



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 171 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, October 29, 2012

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 29, 2012

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

PREVENTING PERSONS FROM CONCEALING THEIR IDENTITY DURING RIOTS AND UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLIES ACT

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC) moved that Bill C-309, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (concealment of identity), be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to open debate on Bill C-309 on the concealment of identity.

I first introduced this bill a little more than a year ago on October 3, 2011. At that time, I asked the members of this Parliament to stand up for the business owners and operators, the emergency service workers, the cities and the citizens of our nation left vulnerable by the holes in our current laws.

I am extremely thankful to all the members who have done just that, allowing this legislation to proceed to this critical juncture. Today I ask for the support of this House once again.

[*English*]

Before I get to the technical details of my private member's bill, Bill C-309, I ask my fellow members of Parliament to turn the clock back to the summer of 2010. A full week before the G20 summit, orderly and legal protests began in Toronto. Demonstrations proceeded peacefully for the most part, until a violent group of vandals showed up. On June 26, the first day of the G20 summit, a demonstration of about 10,000 people assembled downtown. A black bloc of about 200, led by hard-core criminals covering their faces and wearing black clothing, broke away from the main group. I ask my fellow members of Parliament: Why did they cover their faces?

Sadly, our nation was about to meet an insidious new form of criminal. These thugs began maliciously destroying vehicles and buildings with previously hidden weapons that they brought for just this purpose. Hammers, flag poles, mailboxes and even chunks of the street were used to cause as much damage as possible. The

purpose was not just to terrorize the business owners and communities along Yonge Street, Queen Street West and College Street. They also had an ulterior motive. It was to draw the police away from the main group allowing their accomplices to rouse the peaceful protesters into storming the convention centre. Thankfully, our expertly trained police refused to take the bait and the black bloc of criminals changed back into street clothes and melted away into the crowd.

As the weekend continued, despite the thousands of police officers who were deployed, these masked rioters were successful in turning many ordinarily peaceful citizens into members of a violent mob. Police were forced to use tear gas for the first time in the history of Toronto. They also needed to use rubber bullets and pepper spray. In the end, these criminals caused \$2.5 million in damages. Nearly 100 police officers and about 40 private citizens were injured.

They were also successful on another front. They stole the media spotlight from well-meaning citizens who were exercising their rights to expression and assembly. In the aftermath of this disgusting display orchestrated by such thugs, the then mayor of Toronto, David Miller, stated that calling them protesters was "not fair to the people who came to protest". He was right. These criminals were not protesters. They were something else entirely.

In the wake of the G20 protest, it became apparent that the police needed a new tool to arrest these mask-wearing urban commandos before innocent protesters were incited to such blind destruction. Yet one year later, no such tool had been provided to police when the so-called Stanley Cup riot cut through the heart of Vancouver. We all remember the video images of Wednesday, June 15, 2011, but to truly grasp the desperation of that day, I believe we should turn to the words of Vancouver resident and newspaper columnist Brian Hutchinson, who was at the scene. He wrote:

Blood in our streets. I saw people on the ground, bleeding. Shattered glass everywhere. Police cars set alight. Major bridges are now closed, preventing public access into the downtown core. Transit is plugged up, there's no way out. More police and fire crews are arriving, from the suburbs, but again, it seems too late.

And as I write this, the sun has just set. Vancouver, what a disgrace.

Rioters caused at least \$3 million in damages to the city, as well as to about 90 businesses. Many vehicles, including police cars, were set ablaze. Nearly 150 people were injured, including nine police officers. The damage to Vancouver's reputation and economy is still being felt, so too is the sense of fear.

Speaking before the justice committee earlier this year, Mr. Tony Hunt, general manager of loss prevention for the London Drugs that was pillaged by more than 300 criminals during the riot, put it in terms that we can all understand. He said:

Private Members' Business

Thirty staff watched in horror as thugs ravaged through the burglar-resistant glass and steel security gates, pounding their way into the store. The staff fled to safety in our basement room barricade, while thieves stole \$450,000 worth of expensive merchandise and inflicted \$224,000 in physical damage.

The property can be replaced, but the emotional trauma on our staff is just not... acceptable....

Inspector Steve Rai, of the Vancouver Police, reported something similar. He told the justice committee:

Some employees had to lock themselves in back rooms or security rooms, and some of them remain traumatized to this day. We had a famous store that blends coffee near the heart of the riot, and this poor victim had to lock herself in while she heard a mob outside attacking and destroying her business. These kinds of things happened throughout the downtown core during that riot. It affected people's lives.

This was another example of mass criminals leading common, everyday citizens to greater destruction.

As Police Chief Jim Chu told reporters:

These were people who came equipped with masks, goggles and gasoline, even fire extinguishers that they would use as weapons....

Despite the great work of the Vancouver Police Department in identifying 15,000 separate criminal acts, very few people were charged. Despite a heavy media presence, access to closed circuit television and a proliferation of mobile devices, all of which provided ample footage of their misdeeds, many criminals have been able to escape justice.

I cannot emphasize this point enough, the criminals who incited the worst of the violence are not protesters. I have trouble finding the appropriate words to describe the tactics that were employed to turn everyday citizens into crazed mobs. It is insidious. Within the chaos of an all-out riot, they added gasoline to a simmering fire, propelling the mob forward and causing an explosion of violence.

Police have told us that in such volatile situations, law and order could be maintained and public safety protected, if only they had the ability to remove these criminals sooner.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately for the citizens and shopkeepers of Montreal, police were not given this ability prior to the vandalism and violence coinciding with this year's student protests. Once again, masked criminals went to work within the crowd, inciting further destruction by rampaging throughout the streets, smashing windows and assaulting police.

We know that something must be done. It is clear what we must do. That is why I brought this legislation forward, and that is why it has received such widespread support both inside and outside this chamber.

[*English*]

Bill C-309, the concealment of identity act, will create two new Criminal Code offences. The first is an indictable offence, targeting those who take part in a riot while wearing a mask or disguise to conceal identity without lawful excuse. The maximum penalty on indictment for this offence would be 10 years in prison.

The second is a hybrid offence, targeting those who participate in an unlawful assembly while wearing a mask or disguise to conceal their identity without lawful excuse. The maximum penalty on

indictment for this offence would be five years, and on summary conviction the maximum penalty would be six months imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of \$5,000.

The bill would protect the public, police and legitimate protesters. Moreover, it protects freedom of assembly and freedom of expression precisely because it only applies to the criminal thugs who are already breaking the law.

I believe Canadians recognize that there is a difference between honest protesters and the criminal thugs seeking to hide in plain sight behind their masks, inciting mobs to greater violence. That is why I have received such widespread support from police services and chiefs, neighbourhood associations, business groups and individual citizens. Police chiefs in Calgary, Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria have all supported the aims of the legislation.

Chief Constable Chu has endorsed the bill stating:

The Vancouver Police Department is pleased to support this bill. When we see protesters in a crowd donning masks and hoods we know there is a very good chance that violence will soon follow.

Police in neighbouring Victoria also want this problem addressed and in a resolution that was drafted to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Chief Jamie Graham urged the federal government to take action. According to his resolution, wearing a facial covering allows an offender to blend in and mix with a larger lawful group of peaceful individuals without being identified. There an offender may commit unlawful acts under disguise, then remove their masks or facial coverings and blend in with peaceful protesters. Chief Graham has reviewed the bill before us today and he says:

In short, I think this is a progressive, measured, and responsible step towards giving the police agencies the legislative tools we need to uphold the law and maintain public safety.

The Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, comprised of members who were the hardest hit by the riot in their city, has unanimously endorsed the bill. According to its statement:

June 15, 2011 is a dark moment in our city's history that traumatized thousands of residents, employees and hard-working business people. The property damage incurred that evening combined with the looting that took place is in the millions of dollars. Vancouver's picture postcard image was sullied by the actions of reckless and irresponsible individuals who have no respect for the laws of our country.

On behalf of this group, Charles Gauthier asks that we support the bill. He says:

As our country's lawmakers you can begin the process of rebuilding the public's confidence in our laws by supporting private member's bill C-309 and giving notice to would-be looters, rioters, and criminals that donning a mask, disguise, or other facial covering will be met with the full force of the law.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

All of these groups have watched as criminals have refined their black bloc tactics for years in cities around the world. They have also seen other jurisdictions grapple with the same issues that this House faces today.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Laws created to tackle similar situations were written and approved in the United States, the U.K. and France. Like Canada, these are democratic nations where the rights to expression and assembly are vigorously enforced and defended. The courts in these nations have rightly upheld these laws recognizing the distinction between legal protest and illegal rioting.

The masked criminals who work the riots arrive at the scene well prepared. They are armed. They are motivated. We equip and train our police to enforce our laws and to keep our streets safe, yet we know that one key tool is missing from their toolkit: a tool that would help police prevent, de-escalate and control riots; a tool that would spell the difference between legal orderly expression and total destruction of a neighbourhood; a tool that would protect our nation's citizens, emergency service workers, private businesses and public property; a tool that would protect lawful demonstrators' ability to put voice to their beliefs; a tool that would prevent violence on Canadian streets. Let us give our police that tool. Let us do it now. Let us do it today.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech by my colleague from Wild Rose.

The main message at the end of his speech was that we must provide the police with tools.

Is he saying that there are currently no tools in the Criminal Code that can achieve the intended purpose of his private member's bill?

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the member did mention one main message: it would give the police a tool to help protect public safety. That certainly is an important part of what we are trying to do today.

However, I would also point out that there is another key element to it: we are looking to protect the rights of legitimate protestors, legitimate demonstrators, not to be infiltrated by groups that would look to take away from the message that the protesters are trying to convey. That is a very important point, as well.

However, with respect to her specific question, certainly, in discussing with police officers in all the cities where we have had these kinds of instances, what we are hearing is that the tools currently do not exist. What what we are finding is that people are coming prepared. They are coming with a bag full of tools that they need, masks being one of those things, black clothing often, tools used to break windows and to start fires. These people slip into their disguises, create the incident, create the riot, and then slip out of their disguises and walk away undetected. Even though we live in a society where cellphone cameras are prevalent and we have all kinds of footage and evidence, we are not able to identify the individuals involved.

So, yes, it would protect the rights of individuals to peacefully protest, but it would also create a tool for the police to ensure public safety.

● (1120)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for my hon. colleague.

Is it not a fact that it is already an indictable offence, under the Criminal Code, for somebody to riot whether they are covered or not? That is my first question.

I believe, also, the member is claiming that it would allow police to pre-emptively arrest somebody who is wearing a mask. I believe that would not be possible for the police to do. Is that correct?

I would like to have his answer on both of those, please.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, first, I should point out that we are hopeful this would have a deterrence effect, and we believe it would. For individuals who come to a peaceful gathering of any type, whether it be a demonstration or otherwise, anyone who comes to a peaceful gathering looking to make a point, we are looking to protect their rights. The way we would do that is to ensure that this would create a new offence for the individuals who come prepared with the toolkits and the masks, once an incident like that starts. It would allow police to have a tool to be able to prevent these kinds of incidents from occurring and would ensure that the individuals involved are brought to justice if they do occur.

I do believe it would have that deterring effect, but it would also give police the ability to better protect public safety, to deter these kinds of incidents from occurring in the first place and to allow the demonstration to remain peaceful, which is what everyone in this chamber would want to see and I think—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

Questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to follow up on some of my colleague's questions, it is my understanding that subsection 351(2) of the Criminal Code, which I believe is what they are referring to, does not apply to summary conviction offences. This means that the Criminal Code does not specifically address the situation of persons participating in an unlawful assembly who wear a mask or other disguise to conceal their identity without lawful excuse.

So, perhaps my colleague would explain why this correction would fill a gap in our law and why it would be important, with regard to catching people or enforcing the law, especially with people who have concealed their faces during recent riots in Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, yes, certainly, there is a current provision in the Criminal Code that I have had many refer to, which is the section that was quoted by the member. That section, the police tell us, was created more for armed robbery, those types of situations. Although there are instances where they have attempted to or been able to apply this provision to these instances, it is one they find very difficult to apply, for two reasons. First, it was not really created for these types of situations and, second, as the member correctly pointed out, it only deals with indictable offences, not summary conviction offences, which portions of this bill would cover.

So, it is very difficult to apply to these kinds of situations, and this would be a new tool that police require to ensure public safety.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-309, more than any other bill, epitomizes the Conservatives' approach to criminal law: a front page and then a bill. It is that simple.

My colleague gave a very thorough explanation of the reason for Bill C-309 and why the Conservatives brought it forward. Riots occurred after a sports event, the final game of the Stanley Cup. This should have been a very happy occasion, even though the home team had just lost. Unfortunately, it degenerated into a riot, and consequently the Conservatives introduced this bill. This is a private member's bill. The government would never have dared introduce it directly; therefore, it did so indirectly.

There is a problem, which we already raised at second reading of the bill: our Criminal Code should be coherent. That is our concern. It is not about preventing riots or siding with rioters or people who want to use violence. The main problem is that section 351 of the Criminal Code already provides the solution to this problem. In fact, police already have this tool. They can go to a crown prosecutor and lay criminal charges against anyone who wears a mask while committing a crime.

Subsection 351(2) reads as follows:

Disguise with intent

Every one who, with intent to commit an indictable offence, has his face masked or coloured or is otherwise disguised is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.

This is fairly broad and covers almost all the cases mentioned, including those that fall under section 65 of the Criminal Code, the provision targeted by Bill C-309, about taking part in a riot. We will come back to this provision. It is clear what the hon. member is trying to do: he is saying that, if a person conceals his or her identity and participates in an unlawful assembly or a riot, which falls under sections 63 and 64 of the Criminal Code, that person is guilty of an indictable offence in one case and an offence punishable on summary conviction in the other.

It is true that subsection 351(2) does not cover the second type of case covered by the hon. member's bill. However—and this was denied by the government throughout the committee process—it is also true section 351 of the Criminal Code does not apply. In fact, we heard it in the answers to questions asked here in this House: the section would apply instead to armed robbery or theft-related cases. The government therefore did not see how it could be used in the

case of riots or unlawful assemblies, even though it was proven in committee that this subsection of the Criminal Code has all the latitude required to cover these types of situations. This is so true that the government itself, through the Conservative members on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, proposed an amendment to insert the sentence set out in subsection 351(2) of the Criminal Code into the bill.

Those who were in the House and who participated in the debate will recall that the hon. member for Wild Rose's initial bill set out a maximum term of imprisonment of five years. I asked questions in committee that showed that subsection 351(2) sets out a maximum sentence of 10 years for committing an offence while wearing a mask or other disguise. In fact, I asked the following questions. Is there not a risk that this will cause confusion for the courts? We know that the Conservatives do not always like court rulings. Once this is before the court, how will it be analyzed? What charges will be brought against the offender? Will the offender be charged under subsection 351(2) or under subsection 65(2)?

It is not always clear. That is why our main point about the government's crime bills has not changed: the government must be careful about using a piecemeal approach.

● (1125)

They change little provisions here and there, because they see the headlines in the paper and decide that they have a mission and they must change something. The tools are sometimes there, but they are simply not used. That is the first thing to consider. It is true that this does not cover offences punishable on summary conviction, but is this the direction we want to go in? Based on the wording of the bill, I have my doubts.

There are some problems with the way the member drafted his bill. Since it covers offences similar to what is found in subsections 65(1) and 351(2) of the Criminal Code, it is problematic that he did not use the same words. We proposed an amendment to at least try to create some logic in the Criminal Code, but the government flat out refused any kind of amendment that would have made sense.

However, in changing the maximum sentence to match subsection 351(2), the Conservatives admitted that what we were saying in committee must not have been so stupid after all. We were saying that there was a connection between subsection 351(2) and what the member was trying to do in his bill, especially in cases of riots. After being amended, the bill now has exactly the same sentence.

That said, according to the bill in front of us:

Every person who commits an offence under subsection (1) while wearing a mask or other disguise to conceal their identity without lawful excuse is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

Private Members' Business

That is the other problem I want to address. Police officers told the committee that they needed tools. I believe it. We all saw see what happens when we watch riots on TV, whether they are in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. They are absolutely disgraceful. No one supports these kinds of things. No one thinks that freedom of expression means that people are free to break windows, hit others or do whatever they want. Freedom of expression, which is protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, does not protect that kind of thing. However, our charter clearly states that we have freedom of expression.

If my colleague wants to participate in a protest and what she wants to wear covers her face, no matter what it is, this is not in itself an offence, because she is expressing her opinion. It is a way for her to express herself. That is the problem.

Several witnesses told us very clearly that these kinds of measures would definitely discourage many people from expressing their opinions. Some of my colleagues can explore this issue a little further.

If someone taking part in a legal, peaceful protest decides to wear a mask depicting a prime minister, for instance, to express his or her opinion during the demonstration, and the police suddenly declare that the protest has become a riot or an unlawful assembly, it is not always easy for the people marching at the end of the demonstration to know that it has been declared unlawful and that they are therefore committing an offence under the Criminal Code and are subject to prosecution.

This means there is an extremely dangerous reversal of the burden of proof. The biggest difference between subsection 351(2) and the provisions the member is proposing in this bill is the reverse onus; in other words, it will be up to the accused to demonstrate that he or she had a lawful excuse.

The Conservatives even rejected the amendments aimed at defining lawful excuses, such as a burka or other religious attire. No one knows what “lawful excuse” means in the context of Bill C-309 in its current form.

• (1130)

The major flaws in this bill are cause for serious concern. The committee process certainly did not calm any of these concerns. The only purpose it served was to make the government admit in a roundabout way that this provision already exists and assign the offence an equivalent sentence.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to debate Bill C-309 and its proposed amendments to the Criminal Code pertaining to riots and unlawful assemblies engaged in by those who cover their faces to avoid being identified and/or charged.

Like my colleagues on all sides, I was disturbed and saddened by the images from the Vancouver riots and the lawlessness that was part of them. I can appreciate the desire of the sponsor of the bill to seek legislation to address the incident. However, and regrettably so, this legislation is not the answer for the following reasons, which became evident at committee. There is absolutely nothing to suggest that had this legislation been in the Criminal Code last year, the

Vancouver riots would not have happened or that they would have been policed differently or that those who have been punished would face stiffer penalties.

Police officers told committee that rioters who cover their faces to conceal their identities are a particular problem, not only because they are often among the most violent participants but also because they are harder to identify and thus more difficult to bring to justice. To deal with this challenge, police forces across the country have been increasing training and resources for public safety units. They have been developing new approaches and shared best practices to deal with unruly crowds. I applaud these efforts on the part of the Canadian emergency services, as these are indeed what are required to combat rioting effectively.

What is not required are amendments of this nature to the Criminal Code, because laws to deal with rioting and mass rioting already exist. For the sake of comparing the bill before us with the existing law, I refer to section 64 of the Criminal Code, which defines a riot as “an unlawful assembly that has begun to disturb the peace tumultuously”. Section 65, in consequence, states that “Every one who takes part in a riot is guilty of an indictable offence”.

The indictable offence is crucial. If we turn to subsection 351(2) of the Criminal Code, it states: “Every one who, with intent to commit an indictable offence, has his face masked or coloured or is otherwise disguised is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years”. As we can see, the Criminal Code already gives law enforcement the legislative tools necessary to deal with masked rioters. Bill C-309 does not add to them.

The sponsor of the legislation, the member for Wild Rose, has previously stated in the House that the bill differs from the existing law because it gives police the ability to deal pre-emptively with people who conceal their identities in the context of a riot. In his own words, the bill was concerned with “loitering, masked trouble-makers”.

If one looks closely, Bill C-309 creates a subsection to section 65 of the code. As such, it can only apply to people who have already committed an offence under section 65 as it presently exists. Simply put, one has to be already engaged in a riot, an offence under the code, to trigger the application of this new subsection. As such, while the member seems to seek a pre-emptive catch-all in the code to prevent masked rioting, this is actually not what is contained in Bill C-309. Even if that were the proposal before us today, it would warrant extensive critique. Any bill that would allow police to detain people simply for standing around while wearing a mask and subject them to as many as 10 years in prison would raise significant issues with respect to the charter and civil liberties.

If law enforcement were to interpret Bill C-309 in this way, as the member for Wild Rose apparently intends, we could expect court challenges on the grounds that such an application of the law was in violation of section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms with respect to free expression, or section 7 with respect to the protection of “life, liberty and the security of the person”.

Private Members' Business

Amending the statute to allow for pre-emptive arrests of people wearing masks, as the member suggested was his intent, would be a constitutionally suspect approach. Amending the statute without allowing for such arrests, as Bill C-309 does, is redundant. To be clear, rioting while wearing a mask is denounced by the code. Prosecutors lay charges against those who do so and judges enter convictions in these types of cases. There is nothing to suggest that somehow the addition of this to the Criminal Code would change the course, or would have changed the course, of the Vancouver riots.

• (1135)

I understand why colleagues and those who are listening at home may wonder why, if I am saying that the bill is redundant and would do nothing, I would still express my opposition to it. The truth is that even as it is written, Bill C-309 is problematic from a charter perspective. It states that it applies to those concealing their identity “without lawful excuse”, a term not defined in the statute. I appreciate that all members agree that this law is not meant to target people who cover their faces for religious reasons or sports fans whose faces are painted with team colours. However, I am concerned that if we do not further clarify the bill we risk unintentionally subjecting these people to charges under this legislation.

Surely, if a person with a religious face covering attends a public gathering in good faith and the gathering then becomes a riot in which the person participates, he or she should be charged with rioting. That would be an unintended consequence. However, he or she should not be subject to charges under a statute intended to apply to masked provocateurs. For that reason, it would be preferable to add a clarifying clause specifically denying the “lawful excuse” exemption to include face coverings worn as part of a traditional practice of a culture or religious group, as was previously proposed by the Liberal member of the committee. Such a definition would be a clear demonstration that Canada was eager to defend religious freedom both at home and abroad.

Moreover, beyond the religious concern, colleagues have raised concerns about freedom of expression. For example, those protesting at a rally against a political leader and who wear masks that depict the leader may be doing so not necessarily for the purpose of concealing their identity, even though this would be the result. Ultimately, even if these scenarios were not contemplated by the statute, it would not alter the fundamental problem that this bill criminalizes what is already in fact criminal.

There can be no doubt that rioting is a profoundly troubling phenomenon that Canada must deal with in a serious and effective way. For parliamentarians, that means we must support police efforts to develop better training methods and better crowd control techniques, including increased and strengthened resources to improve communications with revellers and demonstrators, to share best practices, and to increase the number of qualified officers available to deal with large public gatherings. We must ensure that those who violate the law by encouraging rioting and by concealing their identity while doing so face appropriate consequences.

However, by enacting legislation that is redundant on its face, we do not help combat the problem. By wording the bill in such a way that it may unintentionally violate Canadian charter rights, a new problem may also be created.

For these reasons, we find it difficult to support the bill. We encourage all members to recognize that the Criminal Code already deals appropriately with masked rioting. It is our parliamentary duty to correct gaps that exist in the law, but we must also be aware that the law does what it is supposed to do today, and the matter is in another realm entirely.

In conclusion, while we share the hope of colleagues that we will not see riots and unlawful assemblies that result in property damage, injury or worse, this legislation neither accomplishes this purpose nor gets us any closer to doing so.

• (1140)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak in the House, especially on a Monday morning with a colleague who has the more beautiful riding, his with the Rocky Mountains and mine with Nose Hill Park. However, that unfortunately is not the subject of debate today.

I am here to support Bill C-309, which was introduced earlier in the year. As a representative of a riding in the core of one of our nation's larger urban centres, I sympathize with the residents and business owners impacted by the destructive activity that occurred during recent riots in the Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal areas.

One of the key priorities of government is to protect its citizens' security. In all of these three cities, the public servants who put themselves at risk to protect innocent bystanders and the homes and property of business owners conducted themselves in an exemplary manner.

As the member for Wild Rose and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice have noted during previous debates in the House, Bill C-309 would give our police an effective tool to better defend our communities against those who choose to engage in violence during a riot, while ensuring that Canadians who choose to express their views in peaceful protest are further protected under the law.

However, some in this chamber do not think police should have this new tool for protecting public safety. For example, on May 7 of this year the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands took to Twitter stating: “Minister of Justice announces full support for PMB [private member's bill] on criminal offence to be masked in protest. No more polar bears in climate marches”.

While there are so many things wrong with this statement, the tone being one of them, frankly, let me start by noting that the member in question seems to have trouble distinguishing between a riot, which is not lawful and the subject of the bill, and peaceful protest, which is lawful. For her benefit I will clarify.

Private Members' Business

As we recently saw in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, lighting objects on fire and projecting them at law enforcement officials and wilfully destroying public and private property are hallmarks of a riot or unlawful assembly. A gathering of people choosing to stand peacefully in a law-abiding forum in support of issues, for example, climate change, would not be classified as a riot or unlawful assembly. As I enjoy debating the member in the House and in other forums and know her well, I find it hard to believe that she does not understand this distinction and has chosen to be flippant about the true purpose of this legislation. Actually reading the bill clearly shows it would not target people who wear masks or costumes that may conceal their identity while they are engaged in lawful protests, marches, gatherings or other activities commonly associated with the exercise of freedom and expression of lawful assembly.

I will re-emphasize for extra clarity that this bill would not affect people who are protesting peacefully or are within the context of a law-abiding activity. This legislation would affect people when the riot act has been invoked or a gathering has been deemed an unlawful assembly, as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada, and who don a mask to conceal their identity for that purpose.

I will go back to clarifying some of my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands' further misconceptions about the bill.

On September 19 the member returned to Twitter and wrote: "If a peaceful event gets out of hand and it's winter and you have a scarf on. 20 years in jail?" This statement is false, blatantly misleading and hyperbolic. However, it is the perfect example of false arguments that have been used to attack the bill. As such, I will walk through the flawed logic of this statement as well as some of the other similar statements made in the House today.

As I said earlier, for Bill C-309 to apply the accused must be wearing a mask or disguise for the specific purpose of concealing his or her identity during a riot or unlawful assembly.

However, what about the case of a gathering that descends into a riot? To this I would say that the best way to avoid participating in a riot is to not participate in a riot. I do not make this statement in jest or flippantly, because I hold the hope that the majority of our constituents would profess to be able to distinguish between engaging in a peaceful, lawful protest and a riot, as I have outlined in my speech, particularly as our country has a proud and strong tradition of our citizens engaging in peaceful protest to effect change.

It seems that I must also address the member's issue with scarves. This legislation specifically states that the accused must be wearing the disguise without lawful excuse, which is at the core of some of the arguments that have been made in this place this morning. Wearing a scarf to protect oneself against the elements during a lawful gathering is a lawful excuse. Wearing a scarf to conceal one's identity while engaging in violent behaviour, such as wilfully damaging property or attacking police officers during a riot or unlawful gathering as defined by the Criminal Code of our country, would not be a lawful excuse.

• (1145)

The same day that this member made the statement on Twitter, she attempted to completely gut Bill C-309 by proposing amendment after amendment, not with ideas to improve the legislation or debate

it, but by replacing clause after clause with empty pages. In doing so, the member failed to note that Bill C-309 would fill a gap in the current law.

To reiterate, at the present time persons who wear masks or disguises with the intent to commit an indictable offence, including taking part in a riot, are subject to an offence under subsection 351 (2) of the Criminal Code and are liable to a maximum terms of imprisonment of 10 years. However, subsection 351(2) does not apply to summary conviction offences. This means that the Criminal Code does not specifically address the situation of persons participating in an unlawful assembly who wear masks or other disguises to conceal their identity without lawful excuse.

While some today have tried to argue that the current law adequately covers these offences, as I have just stated, our law enforcement officials have testified that this is not the case. They find this subsection difficult to apply because it was not created for this type of situation. Rather, it was primarily meant to cover situations such as armed robbery. As evidence, and this is absolutely key, out of 15,000 separate criminal acts that were documented in the Vancouver riot, many with video evidence of the perpetrator, only a handful, a very tiny number, of charges were laid under this section, as this section only covers indictable offences. That is why the bill is such an important tool for our law enforcement officials.

To be clear, what this means is that when someone participating in a riot knows that he or she would be captured on video or on a cell phone and puts on a mask during a riot, we will now have a way to hold them to account in a much clearer way than is currently outlined in our present common law.

Fortunately, many other members of Parliament have recognized the merits of debating this important legislation instead of merely gutting it, and I am not talking about government MPs only. For instance, the most recent member for Victoria voted in favour of Bill C-309 at second reading, as did 189 other members. These members recognize the need to address this issue as well as the merit in debating this legislation, rather than making flippant Twitter comments and attempting to gut the bill.

Approval at second reading allowed the House justice committee to further investigate the issue and to hear from one of the constituents of the former member for Victoria, Police Chief Jamie Graham. He called this legislation a progressive, measured and responsible step toward giving the police agencies the legislative tools they need to uphold the law and maintain public safety. That was a comment from one of our valued law enforcement officials who has over 43 years of experience working in the law enforcement field.

Private Members' Business

Police Chief Graham testified that New York State recently had similar legislation upheld by the courts, and similarly, the United Kingdom and France passed legislation, in 2001 and 2009 respectively, to address similar concerns.

It is a basic tool that Police Chief Graham believes we must give to law enforcement for the reasons I have stated earlier. Speaking to the committee, he said:

There are very specific tactics used to try to dissuade riotous behaviour. We'll do whatever you ask us to do. I provide training and equipment to the officers. The government provides the legislative tools. I am simply suggesting this is one additional tool that I think will be extremely helpful....

We watched the television coverage of the Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal riots. We saw wilful acts of violence. We saw people physically injuring our law enforcement providers, and we also saw the damage it caused to businesses.

Having seen all these things, I would like to believe that no member in this House would vote to deny police this tool to protect the public, the police and legitimate protesters, people who are upholding the Canadian value of peaceful protest.

As I have said before in this House, by denouncing behaviour that is the antithesis of lawful expression and assembly, the bill underscores the Canadian values of freedom, tolerance, respect and rule of law. It also provides additional support for the people who work on the front lines to ensure that these values are upheld. Because of that, I will ask all members in this House to support its passage.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou, I must inform him that he has approximately six minutes for his speech because I must allow enough time for replies.

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for that clarification. I will take full advantage of my six minutes.

I am truly shocked by the parliamentary secretary's speech. She completely ignored a very important problem and that is the reversal of the burden of proof, a consequence of the hon. member for Wild Rose's bill. I am not going to speculate on what the courts will do with this, but this reversal could lead to many problems and nullify some or all of the provisions, the amendments that the hon. member for Wild Rose has made.

I am not going to belabour this point, but I would just like to note, as did my colleague from Gatineau, that, unfortunately, this bill is redundant and has a lot of room for improvement. People can unwittingly find themselves in an unlawful assembly or riot, as defined in sections 63 to 66. They can be victims of circumstance and arrested. It has happened to many people, to honest citizens who simply wanted to express their opinions publicly and take advantage of the opportunity to participate in our society, in the democratic process, which is fundamental and important.

I would like to give an example that is very well-known in Quebec. A philosophy professor dressed up as a giant panda called the Anarchopanda, something he will no doubt do again at other

protests. This philosophy professor's main goal was to defuse problematic and potentially violent situations by giving hugs to everyone, protestors and police officers alike. In fact, many police officers agreed to be hugged in order to defuse potential crises.

Reversing the burden of proof would require the Anarchopanda and any other legitimate protestor in a mask to provide a legitimate excuse. The Anarchopanda, who unfortunately attended a demonstration that escalated into a riot, could be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison. It is absolutely unbelievable that the simple act of wearing this costume with the stated purpose of supporting a completely legitimate demonstration, which is a fundamental right in our society, could lead to a sentence of up to 10 years in prison. That is the sentence imposed for criminal activities such as the financing of terrorism, firearms trafficking, and sexual abuse or assault.

How far will we go? I have quickly given some examples to show that, in its present form and without our amendment, the bill is absurd. We proposed a constructive amendment so that wearing a mask would be a criminal offence in keeping with section 351 of the Criminal Code.

The opposition parties and some groups are not the only ones opposed to this bill, and with good reason. The Canadian Bar Association clearly stated that people conceal their identities for various legitimate reasons such as protecting a family member or friend in another country or for other non-criminal reasons, including medical and religious reasons. The Barreau du Québec took a similar stand and stated that people can have a very good reason for concealing their identity or wearing a mask to make a statement.

• (1155)

If the bill were to be passed, what would the implications be for the fundamental right of freedom of expression? The act runs the risk of being thrown out. The additional amendment to the Criminal Code could be struck down by the courts because it touches on our fundamental freedoms and fails to achieve the original objective of fighting crime during unlawful assemblies.

