

Canadian Senate passes budget early

by UPI

OTTAWA -- Political squabbling came to an abrupt halt as the Liberal Party-dominated Canadian Senate passed the minority Conservatives' budget in Ottawa.

By a 50-4 vote with five abstentions, the upper house cleared the bill Thursday, three weeks earlier than the Liberals said they would, The Globe and Mail reported.

The newspaper said the Liberals had planned to study the package, which contains an economic package to deal with the global recession, until the end of March. However, the Conservatives pointed out unless it were passed immediately, thousands of newly unemployed workers would miss out on five weeks of Employment Insurance income replacement benefits, the report said.

Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff called a news conference to explain the shift in tactics.

"A Liberal will never come between an unemployed worker and the employment insurance that he or she needs," he said.

Wednesday, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper told a luncheon gathering one of the key elements of the stimulus package was cutting bureaucratic red tape to get funds to their targets in weeks, rather than months.

The budget bill was expected to be given royal assent by Governor General Michaëlle Jean.
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