I am asking all members of the House to vote against this bill to avoid making a mistake that would have unacceptable consequences for thousands of innocent members of our society.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I commend all members of Parliament for the vigorous exchange of ideas over this legislation.

I realize that the vast majority of private members' bills that are introduced in this House never make it to this stage, but they serve the public by advancing the national debate regarding various issues. This, in and of itself, is a worthy outcome.

However, on this matter, debate is not enough. The bottom line is that the perpetrators who are criminalized by this legislation are not lawful protestors. We are not talking about giant pandas, Frosty the Snowman, as some members might suggest, or as members of the media talked about, the PETA seal. I am not looking to criminalize pandas, Frosty the Snowman or seals.

What I am seeking to do here today is to deal with provocative vandalism and violence. It is the destruction of public and private property. It is armed assault. In addition to the crimes they commit, these culprits bring disrepute to the honest and well-intentioned citizens making use of their legal rights to free speech and assembly.

The sad truth is that this is a growing threat. Members of the black bloc have incited protestors to riot across Canada, and in major cities all around the globe. The tactic has been refined and taught to new generations of radical criminals. These felons recognize and fully understand how the current loopholes in our laws, and I will reiterate, loopholes in our current laws, are allowing them to evade justice.

They have been able to exploit this situation to great effect, and they will continue training new recruits in these tactics. They will keep inciting riots, victimizing business owners, assaulting emergency service workers and destroying public property, so long as they believe there is a decent chance they will get away with it.

In the meantime, we continue to send our police and emergency service workers into these volatile situations. By allowing the loopholes in our laws to be maintained, we are asking them to wait until a riot is fully out of control and then stop it dead in its tracks, without damage to private and public property and without injury to themselves or the armed culprits attacking them. It is an impossible task. We might as well ask them to hold back the ocean's tide.

These emergency service workers are more than just a uniform. They are mothers and fathers. They are upstanding citizens, risking their own safety to protect others. They do it because somebody must do it. Quite frankly, they represent the best of our nation, and I applaud them.

Again, that is not enough. It is not enough for us to sit here, hundreds of kilometres and months removed from the maelstrom of mayhem set off by armed and organized thugs, and simply shrug our shoulders. It is not enough to order a report. It is not enough to form a commission. It is not enough to return to the aftermath of riot after another riot and blame a small group of troublemakers before turning our attention to other matters.

It is not enough, not for me, not for members, not for our emergency service workers and certainly not for the citizens of Canada. I bring this proposal today to give our police a crucial tool to do their jobs, to protect the public and return safely home to their families.

This tool in no way restricts citizens' rights to expression or assembly. In fact, it serves to strengthen them. It will ensure that those who come to these events to cause trouble can be brought to justice and discouraged from those kinds of behaviours, so that the people who come to a gathering, for whatever peaceful means, whether it be protest or otherwise, have the ability to do their activities safely and freely.

Government Orders

It simply fulfills the Canadian government's first responsibility, which is to protect Canadian citizens. It offends Canadians' sense of justice to watch these radical criminals incite such mindless violence and then be able to slink away under the cover of their masks.

Our nation is demanding a long-term solution, and that is exactly what Bill C-309 offers. It gives police the ability to better protect public safety. I am asking for the support of all members.

• (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 31, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

The House resumed from October 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, the official opposition, to oppose yet another omnibus bill put forward by the government. It is a travesty when it comes to respecting not only the priorities of Canadians, but the kind of value that Canadians give to democracy, democratic debate and the roles of members of Parliament in the House. It is though the government had not learned from what we saw in the spring, the kind of opposition we saw from coast to coast to coast from Canadians on Bill C-38, the first omnibus bill in recent months that the government put forward.

Government Orders

We saw historic opposition on the kind of deregulation put forward in the environment, the damaging portions to do with pensions, specifically with respect to the OAS, the damage made by changes to employment insurance and the list goes on. Overall it was a budget bill that raised the ire of Canadians who did not send their members of Parliament, certainly the government members of Parliament in the House, to shove through legislation that would essentially decrease our standard of living. Yet, here we are again seeing the same kind of tricks being played by a government that truly is prepared to show contempt for democratic debate and the role we have been sent here to do.

I am proud to be part of the NDP, a party that not only has the word “democratic” in its name, but a party that believes debate and representing Canadians, which is what we have been sent here to do, rather than telling people stories of what they are supposedly doing in the House. The real story is one that is rather devastating.

Bill C-45 is another massive omnibus bill that makes amendments to a wide range of acts. Once again, the Conservatives are trying to ram legislation through Parliament, without allowing Canadians and members of Parliament to thoroughly examine it. The Conservatives claim that budget 2012 is about job creation, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that this budget will cost 43,000 Canadian jobs. That is not job creation; that is a massive bleeding of good, solid Canadian jobs that the government is enforcing through this budget bill.

The budget plans for unemployment to rise. As we know, the National Capital Region has been hit disproportionately hard given the massive cuts to the public sector. However, the region in the part of the country that I come from, Manitoba and the Prairies, has been the single most effected region, outside of the National Capital Region, when it comes to cuts to the public service, whether it is the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, which has been hit hard, or it is a number of other departments that have been affected. The domino effect is the lose of good, solid jobs for our communities.

While Canadians want us to take action to protect our environment and grow a sustainable economy for the future, the Conservatives are focused on gutting environmental protection regulation. We saw that in Bill C-38. We very clearly see it again in Bill C-45 through the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and a massive disconnect on the part of the government.

Canadians view environmental sustainability as being key to the way we move forward. We used to be recognized as leaders and a country that sought to find a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability. Now we are seen as a global shame because of the kind of policies the Prime Minister and his government have put forward. Not only have they gone as far as failing to move forward on environmental stewardship inaction, but they have also gutted legislation that is absolutely key to ensuring that the kind of development that takes place across our country is done within parameters that support environmental sustainability.

• (1205)

Churchill, in northern Manitoba, is part of a province that depends a great deal on the wealth that comes from waterways, whether it is rivers or lakes. Seeing the changes in the Navigable Waters Protection Act is damaging to the kind of development that

Manitobans want, one that respect waterways, first nations and communities that are on or close to the water. Unfortunately, once again, the federal government will not stand up for the province of Manitoba and the many Canadians that want economic development to be done with a sustainable lens.

The Conservatives have clearly not learned their lesson and the official opposition will not let them quietly pass their new omnibus legislation. We believe Canadians deserve better. We in the NDP will always be proud to stand up for transparency and accountability. We will always stand up for environmental protection, retirement security and health care, which were key points that were attacked in Bill C-38 and continue to be attacked in the latest reincarnation of the Conservative government's sham representation of the interests of Canadians.

Let us look at Bill C-45 more closely. A key damaging point is the area of public pensions. New Democrats are concerned by the creation of a two-tiered workforce in which younger people have to work longer for the same retirement benefits. Those younger people are from my generation, a generation of people who go into workplaces. Hopefully a number of them will be able to work in the public service supporting the kinds of services and sectors we need in our country. Unfortunately, the bar has been raised for them in many ways and they will not have access to the same quality of life as their parents. That is what it is really about. A two-tiered system means that the people of my generation will be set up to live a life with greater job insecurity and a higher cost of living knowing that their retirement benefits will have been gutted, and that is not fair.

When Conservative members go back to their ridings, how do they make this kind of two-tiered workforce palatable to the young people who live in their constituencies, the next generation of Canadians who want to contribute to society, our communities and our economy? The reality is they will be unable to make the same kinds of long-term plans that they or certainly their parents have made because the odds have been stacked against them. It is particularly shameful that the odds have been stacked against them in large part due to the government's desire to make the playing field more difficult for us.

Government Orders

The changes in the public service pension system come in a context where the Conservative government is failing to take action on youth unemployment and crippling student debt, while also making young people work longer before qualifying for OAS benefits. We have a good idea what the actions the government is taking today will mean in terms of a reduced ability by Canadian young people to contribute to the economy, whether it is in the tax base, or purchasing homes and taking part in the homebuyers' market or consumption in the economy, which is something in which the government seems to be interested. We are going to see a marked reduction in the ability of future generations of Canadians to contribute to the economy.

A final point that I would like to make is with respect to my particular region and the devastating impact Bill C-45 will have when it comes to the Canadian Grain Commission. I am proud to represent the community of Churchill where hard-working people have worked for the CGC for decades and have ensured that Canadian wheat is the best in the world. Unfortunately, Bill C-45 weakens the Canada Grain Act, which means we will lose inward inspections, farmers will be faced with a reduced profit margin because of the fact that we will not have rigorous inspection of the wheat we export, as well as domestic consumption, and that is not okay.

• (1210)

Canada is proud of the kind of wheat products we have sold around the world. This means losing solid jobs from communities like Churchill, Thunder Bay and Vancouver, and it is certainly in line with the government's failure to realize it is here to show leadership. Thankfully, we in the NDP will continue to do that and fight against Bill C-45.

• (1215)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the region my hon. colleague represents in Thompson and Churchill is very much similar to mine in Timmins—James Bay, having some of the largest gold, copper and diamond operations in the world. Therefore, we understand the value of a resource-based economy. However, when I talk to citizens in my riding and they once again hear of the attack on the waterways, this continual undermining of basic environmental standards on the waterways, they become angry because we have seen the damage in our regions. We have seen the lakes and fish habitats that have been destroyed over the years.

I ask my hon. colleague this. While the rest of the world is moving toward a sustainable notion of treating our resources as value-added but also understanding the importance and protection of the environment, why is it that we have a government that seems to be in the process of high-grading our natural environment to get as much as it can as quickly as it can, leaving the toxic residues, which we have fought over the last 100 years in the north to stop from happening?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising what is really the story of our ridings and that of northern Canada.

We have a government that would leave a legacy of devastation, a legacy that is in complete disconnect with the priorities of northern Canadians. For us, certainly going back to first nations teachings, economic development means a true respect for the environment

around us. Instead of making sure we have regulation that enforces that kind of respect and that we are going forward to make sure economic development happens responsibly, the government is like a wrecking crew. It is Canadians who would pay the price, predominantly Canadians who live in northern Canada. That is unacceptable. We know that the international community is certainly taking note of that. We see that more and more Canadians have had enough with the government's agenda.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is proposed in Bill C-45 will create a two-tier system for pension plans, which is obviously going to affect young people significantly. There are also all sorts of measures that will undermine the protection of the environment.

The hon. member has already mentioned that this will greatly affect her generation. As our leader often says, we are passing on a debt burden to future generations, whether in the form of environmental debt, economic debt, and so on.

Could the hon. member tell us about the problems that this could create for young people, who already do not trust politicians? How will they be affected overall?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her very relevant question.

It is incredible to see that the government is so irresponsible that it ignores the devastating impact of this bill and of Bill C-38 on my generation.

The hon. member made a connection with young people's lack of confidence in politicians. It is true that they already do not have much trust. Fortunately, our caucus represents the youth of Canada, given its many young members of Parliament and the issues that they bring forward.

However, the fact remains that this government is shirking its major responsibility for our country's future.

We see that an entire generation will not have good pension plans, will not be able to afford the soaring costs of housing, for example, will not be able to pay off student debts and will not have access to good jobs in the public service or in general. This reality is scary, showing us an absolutely incredible side of the Government of Canada. Yet this government is supporting this reality instead of demonstrating a leadership role in building a better future for Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege and a delight to speak to Bill C-45, the final implementation of the budget act, the jobs and growth act. It is titled, "jobs, growth and long-term prosperity". The reason we chose that title is that the focus of this bill is for just that: for long-term prosperity, for jobs and for growth.

Government Orders

We have heard the numbers countless times. On our side of the House, we are reminded that since this government has been in office and since that horrendous crash in 2008-09 when so many jobs were wiped out, not only here in Canada but across the world, there has been an increase of 820,000 net new jobs. That is an outstanding number.

We also hear the statistics that we rank among the highest in the G8 nations, that we are in the best fiscal position and that we are among the highest in growth in G8 nations.

That does not say there is tremendous growth. We know that in the world today there has been an enormous slowdown. Yet repeatedly, for the last number of years, Canada has managed to hold a position and to build some strength in that position, as well.

We also know that when governments get it right, when governments help create healthy climates, jobs are created. That is the main focus of this government and the reason we have focused so much on those areas. We do that by, first, listening.

I have the privilege to serve on the finance committee. We are involved in budget consultations at this point. We meet every night, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. We meet from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. We ask people and groups from right across this country to come in to speak to us and to tell us what they feel this government has to do to be successful, to grow those jobs, to get those people back to work, to help young Canadians who are coming out schools, be they high schools, colleges or universities, to get jobs. We listen to these groups and these people.

We listen to industry. Again, I was fortunate, in the first four years I served in this House, to serve on the industry committee. In the industry committee, again, we invite industry; we invite labour; we invite all these groups to tell us just what we can do as a government to make things work.

It is people who create jobs. It is businesses that create jobs. Governments create healthy atmospheres.

We listen to business groups, we listen to labour and we listen to the experts. We learned great lessons from the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington last Friday. He gave us a little essay in the house on Keynesian policies and how many governments today—most governments in the western world since before World War II—embarked upon that kind of plane where governments were told they need to spend to stimulate the economy. I think most of us would probably agree with that, but we have had a bit of runaway Keynesianism.

There was another school of thought at that time, the Austrian school, the Mises, that taught it is the responsibility of governments to maintain and make sure their books are in order. We did, and we do what the experts suggest we do. The first thing they tell us, repeatedly, is to get government spending under control, eliminate the deficit.

It is a fact that this government is concentrating on lowering government spending. We do not agree on both sides of the House. Often times, we hear it is the role of government to spend more, to spend our way out of a recession or that, rather than cut spending, maybe we ought to raise taxes.

● (1220)

We hear repeatedly, not just from businesses—obviously businesses do not want to be taxed and corporations do not want to be taxed—but we hear from the experts, the economists, that it works in reverse and ultimately when businesses and corporations are taxed, they take that cost and add it to the cost of products. Then we become uncompetitive in the world. Therefore, our goal on this side of the House is to make sure tax level does not become a burden and to make sure we do not impede growth.

One of the other things we heard repeatedly was to reduce red tape. Red tape is something that stagnates growth. It causes frustration in the marketplace. We have to eliminate those things that impede growth. I have spoken about a number of those areas, one of them being red tape. However, there are other things that governments do, oftentimes with the right intention, but we find out down the road that they cause more problems than they solve. Businesses asked that we not overburden them with taxes and regulations and that we open up the marketplace.

Canada is a trading nation. We are a nation that does a pretty good job at producing certain things. We are strong in extraction. We have a very rich resource sector. We are strong in service sectors, telecommunications and banking, and we do a good job in financing. We are able to export those to other countries. However, oftentimes there are trade barriers that pop up and make those things difficult for our companies. Therefore, our Minister of Trade has been extremely busy on a trade mission.

Let me read something he said:

In less than six years, [we have]...concluded trade agreements with nine countries: Colombia, Honduras, Jordan, Panama, Peru, and the European Free Trade Association member states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Canada has also begun deepening trade and investment ties with the largest markets in the world, including the European Union, India and Japan.

The European Union has 500 million people.

Most recently, we announced in October that Canada has formally joined the trans-Pacific partnership, the TPP trade negotiations. This is a trade agreement under negotiation by 11 countries, which now include Canada and Mexico. The other members include Australia, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.

Canadians can see that we are opening up these opportunities. This gives our companies, our people, an opportunity.

Government Orders

The Speaker is telling me I am running out of time, so I am going to talk about what is really near and dear to me, and that is the bridge to strengthening trade act. We have inserted a provision in the omnibus bill that allows for a bridge across to the United States in my neck of the woods, Chatham-Kent—Essex. Why this is so important is that we are a trading nation. The town of Leamington, which is part of my riding, has an enormous greenhouse industry. Two hundred trucks leave Leamington greenhouses bound for the U.S. every day. More than 70% of the greenhouse industry goes to the United States. There are 223 greenhouse operations in Ontario, and Leamington is home to the largest concentration of greenhouses. There are over 1,500 acres under cover. They tell me that one acre is equal to ten times the production on normal land. It is imperative that those goods get across to the United States. We need that crossing. Therefore, we have put a provision in the budget that would allow for its speedy construction.

I was also very privileged to be able to announce the gateway, the section of Highway 401 to the bridge. Last year in August the government announced we would spend \$1 billion. A very important part of the budget is the trade issue. It is very important in my riding.

I encourage the opposition to look at those great benefits, not only for the country but for areas like Chatham-Kent—Essex, where it is so important that we continue this trade.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about job creation, which is at stake in Bill C-45. I would like to come back to that, because my colleague did not go into detail on the matter.

In the Auditor General's most recent report, we saw that the Minister of Finance's decisions were not backed by the figures in a report on long-term fiscal sustainability. In other words, the Minister of Finance is making decisions without truly knowing what impact these decisions will have on public finances over the long term, which is concerning.

I would like to know whether my colleague knows what long-term effects the elimination of tax credits for research and development will have, for example. In my riding, there is a company that just cut 300 jobs. This company was very active in research and development, which is why this question came to mind.

Does my colleague know the long-term effects of a decrease in tax credits for research and development? If so, what is he using to back his long-term predictions?

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, that is an area of real concern as well.

I have served on both the finance and the industry committee. One of the studies that was produced by the industry committee back in 2007 touched on those areas. The Liberals were in opposition at the time and the committee submitted an unanimous report to the House.

One of the areas of great concern is how we can best use research money and how to make that effective. This is a constant struggle.

This is something that we as a government, and members on all sides of the House when we serve in committee, try to get right. The objective is to, first of all, have good research because we all benefit from good research. Second is to make sure that the research that is done will provide jobs. The result will be stronger economies. I think we are—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I do not mean to cut the hon. member off but we have to leave enough time for other members to ask questions.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague from Chatham-Kent—Essex telling us how important it is for the economy to move that bridge forward in a timely way.

I would like to focus my question on the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which the opposition for some reason has tried to link to the environment. It is a 100-year-old piece of legislation that does not speak to the environment at all. It is really about navigation on our waterways.

Why is this another important feature of this budget implementation act and how will it help long-term growth and prosperity?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue serves on finance committee as well and she does an outstanding job.

Ten minutes goes by so quickly, but a point that I was trying to get to in my speech was that the navigable waters act is very important to my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex, as it is I am sure in her riding as well. We have flat land in Chatham-Kent—Essex. It does not get any flatter and we have many drains and ditches. I am hearing from cities, townships and counties how the old law that the member referred to is making it difficult to put in things as simple as a culvert to cross a ditch.

We are doing things that need to be done. We are doing things that make sense. As a result, we should have a strong impact on our economy. That is precisely what we are trying to do with the legislation.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-45. I would like to open my remarks by joining those who spoke before me in saying that I do not agree with the way we are proceeding with Bill C-45, which is a mammoth omnibus bill. Call it what you will, but the fact remains that this bill is more than 400 pages long and has various parts dealing with different areas. Not only are we restricted to having only one debate, but we also have only one opportunity to vote on a massive bill containing a wide range of measures. For a party that boasted that it would be transparent and would stand up for democracy, this makes no sense. Frankly, we are wondering what has become of those lofty ideals today.

Government Orders

As a parliamentarian, I have to vote only once. This bill has some elements that I agree with and that I would be happy to vote in favour of. Unfortunately, it also has a number of incomplete and potentially harmful features that need major amendments or that should not be there in the first place. I am in a position where I have to vote for or against a wide range of measures and amendments. I think this way of doing things is neither transparent nor democratic.

A number of hon. members have asked us why we are complaining, because everything that is in Bill C-45 was already announced in the budget. I would like to set the record straight and say that that is not true. Not all the measures in Bill C-45 were in the budget. Let us stop lying to Canadians. That is shameful. For instance, one amendment in Bill C-45 has to do with the right of grain farmers to an appeal process. I did not find that in the main budget tabled last spring. The same goes for the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

There are things in Bill C-45 that were not clearly announced in the budget and that warrant careful consideration. Anytime we are faced with such an immense bill, there is always confusion and unexpected things.

The Liberals proposed removing the parts related to pensions from Bill C-45. If that proposal had been accepted, we would have voted in favour of the measure concerning members' pensions and the one concerning public service pensions and Canadian Forces members' pensions. With just one vote, and without any debate, we would have affected the pensions of over 450,000 Canadians.

Modifying people's pension plans without bothering to dedicate any time for consideration, debate or examination is such an insult. This shows a complete lack of respect and a negligent attitude toward democracy. The cavalier, disrespectful attitude this government is taking regarding such important issues for Canadians will undermine their confidence in our parliamentary system.

I would now like to take a closer look at one particular measure announced in Bill C-45: changing the eligibility age for public servants' retirement pensions. Anyone hired as of January 1, 2013, will receive his or her retirement pension at age 65 instead of 60. Five years is a long time; it is more than just a few weeks or a few months. This change is not really justified. The budget indicates that this measure is responsible and is important to ensuring the sustainability of the pension plan. However, those few words are by no means sufficient justification for making such a major change to the pension plan.

On what grounds is the viability of the program being determined? Perhaps there are reasonable grounds to believe the retirement age needs to be raised, but I doubt it. I will leave this open to discussion and debate. The government cannot simply declare that the viability is at risk and the age must therefore be raised; that is not enough. I want to see some figures and some studies proving that the viability is at risk at this time. I can easily draw a comparison with the changes announced to old age security.

• (1235)

All kinds of non-partisan expert studies show that old age security in its present form, with 65 as the age of eligibility, is sustainable in the long term. Of course we do not need complex calculations to

know that costs will rise as the population ages. Old age security, a public pension program, will cost more because the proportion of seniors will be greater. Does this mean that the program is not sustainable in the long term? Not at all. Just because it will cost more does not mean that we will absolutely not be able to cover the costs. Experts' in-depth long-term analyses take into account a number of factors and unanimously confirm that old age security with 65 as the age of eligibility is a program that we can afford to keep.

On a number of occasions, the opposition has asked—as the critic for seniors, I have asked dozens of times—for the figures, studies and reports on which the government bases its claim that the viability of old age security is in jeopardy. To date, I have not seen any valid proof, or anything to justify these changes. The recent Auditor General's report clearly states that some figures and studies could have been made public to provide some indication of and information about the real reasons for changing the eligibility age for our old age security program. No figure has been published even though, in 2007, the government promised to do so and, in 2011, the Auditor General recommended that the government once again publish a report on long-term fiscal sustainability.

Furthermore, we also learned from the Auditor General's most recent report, which was released last week, that the Minister of Finance does not necessarily have all the information on the long-term impact of his decisions. He makes the decisions and then is subsequently informed by the department of the long-term impact of the decisions. Quite frankly, there is cause to be suspicious of the reasons for the changes proposed by Bill C-45 and by the Conservatives' most recent budget.

That concludes my remarks on pensions affected by Bill C-45 and the budget. I would also like to talk about another aspect related to Canadians' savings and their financial security: pooled registered pension plans.

Many experts agree that pooled registered pension plans will not enhance Canadians' financial security; rather, they will undermine it. Yes, we can do something to protect retirees' financial security. We can take meaningful steps and we can do it now if possible. The government should not introduce another savings vehicle similar to RRSPs and TFSAs. Not everyone contributes to RRSPs and TFSAs, which are savings vehicles. A whole lot of people cannot put money aside for retirement.

What are the unique advantages of a pooled registered pension plan? It will give employers the opportunity to provide a so-called pension plan—merely “so-called” because a PRPP is not a pension plan; it is a savings plan—without having to commit to anything. Employers can set up a plan that employees may contribute to if they want, which is fine, but employers do not actually have to do anything. If employers are not interested in participating, they simply do not have to. That is not a solution.

Government Orders

Many experts say that we have to rethink our defined benefit pension plan and that we have to protect it. That is the only thing that will put Canadians in a position to save for their retirement and allow them to count on a set amount of money when they retire. Changes are in order if we want to improve these pension plans and keep them viable. But we have to be serious about making those changes.

I could go on at length about this, but I see that my time is almost up. Nobody can cover everything in a 400-page bill in 10 minutes.

● (1240)

In closing, I want to say that, if the Minister of Finance thinks that austerity is prudent, he should be careful, because people must not be led to believe that the cuts he has proposed are in any way necessary. This is nothing but political rhetoric and lies, if I may say so.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

She spoke about old age security, which is a very important topic. She also mentioned the Auditor General's report. If I am not mistaken, this report compares the costs of maintaining the current system of retirement at the age of 65 to the costs of a system of retirement at the age of 67, as proposed by the government, which does not believe that the current system is sustainable. But the difference between the two systems represented 0.3% of the GDP. This certainly does not indicate that the current system is not viable.

Why does my colleague think that the government is telling us that the current system is not viable, when we are talking about a difference of only 0.3% of the GDP?

● (1245)

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for picking up on what I spoke about earlier. I was saying that we can cope with Canada's aging population and maintain access to old age security at the age of 65.

Why do the Conservatives want to push that back to 67? That is an excellent question. If I knew what was going on in their heads, perhaps I would have the answer. If I had been given documents explaining why, perhaps I would have the answer.

No one can really understand why the government is pushing the age of eligibility for old age security back to 67. Why not 66 or 68? Why in 10 years? Why not in seven years? What effects will it have? And what costs will it transfer to the provinces?

Up until now, we do not have any of that information, which is completely unacceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member comment on a couple of very important statistics?

The first is that Canada has the lowest debt to GDP ratio in G7 countries. It is predicted by the IMF to be a leader in the world economy over the next two years. Second, perhaps the hon. member could tell us the importance to her riding of the 820,000-some-odd jobs that have been created since Canada came out of the global economy recession in relatively good shape?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member offered up some figures, but I must point out that figures taken out of context mean nothing, because you can spin them however you want.

I could also cite the figure provided by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who said that the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in Canada was the result of austerity measures in the Conservatives' budget.

We can keep throwing figures back and forth. I think it is false to say that the Conservatives' cuts are necessary. We are constantly being told that if we do not make these cuts, we will incur all kinds of debt and the economy will suffer. Careful. This is the same government that is depriving the federal treasury of tens of billions of dollars in useless tax credits.

Let us put things back into perspective: cuts and the budget are a matter of choice; not a matter of obligation.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her remarks.

She talked about respect, which is a fundamental theme. Parliament and Canadians need to be respected and they need to be informed about everything that is in Canada's budget.

In addition, as a result of this second omnibus bill, parliamentarians will surely not have enough time to talk about everything that is in the budget.

[*English*]

I want to ask about the impact that these changes to pensions in particular would have on young people. We have a change in pensions, going from 65 to 67, and in the public sector, from 60 to 65. It would mean for young people it would take longer to get into the market because they would have to work longer and work later in life as well.

Could my colleague give us her thoughts on the impact the budget would have on young people for decades to come?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, it will be difficult to give a short answer to such a question, but I will do my best.

Indeed, the current youth unemployment rate is alarming. And what does the budget propose to solve this problem? Nothing. Instead, the budget increases the retirement age of public sector workers from 60 to 65. This measure will clearly have an impact on young people and future generations. Decisions like that should not be made just to get re-elected, but rather based on the impact that they will have on future generations.

I have a word of advice for the government. Not only would publishing long-term fiscal sustainability reports help in making the right decisions, but it would also inform people of the impact of the decisions made.

Government Orders

•(1250)

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion, and I know my colleagues will give that to me: That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 308 to 314 related to changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act be removed from Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures and do compose Bill C-47; that Bill C-47 be entitled “An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act”; that Bill C-47 be deemed read a first time and be printed and that the order for the second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration; that Bill C-45 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-45 be reprinted, as amended, and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We propose the motion to give the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration an opportunity to ensure due diligence to examine and propose amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member for Newton—North Delta have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 29, the Minister of Finance presented the 2012 budget, Canada's economic action plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. The budget was developed after extensive consultation with fellow MPs, department personnel, economists, business and community leaders and ordinary Canadians. It is not surprising that our Minister of Finance has been called the best finance minister in the world after the World Economic Forum rated Canada's performance as the best among G8 economies in the midst of a global crisis.

The overwhelming message I received from constituents throughout the year was, “Keep on keeping on. Your plan is working. Continue to keep taxes low, continue to reduce redundant red tape, continue to facilitate trade among the provinces and continue to open up new markets around the world”.

Albertans in particular support this disciplined and balanced approach to managing the country's economy. The vast majority of Canadians support our focus on substantial, responsible and necessary change, while taking advantage of global economic opportunities and ensuring sustainable social programs and sound public finances for future generations. However, the NDP does not support this.

As members may recall, shortly after the budget was announced, the NDP leader made headlines with his divisive comments of blaming Alberta's successful energy-based economy for the down-sizing of the manufacturing-based economies in Quebec and

Ontario. He also blamed the strong Canadian dollar, for which Alberta's booming economy is responsible, for the downturn in manufacturing. Prairie premiers and other western leaders were quick to reject his claims and he was even criticized by left-leaning eastern journalists who recognized his comments to be divisive and unsuitable for a national leader.

However, we have to hand it to the Leader of the Opposition, he does stick to his guns. Notwithstanding the public outcry, he has not backed down. In fact, he got bolder and even more bizarre. In a question period he went so far as to say:

—the Canadian dollar is being held artificially high, because they are failing to enforce environmental legislation....500,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost because we are not enforcing legislation. We are not enforcing the navigable waters act. We are not enforcing the migratory birds act. We are not enforcing the Fisheries Act.

Behold the NDP plan to revive the manufacturing sector: enforce the Migratory Birds Convention Act.

It is an unfortunate but acceptable consequence of environmental regulations that the economy should suffer. However, the NDP suggest that we impose environmental legislation, not to protect the environment, but to deliberately hurt the Alberta economy in particular and the Canadian economy in general.

Some people have said that it is disingenuous to suggest there are environmental restrictions which negatively impact the economy, while doing very little to actually protect the environment. This is not simply an accidental result of miscalculating the effects of well-intended policies. The Leader of the Opposition reveals that it is an intentional and integral part of the NDP environmental agenda.

The NDP wants to impose strict environmental restrictions upon the Alberta energy sector to significantly undermine its profitability and weaken the general economy. This would bring down the value of the Canadian dollar thereby making Canadian manufactured goods less expensive to foreign markets. Its bizarre economic philosophy suggests that we would all be better off if only the economy was not doing so well.

This line of thinking is not unique to its leader; it is typical NDP mentality. Nor is this philosophy and methodology new. When fighting against the implementation of the same socialist philosophy in the 1840s, Frédéric Bastiat pointed out that in order to gain power, “Ambitious hypocrites...planting the seeds of international discord in the mind of the public”. He stresses the importance of exposing the false assumptions upon which their economic theories are based. He says, “the public can be robbed only if it is first deceived...and we may be certain...every sophism is the precursor of an act of plunder”.

In other words, whenever we see a wonky argument for equalization that is superficially plausible but makes huge leaps and depends on false assumptions, hold on to our wallet.

Government Orders

Since our motive should be the welfare and prosperity of the country, no matter how politically incorrect they are, if the words of the NDP leader are right, we should swallow our pride and implement them. However, they are wrong and there are reasons much more important than scoring politically for pointing it out.

●(1255)

In politics, false assumptions are especially harmful because they mislead public opinion, and public opinion is the guiding force of public policy. If deception and false assumptions are the weapons of the plunderer, then the best shield for the public is correct understanding.

Pitting one region against another is not just politically incorrect, it also discourages inter-regional and inter-industry co-operation, harming national unity and stagnating economic growth for all regions in all industries.

The words of the leader of the official opposition are not just divisive. The belief that each region's gains depend on the losses of others not only destroys the economies of weaker regions but also eventually destroys the strong as well, just a parasite must perish after it has fully consumed its host.

The economy is not a zero sum game. If we are to prosper, it is important to understand that in a free market, it is the very nature of free economic exchanges that both parties gain and, in fact, that co-operation is more effective than competition. Supposing that a region cannot prosper in the absence of abundant natural resources without forced equalization weakens that region and stifles its creativity. The downturn in manufacturing was not caused by a strong dollar but was a natural correction in an artificially supported sector. The strong dollar is a reflection of a strong economy and a strong economy inspires confidence, encouraging outside investment and internal growth.

A lower loonie may increase demand for domestically manufactured goods, but increased demand would also increase their price for foreign markets and Canadians. Ironically, it would also lower the value of the dollar earned by people in the manufacturing sector. Also, the opposition's anti-oil, lower loonie plan would increase revenue for the oil companies too, since their prices are based on U.S. dollars. Therefore, we would end up shipping crude oil at a lower Canadian dollar price, only to have to import gasoline at high U.S. prices. Protectionists always seem to forget that the economy is not made up only of producers and sellers, but also includes consumers.

The economy of a country is not actually a race to the top where only one team can win. If we wanted to make sure that all of the runners crossed the finish line at the same time, it might make sense to place some artificial obstacles in the path of the fastest runners or to give slower runners a head start. A national economy is more like a team of mountain climbers working together to reach the summit. Would it make sense to put obstacles in the way of a climber with the best chance of getting to the top first if, from there, he could better assist those below? However, that is what the member for Outremont and his not-so-merry band of socialists want to do with respect to industry. They forget that the desired result is Canada's well-being, all of it.

●(1300)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's comments in which he also mentioned environmental legislation. I would like to ask him a question about that with regard to Bill C-45. This is a continued theme in the current bill, as it was in Bill C-38, where there were significant cuts to the Fisheries Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

In Bill C-45, there are changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. In fact, the term "water" is dropped from the title of the act. In my riding, for instance, waterways, rivers, creeks and lakes, are held in high regard and people expect them to be managed properly. This requires protective measures, like the Navigable Waters Protection Act. In fact, my riding is nestled between the world-famous Fraser River, known for its history and salmon, and Burrard Inlet in Port Moody. There are many other important waterways I could talk about, like the Coquitlam River, the Burnett River and Comeau Creek.

Does the member honestly think that the Navigable Waters Protection Act is not assisting in the protection of our great country and, in fact, is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I am sorry to cut the hon. member off, but there needs to be time for other members who may wish to pose questions.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, my riding is in southern Alberta and is often plagued by drought, so we too love our waterways. The Navigable Waters Protection Act was designed to regulate navigation on navigable waters. The change in this bill brings it back to its original intent so that it will focus on navigation. It does not eliminate environmental controls or protections. Under the old Navigable Waters Protection Act, the ditches in a farmer's field, or the stream that runs through my town for instance, were controlled by the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This bill simply recognizes that these waterways are not major commercial navigation routes and do not need to be regulated by such an archaic act.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of a debate, if a member can help explain a certain position, either one side or the other, it is of benefit.

The government has talked a great deal about the NDP proposal for a cap and trade system. We know that the Conservatives put forward a similar cap and trade proposal, placing a \$65 per tonne fee on carbon.

Could the member take a couple of minutes to explain the difference between those two approaches? They seem very similar to me.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, the main difference is that the NDP wants a carbon tax, what it is calling a cap and trade system, and the Conservatives do not.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad to have a chance to ask the hon. member for Lethbridge a question related to the constitutionality of what the government is doing. It is particularly fascinating to hear the Conservative benches railing on socialism while they embrace communism. I find it fascinating.

Meanwhile, I have a constitutional law textbook here that points out that the idea of what the Navigable Waters Protection Act was intended to do in 1882 is entirely irrelevant and fanciful. Professor Peter Hogg writes that it is well established “that the general language used to describe the classes of subjects is not frozen in the sense in which it would have been understood in 1867”.

However, the Conservatives' approach to Bill C-45, as with Bill C-38, is to slash back the evolution of our Constitution and to insist that if it were not in the minds of people in 1882, the idea that the Navigable Waters Protection Act should protect the environment more generally is somehow erroneous.

• (1305)

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, I do not quite understand the point or the question.

The member's quote basically clarifies our position, that the Navigable Waters Protection Act has nothing to do with environmental protections. This is not a move against environmental protection; it is a move against useless regulations that neither protect the environment nor help the economy. That is all it is.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise on behalf of the constituents of Winnipeg South Centre to speak about the sound fiscal framework that our government has set out and continues to implement with economic action plan 2012. Our government is committed to ensuring prosperity for Canadians across the country both now and into the future. While economic action plan 2012 would create jobs and stimulate growth, it will also leave a foundation for long-term prosperity across Canada.

As a chartered accountant who values stable economic growth, this approach makes sense to me. As a mother who wants her children to grow up in a prosperous Canada, this approach means much to me.

Our government is focused on long-term financial security for Canadians. Economic action plan 2012 would deliver on this by providing new savings mechanisms while improving and strengthening the administration of existing programs.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight what our government is doing to support families first, then financial industries and business.

With respect to families, following a review of the registered disability savings plans program in 2011, we have taken measures to improve its efficacy so that Canadians with disabilities and their families will also be able to save for the future. To this end, improvements to the disability tax credit would allow investment income to roll over from RESPs to RDSPs. It would maximize the savings potential of families where a member has a disability. All Canadians need to be sure that they and their loved ones are secure.

Consistent with our government's desire to help Canadians prepare for the future by creating savings mechanisms, we would amend the Income Tax Act to accommodate pooled registered pension plans. These plans would play a crucial role by giving Canadians without workplace pensions a plan to contribute to. This option would be particularly attractive to the self-employed and small businesses. Our changes to the Income Tax Act would allow Canadians to take full advantage of this low-cost highly accessible savings option.

Along with its provincial and territorial counterparts, the Department of Finance has just completed a triennial review of the Canada pension plan and has confirmed that the plan is sustainable for the next 75 years. This means that Canadians can be confident knowing that their public pension will be there for them without having to raise their contributions.

Economic action plan 2012 would make important changes that would boost the authority of the Pension Appeals Board, and the review and social security tribunals. Our government believes that a healthy CPP is a solid foundation for the retirement savings of Canadians.

Just as Canadians make retirement savings a priority, our government believes that members of Parliament should do the same. That is why it has introduced legislation that would make MP pensions more consistent with other pensions. These changes would include increasing the contribution percentage of MPs to 50% so that the costs are shared on a 50-50 basis and raising the without-penalty retirement age from 55 to 65. These changes would save hard-working Canadians \$2.6 billion over the next five years.

As servants of the public, MP pensions should be consistent with that of other Canadians. Our government firmly believes this and the economic action plan delivers on that.

Our government is also committed to public sector accountability as it pertains to collective bargaining. At present, the Canada Revenue Agency has the authority to formulate its own collective bargaining mandates and enters into negotiations without approval of the Governor in Council, an exceptional circumstance given that the vast majority of separate agencies are required to do so under section 112 of the Public Service Labour Relations Act. It is our government's intention to ensure that the CRA is also governed by that section. Moreover, we would amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act to ensure that the CRA obtains its collective bargaining mandate from the President of the Treasury Board.

Our government is serious about proper oversight of collective bargaining as it relates to the public service.

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The health of Canada's financial system is crucial. It is a crucial determinant of long-term prosperity. A sound financial system with firm regulation and supervision has allowed Canada to emerge from the 2008 global financial crisis as a leader among its G8 partners.

• (1310)

In order to maintain our international reputation as a leader in financial sector regulation, our government is continuing to be proactive about making changes so that Canadians can have continued confidence in their financial institutions, and we are on the right track. This Canadian economy has created over 820,000 net new jobs since July 2009. A healthy financial sector is central to our government's commitment to economic growth and long-term prosperity. The amendments I have outlined would help. However, the global economy remains fragile and we have to know that our major trading partners, the Canada-Europe trading connection and the Canada-U.S. trading connection, remain fragile.

I also have the pleasure of speaking about what we are doing for the business community because a hospitable business climate is a very important element for promoting economic growth and long-term prosperity. Our government is taking very seriously our responsibility to consult with businesses and stakeholders, and to see how government could assist them in growing and creating jobs for Canadians. As a chartered accountant, I know how important it is for our government to be responsive to the concerns of business.

We just celebrated Small Business Week in Canada and I will highlight what our government is doing to help small businesses. A 2010 report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business suggested that red tape at all levels of government costs business about \$30.5 billion extra every year. This burden is felt disproportionately by small business owners. The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants used the opportunity of Small Business Week to remind government that “[r]edundant and inefficient reporting and collection of information places a considerable burden on small businesses and other organizations”.

The CICA asked government to deliver on the goal of red tape reduction. Our government listened to the CICA and small businesses and is delivering on red tape reduction in economic action plan 2012. Our government believes that providing Canadians and businesses with the tools to grow and save is the best way to ensure future prosperity. Canadians want to be assured that their finances are secure, not just now but long into the future for the next generation of Canadians.

Our government is working very hard to support the economy with positive, pro-growth measures in economic action plan 2012. One example of this is the job-creating hiring credit for small business, which I am very proud to see in this document.

To create a prosperous Canada of tomorrow, our government is acting today. We are doing that by increasing the savings options available to Canadians, ensuring the health of our financial sector in order to maintain Canadians' confidence in it and creating an environment in which small businesses can and will thrive. We have demonstrated that with 820,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to highlight key aspects of economic action plan 2012 and what our government is doing to

create jobs, ensure growth and provide long-term prosperity for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

It is very important for us to be able to create jobs now, not only to ensure and target economic growth, but also to ensure long-term prosperity for our generation and all future generations.

As a chartered accountant and as a mother, I am proud of our government's efforts to ensure long-term prosperity for all generations to come.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue with my hon. friend the matter that I tried to pursue with the previous speech from the member from her caucus, which was to explain the constitutionality of basically the abandonment of navigation under the federal head of power in the Constitution. I hope it will not be unfair to my friend but I think she was present when we were discussing this.

Constitutional law, as I recited from Professor Peter Hogg who is the leading expert, requires that we look at the Constitution not based on what people designed things for in the 1860s but as they evolve. As Lord Sankey wrote in a decision of the high court in 1930, the BNA Act is like a tree planted in Canada that grows and evolves. That means that the meaning of “navigation” and “navigable waters” have changed since 1867. For generations, they have always included that we protect free-flowing rivers in Canada.

When the federal government, through Bill C-45, retreats from this, it would be illegal for any other level of government to step in to protect rights of navigation on waterways throughout Canada. How do we square this circle of unconstitutionality?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for that question, but I also want to advise her that my remarks in the House of Commons today focused on what the Government of Canada is doing for families, for the financial industry sector and for businesses. That was the focus of my remarks.

I might add that my government is succeeding with a contribution of 820,000 net new jobs since July 2009 because we focus on what we are talking about. We are talking about creating jobs. We are talking about creating growth and we are talking about prosperity, not just for us right now, because that is so comfortable, but for the generations that are going to follow us. That is focus and that is why it is succeeding.

Government Orders

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre gave an excellent speech. In her opening remarks, she explained that she was a chartered accountant and also a mom, so she is used to balancing the books. She is used to watching the dollars, as most Canadian families do.

I want to ask her a question about the NDP's carbon tax. The NDP has been talking about this \$21 billion tax. As members know the NDP is linked to the Broadbent Institute. It was really sad when, a while back, the Broadbent Institute said it wanted to increase green taxes, such as a carbon tax, and taxes on natural resources and more and more taxes, which could add up to over \$30 billion.

I want to ask her this question, because she does have expertise in the financial sector. What would a \$21 billion carbon tax, or the taxes with which the Broadbent Institute would like to shackle Canadians, do to the economy of Manitoba at this very important juncture in time?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for that question and the insight that he shares with us. I was talking about how my government, of which I am very proud to be a part, is focused on helping children with disabilities become integrated into the saving framework so that their parents can save for their futures the same way we save with the rollover, which I specifically referenced, from RESPs to RDSPs. This is a classic example.

We are a government that is trying to help children with disabilities do well. The special needs children who I had the pleasure of serving when I was a school trustee had significant transportation requirements. With a carbon tax in place, every single element of their support system would cost more. It is not just the van to get the child to school. It is not just the van to get the child to community events. It is every single thing that the family has to buy, such as food, clothing, transportation, books, everything that matters to families.

That is why I am very proud that this economic action plan does not include a carbon tax. It is the antithesis. It is all about growth and supporting families.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me this morning to rise once again in the House to debate a 2012 budget implementation bill. This is the second round of debate on the 2012 budget. I would like to start by taking my colleagues back 20 years in time, to 1993 and 1994, when three events took place that I believe are relevant to the debate today in the House.

The first event was the election of a Liberal majority government headed by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, which set Canada, the state, the federal government, on the road to sound economic and fiscal management. The Liberal government bequeathed to the Conservative government a budget surplus that was extraordinary and unprecedented in Canada's history and that could have been used to maintain economic prosperity. In the end, that did not happen.

The second event occurred in the House of Commons before I was elected. However, I was on the Hill at the time. I remember the arrival of about 50 Reform members, including today's Prime Minister, who was the member for Calgary at the time. As I recall, he arrived in the House with 49 Reform Party colleagues.

The third event I will mention has to do with the Liberal government of the day, under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. That government introduced Bill C-17, its budget implementation bill. I would like to remind the House of the length of that budget implementation bill. Mr. Speaker, you and my other colleagues in this House might be surprised to hear that, in total, Bill C-17 was 21 pages long and amended a total of 11 pieces of Canadian legislation.

Let us compare that to the current situation. Last fall, we debated a budget implementation bill that was about 500 pages long and amended about 70 pieces of Canadian legislation. Today we are debating Bill C-45, which is 443 pages long and amends 60 Canadian acts. In less than 12 months, we have debated two bills that together total about 900 pages and amend about 130 Canadian acts. We have come a long way since 1993.

What is interesting is that even the short, 21-page budget implementation bill that I just mentioned, that modest bill, triggered a strong reaction from the member from Calgary who is now the Prime Minister of Canada. He said, and I quote:

[*English*]

The particular bill before us, Bill C-17, is of an omnibus nature. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that you should rule it out of order and it should not be considered by the House in the form in which it has been presented....

I would argue that the subject matter of the bill is so diverse that a single vote on the content would put members in conflict with their own principles.

[*Translation*]

If people were outraged at the time, in 1994, regarding a budget implementation bill that was 21 pages long and amended 11 Canadian acts, well then they should be 45 times more outraged today.

● (1325)

What we have seen recently in the House is about 45 times worse than what went on in 1994 with Bill C-17. This should put things into perspective a little bit.

[*English*]

It is interesting that we heard the member opposite speak about family. That is an important point. It is important that every now and then we bring things back to the perspective of the communities and families we represent here in the House.

Sometimes things get a little too complicated here. They get too broad and complicated, layer upon layer, to the point where parliamentarians have a hard time seeing things clearly. Imagine how hard it is for our constituents, who are not engaged in this House every day, who are going about their business, earning their living, bringing up their kids, to wrap their minds around what is going on in this House, especially around a budget?

Government Orders

Let us look at what a family does when they create a budget. Let us say, hypothetically, that a family sits down, the parents and the kids, to discuss the family budget. What would they discuss? They would discuss the revenues they expect for the coming year, what they expect to spend and how they perhaps expect to lower their debt levels. That is what they need to talk about, if they are to have a good budget. If they start to talk about junior's hockey schedule or how much time the son or daughter should be allowed to watch TV per week, and so on and so forth, they would go astray from the subject at hand. They are not going to be as effective in managing the household economy essentially, the household budget.

I would suggest that the fact that we keep bringing in complex pieces of legislation, such as these two budget implementation acts, may be distracting the government's focus and not allowing it to be as effective as it might be.

I have seen two bills, which are unrelated to this bill, come before the House, and they had glaring holes in them. One was Bill C-383, and I do not understand how it got by the lawyers in the trade department, quite frankly. We saw another bill last week, the nuclear terrorism act, which my colleague said omitted a very important and central piece.

We should simplify things a bit and not spread ourselves too thinly, so that we can do our work properly as parliamentarians and the government can achieve some focus and get some results.

On that theme, the budget implementation act obviously does include measures which should be in a budget implementation act. That goes without saying. Even if we disagree with what the government is doing with the SR and ED, the scientific research and development tax credit, it belongs in a budget; it is a budgetary matter.

I would add that I think it may be dangerous that the government is getting away from a kind of broad-based program to stimulate innovation in this country in every small- and medium-sized business across the land, to an approach whereby the government would be giving subsidies instead of tax credits for research. It would be giving subsidies to a few bigger players in an attempt to pick winners and losers in the 21st century economy. We have issues with that, but I would agree that it belongs in a budget bill.

However, there are some things that do not belong in a budget bill. One is rewriting laws that protect Canada's waterways. I do not know what that is doing in a budget bill. Another is redefining the definition of aboriginal fisheries. What is that doing in a budget bill? Eliminating the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission is about human health and public safety. That is not about revenues and expenditures and debt levels and so on.

I have an issue, like many of my colleagues in the House, with the budget going astray and including all kinds of extraneous elements.

However, to get a subject that is of great interest to me, I would concur with my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands that when the Fisheries Act was passed and the Navigable Waters Protection Act was passed, the word “environment” did not exist. If we are to be literal, as the government likes to be, let us go back to the quote that I just read from the then Reform Party member and now Prime Minister, who said that 21 pages amending 11 acts is too long.

●(1330)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege to ask a question to the member. The constitutional questions have not had enough attention in this debate at second reading on Bill C-45. When I look back at Bill C-38, I think we also missed some of the key ones. However, in the Fisheries Act changes in Bill C-38, as egregious as they were, they did not, with a sweep of the pen, say that 98% of the waterways in this country are no longer going to be covered under the navigation head of power found in the Constitution.

Has my friend considered that this act is actually unconstitutional in retreating from 98% of the responsibilities to ensure that Canadians have the right to navigate? This was enshrined as a federal head of power. How can the Conservatives unilaterally walk away from it, knowing that under the exclusivity principles of the constitutional law it would be illegal for another level of government to step in to fill the void?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, it is a very interesting point. There was an article in *Le Devoir* last week about how there are laws at the provincial level, for example in Quebec, to protect the interests of boaters and so on, but in fact constitutionally they do not have the same authority. It is disturbing when a government takes away rights for Canadians that were established at the very beginning of Confederation without having any kind of public debate, other than on a budget bill.

I think this is a problem. I will leave it up to those who are more knowledgeable about the law than I am to delve into this issue, but it obviously merits discussion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and riding neighbour for his speech. I would like to ask him a question about pooled registered pension plans.

This is a measure that is found in Bill C-45. I admit that I am very concerned about this because, right now, retirement security is a big problem. It is time to take serious measures to improve retirees' financial security. The Conservatives' solution is to introduce a pooled registered pension plan.

Does the hon. member agree with Professor Milevsky from York University that a investment plan must not be confused with a pension plan and that one thing is certain: a PRPP, like an RRSP or a TFSA, is not a pension? What does the hon. member think?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, clearly, when it comes to investing, we have to put ourselves at the mercy of the markets to some extent. Sometimes things go well and sometimes they go less well.

Government Orders

It is not the same thing as counting on a guaranteed income at age 65, or now age 67. It is not the same thing as investing in an RRSP. Whether a person invests individually or with a group of colleagues, the level of risk is not the same. It is much greater than the risk for the federal government, which has a huge fund and can diversify the risk in order to promise Canadians a stable specific income in the future, while allowing them to know today the amount of income they will receive in 20 or 30 years.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned briefly that he thinks there is something missing in private member's Bill C-383. I am curious to know what he thinks is missing from that bill because I am looking forward to its passage to ban bulk water exports.

•(1335)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, we have been debating this at committee, and it is a sense that I have. I would like to hear more debate about it, but I fear the bill includes something that removes a protection that our freshwater might have. The fact that we have included the word "pipeline" and tried to say that a pipeline is a transboundary river may be problematic down the road. I do not know. However, a pipeline is not water in its natural state, and any bill that bans transboundary export via pipeline may be a trade bill.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege for me to stand in the House today and speak about Bill C-45, the budget implementation bill.

Canada has been through some tough times since the great recession began in 2008, and we have fared incredibly well when compared to other industrialized nations around the world. We have the strongest growing economy, and it is due in no small way to the efforts of our Conservative government. Our economic action plan has and continues to ensure that the Canadian economy will remain robust and prepared to fend off most risks.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance, our Prime Minister and all of my caucus colleagues for their hard work. I ask the members on the other side of the House to consider this bill very carefully, and I ask for their support.

It is important to keep our fragile economy running smoothly, and this bill supports jobs and growth to do just that. This is good legislation for all Canadians. It is also good for my home province of Alberta and my riding of Medicine Hat. It contains support for farmers. There are many in my region who I am proud to represent here. I would also like to add that many of them are prospering at historic levels now that they have the freedom to market their grain to whomever they choose. I am happy to report that fact to the House.

This bill is good for farmers. It is good for small business owners. It is good for families and seniors. It is good for the middle class. I do not understand how the opposition members have committed to voting against it. I do realize it is an attempt on their part to simply obstruct everything that we do. This is the NDP's game plan, and it has not even tried to hide that strategy.

Our government has been committed to the economy in other ways, such as by helping to keep the corporate tax low, which in turn

has created over 820,000 new jobs since July 2009, shortly after the global economic downturn began. That is an incredible statistic when we stop to think about it.

Nevertheless, the global economic environment remains fragile, and recent economic developments will continue to impact the Canadian economy and government revenues. We have made it clear that we will not impose a harmful, crippling carbon tax on Canadians, like the NDP has on page 4 of its election platform. We do not believe that is productive. We believe it would hurt Canada.

Our Conservative government remains committed to the Canadian economy, and this budget implementation bill will ensure we can continue to grow in an environment where most industrialized nations are struggling.

Through this act, we are facilitating cross-border travel. Pilot projects will begin at ports of entry in Montreal and Prince Rupert which will examine ways to make travelling less burdensome, such as trying to cut out multiple inspections of freight and baggage. Goods should be "once screened, twice accepted".

Budget 2012 also increases travellers' exemptions. Canadians who visit the U.S. for a 24-hour period will be able to bring in \$200 worth of goods. Those returning after 48 hours will be able to bring back \$800 worth of goods.

We are removing the red tape and reducing fees for Canadian grain farmers. That is good news for farmers in the Medicine Hat and surrounding area. Our government has allocated \$44 million over the next two years to transition the Canadian Grain Commission to a sustainable funding model.

Our government was elected by farmers on a platform to modernize the grain sector in Canada and to keep our economy strong. We have brought in marketing freedom, and the next step is to renew the Grain Commission. These changes will eliminate about \$20 million in unnecessary costs from the grain handling system, costs which ultimately are passed down to the farmers.

•(1340)

I urge the opposition to stop playing games with the economy and support the swift passage of this legislation. We are modernizing organizations like the Canadian Grain Commission. It was the same idea with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board. The board was created in a different time. To say that we find ourselves in the same agricultural situation today as we did decades ago would be a stretch, to say the least.

We are trying to create a modern economy to keep us competitive and economically sound at home and abroad.

Government Orders

Through the Red Tape Reduction Commission, we are working to reduce the tax compliance burden for businesses, with such things as simplified administration options for business partnerships, an improved business section on the CRA website, improvements to the rules for paying eligible dividends and graduated penalties for late filings. That is going to help businesses in my Medicine Hat riding; there is no doubt in my mind. If we bring in new regulations, we need to remove one or more items of red tape.

• (1345)

We are not sure what the opposition wants. What we do know is that, besides its \$21 billion carbon tax grab on every single Canadian, it wants to raise other taxes as well. It wants to raise the GST, corporate taxes and, most likely, the personal income tax rate as well.

We are going to change the Public Service Superannuation Act, which would fix the public service pension plan so that the plan is more in line with the private sector. That is a necessary cost saving, and it is fair. We are not asking our hard-working public servants to do anything we are not. The bill to fix our MP pensions to reflect the same rules as already passed through the House. I am proud of that, because it had all party support. It just goes to show that we all can work together to get things done, as Canadians expect us to do.

Another part of Bill C-45 is that amendments would be brought to the Income Tax Act to allow for pooled registered pension plans, PRPPs. I would like to talk a little about these, because they are a way for the people of my Medicine Hat riding and all Canadians to save money for retirement. The whole idea behind the PRPP was to provide a way for those who do not necessarily have access to other plans but want to put aside a little nest egg for their retirement anyway. This option would allow people to save money for retirement at a lower cost by pooling their plans through administrators. It would also allow the self-employed to save money.

This is important for people in my riding. I have discussed the new PRPP with small businesses in my riding. They are very excited about the plan and the opportunity it would present to their companies and more importantly, their ability to attract and retain highly skilled employees.

Bill C-45 would reinforce our financial sector by supporting a sound and balanced regulatory regime. We do not presume that Canada is immune to world economic fault lines, but we do know that we fared far better than most in the last four years. I know the opposition disagrees, but let us look at the comments made last week by Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund. She said:

Canada is a country with one of the strongest financial sectors in the world.... Canada can teach the rest of the world about how to build a stronger, safer financial system.

If I look at Canada and the anomaly that it constitutes compared to other countries — because it's growing pretty well, because its banking system is solid and growing, because its inflation is under control, because its fiscal deficit is also pretty much under control and its level of indebtedness is reasonable — you know, it's not bad as a scorecard.

That is quite a statement of what we are doing here. This is not partisan drivel. It was not a Conservative Party of Canada strategist or even our fantastic finance minister who said this. It was Christine Lagarde.

Unlike the NDP, we don't base our economic policy on what crackpot economists working for big union bosses tell us. We take an honest, calm and moderate approach, one that strikes a balance. Bill C-45 would continue to make our country more financially prosperous. That is a good thing.

Bill C-45 would enhance security in regard to people travelling to Canada by plane. As part of the perimeter security and economic competitiveness plan, Canada would be working better to screen travellers so that security threats could be stopped ahead of time. That makes Canada safer. I find it very disturbing that the NDP would not support that and so did the people in my riding.

Let us talk about employment. We know that our government's economic action plan has played not a small part in the creation of 820,000 new jobs. We also have a bevy of tax credits to support job strategy. We would also include in that extending the hiring credit for small businesses in 2012. The NDP will be voting against this. What does the opposition have against small businesses? It strikes me as crazy, especially since we just celebrated small business week. Cities in my riding, like Brooks, Taber and Medicine Hat are growing.

I want to touch on one more part of the economic action plan that would be beneficial to constituents in my riding and in Canada. That is our government's accelerated capital cost allowance for energy generation, to further encourage businesses to invest in clean energy generation and energy efficiency. My province is the largest producer of energy in Canada, and this would help those in the clean energy sector be more successful.

Countless world economic bodies have praised our strong financial position, and we have nothing to be ashamed of. Our record speaks for itself. I am proud to be voting in favour of the bill. I am proud to be part of the Conservative team and family that has only Canada's best interests at heart.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the member for Medicine Hat peppers his speech with too many half lies. I was looking forward to his addressing the House about growing our economy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member may know that the wording he used is considered an unparliamentary phrase. The member might wish to rephrase his point.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, his party's policies are not particularly working when it comes to innovation and investment, so repeating the half-truths does not make them full truths. However, it is not surprising. It is all huff and puff from that side with no real action.

Government Orders

I have a specific question from the farmers in my riding in terms of internal trade. They are worried about the supply management system. Could the member address what the effect will be of the application of amendment protocol 12 of the AIT on the supply management system?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, what we have been doing for Canadians is extremely positive. What other country in the world has actually created more than 820,000 jobs?

The agriculture minister and the government are supporting supply management, and we will continue to support it because it is good for Canadians and good for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked just now about pooled registered pension plans, which are included in Bill C-45. I would like to ask him a few questions about that.

According to a number of experts, a PRPP is clearly not a pension plan, but rather a savings plan. There are already a number of savings plans that many Canadians do not benefit from or take advantage of. Why does the hon. member think that a PRPP will be more efficient than another savings plan like an RRSP or a TFSA?

If he is really serious about the financial security of Canadians, why does he not introduce a bill that seeks, for instance, to protect the pensions of workers in the event of a bankruptcy or to improve the Canada pension plan, or other measures that could improve the financial security of Canadians?

[*English*]

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, pooled registered pension plans would be extremely positive for organizations across the country and people who are not enrolled in major programs. They would allow other organizations to pool their funds together to be able to have very low administrative fees. I talked about that in my speech. Companies are extremely delighted that they would now have this program that would encourage their employees to contribute and help them retain employees and attract new employees. It is extremely important we do that as part of growing this economy and growing jobs in this country.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my great colleague from Medicine Hat, Alberta, for his thoughtful comments regarding the implementation of Bill C-45, which is really based on our budget. I have to say that in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, it was accepted almost unanimously, with the prospects it has for Canadians.

In Medicine Hat there is a lot of agriculture. Can the member talk a bit about what his constituents have said about this budget but also the implementation of Bill C-45?

• (1350)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, since we brought in the new Canadian Wheat Board and allowed farmers the freedom to actually sell their grain, I have talked to a number of farmers and they can now sell their grains worldwide and get the prices they want. They do not have to wait for funding. They sell it and get their money. They deliver the product and get their money. They are making historic amounts of money for their farms, so they can buy new

equipment and help create more jobs in the economy. It is all about jobs, the economy and helping families, particularly those on the farm.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say how honoured I am to address the House on this bill, following the hon. member for Medicine Hat. The hon. member is as familiar with the issue as any other member in the House, and I know that his opinions have been much appreciated by all sides of the House.

[*English*]

My remarks today will touch on three basic points. The first point is how the jobs and growth act, 2012 would meet an absolutely critical international challenge for Canada and for all of the advanced economies of the world. We are not living in normal times. We are not working in normal times. These are extraordinary times and, in some ways, dangerous times.

My second point will point to some of the key ways in which the bill would strengthen Canada's job advantage. My colleague spoke of a bill that focuses really only on jobs and growth, but we need to continue explaining to the House and to Canadians just how concrete the measures are and just what impact they would have on our ridings.

My third point would be about the local relevance of the bill to my home riding of Ajax—Pickering. It is a national action plan for Canada's economy, but it is a concrete plan and would be helpful to entrepreneurs, workers and young people in Ajax—Pickering and the greater Toronto area, the part of Canada I call home.

I will speak first on the international context. We have been through a week in which extraordinary things, complimentary things, have been said about the Canadian economy and Canada's financial management of its affairs. As everyone knows, the managing director of the IMF was in Toronto to receive an award last week. She praised our financial sector again. She praised our prudence and many of the policies this government has brought forward, as examples to the world. This comes on the heels of a litany of compliments that have been paid to Canada in recent years for the way we came through the economic crisis, for the way we avoided the levels of debt, job loss and contraction of GDP that other countries have had to endure. We have heard these measures of our success from the World Economic Forum, *Forbes* magazine and from *The Economist*. I will not repeat them now.

Our success is a contingent success. It depends on continuing to do the right things, continuing to position Canada properly, continuing to watch and learn from what is happening around the world, to make sure we stay at the forefront of events and protect the advantage we have for future generations.

Statements by Members

I would like to quote briefly from the October 13 IMF communiqué of the policy steering committee. It is the most recent IMF communiqué, and it is just one sentence, “The implementation of credible medium-term fiscal consolidation plans remains critical in many advanced economies”.

Members know as well as I do what that statement means. It means that if we do not get spending under control, if we do not make it sustainable, if we do not continue to create jobs, remain competitive and trade while keeping our debt levels under control, many economies in Europe, Asia and even in the Americas could go down the same path that Greece, Ireland and Portugal have gone down.

The same communiqué mentions how positive it is that outright monetary transactions are being undertaken by the ECB, how important it is that the European security mechanism is now working to some extent, but it then points to high debt burdens and the absence of banking and fiscal union in Europe as continuing risks.

Japan is facing a challenge this week of financing its budget and of further fiscal consolidation. The same communiqué mentions the danger in the United States of a fiscal cliff, the need to move the debt ceiling in spite of an election that has not yet concluded, and the fiscal sustainability of trillion-dollar-a year deficits.

These cautionary notes are struck with regard to our peers, the other advanced economies. Canada has avoided these pitfalls thanks to the prudence and the good planning of our Prime Minister and our excellent Minister of Finance.

•(1355)

It is absolutely essential that we understand how fraught with danger it would be for Canada to go down the path that Greece, Portugal and other jurisdictions with high taxes, high debt loads and loss of competitive position have gone. However, that is exactly what the member for Outremont is proposing with his \$21.5 billion carbon tax. That is exactly what all of the NDP members who spoke on the bill are proposing with their—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, the member should not be using his speeches to supply misinformation to the House. There is no carbon tax and he needs to be reminded of that and stop using his position in the House to further these untruths. The issue of putting a price on carbon was done by his government in 2008. He needs to be at least—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Hon. members will know that these types of questions are really matters of debate. I do not see this as a point of order.

The hon. member for Ajax—Pickering.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, it is extraordinary that the member would stand on a point of order to deny something that was in the platform on which he campaigned. The \$21.5 billion carbon tax proposed by his leader, presumably embraced by all members on that side, needs to be brought to the attention of Canadians and will be brought to their attention, because high taxes kill jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on page 680 of O'Brien and Bosc, we find that the Speaker has already ruled on efforts by members to bring up irrelevant issues that have nothing to do with the facts.

The member is once again trying to use his position in the House to create a political untruth. I think he is bringing down the history of debate in this House.

I would refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the references that have already been ruled on by Speakers of people trying to manipulate and undermine credible debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I appreciate the reference by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay to relevance. Indeed, it is true that members are encouraged to include in their debates and points matters that are pertinent to the questions before the House.

That said, members will know that there is a great degree of latitude offered members in the way in which they explore these ideas and bring them around to the points that are before the House. Members are left the opportunity to do just that.

I will note that we are very near the time for statements by members. At this point, we will give the hon. parliamentary secretary the three and a half minutes remaining in his remarks when the House next returns to debate on this matter. He will, of course, have the normal five minutes for questions and comments.

We will proceed to statements by members, with the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

LAMBTON COUNTY BUSINESSMAN

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to recognize Russ Hazzard, from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who was recently inducted into the Lambton Agriculture Hall of Fame. After World War II service, Russ consistently observed and solved the needs of farmers through innovation and education. His feed mill business, established in 1947, has since evolved into Southwest Ag Partners Inc., a leading business in agriculture inputs and grain-marketing solutions.

Hard work, smart work and consideration for his wife Marg and his family of 12 children and those around him were a way of life, not a duty. Russ Hazzard is truly a local businessman who went above and beyond to help others in his community.

It is indeed an honour for me to stand today to recognize and to thank him for his contribution to Lambton County and to agriculture.

Statements by Members

● (1400)

[Translation]

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday I had the pleasure of dining with Turkish Quebeckers to celebrate the anniversary of the Republic of Turkey.

[English]

Today, people of Turkish origin in Canada and around the world celebrate the foundation of the republic. First president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, shook off the yoke of history and implemented a series of reforms that would ensure that Turkey was a strong secular republic. Turkey remains to this day a guiding force in its region, a force of calm in a sea of instability.

[Translation]

Turkey is an important partner of ours in NATO. The Turks have a proverb:

[The member spoke in Turkish and provided the following translation:]

Peace in the country, peace in the world.

[English]

Pressure is mounting against the republic and is threatening its founding ideas. I want to reiterate that Canadians stand in solidarity with the Turks. Eighty-nine years ago today, Turkey took its first steps towards a better future.

[English]

[Member spoke in Turkish and provided the following translation:]

How happy one is to be Turk. Long live the Republic. Long live Turkey.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon is about 1,500 kilometres from Fort McMurray, but the oil sands and natural gas exploration in northern B.C. and Alberta play a major role in our economy. At Britco Structures in the town of Agassiz, 200 workers build mobile housing units for use in the oil patch. At TYCROP in Rosedale, 300 workers produce specialized natural gas equipment. Countless others make the commute to work directly in the oil patch.

The NDP leader says that the oil sands are hurting manufacturing. In my riding, the oil sands are driving our manufacturing industry, putting millions of dollars back into our local economy and providing high-paying, family-supporting jobs.

Instead of trying to divide Canadians and score cheap political points by stirring up fear, I invite the New Democrats to look at the facts, work with our government to promote responsible resource development and support our continued efforts to ensure we protect the environment while growing our economy.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Library and Archives Canada preserves our documentary heritage. The government maintained that a 10% cut to the agency would not hurt because records could be digitized. Digitization and modernization are actually laudable goals in order to expand access. However, budget cuts have resulted in a 50% reduction of the digitization staff. This will diminish, not maintain nor expand, our access to Canada's historical records. The cuts at Library and Archives Canada are significant, with programs being cut or eliminated. The Conservative government's decision to reduce public access to national records threatens the very preservation of our collective memory. Historical accuracy necessitates robust archives. We now seem to be headed in the opposite direction.

George Orwell wrote: "Who controls the past...controls the future: who controls the present controls the past". Someone seems to have caught on.

* * *

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a staunch advocate of the protection and promotion of human rights throughout the world, including in southeast Asia. There have been welcome improvements in the human rights situation in the region in recent years. We have seen significant reforms under way after decades of military rule and dictatorship. Of course, there is still significant work to do in ensuring that human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, for example in Burma and Vietnam to name a few.

Canada collaborates with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, both bilaterally and multilaterally, on projects aimed at enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We will continue to speak up whenever we have human rights concerns.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES AWARD

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate veteran journalist and broadcaster Bernard St-Laurent, this year's recipient of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' award of excellence—promotion of linguistic duality.

Since joining the CBC, he has achieved distinction as the public broadcaster's senior political editor in Quebec and as a political commentator for a number of English and French programs.

Statements by Members

[English]

Perhaps his greatest achievement is creating *C'est la vie*, a hugely popular radio series bringing French-speaking Canada and all its diversity and energy into the homes of English-speaking listeners from coast to coast to coast. Bernard St-Laurent continues to host *C'est la vie*, helping us share and to get to know one another, dispelling prejudices and breaking down barriers, much like Rilke's much abused saying: two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.

[Translation]

Hats off to Bernie St-Laurent for this well-deserved award.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians enjoy full property rights abroad but not at home. For Canadians who own land south of the border, thanks to chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement neither their property nor any rights associated with that property can be taken from them by any level of government without compensation equivalent to the full market value of the taking.

In Canada, property owners also have a legal right to compensation just as long as they are Mexican or American. However, if they are Canadian making their living from the land, such as farmers or campground owners, any level of government can strip away any or all of their rights without a penny of compensation.

All too often we hear opposition politicians calling for the repeal of chapter 11, but is not the real problem the fact that Canadians who are making their living from the land are denied the property rights guaranteed to foreigners? Is it not time for federal and provincial laws across the country to be amended to ensure that no Canadian can face full or partial de facto expropriation without being compensated for the loss?

* * *

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the many volunteers who make Canada great by contributing over 2.1 billion hours of volunteer work annually. Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission does not take a back seat when it comes to volunteering. In fact, 47% of those in our riding volunteer on a regular basis for charities and non-profit organizations.

Petals is an organization in my riding that provides a safe, warm environment for women downtown in Maple Ridge, specifically those who are marginalized by society. It assists women on disability and social assistance, those with mental health issues, sex trade workers and struggling single moms, all free of charge. There is always a home-cooked meal waiting for anyone who drops into a meeting. Every winter it provides a pair of boots and a winter coat for all members. Petals is run entirely by volunteers and community donations.

I want to thank Heather Chevrier and her team of volunteers at Petals, and the many other volunteers throughout the riding, who contribute so greatly to our communities.

* * *

WAWA

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the torrential rains that wiped out sections of the Trans-Canada Highway and other roads in and around Wawa also affected many other communities that relied on these washed out routes. Dubreuilville, Hawk Junction and Oba lost phone service. Michipicoten First Nation has been isolated while a major commercial route has been severed.

As Mayor Linda Nowicki, council and the Michipicoten First Nation work tirelessly to deal with the state of emergency, we must remember that this is a huge burden for a small community still reeling from the collapse of the forestry sector.

While local businesses feel the pinch, town and council are looking for help to deal with the emergency, which may cost as much as \$15 million beyond any repairs to the roads. I am sure that all members will join me in sending their thoughts and best wishes to the people of Wawa and will echo my call for the government to do all it can to help Wawa in its time of need.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's proposed tax on carbon would not only raise the cost of what Canadians need, such as gas, groceries and electricity, but also of what Canadians love, such as our festive holidays.

Halloween is this Wednesday. As families go out to buy candy, pumpkins and costumes, they are happy that our government has lowered not raised taxes.

This may astonish the House, but the NDP would implement a \$21 billion carbon tax scheme that would raise the price on everything, including Canadians' favourite Halloween treats.

We call upon the NDP leader to admit to this carbon tax scheme that is found on page 4 of his party's platform and explain to Canadians why he wants to raise prices and taxes on our favourite festive holidays.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

SHERBROOKE PALLIATIVE CARE FACILITY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to show the hon. member what a member's statement is supposed to be about.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of participating in a very happy event for the region of Sherbrooke. About a hundred people marched symbolically toward the new Maison Aube-Lumière to show their support for this institution. For 15 years, people in the palliative stage of cancer have been able to count on Maison Aube-Lumière to make their last days more comfortable.

At this facility, caring medical staff and a team of professionals and volunteers work day in and day out to provide end-of-life care and support to the sick while respecting their choices. Over two hundred people stay in this facility each year, and it was becoming increasingly apparent that a larger, more appropriate facility was needed to meet the needs of the Eastern Townships and Sherbrooke regions.

I would therefore like to congratulate all those who contributed directly or indirectly to the success of this project, particularly, Ms. Kirouac, who deserves our recognition. Good years are ahead for the entire team, who bring passion to their work each and every day. Maison Aube-Lumière is an essential institution for Sherbrooke and a true source of pride.

Congratulations and all the best to Maison Aube-Lumière.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

TAXATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight, the NDP member for Brossard—La Prairie will be hosting a meeting with the left-wing misnamed political activist group Canadians for Tax Fairness.

It is not surprising to Canadians that the NDP is sending its MPs out to do an event with this political pressure group. After all, Canadians for tax unfairness is a strong advocate of a carbon tax.

The NDP continues to attack Canadians for giving its \$21 billion tax hike plan an image problem and is exposing it as a backdoor source of raising taxes.

The NDP leader and his caucus continue to surround themselves with carbon tax advocates.

Voters in my riding said no to a carbon tax on wood when the Liberals pushed it as a carbon tax.

Our government will remain vigilant in exposing the NDP's job-killing tax plans.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians work hard to pay their taxes. They want their government to

treat their tax dollars with respect and they want to ensure that everybody pays their fair share. That is why in budget 2005, the Liberal government invested \$30 million to fight tax havens. That \$30 million helped the government collect an additional \$2.5 billion in tax revenues since then.

However, instead of building on that success, the Conservatives are cutting the CRA. In June, they issued 400 layoff notices to CRA auditors.

The Conservatives need to develop a real plan to crack down on tax evasion. The first step toward solving a problem is actually knowing how big a problem it is.

The Tax Justice Network estimates that governments around the world are losing about \$280 billion per year to tax evasion. We have asked the Conservatives to publish an official estimate of how much money our federal and provincial governments lose each year to tax evasion.

Canadians who work hard and play by the rules deserve to know how big the problem is. They deserve to know what—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, our government has encouraged the opposition to support our efforts to get tough on the things that matter to Canadians, like crime.

However, instead of getting tough on crime, the NDP has a plan to get tough on Canadian families with its proposed \$21 billion job-killing carbon tax. Its plan can be found on page 4 of its party platform in black and white. The NDP would raise billions in new revenue off the backs of Canadian families. The NDP certainly has the tough part down. Its sneaky tax scheme would raise the price on necessities for hard-working families, like groceries, gas and heat, which would certainly make their lives tougher.

Thankfully for Canadian families, our government continues to keep taxes low, an important part of our plan for jobs growth and long-term prosperity.

This government will not support a tough on families, job-killing carbon tax.

* * *

MEMBER FOR DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER—MARQUETTE

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so far this session, the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette has made only three statements in the House of Commons and he chose to squander all three of those making up stories about the NDP. He passed on the opportunity to boast about the successful 47th national Ukrainian festival held in his riding in Dauphin last August.

One would think the local MP might want to use one of his statements to congratulate the organizers and participants of the Manitoba summer games held in Swan River in his riding. Sadly, it was not meant to be.

Every time Conservative MPs squander their S. O. 31s, reading fabricated talking points prepared by the flying monkeys in short pants in the Prime Minister's Office, they fail their constituents.

I challenge the next speaker today to show some courage to stand and make a statement celebrating his or her beautiful riding or the achievements of his or her constituents instead of parroting what he or she knows to be falsehoods, fabrications and propaganda.

* * *

•(1415)

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the 2011 NDP election platform states, on page 4 in black and white, that it will impose a new tax worth \$21 billion. By his own admission, the NDP leader's carbon tax scheme would generate billions in new revenues.

The NDP leader's carbon tax would increase the cost of gas, groceries and everything else, plain and simple. The NDP leader's dangerous plan would kill jobs, stall economic growth and hurt ordinary Canadians.

This is why Canadians rejected the NDP policies and sent to this place a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the Conservatives promised clear criteria for the evaluation of foreign takeovers. That was two years ago.

Like the NDP, more and more people are wondering why predictable rules have not been established: the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, *The Wall Street Journal*, former Conservative ministers and even current members of the Conservative caucus.

The deadline for the Nexen deal is coming up, so why have the Conservatives not kept their promise? Where are the new clear criteria for evaluating foreign takeovers?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has always been very clear. We welcome foreign investment if it is of net benefit to Canada. The Investment Canada Act has provisions that allow transactions to be thoroughly reviewed. That is exactly what the Minister of Industry is doing at this time to ensure that the Canadian interest is always put first.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. The Conservatives are about to sell off a huge slice of Canada's own natural resources to China. Investors wonder whether the Minister of Industry will once again decide the fate of this deal behind closed doors like a thief in the night.

This uncertainty has already cost investors and pension funds tens of millions of dollars. When will Conservatives listen to Canadians,

Oral Questions

to business leaders, to foreign investors and put forward the clear rules they promised Canadians two years ago?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so much for the Leader of the Opposition raising the tone of political debate in this place.

This government will always stand up in the best interests of Canada. We welcome foreign investment. Foreign investment in Canada's economy can help create jobs and opportunity. We are looking at these issues very carefully and closely before making any decision.

It is interesting to see the member stand and support the oil sands, something that he once called a disease and something that his own policies want to shut down. That would be the real cost of an NDP government, a carbon tax.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, only a Conservative could consider a call to tell the truth and respect an undertaking to be a personal attack.

It is not only Conservative mismanagement of foreign takeovers that is causing economic uncertainty. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has just reported that next year the Canadian economy will grow by a mere 1.5%. That is \$22 billion less than the finance minister forecast seven months ago.

With crisis in Europe, uncertainty in the United States and flagging growth here at home, for once does the Conservative government have anything more to offer Canadians than "keep calm and carry on"?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is this government that presented a job creation action plan to Parliament earlier this year. It is this government that has weathered the economic storm for our country. It is this government, which at the bottom of the global recession, has seen the creation of some 820,000 net new jobs.

While challenges remain in Europe and in the United States, this government's strong economic leadership has been fundamental to more job creation, more economic growth, more hope, more opportunity. The only thing the NDP would want to do to that is bring in a \$21.5 billion carbon tax on Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying the price for the Conservatives' cuts. The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that there will be 125,000 fewer jobs in the country in 2016 because of the cuts. That is not all. The GDP will shrink by 1% in the next two years. Inequality is rising and real income is falling.

Why is the minister giving the government less room to manoeuvre and attacking workers instead of economic problems?

Oral Questions

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess every one economist is entitled to his or her own opinion. However, this morning the Minister of Finance, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and I met with Canada's leading economists just to ensure that our projections that will be going into the fall economic update and that will coming forward soon are ensuring objectivity and that our economic projections are on track and, indeed, they are. We are facing a global economic recovery that is slow. Our projections are on track.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister still has a chance to get it right with this misguided budget bill.

Canadians were never told that the budget would tax health benefits, erase protection for Canada's waterways or hold vacation back from employees. Instead of learning their lesson, Conservatives did not consult with Canadians, and they are ramming through this dangerous budget bill with who knows how many jobs on the line.

Will the minister stop hiding from the consequences of his failed plan? Will he allow proper study and amendment of this budget bill before it is too late?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the budget implementation act will be voted on very soon in the House and it will be moved to the finance committee, which is standard practice in the House. My understanding is that there will be a suggestion that portions of the bill be moved for further study out to other committees within the House. We think that is very effective.

We would encourage the opposition to actually get on board and vote for some of the positive things. The temporary hiring credit for small businesses, for example, 534,000 businesses can take advantage of that.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, without any notice to the provinces affected and indeed without any publicity, the Government of Canada cancelled the so-called pilot project that involved the highest areas of unemployment across the country, which allowed people living in those areas to receive an extra five weeks of benefit.

I would like to ask the government if it can explain why it made these cuts to the people who are hurting most badly and most severely, to the regions hurting most badly and most severely. Can the government tell us why it did not, at all, consult with the provinces whose social assistance costs will go up?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains focused on jobs, economic growth and long-term economic prosperity.

This was a temporary measure that was brought in and reintroduced in 2008 and 2010 as part of Canada's economic action plan. Notice was given in 2010 that this temporary program would no longer be continued. It was meant to be temporary.

The good news is that the economic action plan brought in several years ago by the government has seen the creation of more than 800,000 net new jobs. The job is not done. We remain focused on economic growth. We remain focused on ensuring that every Canadian can have the dignity of a job.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have to focus on facts, not the government's rhetoric.

The unemployment rate has gone up in eight regions where the government made cuts. It is now higher than ever. It is even higher than when the program was first introduced.

So the question is, why did the government cut this program without talking to the provinces or to those who are going to be affected? Why did it not consult Canadians?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains focused on economic growth and job creation.

This temporary measure was brought in and reintroduced in 2008 and 2010. It was meant to last two years. We are proud of our economic record. The creation of over 800,000 new jobs is a step in the right direction for Canada.

The job is not done. We will continue to work hard to achieve economic growth.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Labrador received contributions from one particular company, from individuals working for that company, two days after the election was over. This is another additional issue and challenge for the member.

However, the overall problem remains, and that is that the member was elected spending \$21,000 more than the amount permitted. One of the hallmarks of Canadian democracy is that we stick to the limits and one does not have to be rich or poor in order to deal with it.

Why did the government not call the member in and ask him to resign—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a new official agent in place that is working with Elections Canada to address some of these issues.

I only wish the leader of the Liberal Party would look at his own caucus. One member of his caucus has been fined \$4,900 for breaking the rules. Four senior members, including one of his own front bench members, have accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars illegally through loans that they have never paid back.

Why does the member not get his own Liberal house in order before he starts throwing barbs at an hon. man who is doing an excellent job for the people of Labrador.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, many Canadians are preparing for the arrival of Hurricane Sandy, which will hit our country's east coast with torrential rains and violent winds. Serious warnings about the storm have been issued by provincial emergency management organizations and Washington. We hope that all Canadians will remain safe and sound throughout this storm.

Can the minister tell us what measures the government has put in place to help Canadians prepare for the hurricane, and can he tell us what resources will be mobilized during and after the storm?

[English]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government stands ready to assist the provinces with the effects of Hurricane Sandy if assistance is required. We have taken precautionary steps to ensure that the federal government can aid the provinces affected should the need arise. The Canadian Forces and the Canadian Coast Guard are standing ready to assist.

We encourage all Canadians to be prepared. We encourage them to go to getprepared.gc.ca to be prepared for this.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we on this side believe recent events should serve as a wake-up call. Local emergency preparedness needs to be a high priority. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have chosen to cut funding from important emergency programs that help train and develop local crisis response personnel. Municipalities are concerned.

After this week's earthquake on the west coast and with extreme weather events increasing, will the minister now support local communities and reverse these short-sighted cuts?

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the premise of that question. Most emergencies in Canada are local in nature and are managed by municipalities or at the provincial or territorial level.

With regard to the hurricane that could be affecting Canadians, we stand prepared, ready to help the provinces and assist them should that help be required. The Canadian Forces and the Canadian Coast Guard are standing ready to assist. Health Canada has reviewed the national emergency stockpile and the Government Operations Centre is working around the clock to ensure that all necessary assets are in place.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is another case of Conservative mismanagement. Once again, the Conservatives are saying one thing and doing the other. They claim to accept the Auditor General's findings on the F-35 and yet they are hiring an outside firm to come to the same inescapable conclusions that the AG already did, that they are bad public administrators who misled Canadians to the tune of billions of dollars.

Why waste the taxpayers' money on another review? Are they hoping to buy a different outcome this time?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, we accepted the Auditor General's one recommendation, which was to ask the Department of National Defence to table updated cost estimates for the F-35. We decided to go further than that. We put in place a seven-point plan and every part of that plan has to be independently verified. This review will help us make a decision on the replacement of the CF-18s and until all of those seven points are independently validated, we will not move forward.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no one on the Ferris wheel of ministers and backbenchers on this file seems to get it. The Minister of National Defence has to get the basics right first and that begins with a statement of requirements. We know that they were wired for the F-35. The AG told us so and the Prime Minister agreed.

Has the Minister of National Defence accepted responsibility and amended the statement of requirements and if not, again, why waste the taxpayers' money on another review until they get at least that right?

• (1430)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the secretariat has been set up to ensure that the entire seven-point action plan is handled appropriately with due diligence and transparency so that the government can move forward with the decision to replace the CF-18s.

In terms of taxpayer money, there has been no money spent on the acquisition of any fighter jets to replace the CF-18s and until we have all the information necessary, a decision will not be made.

* * *

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a 25-year veteran of the Competition Bureau has confirmed price fixing at the pumps. Conservatives have happily handed over billions in subsidies to oil companies but refuse to hold them to account. While Conservatives will answer my question with tired talking points about a fictitious policy, the reality is that their policies are costing people every time they fill up.

Why are they turning a blind eye to gas companies that continue to gouge Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I must remind my colleague that we reduced the GST by two points and after that, strengthened the powers of the Competition Bureau and brought in the Fairness at the Pumps Act. In addition, when the Competition Bureau finds evidence of behaviour that violates the Competition Act, it does not hesitate to take law enforcement action to protect competition and consumers.

I must remind the member that it is his party that wants to put a \$21 billion carbon tax on the shoulders of Canadians. We will not do that.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just embarrass the House with their daily visit to Fantasy Island. The reality is that, in six years under their watch, gas prices have risen a whopping 39%. Canadians are paying more at the pumps than ever. That is a fact and that is the Conservative record. A former Competition Bureau investigator is now sounding the alarm.

When will they stop the daily carbon farce and start tightening regulations, protecting consumers and making sure that Canadians are paying fair, not fixed, gas prices?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the improvements we have put into the law, there were prosecutions in the past year in Thetford Mines and Victoriaville in Quebec. This is evidence.

I can assure my colleague that Canadians will not pay a fixed price on gasoline that is fixed through a job-killing carbon tax of \$21 billion that the NDP would put on their shoulders. They will never pay it.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives speculate about what we will do when we take office, gas prices continue to rise. Right now, high gas prices are driving up the cost of essential commodities. Since gas is \$1.53 a litre, merchants have to increase their prices. A former Competition Bureau investigator confirmed that there is collusion to fix prices at the pump.

The NDP is proposing tangible solutions to strengthen existing regulations and is calling for the creation of an ombudsman position.

Why are the Conservatives allowing collusion in this industry?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already strengthened the Competition Act and given the Competition Bureau more authority. Lawsuits have been filed in the Thetford Mines and Victoriaville regions. This is proof. These are results. We also created a fairness monitor position for gas prices. These are measures that we have put in place and that are working.

Is the hon. member getting her numbers for fixed gas prices from the same place she is getting her numbers for her party's \$21 billion carbon tax? That is what this tax would cost Canadians, and that is unacceptable.

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada is investigating whether the member for Labrador bought himself an election. Today we learned disturbing new questions around donations that were made, which all originated from the same corporate postal code. The member blew past the legal spending limits.

He is reading the newspaper over there. Maybe he will read about the \$18,000 in flights that he buried. These flights represent an illegal corporate donation because it gave him an enormous advantage.

Would he put his newspaper down, stand up and explain his role in this?

• (1435)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has served this place with distinction. The new official agent is working with Elections Canada to resolve any outstanding questions.

The member talked about five donations. Actually, it was 29 donations that his seatmate gave to the separatist party in Quebec. He will not answer the question as to whether he is in fact a federalist after all those donations. If the member would look to his side he can ask his colleague so that he can report to the House whether he is sitting next to a federalist or not.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there we go, we have one guy reading the newspaper and the next guy saying that he does not really care whether the donations are legal or illegal.

We are talking about illegalities here. We are talking about a man who broke the rules and then was promoted. We are talking about a campaign manager who was paid off with a plum patronage job for which he had absolutely no qualification. The Prime Minister promised he would clean up that behaviour and he broke that promise. Without any ministerial accountability, it has become a revolving door of ethical violations.

When will the member for Labrador stand up in the House and be accountable for his actions?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually it was our party that instituted the ban on corporate and union money. It was our party that brought in those tough rules. It was the member's party that broke those rules in accepting over \$340,000 in illegal union money. It was the current NDP leader who attempted to cover up all of that illegal money.

We ask time and time again: When will they stop throwing stones when they live in such a fragile glass house?

*Oral Questions***CENSUS**

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has recently started trying to make us believe that it believes in science, after taking the worst possible decision with respect to the long form census.

Now Stats Can tells us that the data on mother tongue and home language that were recently published in the 2011 census are unreliable and cannot be compared to previous data.

If the government really believes in science, will it reinstate the long form census?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should pay attention to what StatsCan has already said, the fact that the national household survey will yield useful and usable data that will meet the needs of users. It is the same thing for the census.

If the member opposite has questions concerning methodology, I invite him to ask questions directly of StatsCan.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, scientists are concerned about the 2013 census data. This government is loudly proclaiming that it believes in science after making the worst possible decision about the census. Now, we have learned that the data on mother tongue and home language are not reliable.

If this government really believes that science is important and wants to prove it, will it bring back the mandatory long form census?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just told the hon. member, Statistics Canada has already indicated that the survey will produce useful and usable results that will meet users' needs. If the hon. member has any more questions about Statistics Canada's method, I invite him to ask his questions to that organization directly.

[English]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current mandatory short form census and the census for agriculture still have a potential penalty of jail time, two years after the government argued that it was totally unacceptable to send someone to prison for not filling out a census.

The government's primary fearmongering about the mandatory long form census was potential jail time. Will it stop the hypocrisy and immediately remove jail time from every other type of census?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we took action on this file. I agree with my colleague that it is unacceptable to send people to jail for not filling out a census.

Therefore, we improved the system, and as I said now, the data will provide useful and usable data for the users.

Regarding the methodology used, if the members opposite want to ask more questions of the organization, they have to address them to StatsCan.

● (1440)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Cohen Commission, on Fraser River sockeye, releases its report today. This \$26 million report heard from 160 witnesses and covers testimony about serious political mismanagement by the federal government. This may be a landmark report on the state of salmon in British Columbia, and people are looking for action.

The Conservatives will receive a copy today. Canadians want to know, will the government commit today to implement the recommendations in this report?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a British Columbian, I can assure my colleague that our government recognizes the cultural and economic importance of salmon to British Columbia. In fact, that is why we established the Cohen commission after unexpectedly low returns of sockeye salmon to the Fraser River in 2009.

The report will be tabled in the House of Commons on Wednesday, October 31.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are looking for a commitment. That is not good enough.

The Conservatives cut spending on science and enforcement at DFO. They gutted the Fisheries Act, removing habitat protection, all without proper consultation and before seeing the Cohen report.

The commission will today make the important recommendations about management of the fisheries in British Columbia, so I ask, why did the government take such destructive action before even seeing the commission's report?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we put in place the Cohen commission in order to learn some things. That is why we will be reading it, as I encourage the member to do, when it is tabled in the House of Commons on Wednesday.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Conservatives came to power, they have had little regard for official bilingualism. A bunch of key positions in this country are currently held by unilingual individuals. The Prime Minister acknowledged his error at a meeting of the Conservative caucus. To turn things around, here is what they should do: vote in favour of my bill, which would require that the individuals appointed to 10 key officer of Parliament positions be bilingual.

Can the Conservatives publicly confirm that they will support my bill?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, we are currently studying Bill C-419. Our government makes appointments on the basis of merit, and its top priority is to offer Canadians the best possible services.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not enough. Supporting bilingualism goes beyond promising bogus committees on French in businesses under federal jurisdiction, as they did a few months ago, without ever delivering the goods.

According to *La Presse*, the Prime Minister confirmed to the Conservative caucus that he would vote in favour of my bilingualism bill. This does not mean that his colleagues will also support francophone communities across the country.

After the uproar caused by the appointment of a unilingual judge and a unilingual Auditor General, we have every reason to wonder whether they have learned from their mistakes. Can I expect widespread support from the Conservatives for my bill or not?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that during the campaign for the May 2, 2011, election, the NDP ran unilingual anglophone candidates in francophone ridings in Quebec.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later today the NDP's national revenue critic will co-host an education session with a far left organization backed by big union bosses from CUPE and CAW, called Canadians for Tax Fairness, where tax fairness means tax increases. Its president, Murray Dobbin, called for the nationalization of Canada's oil and gas sector and praised Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez.

Could the Minister of State for Finance comment on how our government will continue to keep taxes low for Canadians?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's partnering with the far left organization called Canadians for Tax Fairness certainly does sound like quite an unholy

alliance. It will only bring to light how the high tax agenda of the NDP actually would hurt Canadians. It is no wonder that we have seen that party vote against every tax reduction we have put on this floor since 2006. Canadians do not need to see the NDP supporting a \$21 billion tax on everything. We will fight against that.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development can brag about the employment insurance reforms all she wants, but Canadians are finding the half-truths that she is trying to pass off hard to swallow.

Last week, the Conservatives were deluged with criticisms of their reforms. Thousands of people held demonstrations in Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. I was there.

The minister could have avoided these troubled waters had she consulted Canadians, but she did not. Will she backtrack again and create programs that meet the needs of the unemployed?

● (1445)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the unemployed need work. They need jobs. They need help finding jobs, and that is what we are giving them.

We have made changes to the employment insurance system in order to support people who work while receiving employment insurance benefits. We help them find jobs and we do not penalize them if they work while on benefits. That is how we support the unemployed.

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that “just move west” is not a job creation strategy.

Two thousand people gathered in Campbellton, New Brunswick this weekend to protest the government's reforms to EI. They called the changes “destructive” and an “attack on the Maritimes”. They are fighting back against the devastating effect that these changes will have on workers, employers and the local economy.

Will the minister finally listen to these Canadians, abandon her disastrous reforms and work with Canadians to strengthen EI instead of destroying it?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are strengthening the EI system to help those who are out of work, who have lost jobs through no fault of their own, to find a new job. Also, when they are on claim, we will help them work, and when they work, we will let them be better off than not working. That is better for them and their families.

Oral Questions

The member talks about New Brunswick. To quote someone else: “There are more shortages in the higher skilled positions, but we still have 30% of respondents [that is, employers] highlighting challenges and filling most skilled positions.” Who said that? That was New Brunswick Business Council CEO, Susan Holt.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not happening only in Campbellton. Last Saturday, no less than 3,000 people went to Thetford Mines to speak out against the employment insurance reforms. They do not agree with the government's decision to force people to relocate and work for 70% of their previous wages.

Instead of ignoring Canadians and defending the reforms come hell or high water, will the minister listen to these criticisms? Or will she continue to ignore unemployed workers?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get his facts straight about the changes to employment insurance. These are common sense. In other words, if a position requiring the skills of an unemployed worker becomes available in his region, he must apply.

The right to employment insurance goes hand in hand with the responsibility to look for work to meet the needs of one's family and to work, which is better than not working.

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with five unemployed for every job opening, “just get a job” is not good enough.

Another group of over 200 workers and employers gathered in P.E.I. to protest EI cuts. They did so because employers are concerned about losing part-time employees and out-of-work Canadians are concerned about being denied benefits.

How large will the protests have to get before the minister starts to listen? When will the contempt for the unemployed end?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we want is to help the unemployed find a job, and we are doing that in tangible ways. We are broadening the number of job alerts that are sent to them so they are aware of employment opportunities in their competencies and in their geographic area. We are helping them to find that work, and when they do work while they are on claim, we are going to allow them to be better off than not working.

That is showing respect for the unemployed. That is helping them get a job that is going to help their families and their communities.

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FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the proposed Canada-China investment agreement is radically different from other investment deals that Canada has signed. Experts believe Canadian taxpayers will assume more risks and face more constraints than the Chinese. Chinese companies can sue our provinces and municipalities and have the cases decided by arbitrators behind closed doors.

Why would the Conservatives cut a deal that would give China special advantages for decades?

• (1450)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would have to disagree with the hon. member. The reality is that this treaty is similar to other treaties we have signed. It is designed to protect Canadian investors from discriminatory and arbitrary practices, and the rights and obligations of this treaty apply equally to both countries.

I think there is a point we could agree on, though, and that is the NDP position on trade. Recently, the NDP member for British Columbia Southern Interior wrote that trade agreements “threaten the very existence of our nation”. That is the NDP position. I think we would be in agreement.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this is about hitting Canadian investors. Actually, under the Canada-China investment agreement, Canadian taxpayers assume more risks and get fewer protections than their Chinese counterparts.

Canada's legal framework is considerably more open and transparent than China's, which is opaque and difficult to get justice in. That means that complaints by Chinese investors here can create greater risks and liabilities for Canadians, while little legal protection exists for Canadian investors who are treated unfairly in China.

Could the government explain how locking in this unlevel playing field is to Canada's net benefit?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just pure nonsense. I would remind the member opposite that it was our government that brought openness and transparency to the treaty process. I will say, once again, the rights and obligations of this treaty apply equally to both countries.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by making cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency, the Conservatives are undermining Canada's ability to combat tax evasion. To replace the revenue that is being lost to tax havens, the Conservatives are cutting services to Canadians. Billions of dollars are being lost and all Canadians are paying the price. In the current economic situation, the Conservatives' decision to miss out on revenues lost to tax evasion is troubling and absurd.

When will they provide the Canada Revenue Agency with the resources needed to combat this scourge?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that the Canada Revenue Agency is not laying off any tax evasion experts. These people are key to battling tax cheats and ensuring fairness for taxpayers. Some of these positions may move, or they may change to allow for better coordination between the Canada Revenue Agency, the RCMP and the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

Recently announced reductions at CRA reflect the fact that more people are filing their taxes electronically rather than phoning in or mailing paper.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we have seen a government willing to spend tremendous resources targeting single parents, charitable organizations, environmental groups and the most vulnerable instead of going after offshore accounts belonging to billionaires and multi-nationals.

Cuts to CRA will not help the issue. Why has the government not targeted offshore tax cheats?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague across the way that we are targeting offshore tax cheats. We take this issue very seriously and we aggressively pursue all the information that we receive.

I can assure the House that since 2006, we have audited thousands of cases and identified more than \$4 billion in unpaid taxes through our efforts on international and aggressive tax planning.

This is compared to only \$174 million in the last year that the Liberals were in office. The number of voluntary disclosures alone has increased by an astounding 238% since 2005.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past August, a ship dumped 100 tonnes of iron sulphate into the Pacific Ocean, 300 kilometres off the B.C. coast. The ensuing algae bloom has spread some 10,000 square kilometres and is visible even from space.

Could the Minister of the Environment please inform the House what our government is doing in response to this development?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member for Nanaimo—Alberni that Environment Canada enforcement officers are continuing their investigation into this alleged violation of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Environment Canada was not asked to approve this now self-confessed act. Environment Canada did not approve this demonstration of rogue science.

This government takes very seriously our commitment to protect the environment. Anyone who violates environmental laws should be prosecuted to the full extent.

* * *

● (1455)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before answering questions about two Nigerian students who have taken sanctuary in a Regina church, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism asked for privacy waivers from those two individuals. Those documents have now been supplied.

Again, this question is for the minister. Is the government's determination to deport these two girls and thereby destroy their education based solely on their honest mistake of working for two weeks at a Walmart store? If that is their only transgression, is not such retribution out of proportion?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, one of the women in question is not a student and has not been attending classes or enrolled in an institution for several months, but was working illegally without a work permit.

We do have a problem of many foreign students working illegally in Canada. This has been raised with me by Canadians who are concerned that their kids cannot find work while foreign students are taking work illegally.

That is why it is important that our law be applied—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has the floor.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is raised with me all the time.

The point is this. The law should be applied consistently by independent public servants and should not be politicized. I leave it to those responsible, entrusted by this Parliament and its statutes, to enforce the law in a consistent manner.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the House voted for a bill aimed at fixing Canada's Access to Medicines Regime, but the bill died in the Senate.

Now with Bill C-398, we have a new opportunity to help developing countries access the medicines they need. MPs from all parties will be at a rally on the Hill Thursday in support of access to medicine.

Will the Minister of International Cooperation join MPs, the grandmothers and concerned Canadians on Thursday?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing I can say is that the CIDA network of aid and support is well-known and well appreciated. We do an excellent job of helping those in greater need, and we will continue doing that.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Sandy is bearing down on the northeastern United States today. Media are reporting serious rains, winds and some localized flooding. It is expected that Hurricane Sandy will hit Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the coming days.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety please, once again, reassure Canadians on preparations for the upcoming storm?

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government stands ready to assist the provinces with the effects of Hurricane Sandy if that assistance is required. The Canadian Forces and the Canadian Coast Guard are standing ready to assist. Health Canada has reviewed the national emergency stockpile and the Government Operations Centre is working around the clock to ensure that all necessary assets are in place.

We encourage all Canadians to ensure that they, too, are ready to deal with the hurricane. We encourage them to visit the website getprepared.gc.ca to ensure that their families have emergency plans in place.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives promised that the cuts announced in their most recent budget would not affect service to Canadians.

We have learned that the next wave of layoffs will affect project development officers at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and that all of those positions in the Montreal north shore office will be affected.

Organizations that provide assistance to the community will no longer be supported, and Canadians will be the ones who lose out the most.

Why are the Conservatives attacking community organizations?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians entrusted us with the responsibility of spending their tax dollars wisely. That is why over the last few years we have been reviewing how we could deliver programs and services to Canadians and finding better, more efficient and effective ways of spending their tax dollars, while maintaining levels of service.

There is more than one way to do things. We are looking for the best way.

* * *

● (1500)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, dozens of towns in northern Ontario, including Kenora, Dryden, Sioux Lookout and Lake of the Woods, have passed resolutions demanding that the Conservatives reverse their decision to close the Experimental Lakes Area. Thousands of people from the Kenora riding are among the 25,000 Canadians who have signed petitions to save the ELA.

Instead of taking his orders from the Prime Minister, will the member of Parliament for Kenora actually stand up for his constituents?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our investments in research and development. It is too bad that the NDP chose not to support our last budget, which increased investments in that area.

Furthermore, we want to transform how the National Research Council operates in Canada. We want to turn it into a more productive research centre that focuses on science and innovation.

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[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Philip Bradbourn, Chairman of the Delegation for Relations with Canada of the European Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]*

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 206 to 209, related to the changes to the Indian Act, be removed from Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures and do compose Bill C-47; that Bill C-47 be entitled “An Act to amend the Indian Act”; that Bill C-47 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; that Bill C-45 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-45 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and the parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion in order to conduct a thorough review of the potential impact of this legislation on first nations across the country.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present two petitions. One petition is in support of Motion No. 312.

INTERNATIONAL WATERWAY'S BORDERS

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition requests the House to have a full review of the standing requirements to report on the maritime borders of waterways on international borders and that we consider harmonizing the regulations and policies between Canada and United States.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by hundreds of people from the Sarnia—Lambton region who call upon the Government of Canada to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. The petitioners point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial or occupational causes combined.

Therefore, the signatories from the Sarnia and Lambton area of the province of Ontario call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms, to ban the abstraction, production, sale and export of asbestos in all of its forms and to stop the importation of asbestos laden products from other countries.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition regarding CCSVI.

The Conservative-dominated Senate committee is refusing to hear from those who have MS. Can anyone imagine a committee silencing a cancer patient, a heart patient or someone living in poverty? Why then are MS patients being silenced as well as the well-known Canadian CCSVI expert, Dr. Sandy McDonald? Why is the government shutting down these important voices?

The petitioners call for the Minister of Health to consult experts actively engaged in the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI to undertake phase III clinical trials on an urgent basis and to require follow-up care.

• (1505)

JUSTICE

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to present a petition from a large group of people from the riding I represent. They are concerned about women caught in prostitution.

The petitioners propose that there be no move to decriminalize prostitution and in fact that the onus be moved against those who are the buyers of the services of prostitutes.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today. The first one is from citizens in my riding concerned about the smart metres.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to convene a panel of experts to hold public hearings to review the need to update Safety Code 6, based on recent scientific evidence that existing requirements do not adequately protect the safety and health of Canadians.

ACCESS TO MEDICINES

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is also from folks in my riding, in Procter, Nelson and other areas, supporting Bill C-398.

The petitioners say that because of the devastation AIDS has caused in Africa, they call upon the House of Commons, without significant amendment, to facilitate the immediate and sustainable flow of life-saving generic medicines to developing countries.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is in support of my Bill C-322, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act (slaughter of horses for human consumption).

The petitioners call for the prohibition of importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horsemeat products for human consumption. There are over 300 names from Ontario.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise to present petitions from the residents of Dryden, Ontario on the topic of the Experimental Lakes Area.

In the 2012 budget, the government made the ill-advised decision to close the ELA, depriving Canadians of the groundbreaking scientific advancements it provided. I have two more petitions on the same subject, one from Ear Falls, Ontario, and the other from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. I am receiving dozens and dozens of these every day from across Canada.

ACCESS TO MEDICINES

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that has been certified by the clerk. It has been signed by a number of residents in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo and others across the Waterloo region.

The petition expresses a concern, which I certainly share, regarding the devastating impacts of HIV-AIDS in developing countries, particularly in Africa. The petition calls upon the government to reform Canada's access to medicines regime and to make the regime more workable.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to submit a petition to save the Experimental Lakes Area, the ELA.

There are thousands of Canadians from across the country who have submitted their names. The petitioners want the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of the ELA to the Government of Canada's mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems; to reverse the decision to close the ELA research station; and to continue to staff and provide financial resources to the ELA at the current or higher level of commitment.

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first one is from my constituents of Drummond, who are asking the Conservative government to protect old age security. They are completely against the two-year increase in the age of eligibility for old age security. They feel that it is a shameful attack on the neediest members of our society.

● (1510)

CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition from constituents in my riding and the surrounding areas. It has to do with Environment Canada's chemicals management plan. Currently, we do not know how toxic the chemicals we are using to extract shale gas are. We do not yet know what their impact will be on the environment and on our health.

It will take a long time for the chemicals management plan to work. According to some estimates, we will have to wait until 2020 before we know the hazards of all the chemicals currently being used. In addition, cuts to this plan have been announced in the

Routine Proceedings

budget, which will hinder efforts to determine the toxicity of the chemicals. That is why I am presenting this petition.

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition from constituents in my riding, from Salt Spring Island, Galiano and throughout Saanich. The petition calls upon the Minister of Agriculture, with whom I have had several personal conversations on the matter, to reconsider the closing of the plant health centre, which for 100 years has served the interests of science in understanding viruses. Since 1960, it has been the national centre for the quarantine of plant viruses. It is simply not feasible to pursue the current plan to move these facilities to the Okanagan.

Therefore, I table this petition, which is calling for the plant health centre to remain open, on behalf of my constituents.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition which is very timely. It is from residents of the Ottawa area calling upon the government to stop the ratification of the Canada-China investment treaty. They note that it will bind the government and the country for decades and that it has provisions that work against the interests of Canada's sovereignty or ability at the municipal, provincial or federal levels to chart our own course for natural resources or in banking, investment law and the like, any area where Chinese state-owned enterprises seek to invest.

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QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 837 and 840 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that Questions Nos. 837 and 840 be made orders for return and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

S. O. 52

[Text]

Question No. 837—**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:**

With regard to the MV Ocean Lady and MV Sun Sea migrants: (a) how many passengers since 2009 were detained, broken down by (i) age, (ii) sex, (iii) location of detention centre, (iv) average number of cells per detention centre, (v) average number of detainees per cell, (vi) average length of detention; (b) how many migrants since 2009 have been deported, broken down by (i) country of origin, (ii) destination country, (iii) rationale; (c) how many migrants since 2009 have been found guilty of criminal offences, broken down by (i) type of offence, (ii) location of crime; (d) how many migrants since 2009 have submitted applications for refugee status, broken down by those whose claims are (i) approved, (ii) rejected, (iii) in the queue; and (e) how many migrants since 2009 have submitted applications for permanent residency status, broken down by those whose claims are (i) approved, (ii) rejected, (iii) in the queue?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 840—**Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With respect to the prevention of harassment within the RCMP: (a) what is the official policy on the prevention of harassment in the workplace and when did this policy take effect; (b) what is the definition of harassment used by the RCMP and when did this definition take effect; (c) what are the informal and formal resolution mechanisms of harassment complaints and when did these mechanisms take effect; (d) what unit of the RCMP is responsible for the implementation of the policy mentioned in subquestion (a); (e) how is the implementation of policy mentioned in subquestion (a) reviewed and audited for effectiveness; (f) what are the roles and responsibilities of senior management in preventing harassment; (g) how is the policy mentioned in subquestion (a) communicated to employees and at what frequency; (h) what training was offered on strategies to prevent harassment in the workplace and on the policy mentioned in subquestion (a), and (i) who administers the training, (ii) who has access to the training, (iii) for each course, how many hours of instruction are provided, (iv) does the training include a course that specifically targets prevention of harassment against women, visible minorities, First Nations, Inuit or Métis, (v) does the training include a course on the prevention of sexual harassment, (vi) which courses are mandatory and which are optional; (i) is the policy mentioned in subquestion (a) available to the public and if so where; (j) in the last ten years, how many different policies to prevent harassment in the work place were made and what were they; and (k) what is the timeline for the gender audit and will the results be made public?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SYRIA

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of two applications for emergency debates and I will recognize members in the order in which I received their notice.

First, the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since early 2011, Canadians have watched the situation in Syria escalate from peaceful protest to a civil war, which in recent weeks has cost between 1,200 and 1,600 deaths per week. Depending on the source, the death toll in Syria is reported to be between 28,000 to 37,990.

There have been reports of mass atrocities against the Syrian regime and the rebel forces. Thousands of Syrians have fled their homes and have taken refuge in Turkey. In recent weeks, the Syrian regime has taken to bombing refugee encampments in Turkey and Turkey has shelled targets inside Syria in retaliation. These attacks and counterattacks have had a great impact on regional peace and stability, which is volatile at the best of times.

To date, the international sanctions against Syria do not seem to have an effect on the government of Syria. The United Nations Security Council seems to be deadlocked in what, if any, action should be taken in Syria.

Therefore, I am asking you to permit an emergency debate on what the Government of Canada is doing to help bring about an end to the serious situation that has been brought about by the civil war in Syria.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this issue with me and while I can certainly understand it is a matter of very grave concern, I do not find that it meets the test of the Standing Orders at this time.

The Chair also has notice of an application for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put forward a motion that the House do now adjourn under the provisions of Standing Order 52, in order to take up the pressing issue of the Canada-China investment treaty. In just my office alone, I have now received over 64,000 individual messages from Canadians asking that this matter be stopped or at least debated before Canadians find themselves bound to it.

As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, I made a similar motion on October 1. I believe the rules under Standing Order 52 are clear. This matter is an administrative responsibility of government. It is a specific matter of obvious and acute national importance and concern, and it is urgent. I hope that you do not mind but in the absence of reasons from you, and I understand that it is not traditional for the Speaker to provide reasons, I am inferring that perhaps on October 1, you recognized that there were many opportunities that might present themselves in which this matter might be debated. Under the rules the Speaker must consider the probability of the matter being brought before the House in a reasonable time by other means.

It is clear now that there will be no other opportunity. The 21 sitting days from September 26, when the treaty was first tabled, run out on November 1. We could face a ratification as soon as this Friday.

I did cite some authorities, particularly Professor Peter Hogg, on constitutional laws that even though a treaty of this nature does not require a vote in the House, it is very clear that traditionally a matter of this importance would have come before the House. I cite Peter Hogg:

Despite the absence of any constitutional obligation to obtain parliamentary approval, it has been the practice of Canadian governments to obtain parliamentary approval of the most important treaties in the interval between signing and ratification.

He goes on in that text to describe that governments in the past would place the treaty before both the House and the Senate for consideration and to vote, although there would not be a requirement for royal assent.

The current government has spoken of the fact that, since 2008, it has put in practice the tabling of a treaty for 21 sitting days. However, in the absence of any opportunity to debate or vote on the treaty, this becomes a ritualistic denial of democracy.

Given the great urgency and the fact that this treaty is clearly important, it will bind Canada until at least 2043. It has the potential to disrupt provincial, municipal and federal abilities of future governments to chart a course, to pass laws or to take steps that investors from the People's Republic of China find to be arbitrary. The possibility of a chilling effect from this is also a threat.

I know that there are those who think this treaty is fantastic and support it fully, but they too would say it is important and if it is important, should it not come before the House? I beg of you, Mr. Speaker, with very little time left, at least allow a treaty of this importance, and in my view a dangerous document, to receive at least four hours of debate in this place tonight.

• (1515)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this matter to the House again. While I have no doubt it is a very important issue and one with which she has great concerns, I still find that it does not meet the test under the Standing Orders.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence has three and a half minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this opportunity is already memorable for me, given the attempt by the member for Timmins—James Bay to deny a provision of his own party's platform using a point of order, not once during my speech, but twice.

We will not be deflected from our purpose by a \$21 billion carbon tax, by the job-killing proposals from the other side. We are focused on a policy of invention and innovation, attracting the best managers and entrepreneurs, ensuring the right skills development for Canadians to make our economy's leading sectors engines of higher productivity, growth and job creation, because that is the bottom line.

Government Orders

Every day that we lose in the House to issues other than setting the conditions for creating jobs is a day when Canadians lose confidence in us. When the time is allocated according to our government's priorities, we will not make that mistake. That is why, for a country that has become even more of a leader in financial services, the bill is improving oversight at CMHC for its securitization functions at this critical moment in the evolution of our property market.

That is why we are updating the Bretton Woods act to make sure we fulfill our international obligations as a strong member of the G20 and the G8.

That is why we are accelerating the capital cost allowance for clean energy and phasing out two tax credits to ensure the neutrality of the system and applying the second one, the one formerly for Atlantic oil and gas and mining, also to clean energy generating equipment. This would ensure that Canadian entrepreneurs all across the country have the best opportunity to grow a leading energy sector even larger in the years and decades to come.

That is why we are updating the Public Service Superannuation Act to ensure there are no unfunded liabilities there.

That is why we are opening the door to pooled registered pension plans to make sure that entrepreneurs and small businesses that do not have access to pensions, and there are millions of them across the country, do so in the future.

That is why we are bringing into law the bridge to strengthen trade act to make sure that the Detroit River international crossing, an artery of the largest trading relationship in the world, moves forward expeditiously and with a strong impetus from Canada behind it.

That is why we are reforming the scientific research and experimental development investment tax credit to remove capital, to remove the profit element for third parties and to reduce the tax credit from 20% to 15%. We think these measures will make it work better and ensure that research and development are increasingly translated into jobs, employment and the breakthroughs of tomorrow that would allow the businesses of tomorrow in this country to move ahead.

Government Orders

These measures have already had a huge impact in my riding. Fifty Ajax business owners have written to me recently about the hiring credit for small business and about the pooled registered pension plan scheme contained in the bill. They are excited about it. It is relevant for them. That only adds to our determination on this side to move ahead. The youth employment strategy that the government has put forward has had benefits across the board in communities like Ajax—Pickering with \$428,000 and 67 projects for the summer jobs program just this year, with much more to come under the same strategy.

In Canada's statement, prepared for the recent IMF board meeting in Tokyo, our Minister of Finance spoke of “measures to support jobs and growth by improving conditions for businesses, entrepreneurs and innovators, investing in training and infrastructure, and helping the unemployed find jobs”. That is exactly what the bill does.

• (1520)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague and I was rather let down by the continual use of mistruths.

I would like to quote from the *Ottawa Citizen* because I think Dan Gardner hit it on the head about the use of the political lie. The whole point of Dan Gardner's article is the use of lying. He said, “the worst part” is that the people in the Prime Minister's Office won't care if he calls them “cynical liars who would wince when they look in the mirror—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale is rising on a point of order.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that we cannot do indirectly what we should not do directly. Clearly, unparliamentary language is being used by the member.

The Speaker: I will remind the hon. member.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I am leading a point, and I understand the rules of Parliament. That is why I think it is very important that he listen to this. He said that—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I will just remind the member for Timmins—James Bay that we cannot do indirectly what we are not allowed to do directly. Even when quoting from media reports or articles, and we have had cases of this in the House before, we cannot use unparliamentary language or use it to accuse members of unparliamentary actions.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, in this Parliament there is a notion that we cannot call someone a liar, but the notion that someone can lie is seen as parliamentary. I would continue with Dan Gardner's phrase:

It's the gobsmacking cynicism and the contempt that is its foundation. Contempt for Parliament, the judiciary, the media, and anyone who gets in their way. But most of all, contempt for Canadians.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, there was no question there. There was no truth there. There was no integrity there in the remarks of the member opposite. However, that is no surprise to those of us on this side of the House.

That will not, however, let the members opposite off the hook. A \$21.5 billion carbon tax on page 4 of their own party platform remains with them—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: He may refrain from calling people liars, but he cannot stand in this House and make a mistruth. He does not have that evidence and he has used this again and again in this House to divert attention.

I refer him to page 680 of O'Brien—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has asked a question. The parliamentary secretary is answering it. It sounds like what the member for Timmins—James Bay is raising is a further point of debate. If there is time, I can recognize him for another question and comment and he could make his point then.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor to respond to the comment made by the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the bill before this House is absolutely about fiscal policy, and it is absolutely legitimate for members on this side of the House to draw the contrast between a low tax plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity and the electoral platform of the other side, on the basis of which some of them entered the House.

That \$21.5 billion carbon tax proposed by his leader, embraced by all of them, expresses that contrast as well as anything else, as does the performance of his leader in debate in the House last week, when he spoke for the better part of an hour without even mentioning the question of public debt.

• (1525)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of what is in platforms, in their 2008 platform, the Conservatives promised to:

—develop and implement a North American-wide cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gases and air pollution, with implementation to occur between 2012 and 2015.

If he is interested in reading further, there is an article by a Jeffrey Simpson in *The Globe and Mail* that talks about the “Conservative carbon amnesia”. It reads:

The Conservative Party's attack machine, with its television ads, canned speeches and pre-written scripts, has always been constructed on exaggeration tinged with mendacity. To this, since Parliament resumed, can now be added flagrant hypocrisy, since the machine and its mouthpieces, Conservative MPs, are attacking with customary vehemence the very policy on which they once campaigned.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague could respond to that.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows perfectly well that there is no such North American regime and there never was a policy proposal on this side to create a \$21.5 billion carbon tax.

Government Orders

That proposal did not come from this party. That proposal came from his party, and both members who have asked these questions and reminded this House many times over should know that it is not so much the policy move, the policy mistake, that matters, but the cover up that Canadians find particularly off-putting.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has become clear that omnibus bills will now be the norm in the House of Commons. It gives me no pleasure to rise today at second reading of Bill C-45, the second omnibus budget bill.

In addition to implementing the 2012 budget, the Trojan Horse bill included a number of other changes that had not been announced beforehand. This is yet another budget implementation bill that goes well beyond implementing the budget.

We said it when the Trojan Horse bill was forced through the House in May, and we are saying it now: this is not an acceptable way of doing things in a so-called democratic country like Canada. The monster Bill C-45 is over 440 pages long and contains a huge number of disparate measures. It would amend over 60 laws, giving the minister more power and weakening environmental protection legislation.

It also sets out a vast number of complicated measures, including a reworking of the Canada Grain Act and changes to subsidies for scientific research and experimental development, elements that are essential to the nation's development. In addition, it sets out major changes to the public service pension plan and the Canada Labour Code.

Here are the facts. The Conservatives have introduced a bill encompassing dozens of disparate measures, and they want to have it passed as quickly as possible so that we do not have time to talk about it. That is because they do not want Canadians to know what really goes on here in the House of Commons. MPs do not have enough time to study the bill closely and analyze its repercussions. Who will pay the price for that? Canadians—the very people whose interests the government is supposed to protect. As elected representatives, Conservative MPs are also supposed to work for Canadians.

On the one hand, MPs are being prevented from doing the work they were elected to do, and on the other, Canadians are being kept in the dark. Fortunately, Canadians can count on the NDP, which strongly opposes the undemocratic nature of Bill C-45.

We have defended and will always proudly defend the concepts of transparency and accountability. We will always stand up for environmental protection. We will always stand up for old age security and health care. If we do not, who will? Certainly not the government, which is showing us once again that democracy is not its priority.

Canadians are not blind. They know that the government is not doing so and that it is preventing the official opposition from doing its job by imposing a gag order once again. Actually, how many gag orders have we had so far? I think it is a record number. I am not sure what the exact figure is, but I know there have been more than 20. In short, that is preventing us from doing our job.

As a result of the strong offensive launched by our party, the government is finally going to allow various committees to study this bill. What a privilege. However, we do not know whether we will be able to propose amendments during those consultations. Needless to say, that will greatly hinder the process.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, has once again said that members of Parliament are not receiving the information they need to be able to reasonably exercise their power of oversight. Well, yes, power of oversight, but also responsibility of oversight.

The PBO recently even had to threaten to take the Conservative government to court if it did not forward the information about the budget cuts that were announced. The government has to stop trying to obstruct the work of Parliament and must allow a real study of this bill.

Canadians will agree that the amendments and their impact on Canadian families need to be studied in particular. It is appalling to see that, once again, Canadian families are being completely ignored. The government is continuing to ignore the real needs of Canadians.

● (1530)

According to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, 4 million Canadians, including 750,000 children, have core housing needs at this time. However, once again, the 2012 budget implementation bill does not contain any measures related to housing or any measures to fight poverty or homelessness. Yet major institutions like the Wellesley Institute and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have sounded the alarm several times. These national organizations asked the federal government to invest in housing in the most recent budget. Clearly, nothing has been done.

Housing is an important issue not only for families, but also for seniors, a very high-risk group. The current government reduced old age security benefits, which means that some seniors will have even more difficulty paying their rent. Approximately one-third of social housing is occupied by seniors, and one-third of that group is at risk of losing their housing because long-term operating agreements between the federal government and housing co-operatives are not being renewed.

A survey conducted by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association found that the number of seniors waiting for housing has been increasing steadily since 2004. That number is increasing, yet this government does nothing. Seniors represented one-quarter of all households waiting for housing in 2011.

Since we are talking about poverty, let us also talk about the changes to employment insurance. These measures will also have an impact on a claimants' ability to find housing, particularly since the federal operating agreements are about to expire. As a result of the loss of employment insurance benefits, more households may have core housing needs. Core housing needs are no joke. I am talking about substandard, overpriced homes that are difficult to heat and that are too small for families. These are not trivial matters.

Since the federal government did not introduce any housing measures in its budget, it could at least help all Canadians by supporting my national housing strategy. It will not do so under the pretext that housing falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Government Orders

And yet, the purpose of Bill C-400 is to provide secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, while respecting provincial jurisdictions. The government's inaction is a mystery.

Once again, the government is not demonstrating leadership. The omnibus bill contains another attack on agriculture, which provides even more evidence that the government is not demonstrating leadership.

Bill C-38 already hit my riding hard—really hard—by interfering with the CFIA's ability to conduct proper inspections to ensure the food security of all Canadians.

Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is one of the biggest agricultural regions in Quebec. The CFIA's services are thus very important to this region, which largely depends on agriculture-related economic activity.

Unfortunately, we still do not know what impact the cuts will have on the CFIA's regional centre, which is located in my riding. Many people are concerned about their jobs, and for good reason.

However, that is not my riding's only concern. Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is made up of 25 municipalities and more or less all of the farmers there grow grains. Thus, many of these farmers will be affected by the elimination of the grain appeal tribunals, which are independent committees set up by the region that provide a great deal of support to farmers. Who will farmers deal with if they do not have anyone to represent their region?

If Bill C-45 is passed, any recourse will automatically have to go through the chief grain inspector. Will the chief grain inspector be able to consider the unique characteristics of my riding as well as the local committees can? I seriously doubt it and so do my constituents.

In fact, all Canadians doubt the Conservatives' approach. The 443-page omnibus bill proves that they have reason to doubt.

● (1535)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke a lot about housing in her speech, and in the last budget we saw that cuts to housing were interpreted as savings.

Does she not consider money allocated to housing to be an investment in society?

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Hochelaga for her very pertinent question.

Indeed, from an objective point of view, economically speaking, in a society, people with proper housing are better off financially to be able to cope with reality and are in better health.

We know that housing is a critical determinant of health. In a society where people are healthy and have proper housing, where they have secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing, they are able to eat properly, pay hydro bills to stay warm, as well as keep up with other expenses, for example, expenses related to sending their kids to school. Our society would be better educated.

Investing in housing, in the fight against homelessness and poverty, pays off. Making cuts to programs that the public needs and that contribute to the healthy development of our communities does not save money.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the wonderful speech made by my colleague. I also heard the speech of a member opposite, in which he praised his government.

But here it is written in black and white that the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that the budget will lead to the loss of 43,000 Canadians jobs. He said that in reality, this budget will cause the unemployment rate to go up.

Does my colleague not think that Canadians deserve better?

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. Yes, Canadians deserve much better than what this government is offering them.

Canadians deserve a decent employment insurance program. Canadians deserve adequate housing. Canadians deserve help getting off the street when they need it. Canadians deserve a decent food inspection system so they can eat safely. Canadians deserve a strong economy. Canadians deserve jobs and a safe and healthy work environment in which they can thrive.

That is what Canadians deserve, but that is not what this government is offering them.

● (1540)

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to stand to speak on Bill C-45, the second implementation bill of our jobs and growth act. This is an activity we are embarking upon as a government to make sure that Canadians have a job and that our economy is growing.

As part of the system that we have in this country, we present a budget in the spring, which is a policy document, and then we have two implementation acts every year. We had one in the spring and now we are having one in the fall. This bill is to implement the budget that was passed by this House in the spring.

It is important to understand that the bill would implement what has already been debated and discussed. It is nice to talk about things, but it is important for this government to make it happen on the ground and that we implement what we say we are going to do.

The process is not a new one, as it has been in the House for many decades. When there is a budget, an implementation bill comes afterwards, which is what we are doing here today.

There are three or four things that I would like to highlight from the bill.

First, extending the hiring credit for small- and medium-sized employers would enable them to hire new employees and create jobs for people in my riding and ridings across this country.

Government Orders

This is a \$1,000 hiring credit, and last year it affected over 530,000 employers. We have seen the benefits from this tax credit in helping small businesses attract new people to develop their products and services. It has provided jobs to those in great need of employment, particularly youth. This is an opportunity for youth to find employment here in Canada.

Nobody is kidding anybody around here; it is a difficult environment for small business. As government, we need to help small business move forward, and this tax credit is one way to do that.

Also, Bill C-45 contains the tax framework for pooled registered savings plans. This is a tool that I have debated numerous times in the House, both at second and third reading in the spring. We talked about the need for an additional tool for small business to attract and retain employees, and for employees in this country to have an opportunity to have a pooled registered savings plan for their retirement. The bill would implement the tax changes that are required to make that happen.

It is important for us to have this debate, but we must move on and pass the bill. The legislation has passed for the pooled registered retirement savings plan, but we now need to take action and implement the changes that are needed to make it happen.

Another piece in Bill C-45 is the expanded accelerated capital cost allowance, ACCA. This would allow businesses to invest in clean green energy generation products, which would include machinery that had not been eligible for an accelerated capital cost allowance. However, the machinery would have to be in the clean energy generation business and meet the environmental criteria.

The bill would allow businesses to invest early on and to write-off the cost of the new investment in a speedier, more accelerated way. It would encourage companies to make those investments and make a difference.

The benefits of the expanded accelerated capital cost allowance are twofold. It would help small business get the equipment they need and it would also support the clean energy agenda that we have as a party. It would ensure that the Canadian government is doing what it can to support industry in providing cleaner energy for the people of this country.

One area that I am very proud and excited about is the registered disability savings plan, RDSP. There are a number of changes to that.

• (1545)

I remember when I was on the finance committee and heard about this idea of a registered disability savings plan, a program that would allow parents and grandparents, particularly parents, to invest in the future of a child with a disability. It is a plan that would provide financial security for young Canadians with disabilities. When their parents are no longer able to support them, a plan will be available for them to call on.

What is very important is that this bill would allow the registered education saving plans to be rolled over into a registered disability savings plans. I am very fortunate to have two healthy children. That does not happen in every family. As a past employee of Easter Seals Ontario, and my wife being a current employee, we know of the

difficulties, the struggles and efforts of parents with disabled children.

Of course, not every child is born disabled, and sometimes things happen, whether it is an accident or health issue, which unfortunately causes a child to become disabled. Families may have invested in an RESP with the hope that some day a child would be able to use that capital to obtain a post-secondary education. That does not always happen. Instead of losing those investments that parents have made, they would be able to roll that investment into an RDSP for a child's future needs.

There are also a few other smaller changes. I have been the chair of the Conservative marine caucus for a number of years, which is making some changes to improve the certification of ships that are over 24 metres. Those practices are being improved to make sure we have clean safe ships floating on our Great Lakes and off both coasts. We want to make sure they are safe, that they have the right environmental responsibility and that they harmonize with other international inspection certification programs, which I am very happy with.

One thing that has been a bit of a controversy is the change to the SR and ED program, which is the scientific research and experimental development program. It is a tax credit that companies have been able to attract. It was at the 20% mark, but it is down to 15% in this bill. The enhanced SR and ED program is still at 35%.

However, this was not done in a vacuum. There was a study done by Mr. Jenkins. The Jenkins report talked about the difference between the tax credit and direct support. As all of us know in the House, there have been no complaints. In fact, there has been lots of uptake on IRAP, the industrial research assistance program. IRAP is a direct funding mechanism. The Jenkins report said that we need balance; we are not sure whether we are getting the bang for the buck on the \$9 billion we are spending on research. We know that IRAP is producing. We know that it is a very attractive program to individuals. With regard to SR and ED, it depends on the company.

There was a very good presentation at the industry committee last week. A gentleman was there from a company in Burlington, which has used SR and ED extensively over the years. His point was that SR and ED was a bonus because companies are not sure whether they qualify for it every year or not. We are trying to rebalance the issue with the IRAP program. People get the money in advance, and it is a direct support of research and development. SR and ED will still exist and is an opportunity for people to use the tax system to support the development of their research.

Hopefully this new balance will provide more results, because that is really what we want as a government. We want results. We want R and D to turn into product that is commercialized and that we can sell, not just to Canadians, but around the world. We are a trading country, and we need to make sure we have the ability to do that.

Government Orders

• (1550)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the tax credits in his speech, which sounded quite interesting. I guess there is the rub with this omnibus bill. Instead of being able to sit down and talk in-depth about some interesting tax credits like that with our colleagues, we are forced to accept less than pleasant changes in Bill C-45 that overshadow these rather interesting options. How does the member feel about that?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, that was the perfect question for me. We have committed to send parts of this legislation to 10 or 11 committees so the individual committees can look at individual parts of it. However, what happens when we do that? In *The Hill Times* the opposition said that it was partial victory for the backing down of the federal government. We are criticized as a government. That is what is wrong with this place. Those members talk about working together and getting things done.

Opposition members also talk about the budget being 440 pages long. It is English and French on each page. It is actually 220 pages. It is not that big. If I can read a novel of 220 pages, then I can read a bill of 220 pages.

We are breaking up the bill. We are sending 10 or 11 parts to different committees so members on all of those committees can review the issues and discuss the tax changes that will happen. What do those members do? They criticize us. They say that we are backing down. We are doing what is right for Canadians, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we are dealing with such a small document and my colleague is such an expert on financial issues, let me ask him this short question.

On page 241 of the budget speech last March, Mr. Flaherty talked about the Employment Insurance Financing Board continuing to set the rate. However in the budget implementation plan, Bill C-45, section 435 says that will no longer happen and the rate will be set by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Finance.

Could the member explain to us why something in the budget last March has been changed in this specific case?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the member for Burlington, I would like to remind all hon. members not to refer to their colleagues by their given names in the chamber but rather by their riding or by their office.

The hon. member for Burlington.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I do not have any answer for the member as to what the difference is. I do not have the budget in front of me to refer to the specific page.

In terms of EI, we put together a board allowing it to manage the EI system. With what happened under the Liberals, we had to do it. The Liberals took all of the surplus money in EI and used it for their own purposes. They used it for other government purposes, not for EI. For that not to happen, we brought in a stronger employment insurance board to ensure that policies would be in place so that could not happen in the future.

[Translation]

Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to point out how ironic it is that, on the one hand, the Minister of Finance is telling us in this House that we should have done our jobs over the summer and read the budget and memorized every aspect of it, while on the other hand, when we ask our Conservative colleagues to tell us a little more about certain measures that can be found on specific pages of the budget, they are completely incapable of doing so.

Let us move on to something else and get back to a more crucial matter: my speech.

I am extremely proud to rise here today in the House to oppose Bill C-45, the Conservatives' latest omnibus bill. Despite harsh criticisms from hundreds if not thousands of Canadians when the Conservatives introduced Bill C-38, here they are again introducing another gigantic bill that addresses pretty much anything and everything but the 2012 budget.

Bill C-45, the second mammoth budget bill, amends over 60 different laws and is over 400 pages long, and the government drafted it without consulting anyone at all. Once again, the Conservatives are trying to ram their legislation through Parliament without giving Canadians and their elected representatives an opportunity to examine it in detail, which is what should happen in any good democracy.

Over the past few days, I have heard far too many Conservative members state that the parliamentary process and procedural matters are trivial details and that Canadians do not care about things like that. They have said that omnibus bills and other tactics to undermine democracy have been used for decades, that it is no big deal, that it has always been this way and that our democracy is in great shape.

As an example of this, I would like to share parts of a speech given on October 24 by the member for Saint Boniface. She made some rather disturbing statements to that effect. I will read them in English because the original version is so eloquent and delightful that it is worth reading in the original language.

• (1555)

[English]

From the opposition members, we will hear a lot of talk about process and procedure, or what some would call "inside baseball", that appeals to a small number of Canadians, mostly located in Ottawa. They talk about process to dictate the exact length of the debate, procedure for the formatted legislation, process for a timeline for a committee study, and on and on.

[Translation]

A little later in the same speech, she added:

[English]

In other words, it is really meaningless to the everyday lives of the vast majority of Canadians...

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

I must admit that I was quite surprised and disappointed to hear a government member say such things. I spoke to many constituents in my riding, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, whose reaction to such statements was exactly the same as mine. Having a majority does not absolve the government of its obligation to be transparent, open and accountable, nor does it give the government the right to abuse the public trust by introducing omnibus bills like this one, which MPs cannot examine properly and carefully. The government is breaking parliamentary rules every day and abusing those rules in order to hide its true agenda from the people. Then it has the nerve to say that Canadians do not really care. That is shameful.

Just like Bill C-38, Bill C-45 eviscerates current environmental protection measures and concentrates even more power in the hands of Conservative ministers. Quite honestly, I find that prospect less than thrilling.

First of all, Bill C-45 guts the Navigable Waters Protection Act by eliminating the concept of water protection from the name of the act and from the legislation, and focusing solely on the issue of protecting navigation. With the exception of three oceans, 97 lakes and 62 rivers in all of Canada, the act will no longer apply automatically to projects that have a direct impact on waterways. Of the 37 rivers in the Canadian heritage rivers system, only 10 will be protected by the law that has been newly gutted by the government. As a result of the Conservatives' bullheaded ideology, thousands of waterways will no longer be protected automatically and even fewer environmental impact assessments will be carried out by Transport Canada. The provinces will have to fill the void, without any compensation, of course.

These major changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act are particularly worrisome for people who live in ridings such as mine, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, which has several hundred wetlands, streams and rivers, as well as extensive access to the St. Lawrence River.

Waterways are at the heart of many economic activities vital to the riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, especially tourism. Their protection is of the utmost importance to my constituents. Therefore, the amendments proposed by the Conservatives to the Navigable Waters Protection Act are some of the most troubling for the people in my riding.

In addition to these changes, Bill C-45 also amends the Canadian environmental assessment act 2012, in part to deal with problems noted in the last budget implementation bill, but primarily to further weaken environmental impact assessments.

These are two major issues that affect the environment, but I could go on about others for hours and hours. There are all the amendments to the public service pension plan and to the Canada Grain Act, which are being proposed without any consultation. Once again, these changes will have a great impact on my riding and the many farmers who live there. There are also amendments to the Canada Labour Code, which will affect women and young people in particular, because they often must work part time for lack of other opportunities.

As they have so often done in the past, the Conservatives are doing everything they can to bypass Parliament so that they do not have to be accountable to Canadians.

Every time the government introduces a new bill, it violates the underlying principles of our democracy by restricting parliamentary debate and in-depth study of its bills. Bill C-45 is just the latest in a long line of autocratic Conservative tactics. Unfortunately, this is becoming an extremely regrettable tradition in Canada's Parliament.

As a new member, this is not how I wanted to work. The NDP has tried very hard to work with the other parties. However, every time we try to work with the Conservatives, they shut the door and do as they please, even if it means introducing other bills later and wasting MPs' and Canadians' time. For example, they introduce new legislation to fix problems with a previous bill that the opposition pointed out before the bill was passed. That is a huge waste of time. They are completely uncompromising and do not want to work with the opposition.

As we have heard over and over, the Parliamentary Budget Officer stated that members do not have enough information to reasonably exercise their power of oversight. In fact, the PBO had to threaten to put the matter before the courts to gain access to even a little information about the Conservatives' budget cuts. The Conservatives say that the PBO is overstepping his mandate, and they do not want to provide the information.

How are we supposed to analyze the budget if we do not know what the government is spending and where it is making cuts? This new way of keeping everyone in the dark is highly dangerous and worrisome. I hope that the PBO will not have to go to court to get the information that all members of the House need. The Conservative members need it too. I am sure that they are just as much in the dark as the opposition members. They do not have the information they need to do their work, yet they are making decisions to block the democratic work of Parliament and, as such, they are not living up to the trust that their constituents have placed in them.

The government has agreed to have 10 parliamentary committees study this second omnibus bill. At first glance, that gesture may seem like a sign of goodwill on the government's part, but, make no mistake, that is not the case. Those committees will not be able to amend Bill C-45. We are not yet sure of the answer, but it is obvious. Members of Parliament will be asked to sit in committee and witnesses across the country to travel and discuss the bill, its impact on the public, its potentially disastrous consequences or legislative gaps that we have not yet identified, but this work will be in vain. People will be asked to come and waste their time, and the Conservatives will still do exactly what they want without taking into account what anyone has to say.

Clearly, with their bill that is several hundred pages long, the Conservatives want to prevent the opposition members from doing their job by trying to cover up major ideological changes to more than 60 bills.

The Conservatives are proud to spend tens of millions of dollars on advertising propaganda, but then they tell Canadians that there is not much money for services that are essential to them.

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We in the NDP have always proudly defended the concepts of transparency and accountability, and we are going to continue to do so every day. We have always defended environmental protection, old age security and health care, and we are going to continue to do so.

• (1600)

We are proud to fight each and every day for Canadian families. That is why my colleagues and I will oppose Bill C-45.

• (1605)

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the member's speech, she kind of lost me on the corners a little bit.

There was some talk that the public had not been consulted, so let me share with the hon. member how the public is consulted. Chambers of commerce, individual people, business owners, large and small, and city and town councils were involved, as well as media, newspapers, television and radio.

I am not sure how much more consulting we can do. I am sure I speak for my colleagues who consulted in their ridings. In the past four years that I have been in this place, we submit our thoughts to the Minister of Finance regarding the budget, as do all our colleagues over on this side of the House. To suggest there is not consultation is entirely wrong.

Then my colleague said we are bringing in people from all over the country to sit and tell us about the budget. The member says we do not consult on one hand, and on the other hand we are now dragging all of Canada into one pot.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I did not realize that I was speaking so quickly or that what I was saying was so complicated. Next time I will make sure that I speak more slowly.

As for the consultations, do they truly take into account the opinions expressed by Canadians? It is one thing to talk to people, but if we do not take what they are saying into account, then there is no point.

The consultations on Bill C-45 that I mentioned would follow up on this government's oh-so-magnanimous decision to allow 10 committees to study this bill. That is perhaps when we will hear from witnesses, but if there is no opportunity to present amendments, then it is a complete waste of time. I hope that I clarified my position for the hon. member.

[English]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question. At the beginning of her speech she mentioned words that were said in another colleague's speech in regard to the waste of time, basically, of the act of democracy.

I would ask the member to comment on this. I submit that this is exactly we are here. This is why this House exists. It is for that discussion, including discussion of dissent, to find that balance between what is proposed and what is not.

I wonder if the member could comment on that.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber, who has allowed me to come back to a very important part of the discussion we have had in the House about Bill C-45, a discussion that will unfortunately be too short, since once again, the government has imposed a time allocation motion.

When the government says that parliamentary rules and procedures are not important, it is rejecting the very essence of our work. These rules provide a framework for our debates and ensure a transparent, clear and fair process for everyone. The government says that these rules are just a technicality and that getting a majority by winning an election with barely 30% of the vote means that Canadians gave it a mandate to do whatever it wants. That is an aberration and an abuse of the trust of the people we represent here.

We are here to speak on behalf of all Canadians. However, if every time the government introduces a budget bill it tries to stifle the opposition, which represents a considerable number of people, there is a problem because our democracy is eroding. Changes need to be made, and fast.

[English]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill would implement last spring's budget bill, a budget that had its priorities for Canadians straight. It contains many technical amendments and some substantive matters such as building a much-needed new bridge at the Detroit River crossing. It is designed to facilitate growth, trade and innovation and to reduce red tape regulations that hold up innovation and growth. It is about the economy. It is about jobs. It also would facilitate select incentives for small and medium businesses, such as the EI tax credit of \$1,000 a year for employers so they would hire more people.

The primary purpose of all our budget bills is to help grow our economy in a time of fragile international economic growth, without reaching into the bank accounts of Canadians or scooping more money from their pay cheques before they even see them, while balancing the budget.

Therefore, the formula is for growth for Canada, reducing debt that costs us millions of dollars in interest, with no tax increases and with no severe austerity measures like they have had to have in Europe.

Where is Canada's economy in relation to the world's? The World Economic Forum recently ranked Canada's financial system as the safest and soundest in the world for the fifth year in a row, making Canada the most secure place in the world to invest. We now hold the highest possible credit rating from the three principal credit rating agencies, saving us tens of millions of dollars in interest payments. We hold the best fiscal position in the G7. *Forbes* magazine recently proclaimed Canada the number one place in the world to do business. To prove all this is working for Canadian people, 820,000 new jobs have been created since 2009, a better record than the other G7 countries and even Germany. The jobs and growth act 2012 would further our successes.

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Every country in Europe that is technically bankrupt or has been bailed out, like Portugal, Spain, Italy or Greece, would be thrilled to be able to do what our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance have done. These are countries that thought the gravy train would never stop, with governments that practised wilful blindness for decades and are now forced to implement huge cutbacks on services, where 25% to 50% of the young people are unemployed.

Unlike Greece, where people protest massive cutbacks and lack of job opportunities, we have students in Quebec protesting because the lowest tuition in Canada would rise by \$325 a year and they want it free. That is quite a contrast and I think the irony escapes them.

However, here is another stark contrast. While Canada has announced phased-in changes to the old age supplement to ensure our auxiliary income supplement is on sound financial footing—changes that do not even start for 11 years and are phased in over 6 years—Portugal has been forced, by its own debt and interest charges, to raise the age for basic pensions for women from 60 to 65 overnight. Our national pension plan, the CPP, has no need to be changed at all. It is sound. Yet, the New Democrats' fearmongering is terrible among our most vulnerable citizens, misleading them that their pensions have been cut. The New Democrats have no shame.

The fundamental question for Canadians expressed in this bill is this. Do we want to plan our future on responsible, Conservative stewardship of our economy—for example, the old age supplement—or on the fearmongering comments of the NDP and claims made recently by its leader that, if elected in 2015, he would pull back the age at which seniors get their \$500 a month to age 65. “Just vote for us and all will be well; we care about you,” he says.

However, this is exactly the way that most of Europe got itself into such massive trouble in recent years: decades of buying votes with borrowed money; acting as if they care more about people because they hand them more borrowed money, under the pretense that it is only the rich corporations that would pay for it, not consumers and not taxpayers. This government will never attempt to sneak in a massive increase in the cost of anything and everything, like a carbon tax on energy disguised as a cap and trade system.

I have a document here. It is the NDP costing program for the last campaign. On the front page, it says, “Giving your family a break”, and on the inside it says, “Be a part of it”; and the second-last line, where hardly anybody would look, says “Cap and Trade Revenues By Year” and it adds up to \$21.5 billion.

• (1610)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, again there is this constant misinformation, and I do not know if my colleague knows the difference. There are no words “carbon tax”, but “cap and trade” is in his 2008 election budget. Did he not read his election budget when he ran, or does it not mean anything to him?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): This is a point of debate, not a point of order.

The hon. member for Oakville.

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats do not understand, and never will understand, the difference between “cap

and trade”, which is revenue neutral, and a carbon tax which brings in new revenue to the government.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Order, to the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay. I have not given him the floor. If he has a point of order, he is welcome to raise that, but he is not to abuse points of order by raising debate. If he has a point of order, he can make it now.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, my point of order goes back to the issue of using our House to plant misinformation. He said it was cap and trade, that that was the point. Then that is the point. He should say it was cap and trade.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): This is not a point of order. This is a point of debate.

The hon. member for Oakville.

• (1615)

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, here is what the NDP leader and the NDP MPs should really be telling their trusting supporters. The NDP would bring the qualifying age for OAS to 65, 11 years from now, but people would have to pay more for eggs, bread, milk and other groceries, more to heat their homes, more for electricity, more to fill up their cars and more for everything they buy at the mall, forever, and they would never break even. The NDP cares about them.

The reality is the ideologues in the NDP, who for decades have cherished policies designed to redistribute what they call wealth evenly to all Canadians, will not give the policies up. Instead of creating an equal playing field of opportunity for all Canadians—who work hard, make sacrifices and take risks to be able to improve their own lives and build a little wealth—which is what the bill would help to do, the NDP expects them to risk their life savings to start a business and create jobs for others, for a take-home pay based upon some kind of national average, created through massive tax increases.

The Broadbent Institute calls this a more equal Canada. The question is: Equal to what? It would be equal to Greece, perhaps.

This bill demonstrates our agenda. But why is the NDP opposed?

In a report published last week, the socialists at the Broadbent Institute laid bare their true beliefs, demonstrating they want governments to have a much greater piece of the earnings of all Canadians. They think that is how wealth is created, because they learned that in books written by people who read it in other books. These ideas and statements inevitably come from people who have never started a business and usually never even worked in one.

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In the recent report, the socialists were severely disappointed that taxes in Canada are only 31% as a share of national income, while they are 34% in most advanced countries, which means they not only want the \$21.5 billion carbon tax but another \$30 billion to implement their theories on Canadians.

How do they measure success? It is in how much taxes people pay, not quality of life, not the total average income, not how carefully taxes are spent and what value we get from money, and not the most important indicator of a true democracy: social and economic mobility—how many Canadians can access post-secondary training and education so they can have a better quality of life than their parents did—not how easy or difficult it is for an entrepreneur to start a business and hire others, improving their lives. They study how much of the wealth is mine, how much is ours, how much should be the government's and how we need the government to take more so it can do everything for us. They call it social spending.

These are people who, if they were isolated on a desert island, would sit for days and talk about how to divide up their last fish. The Conservatives would be out finding ways to catch more. The Liberals would be talking about who should decide. And the Green Party would be burying the fish for fertilizer.

Here are the new taxes the socialists want to introduce in Canada, as expressed by the NDP soulmates at the Broadbent Institute.

One, increase the capital gains tax to the same level as income tax. That would reduce investment in Canada that creates jobs.

Two, eliminate tax loopholes they say are only for the rich. However, we know from our experience in Ontario that it would affect the entire middle class.

Three, introduce a death tax to eliminate—and I am quoting from the Broadbent Institute—“morally unjustifiable class privilege being passed on to the next generation”. Let me translate that. That is the money our parents worked so hard to save, so that we could have a better quality of life than they did. They do not say if they would take 100% or 90% or just 50%, but it would all go to the collectives.

I am not making this stuff up. They want to tax financial transactions. That would discourage investors from buying and trading in Canadian securities, which is a key source of job growth.

They want, of course, a carbon tax and higher taxes on natural resources; all this to promote a socially and environmentally sustainable society.

The tax grabs are always couched in terms of the environment or social justice, which means they would decide, using taxes, the take-home pay of every person in Canada. They dream that everyone would work as hard for the collective as they do for their own families.

That Marxist theory has failed in every country in the world in which it has been tried, yet the socialists never give up.

They also want premiums on social service programs—in other words, user fees for social services. It is very important for everyone to know that.

They want more value-added taxes. On top of the GST and the provincial taxes, it appears they want a new value-added tax.

That would all fund expensive, unaffordable entitlement programs, the kind that have bankrupted most of Europe.

We believe in the freedom to work hard, choose to start one's own business or not, pay reasonable taxes, earn good wages or profits, and not be continually harassed and burdened by new fees, taxes and unnecessary rules from three levels of government.

This bill would be an important step along the road to the prosperity that all Canadians deserve.

● (1620)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about what is missing in the budget implementation act. On page 32 of the Conservative 2008 platform entitled “The True North Strong and Free”, under the heading “Developing a Cap and Trade System to Cut Pollution and Greenhouse Gas Emissions” it promises that a re-elected Conservative government will implement the cap and trade system between the years 2012 and 2015.

I want to ask the member how that is coming along.

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP do not understand the difference between a revenue neutral cap and trade system where businesses trade or we trade even within countries, such as we were planning to do within North America, and a carbon tax, which is a revenue grab from consumers to spend in whatever way the NDP would like.

There was a plan in 2006 to have a cap and trade system with our American partner, but it was not willing so that did not happen. It is pretty simple.

Allow me to demonstrate what governments can do at very little cost and how good governments that respect personal freedom and choice can create a climate that attracts thousands of jobs.

On Thursday, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage heard testimony from Ubisoft Entertainment, a video gaming company based in Montreal. It also has offices in Quebec City and Toronto. It came to Canada from France 15 years ago and has grown to 3,000 jobs in Canada. I asked why it chose to grow its company here. The first reason given was corporate taxes, now at 15%, and provincial tax incentives, as well as skilled workers and the advantage of having the French language in Quebec as the company came from France.

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Therefore, a Conservative federal government and two provincial governments created a climate for a business, which continues to grow, and now employs 3,000 Canadians with good paying jobs and educated workers, all of whom pay income tax no doubt totaling tens of millions of dollars. Some of those jobs were a portion of the 820,000 jobs created in Canada since 2009 by this government.

The legislation in this bill will no doubt help attract tens of thousands more.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thought that was a whole new speech.

The question I want to ask is this. I was shocked what I heard the member say earlier, alleging that there was buying votes with borrowed money. I believe he was referring to seniors. Is this the same party and the same Prime Minister who did not tell Canadians what their plans were with respect to the OAS? What is this business about buying votes? This is about actually telling people the truth about what the Conservative government has planned, something it neglected to say during the federal election.

How can the member defend that?

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, I have worked as a volunteer in non-profit seniors housing early in the nineties going back 12 years at least. I have been on the board of St. Hilda's Towers, a not-for-profit seniors supportive housing residence in Toronto, for 212 years, so I have worked with seniors for a long time.

The greatest fear that seniors have is they will run out of money. The second greatest fear is they will not have any money to leave their children in many cases. However, even seniors who have a lot of money, for example, someone selling a house in Toronto could easily get \$500,000 to over \$1 million, are afraid they will run out of money.

Therefore, when the NDP organizes and its leader goes out and tells Canadians that someone is slashing their pensions, which is not true, it is profoundly frightening for those people. It is a shame that it would happen.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the member for Oakville talk about some of the advantages for families that we see in this jobs and growth for long-term prosperity bill?

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, the answer is jobs, careers, hope and opportunity. One of the biggest problems we have in society right now is that university grads who come out, many with an ordinary BA, which is a four-year degree and many without academic degrees, simply cannot find a good job. They can find a job at Starbucks and in fast food restaurants. Some in my riding of Oakville have two or three part-time jobs, which drags on for six months, a year and even longer.

In my office in Oakville, I have hired five young university graduates from Oakville to provide them with their first job because the first job is the hardest one to get experience.

The entire process that this bill and everything this government is focused on is about the economy and our young people being able to start a new career and get jobs.

● (1625)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment; the hon. member for Nickel Belt, Workplace Safety.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and speak today to Bill C-45, the second omnibus budget implementation act. As with Bill C-38 this past spring, New Democrats oppose Bill C-45 on both content and process. This bill continues on the path set by Bill C-38, which puts more power in the hands of cabinet ministers and guts environmental protections.

As the official opposition critic for science and technology, I will focus my comments on the aspects of the bill concerning my area of focus, especially those concerning the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. However, I will start with a few general comments.

As we have heard in the House today, Bill C-45 is another massive omnibus bill. Once again, the Conservatives are trying to ram legislation through Parliament without allowing Canadians and their MPs to thoroughly examine it. What is disturbing is the PBO has said that the budget will actually cost 43,000 Canadians their jobs, but we hear otherwise from the Conservatives. In fact, this budget actually plans for unemployment to rise from the cuts that are being made to government, especially the scientific and research community. New Democrats oppose budget 2012 and its implementation, unless it is amended to focus on the priorities of Canadians, which is creating good quality and strengthening our health care system.

Turning to science and technology, I have been meeting with scientists, engineers, technologists and members of industry since appointed as the science and technology critic. I have done a lot of face-to-face meetings, I have spoken with people electronically and I have had the opportunity to visit a number of public and private facilities. The scientific community, and I mean this very broadly, not just natural scientists but also social scientists, engineers and technologists, is very concerned, and so am I, about the government's approach to science and technology. I will provide a few details especially as they concern this budget.

We have seen in report after report that one of our main strengths in terms of productivity in our country concerns the world-leading research done at our universities and government institutions, like the National Research Council. Many people may not know this, but almost 3% of the peer-reviewed papers published in Canada are produced by researchers at the National Research Council. This is a good fraction of what is produced worldwide. Peer-reviewed research is produced at universities but also at the NRC.

One of our strengths is our research output, but one of our main weaknesses is that Canadian companies are not investing in R and D at the same rate as companies located elsewhere in the world. This point was hammered home in the Jenkins report that we hear quoted in the House very often. Lack of investment in research and development has led to plummeting productivity levels as compared to the U.S. Our productivity is around 70% of U.S. productivity.

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The Conservatives are right to view this as a problem, but the solution to this problem of declining productivity is mind boggling. The Conservatives are trying to fix productivity rates that are really caused by low levels of private investment by Canadian firms and are planning to attack the part of the innovation supply chain that is performing well. The scientific community working in universities and government research organizations is really punching above its weight internationally. The government is shifting funding from these well-operating parts of our economy over to business, and that is a mistake.

The Conservatives are cutting hundreds of scientists from government rolls, they are closing world-class facilities, one of which I visited just the other day, they are radically changing the funding structures for scientists, both within government and without, and they are muzzling the government scientists who remain.

I have talked to researchers both in industry and outside of industry and in universities. I sat down with a panel of physicists the other day. The physicists said that what was developing in Canada was poisoning the culture, that scientists were afraid of speaking out because they were worried about having their funding cut or, worse, getting fired. This is a really dangerous thing to do. The Conservatives are attacking a scientific culture that has taken almost a hundred years to build. For example, the National Research Council came in place in 1916. We were almost going to celebrate a centenary, but now we find this is under attack.

• (1630)

The National Research Council was considered the jewel of the Canadian research crown for many years. It is headed by Nobel Prize winners. It has brought us all kinds of inventions that started as just ideas and made it all the way to the factory floor and onto the shelves of consumers

The Minister of State for Science and Technology has said that he wants to take this venerable and well-respected research institution and turn it into a 1-800 concierge service for industry. Therefore, instead of winning Nobel Prizes, Nobel scientists will now hold the door open for industry and carry its bags. If I were a research scientist looking at where I would take my top level research, going to the National Research Council in its past glory would be great, I would get the funding and atmosphere that I need to work, but becoming a concierge or a bellhop is not really what I would be looking for.

Let us talk about the 124 NRC researchers who received their pink slips this year, 90 of them last week. If we think about the progress of a researcher, they get a BA after four years, a Masters in Science for two years, a Ph.D., a post-doctorate, to have to go and set up labs. We are talking about 15 to 20 years someone has invested in becoming a researcher. It is a portable skill, but it has to be located at an institution. What concerns me is people at the NRC who have come out of university and set up these labs, when they are given a pink slip, it is not like they go next door and start up another career. It is a major loss of investment. This really needs to be thought through before we go too much further down this line.

This fear of the change in culture has been expressed to me in many letters. The Minister of State for Science and Technology is

familiar with this because I am copied on most of the letters he receives. They express fear and really want the government to slow down in terms of how it is hacking away at these various institutions.

I want to change now to a more specific matter, and that is the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. The government proposes to reduce the tax credit rate from 20% to 15% and this will particularly affect large businesses. It will eliminate the eligibility of capital expenses. Although it would save up to \$500 million a year by making these changes, it has not made it over to any new program, or not all of it anyway. It is really just straight savings for the government and attacks businesses right where they live in the innovation field. This will hit the manufacturing sector hard and it is likely to drive firms to move their R and D activities to other countries that have better incentives.

Conservatives have done nothing to fix the complexity of the SR&ED tax credit, which I agree needs some adjustment but it is more in the administration of this tax credit rather than throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Instead of reducing the credit for industry, it should be looking at administrative changes instead. The government has done nothing to reduce the complexity and overhead costs of applying for and administering the SR&ED tax credit.

The member for Burlington said earlier today that he was getting positive feedback from industry, but I have had a number of different comments and he should be aware because they came at the industry committee. For example, Declan Hamill, vice-president, Legal Affairs, Hoffman-La Roche Ltd., said when asked about the SR&ED tax credit:

From our perspective there are changes to the SHRED tax credits that have some potential negative impacts on our member companies.

Probably most serious, were the comments from RIM. Morgan Elliott, director of Government Relations for Research in Motion, which makes the Blackberry, said when I asked him directly what this change in the SR&ED tax credit would mean. "It cuts our support by one-third". Here is the jewel in the private industry crown of technology in Canada that has been struggling lately, seems to be getting back on its feet, and what does the government do? It cuts one-third of its support with these changes.

It is hardly a ringing endorsement for these changes. I submit there are problems with the bill and the government should, at the very least, split out the SR&ED tax credit changes and refer them to the industry committee for further study.

• (1635)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like the member, I was also troubled when I heard those comments from RIM at the industry committee.

I want to talk about another aspect of science and technology and Canada's satellite industry. In the first budget of the year we were expecting to see money for the final phase of development of the RADARSAT constellation mission, which is Canada's crown jewel of our satellite program. The money was not there. Now we have part 2 of the budget and the money is still not there.

We have had 31 job cuts at COM DEV, which is a large subcontractor. We have had hundreds of job losses at MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates. These are scientists and engineers losing their jobs because of the instability created by the government.

Tying into what the member said about the NRC and scientists and all the changes being made, does he have a comment to make about what kind of impact that has on our high tech industries?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I did have the great pleasure of sitting down with the president of MDA to talk about RADARSAT specifically, and he was beside himself. There are really six phases to this contract. The government has agreed to the first five and cut the money for the final phase of the contract, which would put the satellites in the air over our Arctic, and it is only through satellite technology that we can do surveillance over the Arctic.

It is extremely disappointing that the Conservatives have chosen not to support the final stage of the RADARSAT satellites. I urge them to find a place in the budget to make this project go ahead.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. It is very interesting to hear the point of view of someone who has extensive knowledge of technology.

Having worked in research and development in a corporate setting, I know that the field desperately needs more support. Clearly, that is not what the Conservatives are prepared to offer.

I have a much more general question for the member about the form of today's bill. The Conservatives across the way keep telling us how important it is to do things the way they are because there is no time, because these measures must be taken as quickly as possible, because they are minor measures and no big deal.

If these measures are so simple and obvious, and if these ideas are so good, then why not have a proper debate about them and hear from real experts? I do not see why we cannot treat each element separately. That would give all of us a better understanding of what is in this bill.

What does my colleague think the Conservatives are afraid of? Why did they introduce an omnibus bill like this?

[English]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I really think this is an abuse of Parliament. The measures in the budget are important for Canadians, whatever we think of them. These really need to be debated.

In their effort to rush through measures through the industry committee, the latter's members seemed to be making a major error with the SR and ED tax credit. That is not just my opinion. The

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changes have been dismissed by RIM, by pharmaceutical companies, by Genome Canada. They all have great concerns about these changes to the tax credit.

We should just slow down a bit, split this up into a bunch of bills and look at them separately before we make a gigantic mistake.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, which I listened to carefully.

We have started talking about the budget implementation bill. We have gotten used to the Conservatives introducing huge omnibus bills to push through all kinds of legislation. MPs cannot do the work that Canadians elected them to do.

Does my colleague think that this practice is undemocratic?

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I really do not think Parliament was created for us to ask real questions and to get stock answers back. Bills are then forced through without any real debate before Canadians get a chance to look at the details. We should pause and try to respect the institution we are in.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about how Bill C-45 will benefit residents of Palliser, Saskatchewan and indeed all of Canada.

At the outset, I am proud to say that Canada is more financially secure than other economies in the world, thanks to the decisive and swift action taken by our government in 2008. Thankfully, Canada has one of the strongest fiscal positions in the world as shown by Fitch, Moody's, and Standard and Poor's ratings renewing Canada's AAA rating.

Since taking office in 2006, we have introduced many popular initiatives, including the tax-free savings account, pension income splitting, a tax credit for textbooks, the deduction for tradesmen's tools, and much more.

Additionally, over the past six years, Canadians have benefited from broad-based tax cuts, 140 tax cuts to be exact. These tax cuts have given families, individuals and businesses the flexibility to make the right choices for their own needs. In fact the average Canadian family now has an additional \$3,100 in its pocket, thanks to these tax savings.

Government Orders

Our government will continue on this path of keeping taxes low, reducing red tape and other measures, so that businesses are free to grow. Here I would add that our economy has created nearly 820,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession, with 90% of them full-time.

However, our government realizes that some belt-tightening is required to protect against shocks in the global economy. To this end, under the leadership of our talented Minister of Finance, in March, our government introduced a comprehensive and forward-thinking action plan to create jobs, growth and prosperity over the long term.

Here I would point out that our jobs and growth bill does not raise taxes or cut transfers to seniors or other levels of government for health, education or social services. Our jobs and growth plan will respect the taxpayer dollars of individuals, families, trades people, businesses and seniors. Our jobs and growth plan will benefit today's population without transferring the burden to tomorrow's leaders.

Raising taxes or transferring the burden might be an easy solution that governments may have taken in the past, but we are thinking outside of the box and taking action to benefit all Canadians, not just those of a particular region.

To create our comprehensive and long-range plan, we held consultations with Canadians to seek solutions that would improve efficiency and reduce waste. On my part, I had an excellent discussion with business leaders in my riding this spring, and passed their ideas on to the Minister of Finance.

A cornerstone of our government is respect for taxpayer dollars. To that end, our government is taking landmark action to ensure that the pension plans of members of Parliament, senators and federal public sector workers are sustainable and financially responsible. My office has received significant correspondence calling for reforms to these pensions. I support these measures to bring these pensions in line with those in the private sector.

Next I would like to speak about creating jobs and filling job openings. I will begin by quoting Saskatchewan's finance minister, Ken Krawetz, who stated in regard to our economic action plan:

I'm quite encouraged by the initiatives that seem to be coming forward in the economy and training and employment.

In my view, his words carry a lot of weight since he knows the issues facing Saskatchewan better than anyone else.

Canada not only has a labour shortage but also has people looking for jobs. The shortage in skilled labour is very problematic in my home province, which has low unemployment rates of less than 5%. Indeed, I am pleased to see that Saskatchewan is experiencing strong growth.

To help remedy this disparity, we will increase funding for training, with a special focus on youth and older workers. Our jobs and growth bill has \$50 million to help youth gain skills and experience in the workforce through the youth employment strategy. Thanks to this funding, I am pleased that approximately 3,000 young Canadians will be able to fill labour shortages while they get on-the-job experience in high demand fields, such as skilled trade or tourism.

● (1645)

Our jobs and growth act also has \$6 million to expand the successful ThirdQuarter project to connect employers with experienced workers over 50 years of age who want to continue using their skills in the workforce. Additionally, we are investing significant funding to improve labour market information, which will ultimately help connect out of work Canadians with available jobs.

Without impacting the Saskatchewan residents and Canadians who are looking for jobs, we are taking action to fill gaps within our workforce. We are investing \$150 million to repair and upgrade local infrastructure via the community infrastructure improvement fund. There are rinks, community halls, museums and other organizations that may benefit from this funding in my riding.

As we are all aware, the aging workforce will compound the labour shortage. Meanwhile, the average life expectancy of Canadians is rising. Given that the OAS system is completely funded by the government and not by the working population, I think everyone can agree that this demographic change creates serious challenges.

Our government was elected with a mandate to respond to the taxpayers. To that end, we will work to protect the financial security of tomorrow by gradually raising the age of eligibility for OAS.

Will this change affect seniors? I emphatically say no. Will this change affect those nearing retirement? Again, I emphatically say no. Since changes are necessary for the benefit of future generations, it is fitting that the changes will only affect recipients among future generations.

One of my constituents phrased it very well in writing. He said the changes were acceptable because they "will allow the next generation to prepare and manage their economies of scale accordingly". I am proud to say that he further stated that it was "good government at its best."

To help people prepare for the future, we will help Canadians saving for retirement through pooled registered pension plans and registered disability savings plans, in addition to the previously announced tax-free savings accounts.

Government Orders

Moving on, Canada's reservists support and rebuild communities in disaster situations here at home, as well as serving as reconnaissance troops in peacekeeping operations. In my home province, members of the Saskatchewan Dragoons have been and continue to be actively involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Cyprus, Bosnia, Afghanistan and more. I am also proud to say that the dragoons also helped combat the forest fires in British Columbia in 2003. Economic action plan 2012 will support Canadian reservists in the workforce, by helping to remove the barriers to hiring reservists and off-setting costs when they are called on for full-time duty.

This past Saturday evening while I was at a mess dinner with the local chapter of the Saskatchewan Dragoons, I was proud to be part of a government that supports our reservists.

In economic action plan 2012, our government has presented a plan focused on jobs and growth to chart a course for the long-term financial prosperity of all Canadians. This plan will support individuals, families, communities, tradespeople, seniors and veterans in Palliser and indeed across Canada.

I fully support the jobs and growth act, 2012 and ask all hon. members to join together toward building a stronger Canada and a stronger economy.

I humbly offer my appreciation for the chance to speak about how the implementation of this long-ranging and forward-thinking plan will benefit residents of Palliser, the land of the living skies, as well as all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and I could not believe my ears. I had no choice but to rise here and address this.

My colleague talked about lowering taxes for large corporations. That means that workers' contributions to employment insurance will increase by 5¢ in 2013. Furthermore, the limit will increase from \$45,000 to \$47,000. This means the Conservatives will be taking about \$1.3 billion out of Canadians' pockets. A tax increase should not be disguised like that.

● (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question but I am not quite sure what she was asking. It seemed to me that she was saying there was taxation on fringe benefits for workers.

We certainly go on record as supporting full employment and supporting workers. We do not have any problem with that principle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would remind hon. members that it is questions and comments. Members sometimes pose questions but other times choose to make a comment instead.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I refer to a comment from my hon. colleague. He said that he could say emphatically that changing the age from 65 to 67 for old age security would definitely not have an effect on seniors.

First of all, we know that the old age security program is sustainable without making changes to it at the moment, as the Auditor General told us. What about those seniors who, at age 65, are collecting old age security and the guaranteed income supplement?

Seniors have to be at a low-income level to collect GIS, which has a \$15,000 a year impact. Over a two-year period, that \$30,000 is of enormous significance to them. I wonder what the member has to say to those low-income Canadians who would be affected by this change.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that there is time now to plan for the future. That time should be spent with individual people looking at financial responsibility in the future. We are bringing in the changes over a span of time that will give people a chance to put together their own financial world. If we are going to sustain this program, we have to do something to make it realistic, and two years is realistic.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Palliser for his great intervention on Bill C-45, which follows through on the Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act.

Having been an educator, one of the things we need to do is continually focus on providing resources for post-secondary education in terms of skilled workers. In this new world, it seems most countries are in financial despair and yet Canada is strong and healthy. What we are doing in our budget for post-secondary education to help us maintain that through our skilled workers is of significance.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, the issue my hon. colleague raises is very important as we have to fund our health and our educational programs.

I would refer the House to page 53 of Bill C-45. Members can see that there is \$105 million over two years to support forestry innovation, \$995 million over three years to support the Canadian innovation commercialization program, and it goes on and on.

I do not hear people mentioning these dollars, which we put together in the budget. It seems to have gotten by a lot of folks. I would also refer members to page 136 on expanded opportunities for aboriginal folks and to page 135 on improving insurance programs and information on jobs.

It's an easy read. If members have trouble, I taught reading in an elementary school for awhile and I could help them out.

● (1655)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I believe the hon. member for Vancouver East is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Etobicoke North is the next to speak, so I hope she will bear with me for a moment.

Government Orders

I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any order or usual practice of the House, clauses 269 to 298, related to changes to the Hazardous Materials Information Review Act be removed from Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-47; that, Bill C-47 be entitled “an act to amend the Hazardous Materials Information Review Act”; and that, Bill C-47 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that, the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Health; that, Bill C-45 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that, Bill C-45 be reprinted as amended; and that, the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

I am proposing this motion so that the Standing Committee on Health can properly study Bill C-45 as it relates to hazardous materials and make amendments. Mr. Speaker, we want to do our job in our committee and I ask that you seek unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member for Vancouver East have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to represent and serve the good people of Etobicoke North, where I was born and raised, and to fight the shameful cuts to the environment to be found in Bill C-45.

The government's record on the environment is atrocious, as recognized by its bottom of the barrel environmental performances. The 2008 climate change performance index ranked Canada 56th of 57 countries in terms of tackling emissions. In 2009 the Conference Board of Canada ranked Canada 15th of 17 wealthy industrialized nations on environmental performance. In 2010 Simon Fraser University and the David Suzuki Foundation ranked Canada 24th of 25 OECD nations on environmental performance.

The government learned nothing from last spring's hue and cry against the omnibus budget implementation bill, Bill C-38: concerned Canadians, demonstrations across the country, the 500 organizations that joined the Blackout Speak Out campaign to stand up for democracy and the environment, 3,200 pages of correspondence and extensive international criticism.

The voices of Canadians concerned about democracy, the environment and the health of our children and grandchildren has once again fallen on deaf ears.

This past week the government tabled the anti-democratic and draconian Bill C-45, its second omnibus budget implementation bill. The bill would alter the Indian Act and reduce protections contained in the Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act, foundational Canadian laws to steward a sustainable environment, clean water and health oceans. It would also weaken the Canada

Labour Code in ways that were not even hinted at in the budget. In total, the bill takes aim at some 60 pieces of legislation.

Bill C-45 hides big changes to environmental laws, subverts democracy and weakens protection of water and ecosystems. West Coast Environmental Law describes the lowlights of Bill C-45 as follows.

The Navigable Waters Protection Act of 1882, considered Canada's first environmental law, has been changed to the Navigation Protection Act and dramatically limits the number of waterways protected. Of the roughly 32,000 lakes in Canada, just 97 lakes and 62 rivers will now be protected.

This means the construction of bridges, dams and other projects would be permitted on most waterways without prior approval under the act. It is important to note that the original budget says nothing about restricting federal controls over lakes and rivers. Astoundingly, however, pipelines are directly exempted from this law. Under the act, pipeline impacts on Canada's waterways will no longer be considered in environmental assessments.

According to Ecojustice's executive director Devon Page:

Simply put, lakes, rivers and streams often stand in the path of large industrial development, particularly pipelines. This bill, combined with last spring's changes, hands oil, gas and other natural resource extraction industries a free pass to degrade Canada's rich natural legacy....

It is important to remember that when the government came to power it inherited a legacy of balanced budgets but soon plunged the country into deficit before the recession ever hit. It is absolutely negligent and shameful that the government would now gut environmental safeguards in order to fast-track development and balance its books.

Other lowlights of Bill C-45 include giving industry the option to request that its existing commitments to protect fish habitat be amended or cancelled, or that it be let off the hook for promised compensation for lost or damaged habitat. It would also eliminate the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission, an independent body charged with making science-based decisions to protect Canadians from toxic chemicals and hazardous materials in the workplace.

Bill C-45 needlessly tinkers with the Fisheries Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 to correct obvious drafting mistakes made during the ramming through of Bill C-38. Changing the same bill twice in one year underlines the value of debating specific bills through appropriate committees.

Government Orders

● (1700)

Jessica Clogg, the executive director and senior counsel for West Coast Environmental Law, stated:

So much for the federal government's promise that the bill would focus on budget implementation and contain no surprises.

The Bill C-45 'budget bill' is a wolf in sheep's clothing that will have major implications for the environment and human health.

John Bennett, executive director, Sierra Club Canada, said:

Today's killing of the Navigable Waters Act, along with further gutting of what's left of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and Fisheries Act, will inhibit the ability of Canadians to protect their natural environment for their children, grandchildren and future generations.

He went on to state:

This assault on the environment is deeply offensive and undemocratic. I don't remember the Prime Minister campaigning in the last election on a platform of laying waste to the Canadian landscape.

Many of Canada's leading environmental organizations, including the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, Environmental Defence, Équiterre, Greenpeace, Nature Canada, Pembina Institute, Sierra Club Canada, West Coast Environmental Law and WWF Canada, issued a joint statement decrying the fact that, once again, the federal government is proposing to make significant changes to environmental legislation without proper democratic debate.

The government has repeatedly abused Parliament by ramming through outrageous omnibus bills. For example, two years ago the government introduced the 880-page omnibus bill, a grab bag of bills that the government wanted to pass quickly. In fact, it was half of the entire workload of Parliament from the previous year. As a result, the government was severely condemned for turning the legislative process into a farce.

Most recently the government introduced Bill C-38, the 400-plus page omnibus budget implementation bill. Through the bill, the government sprung sweeping changes on our country, affecting everything from employment insurance, environmental protection, immigration and old age security, to even the oversight that charities receive. None of these changes were in the Conservative platform. They were rushed into law by "an arrogant majority government that's in a hurry to impose its agenda on the country".

According to one newspaper, omnibus bills are "political sleight-of-hand and message control, and it appears to be an accelerating trend. These shabby tactics keep Parliament in the dark, swamp MPs with so much legislation that they can't absorb it all, and hobble scrutiny. This is not good, accountable, transparent government."

The government's actions reek of hypocrisy. In 1994, the right hon. member for Calgary Southwest and today's Prime Minister criticized omnibus legislation, suggesting that the subject matter of such bills is so diverse that a single vote on the content would put members in conflict with their own principles, and that dividing the bill into several components would allow members to represent the views of their constituents on each part of the bill. The right hon. member is now using the very tactics he once denounced. It is a shame that he changed his tune when he was elected to the highest office in the land.

Canadians should be deeply concerned by yet another of the government's end runs around the democratic process and the potential for even more destruction of critical habitat and greater pollution. The government did not campaign in the last election on gutting environmental protection. Canadians should therefore rise up, have their voices heard, and stop the Prime Minister's destruction of laws that protect the environment and the health and safety of Canadians, our communities, economy and livelihoods. Canadians are entitled to expect much more than they are witnessing today in the protection of our environment and democratic values, which our beautiful country was built on.

● (1705)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned gutting the Fisheries Act, changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and numerous other environmental protection measures that were significantly impacted, both in Bill C-38, and again in this budget implementation act. She also speculates that the government wants to fast track its major industrial agenda, such as, the Enbridge pipeline project in British Columbia.

Could my hon. colleague comment on that?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we had a former Conservative minister responsible for the current Fisheries Act, who came to talk about the last budget implementation bill when it was put through the finance committee. He stated:

This is a covert attempt to gut the Fisheries Act, and it's appalling that they should be attempting to do this under the radar.

He also said:

They are totally watering down and emasculating the Fisheries Act...they are making a Swiss cheese out of [it].

At the finance committee, he reported:

The bottom line...is to take your time and do it right. To bundle all of this into a budget bill, with all its other facets, is not becoming of a Conservative government, period.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I met with a group of manufacturers, and they gave me a booklet, *Our Future*, talking about an action plan for Canada, driving investment, creating jobs, growing exports. They have a record of generating a lot of money toward our economy: \$166 billion in GDP, \$280 billion in exports.

Throughout the booklet they demonstrate that manufacturing matters, and they talk a lot about productivity. They talk a lot about investment, but they also talk a lot about streamlining regulations.

In one area they were talking about a recent study on macroeconomic impacts of federal regulation. The manufacturing sector concluded that 2,183 unique regulations have been imposed upon the manufacturing sector, with regulation-imposed costs across the entire sector. They say that the output could be reduced by \$200 billion to \$500 billion.

Government Orders

I want to know if the member has met with the manufacturers, the CMC, to talk to them about streamlining regulations. The CMC believes that science-based research is important, but it is important to streamline regulations.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there were a number of questions in there. I did hear at the end about science-based policy. This is a government that has a war on science, a war on the environment.

The government has cut the Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory in the far north, which looks at ozone, at climate change. This year we have had the greatest melting, ever, of sea ice in the high Arctic. Last year, an ozone hole was discovered that was two million square kilometres.

Why would the government cut a research station at a time when major environmental changes are taking place?

We also are seeing the potential loss of the Experimental Lakes Area, 58 lakes which are unique in the world, doing ecosystem-based research. We are also seeing the potential cut of the Kluane Lake Research Station. These research stations could be kept open for about \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

There is a war on science. There is a war on the environment. The government should be striking a balance between the economy and the environment; they are two sides of the same coin.

• (1710)

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to address the House today and to speak on Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act, 2012.

This important bill continues the path laid out by our government in the spring to support job creation, economic growth and prosperity for all Canadians in the short and long term.

It would be easy for us to become complacent with the relative stability and success of the Canadian economy in comparison to many of our global partners. We could continue to brag about Canada being a world leader in job growth, financial stability and a strong presence in the world. However, in doing so, we would be doing ourselves no favours.

The global economy remains fragile, especially in Europe and the United States, our largest trading partners. Canada is not immune to such global economic challenges coming from outside of our border, and careful steps must be taken to ensure our economic recovery does not stall or begin to falter.

The steps being taken in Bill C-45 will ensure that Canada remains on the right track. In my home riding of Brampton—Springdale, and in the city of Brampton as a whole, over 80% of businesses are designated as small or medium, with fewer than 50 employees.

Under this bill, the highly successful hiring credit for small businesses would be extended for one year. The hiring credit of up to \$1,000 against the increase in EI premiums paid by employers helps small businesses hire the workers they need to expand and grow their operations. More importantly, it helps small businesses create jobs for those living in their community.

I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of entrepreneurs operating small businesses in my riding who have benefited first-hand from the hiring credit for small businesses. They are among the 536,000 employers nationwide who are eligible for this credit. Each of the entrepreneurs I have met has spoken highly of the credit, which has eased some of the additional costs of bringing new staff onboard.

The positive effect of the new jobs, created in part by the credit, goes beyond just helping employers expand and grow their businesses. Each job created represents an individual receiving a new employment opportunity, one more person who is given a chance to return to the workforce. When unemployment is low and Canadians have access to well-paying jobs to support their families, the entire country benefits.

This bill also trims much of the unnecessary red tape faced by small business employers, allowing them to focus on managing and growing their businesses. It simplifies the calculation for statutory holiday pay, eliminating the multitude of different formulas used to achieve the same end.

This budget reduces the tax compliance burden for small businesses and makes a number of significant administrative improvements at the Canada Revenue Agency.

This bill will also implement our government's plan to facilitate and improve interprovincial and cross-border trade. The implementation of the agreement on internal trade will build a stronger economic union between the provinces and eliminate barriers to internal trade and labour mobility by incorporating enforceable penalties against governments for failures to comply.

• (1715)

The 2006 census reported that manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and retail trade were the three largest industries in Brampton. Many of the firms in those industries are heavily involved in the cross-border transport of material and goods, with much of that trade coming across the U.S. border in Windsor.

The Windsor-Detroit corridor is Canada's most important trade artery and the busiest Canada-U.S. commercial border crossing, handling almost 30% of the Canada-U.S. surface trade. An efficient and secure trade corridor is essential to the economies of the U.S. and Canada.

The Detroit River international crossing would facilitate the movement of people and goods between Canada and the U.S., by ensuring that there is sufficient border-crossing capacity to handle the projected goals in cross-border trade and traffic in the Windsor-Detroit trade corridor.

Government Orders

It would also provide a much-needed crossing alternative at the busiest Canada-U.S. commercial border crossing and create thousands of jobs and opportunities on both sides of the border. This bill would allow for the project to be fast-tracked. It would clarify a number of governance issues and ensure continued efficiency, security, safety and mobility at the Detroit-Windsor border crossing, while ensuring that appropriate environmental mitigation measures are met and in full compliance with federal law.

To continue to help families, we are improving the registered disability savings plan. Parents who have saved money in an RESP for a child with a disability would be able to transfer investment income earned in an RESP to a registered disability savings plan on a tax-deferred rollover basis, if the plan shares a common beneficiary and if the beneficiary can reasonably be expected to be prevented from pursuing post-secondary education due to his or her disability.

The bill would also implement plans to help Canadians save for retirement by laying out the tax framework behind the pooled registered pension plan implemented this spring. These plans would provide accessible large-scale and low-cost pension options to employers, employees and the self-employed. Our government is also improving the administration of the Canada pension plan, clarifying guidelines on contribution for certain benefits, determining minimum qualifying periods for delayed applicants for a disability pension and clarifying recognition of divorces granted outside of Canada for the purposes of credit splitting.

Bill C-45 would also close a number of tax loopholes, phasing out subsidies and tax credits for oil, gas and mineral exploration. However, it would expand tax relief for investment in clean energy generation equipment, encouraging investment in more efficient means of energy.

When we stood in this place in the spring, our government had helped the Canadian economy create more than 700,000 net new jobs since July 2009. With the job numbers reported by Stats Canada at the beginning of this month, that number now stands at more than 820,000 net new jobs since July 2009, most of which are full-time positions in the private sector.

Budget 2012 would keep us on the right track to return to balanced budgets in the medium term, keep taxes for individuals and small business low, and create jobs and economic prosperity in the long term.

Bill C-45 is the next step in the process of Canada's economic recovery and plan for future growth. I encourage all members in the House to support the bill.

● (1720)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member his view on the two-tier pension system that the bill before us would create, as well as the fact that younger workers entering the public service would simply not have the same kind of pension as their parents, and the way in which that truly disadvantages a whole generation of Canadians.

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind all members on the other side of the House that this budget was put together having consultations with thousands and thousands of Canadians, small businesses, other organizations and stakeholders. It actually

gives an opportunity to individuals who are self-employed, who did not previously have a pension plan that they could use when they were able to retire at a later age.

As a matter of fact, when I talk to my constituents and other Canadians when I am travelling, one of the things I hear is that Canadians in general applaud the efforts the government has taken in addressing issues that needed to be addressed.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brampton—Springdale for a great overview of some of the initiatives in our jobs and growth plan for prosperity. It hearkens back to our initial 2006 advantage Canada, where we focused on tax relief, on red tape reduction, on supporting innovation through post-secondary education and so much more that he mentioned and at which he did a great job.

I want to emphasize that since that 2006 economic plan, we have not only tabled budgets but successive budget implementation acts, which means that we have had days and days of debate in the House and now, with this particular budget implementation act, we are actually going to have multiple committees take a look at it. This is going to be a robust debate on these initiatives, where democracy is really going to flourish. At the same time, we need to make sure these initiatives get enacted, so we support this economy and do not have the kind of experience as has happened in Europe and south of the border.

How important is it to get these initiatives in place so they can get working to stimulate our economy and continue to create jobs for Canadians?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for a wonderful question and for working hard on behalf of his constituents and representing them well in the House.

As I mentioned previously, the government and members on this side of the House are always, on a daily basis, talking to Canadians, looking for ways, listening to their issues, listening to their concerns, considering how they can be better addressed and how we can better represent and serve them and their best interests. The government continues to do a great job.

It was no accident that the government has played a very important role by introducing these economic action plans and has created more than 820,000 net new jobs, especially when we see the other parts of the world where countries and other economies are still suffering. We still have a lot of work to do in Canada, but we are on the right track. We are serving Canadians, and that is what we are here to do and will continue to do. I would encourage all members on the other side of the House to support this budget. It is a wonderful piece of legislation.

Government Orders

●(1725)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my constituents are wondering where all those jobs are. My constituents are asking why it is that the government has decided it is going to beat up on them. It is a shame that the government again shows such lack of faith in Canadians. It is a shame that the government feels it is a waste of time to engage Canadians in the discussion as to what is good for them and what they feel they need. It is a shame the government is so afraid of dissenting opinion, dissenting voices that say they might have a different way of doing things or maybe even a better way.

Is it not the function of this place to offer that dissenting opinion, to offer an objective opinion that differs, maybe, from the government's? My opinion, which I think I share with the rest of my colleagues in this House, is it is not a situation of "it is my ball so you play by my rules". In this House, the government, the official opposition and the other opposition parties are elected to represent Canadians, to represent their voices, not to rubber-stamp what the government members feel is the ideal way to do things.

As far as Bill C-45 is concerned, this budget implementation bill, the Conservatives seem to want to make Canadians believe that everything they are talking about in this bill was in the budget, while it was not. The budget is a series of numbers and calculations. However, what the government is missing is that it is not only what one achieves but how one achieves it. This is what I will focus on today.

I remember, upon first entering this House, one of the first questions asked after the throne speech was how the Conservatives were going to achieve these goals that they had set for themselves; how they were going to balance the budget by 2014; how they were going to make these cuts; who was going to be affected by these cuts. The response we got was silence.

We kept asking those questions and kept getting silence, until we came across Bill C-38, the Trojan horse bill that, under the guise of a budget bill, included over 200 changes that gutted the Environmental Protection Act. How is that a budget? It went on to horrify Canadians with the sweeping changes that the Conservatives made in Bill C-38, with nary a word of consultation, at least not with the other side. Maybe there was consultation with friends, consultation about how this bill would help friends of the Conservatives, but again, not with the people of my riding.

We saw changes to the EI Act, which hurt more than they helped. We saw changes to health care. We saw changes, as I said, to the Environmental Protection Act. I would venture a guess that not a whole lot of people sat there and said it would be a good idea to just destroy the Environmental Protection Act.

So now we have Bill C-38's evil little brother, Bill C-45, which continues the work that the government proudly stands up and says is a good thing.

As I said earlier, there are some good things in this bill, and members have heard many of my colleagues stand to request unanimous consent on motions to separate out some of these good things in the bill, which have all been refused. Why?

●(1730)

If they are good things, why not set those aside and move them forward? Instead, we get the party line, that "If you fight me, you fight my gang", as they say in Montreal.

We are here to do a job for Canadians and it is important that we listen to Canadians. On this side of the House we are also the voice of Canadians. Yet we have another time allocation motion limiting the discussion of the bill and all the very intricate aspects of this monster bill to just a few days.

We have been told that the Conservatives have graciously agreed to allow some of these things to go off to committee, but we all know what happens in committee. Not a lot gets through as far as amendments are concerned. To us, it seems to be more of a publicity stunt when the Conservatives say they will let things go to committee, because Canadians want to know that their interests are being held to a high standard. That is not happening with the bill.

How we do things is extremely important to Canadians. There is a lack of transparency, a lack of letting Canadians know what is going on before it happens. What is the point of saying what is going on after the fact? Why are we voting on a bill that has serious problems rather than addressing those problems through consultation before it becomes a bill and by tweaking it in committee in an open and transparent way?

It does seem that the government is afraid of dissenting opinions, dissenting opinions that help balance out what we are giving to Canadians. Is it not our obligation to make sure that when a bill gets to the point of ascension, it is done knowing that it has been vetted in a proper way and the best way for Canadians?

We NDP members have been accused of using tactics to slow down the process. We have been told that we do not vote for good things for Canadians. I would like to clear that up. We do vote for good things for Canadians when we are given the opportunity, but when we are thrown an omnibus bill that has serious issues, wrapping up those little jewels, for lack of a better way of putting it, is problematic.

It is a shame that the government decides that it wants to play politics with Canadians' lives rather than putting forward legislation that helps Canadians, and putting forward legislation in a positive way, in a way that is fitting for this House, and not using tactics like time allocation and overpowering our committees, but letting the voice of all Canadians and this whole House, which represents the voice of all Canadians, have an opportunity to be heard and to put forth an idea that might make this bill a little more palatable.

We have heard many times about the Prime Minister, who spoke out against omnibus bills, but when asked he has no answer for us as to why he has used these multiple times.

I ask this House, the government, to think about the how this is being done—

●(1735)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member has completed his allocated time.

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I would remind hon. members to watch the chair from time to time to see how the time is going along. It gives us a chance to keep members in the loop that way.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned on a number of occasions that the government was afraid of honest debate. I have to admit that I have not lost any sleep at all regarding the debate on the budget implementation act. Again, it is one portion of the entire budget that was tabled.

I remind Canadians that when we have an economic plan that has multiple budget implementation acts, it means there will be many days of debate here in the House and at committee, which are continuing now. In fact, multiple committees will look at this budget implementation act.

I would ask my hon. colleague what his concerns are with the bill. He mentioned “concern” multiple times, but not specifically. Is it the tax reductions that he is concerned about? Is it the fact that Canadian citizens would have less money taken out of their pockets and that pensions would be fairer for public servants? What aspects exactly is the hon. member talking about?

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, my concern is that the bill's format does not allow for true democratic discussion. Hiding little jewels in a monster bill that guts acts and laws that have nothing to do with the budget is sneaky to say the least.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for the wonderful observations in his speech.

Along with the gutting of environmental legislation, particularly with respect to lakes and rivers, I notice that the government is withdrawing its support for the Experimental Lakes Area, one of the world's most pristine environmentally protected areas. It has allowed tremendous research on mercury in rivers, the effects of global warming, acid rain, et cetera.

It only costs \$2 million a year to maintain the Experimental Lakes Area. Clearly, giving up that asset is of no benefit. In fact, it is emasculating any opportunity we have to conduct important environmental research.

I wonder if the member could enlighten us a little more on the removal of funding from the Experimental Lakes Area by the Conservative government through the budget bill.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, I think it goes to what I was saying about the fear of dissenting opinion. Science, for the most part, is not always very supportive of the business and commercial end of an idea.

I think this withdrawal of support goes to the image, for lack of a better way of putting it, of the government taking the side of business and profit making over sound science. However, Canadians benefit both from the economy as well as science and learning.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with the environment.

As we know, changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act mean that thousands of waterways will no longer be protected.

One unprotected waterway runs into another waterway and so on. Sooner or later, that water makes its way into the water table or the ocean. What impact does my colleague think this will have on future generations and on sustainable development?

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, again, this is the crux of the problem. Does it speed up the economic reasons for a company or organization wanting to build over an unprotected lake by not having this Navigable Waters Protection Act in place?

It would create a situation where business has the opportunity to weigh its own interests on whether to circumvent prevention and protection laws or needs.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on what matters to Canadians: jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Since 2006, our government has supported the security and prosperity of all Canadians, promoted Canadian businesses and made investments in job creation. When the global economic crisis hit, the previous actions by our government helped Canada avoid a deep and long-lasting recession.

Our government's response to the crisis was both timely and targeted, and was one of the strongest responses to the global recession among the G7 countries. However the recovery process is not complete, and there are many challenges and uncertainties still confronting our economy today.

Bill C-45 takes important and strategic steps to address these challenges and ensure the sustainability of public finances and social programs for both current and future generations. In Bill C-45, our government is focusing on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity through investments in business, infrastructure, trade, families and communities.

All Canadians are sure to benefit from the provisions in Bill C-45, as I will outline in my remaining time.

Our government believes it is important to assist small Canadian businesses so they can focus on what matters: growth and job creation. We are doing this by extending the hiring credit for small business. This is a temporary credit of up to \$1,000 that helps alleviate the costs of additional hiring for approximately 536,000 employees. This will reduce the 2012 payroll costs of small business by approximately \$205 million, an astonishing saving that I know small businesses in my riding of Oxford will appreciate.

Government Orders

This initiative is in addition to our commitment to small business owners to reduce red tape by implementing the one-for-one rule; reducing the administrative tax burden on small businesses by enhancing the Canada Revenue Agency's my business account portal; and doubling the threshold for eligibility to use the GST-HST streamlined accounting methods; and enhancing the predictability of the scientific research and experimental development tax incentive program. It is good news all around for small business owners.

Our government understands the important role that Canadian farmers play in our country. They not only provide nutritious and delicious food for Canadians and people around the world, but they also provide numerous job opportunities for the Canadian economy. The importance of farmers and their contributions to society can be seen in my riding of Oxford. Every season, we are lucky to enjoy the various fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products that our Oxford farmers produce.

Oxford and Canadian farmers will be happy to hear that in budget 2012 we are assisting hard-working farmers by investing \$50 million to help Canadian farmers remain on the cutting edge of agricultural innovations. We are also providing tax relief to reduce the costs of new investments in processing machinery and equipment, and \$24 million to fund national biosecurity and best practices initiatives to combat hog diseases.

In Bill C-45 our government is also making amendments to the Canada Grain Act to streamline and update the operation of the Canadian Grain Commission by reducing costs and better aligning the commission with the needs of the grain sector. This includes a \$44 million investment as the commission continues to transition to a more sustainable funding model. This will create a more competitive environment for our farmers and improve their bottom line. No matter what type of farming Canadians are employed in, they will surely benefit from the support of our government.

The Canadian manufacturing industry and its workers is one of the key engines of Canada's economy, as it represents a vital source of jobs and economic growth for many communities, including my riding of Oxford.

Since 2006, our government has proudly supported the manufacturing sector by lowering business taxes to 15%, eliminating the job-killing corporate surtax and introducing the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance tax relief to help manufacturers become more competitive when upgrading their machinery and equipment.

The manufacturing sector has seen strong results due to our government support, and this can be seen in my riding of Oxford.

In March of this year, Toyota announced that it would be increasing Rav4 production at its Woodstock plant from 150,000 annual capacity to 200,000. This increase will result in 400 new jobs. That is great news for the people of Oxford and the Canadian economy as a whole.

I might say there will be a fine announcement at the CAMI GM plant in Oxford tomorrow about a milestone that the plant has reached.

● (1745)

On this side of the House we want to continue with these types of results with the implementation of budget 2012. That is why we are investing \$500 million to support venture capital activities, extending the domestic powers of Export Development Canada to provide financing to support Canadian manufacturers and other exporters and \$110 million to double support to manufacturers and other entrepreneurs through the industrial research assistance program.

I look forward to hearing many more success stories that are sure to come as we continue to support our manufacturers with budget 2012.

In addition to our government's investments in key industries, we are also facilitating increased trade by strengthening the Trade Act. Bill C-45 would facilitate the construction of the urgently needed bridge along Canada's most important trade artery, the Windsor-Detroit corridor.

Our government will continue to work closely with the state of Michigan, the United States government and the province of Ontario on the Detroit River international crossing project. This project is consistent with the Government of Canada's economic agenda, given its importance for Canada's long-term economic prosperity, growing international trade and investment and the creation of jobs.

The new border crossing will facilitate the movement of people and goods between Canada and the U.S. by ensuring that there is sufficient border crossing capacity to handle projected growth in cross-border trade and traffic in the Windsor-Detroit trade corridor. It will also provide a much needed crossing alternative to the busiest Canada-U.S. commercial border crossing and create thousands of jobs and opportunities on both sides of the border, while at the same time ensuring border security and safety. Canadians can be sure that our government will always support beneficial trade opportunities for the Canadian economy.

Our government is also ensuring the safety of all Canadians by updating the Customs Act. As part of the beyond the border action plan on perimeter security and economic competitiveness, the Government of Canada is working to better screen travellers so security threats can be stopped ahead of time. The changes to the Customs Act will support the interactive advance passenger information initiative outlined in the action plan. This initiative will allow the Canada Border Security Agency to take steps to prevent high-risk or improperly documented travellers from boarding a plane destined for Canada, which will also reduce costs associated with removing inadmissible individuals from Canada.

Government Orders

We are also implementing the integrated cargo security initiative, which will harmonize the security requirements for cargo between Canada and the United States. The pre-screening of cargo will help save time for both businesses and the government by significantly reducing the need for re-inspection of cargo between the two countries and will ensure that high-risk cargo does not reach Canada. Our government is protecting Canadians both at home and abroad.

Families are the cornerstone of Canadian society. Our government believes in supporting families and that is why we have made huge investments since 2006 to help families save money and live healthier and happier lives. We have done this through the introduction of various initiatives, including the children's fitness tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, the family caregiver tax credit, the first time homebuyers tax credit, the registered disability savings plan, the working income tax benefit and the child tax credit.

Due to our government's strong record of tax relief, a Canadian family is now saving over \$3,100, a truly amazing saving. Families can use their savings toward investments, vacations, education or recreation. The possibilities are just endless.

In Bill C-45 we are helping families by improving the registered disability savings plan, helping Canadians save for retirement by implementing a tax framework for pooled registered pension plans and improving the administration of the Canada pension plan.

We are also respecting taxes paid by our hard-working Canadian families by taking landmark action to ensure that the pension plans for members of Parliament, senators and federal public sector employees are financially responsible and broadly consistent with the pension products offered by other jurisdictions as well as fair relative to those offered in the private sector.

We are closing tax loopholes that have been open for far too long and eliminating duplication to ensure that Canadian taxpayer dollars are put to good use.

I am proud of the investments and initiatives that our government is putting in place in Bill C-45. We are getting things done for Canadians as we focus on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. I encourage all members to join us as we support Canadians by voting in favour of Bill C-45.

● (1750)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the changes being made to the Canada Grain Act. He may not be aware but hundreds of jobs in inward inspection are going to be lost. The people doing those jobs ensure that western wheat going out for either domestic consumption or export coming to port or at different linkages throughout is both the quality and quantity that farmers want it to be. As inward inspection goes as a result of Bill C-45, the concern is not only will hundreds of jobs be lost, but farmers will be short-changed. That is really a concept that stands in polar opposition to what the member said.

I would be keen to hear him comment on the real facts of the changes to the Grain Act.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, some of the real consequences of the changes to the Grain Act are there has never been more grain moved in Canada and there has never been more money come back into Canada as a result of those changes.

Farmers finally have a choice and it truly is an opportunity. This is a country of choice and for far too long farmers had absolutely no choice.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it always confounds me, and I think Canadians as a whole, that whenever the Conservative government talks about prosperity, it is always at the expense of the environment. It has gutted environmental legislation under Bill C-38 and it will do it again in Bill C-45. It is getting rid of legislation that protects our lakes and rivers, reducing it to a mere less than 100 lakes and less than 100 rivers that will remain protected. It is getting rid of its investment in the Environmental Lakes Area. This is a pristine area, used for study. There is nowhere like it in the world, except Canada. It costs a mere \$2 million a year to maintain the area.

Why does the government feel it necessary to emasculate environmental legislation in the hope of thinking that it is somehow going to generate prosperity?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, it is a rather interesting comment. The member starts off by saying that Conservatives are always doing all this damage to the environment. I wish he would turn around to the hon. member sitting behind him and ask who was identified as the greenest prime minister in the history of the country. He would find it was a Conservative prime minister, Brian Mulroney.

His colleague behind him would be more than happy to tell the member about that. The acid rain treaty, signed under that prime minister's time, is landmark. Some of these things that he is talking about are really beyond the pale in many respects to the issue.

I looked at the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The member is the critic for agriculture. Finally, farmers now have something with which they can deal with their drainage ditches and small bridges in rural Ontario and Canada. It is high time we moved to some of these things.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will first clarify and answer the question from the member for Churchill. Farmers were actually consulted on this change. Farmers actually want this change. Farmers, when they deliver their grain, they no longer own it. Therefore, it does not make any sense for farmers to be paying for inward inspection. It is that simple. I would encourage her to speak to some farmers.

The hon. member just spoke very briefly about the importance of the Detroit river international crossing. I know it is close to his region. He probably has a better understanding than I do of how important it is. Could he explain a bit more about the importance of that crossing that we are working on in this budget implementation act?

Government Orders

• (1755)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, we all think our ridings are unique. Oxford has a lot of agricultural products, a lot of which are exported to the United States. More important, we have two automotive plants, a Toyota plant and a GM Cami plant. They export 90% of their product to the United States. When those bridges are tied up, that bridge in particular, the costs are astronomical. It slows down production and hinders job opportunities for Canadians. This budget is about that. It is about job opportunities, employment for Canadians and fairness.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-45.

I want to focus a little on the environmental impacts of various provisions, but I want to start with what concerns me to a great deal.

The bill is supposed to be all about creating jobs and generating prosperity. In fact, anybody who has been able to obtain some information from the government, which it is loath to releasing, any of the experts, the PBO for example, on the impact of the provisions of the budget bill that was brought down last spring has estimated we would be looking at nearly 100,000 jobs lost as a direct result of the implementation of this particular bill.

Not only that, the government would be making widespread wholesale changes to environmental protections that exist in various legislation, such as the Canadian Environmental Assessment Review Act, the Fisheries Act, the Navigable Waters Act. A number of pieces of legislation that provide oversight for projects, for development, for activity throughout the country, will be removed and that causes considerable concern.

Listening to members opposite talk about the bridge over the Detroit River or other projects, I hearken back to the Sydney tar ponds. I heard today in the news that the last contract has been awarded for the cleanup of the tar ponds in Sydney.

The tar ponds is a notable environmental spot that resulted from steel making over more than 100 years in Sydney, in Cape Breton. Government after government felt that it was sufficient to make steel to create jobs to do whatever we wanted to do with the environment, to get rid of waste, to spoil the earth, the air and the water. Rivers were completely ruined and covered up as a result of what the steel making process did.

Nearly \$500 million of taxpayer money was taken, not the people who actually made off like bandits as a result of the opportunity to make steel in Cape Breton over those 100-and-some-odd years. It was the taxpayers who ended up paying as a result of the fact that government after government, both federally and provincially, failed to provide the oversight.

It feels to me like we are going back to the future. We are rolling back the clock in our country. The government has decided that it wants to export oil and bitumen and it will see those pipelines built, over as many water courses as needs to happen, as quickly as possible, without any oversight. That causes me and members on this side some considerable concern.

Not only does the government bring in this second omnibus bill, which we are going to be forced, with one set of votes, to vote on, rumour has it that it is going to break off some of the provisions in the bill and send them to committee, but we still are going to be faced with one bill that we will be voting for or against at the end of the day.

• (1800)

As a result of public pressure, the government is going to allow for greater discussion. However, it is clear that the Conservatives have no intention of making any changes to the bill. That is why members on this side continue to move motions to try to get the government to split off some important aspects of the bill.

One issue that is particularly burdensome and troublesome with the bill is the change, in fact the removal of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Canada has over 32,000 lakes and rivers, and under this proposed budget bill only 97 lakes and 62 rivers are identified as significant. Why is that important? I heard a member opposite a moment ago say that the changes made to this act were important for farmers so they could plow over ditches in their field. It has nothing to do with ditches. That was the first budget bill last spring when that was allowed to happen; it allowed developers and others to get bulldozers and plow over the ditches.

This has to do with lakes and rivers. It is going to leave thousands of waterways without protection. Conservatives are even walking away from the majority of Canada's 37 designated Canadian heritage rivers. That means that a couple of heritage rivers in Nova Scotia, one of them being the Margaree, which is part of Margaree-Lake Ainslie River system, where Atlantic salmon and trout flourish in incredibly pristine water, could potentially be allowed to have roads, bridges or other projects that interfere with this river and this watershed without the requirement for permits.

It is the same thing for the Shelburne River, which begins in the Tobetic wilderness park. It is part of the Mersey River system. It is an important river system for the Mi'kmaw. It has been used for millennia, and now it is no longer under protection. The government does not seem to understand how important these rivers, lakes and the environment are to Canadians. Our job on this side is to make those points and to bring that information to the attention of Canadians. As I indicated earlier, we are going to do that by continuing to move motions to try to split off various portions of the bill, so not only do they get proper debate, but they get an opportunity to have a vote.

Government Orders

My time is nearly over. I want to move a motion. I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, clauses 173 to 178 related to changes to the fisheries act be removed from Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures and do compose Bill C-47; that Bill C-47 be entitled “an act to amend the fisheries act and the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act; that bill C-47 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans; that Bill C-45 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-45 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

● (1805)

I am proposing this motion as indicated so we will have the opportunity, not only to discuss the changes being proposed, debate them and hear witnesses, but to have an opportunity to vote on these specific amendments. I, therefore, request said unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for drawing attention to the seemingly inexplicable choices of what rivers are now covered by the Navigable Waters Protection Act, to be renamed the navigation protection act, and what ones are abandoned. Clearly, something in the order of 98% to 99% of all internal waterways in Canada are now to see a full-on retreat from federal constitutional authority. The provinces cannot step up to fill the void because of constitutional law; only the federal government is responsible for navigation on waterways in this country. Yet, members of the Conservative Party who speak in the House tell us not to worry, Canadian common law will still apply to protect navigation. That means if people want to protect their rights to use the waterways, they have to go to court.

What does the hon. member think of that?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, what the government is proposing to do with respect to these important watercourses and waterways, I find appalling. I have had the opportunity to talk to a number of organizations. I was in Alberta this past weekend where I had the opportunity to talk to an organization that is concerned about the watershed it is responsible for. In particular, the Bow River will be covered under this particular act but the Oldman River will not, and the two are completely interconnected. People are asking themselves what the rationale is behind this and, more importantly, what the damage is going to be as a result of this legislation and the removal of oversight and protection.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has highlighted a number of key issues to the BIA. My question is on employment, which he referenced as a major issue.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has stated that this budget would cost 43,000 Canadians their jobs and that the budget actually plans for unemployment to rise. If we combine that with the previous rounds of cuts, the PBO projects a total of 102,000 jobs lost. I wonder if my colleague could comment on this.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, provisions of this bill are particularly onerous for the reasons he cited, in terms of the direct jobs that are going to be lost.

The other part of the bill really puts it to workers. Whether we call them private sector or public sector workers, they are workers who are supporting families, communities and making a contribution to the economy of this country. The government, as a result of changes to the pension plan for public sector workers is in effect rolling back wages. Pensions are nothing but foregone wages. That is exactly what they are. They are freely negotiated, and there are trade-offs made during negotiations. Pensions are part of the compensation package. What the government is asking us to do is to unilaterally impose a rollback in the area of 25% to 30% on public sector workers in this country.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives say they held public consultations regarding this bill. If the Conservatives had consulted first nations, such as the Mi'kmaq people in my colleague's riding, does he think they would have agreed with the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, for instance?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, that is an absolutely perfect question because I have talked with the officials at the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs, the traditional governing structure for the Mi'kmaq in the Atlantic provinces, and there has not been any consultation.

Likewise, I spoke to the Thames River watershed conservation society on Thursday of last week, which is responsible for 410 kilometres of watershed as a volunteer organization. It has not been consulted.

I spoke to Trout Unlimited Canada on Friday in Alberta. It had not been consulted about the changes to the act that directly affect its area of interest. In the case of the aboriginal community, the changes directly affect its treaty and aboriginal rights.

Government Orders

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for the opportunity to be able to put some comments on the record. When we listen to all of the speeches, I understand that the role of opposition members is to criticize the government and to try very hard to get elected in the next election. However, a stronger role for all of us in the House is to pay very close attention to what will build and support our country.

Over 820,000 new jobs have been created since July 2009. Our country has the strongest job creation record in the G7. That is amazing. For the fifth straight year, the World Economic Forum rated our banking system the world's best. That is significant.

When we look to other countries, the reason they are facing horrendous economic downturns is because decisions were made that were neither in their best interests at the time nor in the future. As well, no planning went on in some of the countries and others were continually overspending.

If we look at Canada, we are living in a nation where people are living well, although there are significant challenges for all communities. Having said that, it is incredible that for the fifth straight year the World Economic Forum has rated our banking system as the world's best. Also, all major credit rating agencies, such as Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poor's, have affirmed Canada's AAA credit rating in this worldwide economic downturn.

Yet I sit in the House and hear over and over again about the NDP's job-killing carbon tax. I know that page 12 of the NDP's platform clearly highlighted that it would put a price on carbon. Therefore, this whole interchange in Parliament has been about the criticism of this government's handling of the economy. The opposition is blind to the factual information that has come not from members opposite but from global leaders and entities across the world who are praising Canada as the world's economic leader.

The NDP carbon tax would raise the price of everything that Canadians buy. I want to repeat that. The NDP—

• (1815)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I know that we have been going back and forth, but people who stand up and repeat misinformation and make things up are lowering the standard. If the member does not know the difference between what a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for James Bay has been up on this point earlier today. I have ruled on this particular intervention, as have previous Chair occupants. The member will know that the ruling is that it is a debate as to the matter of facts. This is common in the course of debate in the chamber.

I would seek the member's co-operation that, unless he has a specific point of order as set out in the Standing Orders, he choose not to intervene when other members have the floor.

The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I am astounded at such a motion because on the 2011 NDP platform, on page 12, it specifically stated that the NDP would put a price on carbon. The New Democrats'

costing document also showed plans to generate \$21.5 billion in government revenue through the scheme. What would that do? The NDP carbon tax would raise the price of everything.

Earlier this week, I heard several members opposite talk about their concerns about rising gas prices. The NDP carbon tax would raise gas prices. Respected economist Jack Mintz calculated that the \$21 billion proposed NDP carbon tax would raise gas prices by as much as 10¢ a litre. Therefore, this is a concern.

The *Financial Post*, on April 29, 2007, said, in reference to the NDP carbon tax, that it would increase the cost of transporting food and increase grocery prices. When we hear the members opposite talking about the need to take care of the workers and take care of Canadians, that is exactly what this government is doing.

For instance, when we talk about Canadians as a whole, we know that small business is a big asset to the economy in our country. We know that women, for instance, are entrepreneurs and are taking the lead in putting new creative businesses out there and feeding their families. They are very practical in what they do. Having said that, our government has proposed to extend the temporary hiring credit for small business for one year. That is huge because small businesses often do not have a chance to hire new people.

When I hear over and over again about the NDP carbon tax and the \$21.5 billion intended to be raised if those members get into government, it just makes me shudder. We will not be hearing about 820,000 new jobs in the future if that happens, because the cost of everything shuts down everything, including small business.

As I said, small businesses are the engine of job creation in Canada and are indispensable in their role as job creators. Small businesses struggling to get ahead and families struggling to buy their groceries and pay their mortgages do not need to be taxed and taxed again. That is what the NDP carbon tax would do, just add more and more taxes to families who are already stretching their budget in every way.

This temporary hiring credit for small business is \$1,000 per employer and for a small business that means a great deal. It means the difference between being able to push a business forward or having to step back and not be able to take care of one's family.

We talk about very practical things, as I have heard earlier today. I have heard some of the speeches here, and there are always complaints about there not being enough jobs, when 820,000 net new jobs is a lot of jobs. Those are people out there working, bringing home the bacon for their families. I have a real concern about the NDP carbon tax because it would not only kill jobs but it would also kill the ability for families to move ahead.

We have to be very mindful when things are proposed at the government level. Our government on this side of the House has been able to rank right up on top of the world for economic stability. That is something to be proud of it.

Government Orders

● (1820)

Members opposite and their families, and members on this side of the House, are living well even though there are some challenges. There are some things that will always be challenges, but this budget needs to be supported. This budget needs to be embraced to allow our country to move forward. I think that is what every member on all sides of the House wants.

The NDP carbon tax would kill jobs. The NDP carbon tax would push up the cost of gas. The NDP carbon tax would cause groceries to increase.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had a great deal of respect for Jim Prentice. There was a man who stood up in the House and did not misinform people. He was a man one could say would never lie. Jim Prentice in 2009 stood up as part of the throne speech and said that the government would put a price on carbon.

The present Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Montreal and said that the government would open a carbon trading institute in Montreal and “put a price on carbon”. Either they were making that up, they were lying or they thought the Canadian people were stupid, but that was the policy the government ran on: that it would put a price on carbon.

I see the bobbleheads who are now repeating this misinformation, the lie about the so-called carbon tax, when the government had told the Canadian people that it was putting a price on carbon

I would like to ask that hon. member, what happened to the commitment made by Jim Prentice, an honourable man in the House? Was that just cynicism on the government's part or was he making it up?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the Prime Minister would never tax the public in any way, shape or form to that end.

The fact of the matter is that I have never before been called a “bobblehead” and I take exception to that kind of analogy. I have had nine years of university. I have raised six children. I do not consider myself a bobblehead.

I consider myself an intellectual person who works hard to raise the standard of everything I do, and I am saying great kudos to the government and our Prime Minister, who has protected this whole country from financial ruin when a lot of other countries have experienced economic downturns.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, following up on the point that my colleague raised, Mr. Prentice made his comments in response to the Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne actually did say that the government would put a price on carbon, and that price was \$65 a tonne. If we take the total output, that would actually mean a \$45 billion tax on carbon, which is more than double what the entire Conservative caucus is saying we are pitching.

How do we square that circle?

● (1825)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, how I square that circle is that we are living in the year 2012 and the Prime Minister has never, ever said anything about putting a tax on carbon. It is the NDP carbon tax that would raise groceries. It is the NDP carbon tax that would increase gas prices. That is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans.

M. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, PCC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I both ran in 2008 against a carbon tax. The party that ran on the carbon tax was relegated to a reduced caucus in the opposition. They are now stuck in the third corner.

It is true that we talked about carbon trading with the United States. The United States would not trade. We cannot trade with ourselves, so that is the end of it.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for those comments because our government has been known for lowering taxes, giving tax breaks to every segment of our society from sports teams to families to small businesses.

The NDP carbon tax is the tax that was on page 12 of the NDP's platform, generating \$21.5 billion in revenue. It would raise every single thing.

The member for Dauphin last week talked about the things families have to get for their Halloween festivities. It would even raise those simple family things that people enjoy every day. It would impact on this country in a major way.

We have to be very mindful of that when we are talking about the budget.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before recognizing the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, I must inform her that I will have to interrupt her at 6:30 p.m. at the conclusion of the time provided for government orders. She has three minutes for her speech.

The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

Mrs. Djauouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I get the impression that today is Groundhog Day, and I am not talking about the day in February where we check to see whether the groundhog has seen his shadow to determine when spring will arrive. Rather, I am talking about the 1993 movie, where the main character keeps reliving the same day over and over again. I have the vague impression that I have already lived this moment where I rise in the House to speak out against a bill that is over 400 pages long and contains many elements that were not part of the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance in March.

This is likely because this is not the first time this has happened. I promise to do my best not to repeat myself even if the speech I gave last June is still valid and relevant today.

Adjournment Proceedings

Like Bill C-38, Bill C-45 is another massive omnibus bill that makes changes to many laws. Once again, the Conservatives are trying to ram their legislative measures through Parliament without allowing Canadians or their representatives, the MPs, to carefully examine them. The 400 pages of this bill once again contain many areas of concern.

I would have liked to focus on a few points, particularly health, but unfortunately, I have only one minute left.

What I can say is that this is truly an undemocratic practice designed to prevent the representatives of the people of Canada from examining the bill and doing their jobs properly. We are opposed to this way of doing business in Parliament. We want Canadians to know exactly what the current government is doing. We must speak out against all the bad things in this bill.

I would like Canadians to be aware of the fact that this is the same story all over again. This is the second time this has happened. It is the same 400-page bill to do nothing, apparently.

I hope that Canadians will learn their lesson about this government.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to pursue a question that was asked some time back, but it is still very relevant.

I asked this question in question period on May 17, and it related to a report that had just been released that the federal government was encouraging leases in the Beaufort Sea and other areas of our Arctic. At the same time, the National Energy Board had come up with a way to reduce what are fairly onerous requirements on oil companies that wished to drill in the Arctic. The National Energy Board had relaxed its requirements for proof of being able to drill a same-season relief well.

I think a lot of Canadians did not know what a relief well was until we watched the failure of one in the Gulf of Mexico with the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster. We certainly saw there why there is a need for it. For example, if there is a blowout at depths in the ocean, a way to stop the blowout is needed, and a relief well is required.

In the case of the Arctic, with much more difficult climatic conditions, if a blowout occurred during winter months when there is ice cover and no daylight, the chances of being able to get in a same-season relief well are critical. The relief well would have to be put in before the winter conditions became an impossible obstacle, in order to stop a blowout.

On May 17, I raised this question: How would we eliminate the risks of blowouts during drilling exploration and development in our most fragile ecosystem in the Arctic?

Since I first raised the issue, the French multinational giant, Total S.A., aborted its efforts to pursue oil drilling in the Arctic in September. The CEO of Total, Christophe de Margerie, told the *Financial Times* that there was simply too large a risk. In fact, from his point of view, the financial risk to his company of attempting to drill in the Arctic would outweigh any benefit. As he put it: “Oil in Greenland would be a disaster... A leak would do too much damage to the image of the company”.

We have a situation where at least one large oil company decided it is not worth the risk. However a second large oil company, Royal Dutch Shell, abandoned those attempts after repeated failures, also in September, after spending almost \$5 billion in efforts to get at oil in offshore Alaska, in the Arctic.

Here we have a situation where Canada is about to take the chair of the Arctic Council, which is a huge opportunity for this nation. The Minister of Health, a member of the Inuit nation, will be chairing the Arctic Council table.

This is a time for Canada to show leadership and say we will not subsidize oil and gas, we will not promote oil and gas in the Arctic and we will insist on same-season relief wells. We will not allow relaxation of standards and we will adopt a precautionary principle in concert with the other circumpolar nations who sit at the Arctic Council table. It is critical that we protect our Arctic.

• (1835)

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the question of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Our government is committed to ensuring that a strong and prosperous north helps shape the future of our nation. Without a doubt, the north continues to be a top priority of our government. We are carrying on with the delivery and improvement of key programs and initiatives under the northern strategy – programs and initiatives that benefit all Canadians.

The north is home to world-class resource potential, representing tremendous economic opportunity. Our government continues to encourage investment in northern communities while ensuring that investment is supported by a world-class safety and environmental protection regime in the north.

In anticipation and preparation for future investment in the north, the National Energy Board initiated a public review of Arctic safety and environmental offshore drilling requirements. The final report of the public review released by the board on December 15, 2011, reconfirmed that Canada’s Arctic offshore regulatory regime is one of the safest and most stringent regimes in the world.

Adjournment Proceedings

To emphasize this finding, the report included a series of new safety and environmental protection filing requirements for Arctic offshore drilling programs. These new requirements were developed based on input received during the public review. They will contribute to the already rigorous review process that the National Energy Board undertakes when considering whether to authorize oil and gas activities in the north.

The issuance of mineral rights on crown lands is important to encouraging investment in the north. Working with northern and aboriginal governments and people, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada issues rights to prospective resource developers. The rights issuance process in the north is open and transparent and, as in other jurisdictions in Canada, is market-based. An exploration licence issued by the department gives the developer an exclusive right to explore and to drill for oil and gas.

Currently, there is no drilling in the Arctic offshore. Any proposed activity associated with an exploration licence would require the authorization of the National Energy Board, and the review process would include public consultations. Also, before a drilling program would be authorized, the applicant would need to demonstrate that it meets the safety and environmental protection filing requirements for offshore drilling in the Canadian Arctic.

Our government is committed to helping the north realize its true potential as an economically healthy, prosperous and secure region within a strong and sovereign Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his comments. I believe that oil drilling in the Canadian Arctic is one of the most dangerous projects in the history of our country.

[*English*]

I look at this in light of the independent study by the World Wildlife Fund that found that:

Mounting an effective response to a major oil spill in the Arctic is presently not possible due to enormous environmental challenges, a lack of capacity and the severe limitations of current response methods in ice-covered waters.

The same report identified a so-called response gap whereby, due to the Arctic's remoteness and extreme weather there is also a high percentage of time when no response, however ineffective, could even be attempted.

We need to have a precautionary approach. We need to develop a strategy for the prevention of oil spills. I assert again that Canada should use its leadership as chair of the Arctic Council to pursue a matter for an oil spill prevention strategy for the Arctic and not be complacent.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, our government fully recognizes the importance of economic growth and environmental protection. Canada has robust environmental legislation and standards, a tough safety regime and experienced independent regulators to oversee offshore activities.

The National Energy Board is a world-class regulatory body. Our government is convinced that the board has the appropriate tools to

safely and effectively regulate any proposed oil and gas activity in Canada's Arctic. Our government is determined to realize the energy potential of the North, for the benefit of all Canadians.

[*English*]

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month I asked the Minister of Labour a question that is the number one question in my community. I cited the federal Minister of Labour's claim that her government is committed to ensuring workers who go to work return home safely. I said that is not what happened to Jason Chenier and Jordan Fram who died last year in a Sudbury mine. I said that Canadians want employers held accountable for endangering the lives of workers.

The federal Westray act was passed a decade ago, but the Minister of Labour is not enforcing it. I wanted to know when the Minister of Labour would start doing her job and protect Canadian workers. The parliamentary secretary stood up and, after nine words acknowledging the tragic consequences of those deaths, went on to cheer the government's track record on workplace safety. While many answers from the government leave Canadians shaking, this particular answer left many in my community deeply upset.

I am hoping that the member will leave his talking points tonight and speak real answers, not to me but to the Chenier and Fram families and members of the mining community who are watching this debate.

There are provincial jurisdiction issues to be addressed too, as the Ontario Liberal government refuses to call an inquiry. However, tonight I am addressing the proper enforcement of a federal law.

The Westray bill was a good bill and is a good law. There was bipartisan work on that bill led by some Nova Scotia MPs, including former leader of the NDP Alexa McDonough. It has in fact become a useless law so far, because it is not being enforced. I am unaware of a single prosecution under the Westray bill. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could confirm that in his remarks tonight.

If a law is on the books and it is not being enforced, then no wonder companies ignore it. Does this not bother the parliamentary secretary and his government?

The government likes to publicize its reputation of being tough on crime. Do the Conservatives not care about company crime? Does the Government of Canada, the government of Jordan Fram and Jason Chenier and Sudbury miners, intend to do anything about the law that is being ignored?

Adjournment Proceedings

Let me quote from the president of Local 6500, Rick Bertrand, when the police announced that no charges would be laid, “Under the Westray bill, the Canadian Criminal code was amended to make [it a] criminal offence to ignore workers’ health and safety...and in this case, that’s what happened”. The news report goes on to say that Mr. Bertrand said the union’s investigation revealed that Chenier had informed management about safety concerns at the mine. There is evidence backing this up.

Last month in the *Northern Life* newspaper, former editor Mick Lowe chronicled the long and hard journey toward mining safety in Ontario. He wrote that despite safety improvements, miners are still dying. What interested me about this article is that he referred to how bipartisan work, between the then Sudbury East NDP MPP Elie Martel and the Progressive Conservative government of Premier Bill Davis, created the Ham Commission into Workplace Safety in the Ontario Mining Industry. The writer credits the Davis Progressive Conservative government for acting and introducing the Ontario safety and health act of 1978, which included the right to refuse unsafe work.

I implore the parliamentary secretary to answer the question tonight, not with more words or cheering about the government’s record. Will the government commit to enforcing the Westray law? What will it do in the way of justice for Jordan Fram and Jason Chenier? What will the government do to ensure that miners who go to work can return home safely to their loved ones?

• (1845)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the MP for Nickel Belt and I share a vast region in northern Ontario with a number of major mining projects on the go. For instance, in the great Kenora riding we celebrate the fantastic contribution that it makes in terms of economic development. We also appreciate and understand the importance of workplace safety. To that end, I have had the Minister of Labour involved in a visit to Red Lake, which went very well.

We were concerned last summer, and remain concerned, when we heard about the deaths of two miners at the Vale Frood-Stobie mine complex in Sudbury.

[Translation]

We want to once again offer our sincere condolences to the families, friends and co-workers who were affected by this tragedy.

[English]

As the mining operation falls within the provincial jurisdiction, the Ontario Ministry of Labour is responsible for investigating this accident. We understand that the ministry has laid 15 charges against the company and one of its employees in connection with the deaths of two miners.

Although we were not directly involved, our government is committed to finding ways to prevent injury and illness in the workplace. This is an integral part of keeping Canada’s labour force strong, healthy and competitive.

The labour program works with the provinces and territories as well as employer and employee organizations to promote safe and healthy workplaces across Canada. Our responsibilities are set out in part II of the Canada Labour Code, which establishes occupational health and safety requirements for federally-regulated workplaces.

Beyond the code, we are developing policies and adopting health and safety regulations to reflect the evolving realities affecting today’s workplaces. However, enforcing laws is only part of the solution.

We must instill a sense of co-operation and shared responsibilities between employers and employees when it comes to addressing health and safety issues. When these issues cannot be resolved by the workplace partners, our federal health and safety officers intervene to investigate incidents and complaints in federally-regulated workplaces.

Occupational injuries can amount to significant costs to the Canadian economy in addition to the tragedies that are experienced by the workers and their families.

I can assure the member that we are doing everything we can to reduce the toll on human lives and ensure that our economic recovery remains strong.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Kenora for giving a much better answer than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour.

Those two miners died from what we in mining call a run of muck. The run of muck happened when a torrent of water and ore flooded the drift where they were working.

I suggest it is time the government stop mucking around with the safety of workers.

One of the mothers of those miners, Wendy Fram, is heading the local committee in our community to ensure justice is done for their sons and our miners. The other mother, Barb Staszak, wrote me today to keep up this fight. She said that she found “As time passes people forget and life goes on”. That is what those companies and the government count on, silence and forgetting.

It that what the Conservative government is choosing, silence and the forgetting of the Westray law?

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sincerity of the member’s question in response. When tragedies such as the one in Sudbury occur they affect us all, particularly when we come from large regions where mining activities are so prominent.

We are naturally concerned about the impact on the victims’ families, loved ones, colleagues and the community. I can advise the member that we offered to assist the Government of Ontario in any way we could. The investigation at this point into this accident falls under the provincial jurisdiction.

[Translation]

According to our information, formal charges have been laid and the legal proceedings are under way.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1850)

[*English*]

In Canada an average of three workers are killed every working day. We seek to make our workplaces more safe. This is way too many and we are committed to working with the provinces and territories, labour organizations and the like to end these tragedies in our workplaces.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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