



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 149 No. 036
Wednesday, May 13, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

The House met at 2:30 p.m.

Prayer

• (1440)

[*English*]

RECALL OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Speaker: Colleagues, before I begin our proceedings, I would like to remind members of the special measures in place today.

[*Translation*]

The application of Standing Order 17 will be suspended for the current sitting. Members desiring to speak and address the Chair may do so from any seat in the House.

[*English*]

I will ask that all members tabling documents or moving a motion sign the document and bring it to the table themselves.

I wish to inform the House that pursuant to an order made on April 20, I sent a notice of meeting calling the House to meet this day. On Monday, May 11, I sent each member a message explaining the reasons for this recall. I now lay this notice on the table.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to an order made on Monday, April 20, the House will now proceed to the introduction of a government bill.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN DAIRY COMMISSION ACT

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*English*]

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HOUSE

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discus-

sions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

[*Translation*]

That authorized photographers be permitted to take photos during the in-person proceedings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic, in accordance with the existing guidelines of the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to a motion adopted on April 20, I wish to state that there is an agreement among the representatives of all recognized parties to govern the proceedings in relation to Bill C-16. Therefore, I move:

That, pursuant to the order adopted on April 20, 2020, Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act, be disposed of as follows:

(a) the bill be ordered for consideration at second reading later this day;

[*Translation*]

(b) when the House begins debate on the motion for second reading of the bill, two members of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may each speak to the said motion for not more than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments, provided that members may be permitted to split their time with another member; and, at the conclusion of the time provided for the debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill shall be put without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred; and

(c) if the bill is adopted at second reading, it shall be referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage on division, and deemed read a third time and passed on division.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1445)

[*English*]

CANADIAN DAIRY COMMISSION ACT

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): moved that Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this bill to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act. I urge hon. members to offer their support as well.

This measure was announced by the Prime Minister as part of a larger package last week to respond to the urgent needs of Canadian farmers and food processors in this challenging time. COVID-19 is placing enormous pressures on the entire sector.

The measures announced last week represent a federal investment of more than \$250 million on top of additional measures previously announced, including important reforms to our farm programs.

[*Translation*]

We absolutely need to be there for our farmers. They are essential to our food security, and they deserve our full support.

The dairy sector urgently needs this amendment to the Canadian Dairy Commission Act. Our dairy sector sustains the vitality of our rural communities. It stimulates our economy by generating billions in revenue and supporting tens of thousands of jobs. All across the country, dairy producers and processors are working hard to feed us. They are constantly going above and beyond to innovate, protect the environment, and produce the best dairy products in the world.

I have spent a lot of time with dairy producers in my riding, Compton—Stanstead, which is in Quebec's Eastern Townships, and I know how hard they are working and how proud they are of every litre of milk they produce. We all get how hard it must be for them to have to dump milk because of a drop in demand.

This amendment offers a workable solution to an untenable situation. This bill is important for dairy producers and processors as well as for the food security of all Canadians.

[*English*]

The bill would provide an effective solution to this difficult situation. It is vital not only for dairy producers and processors, but ultimately for the food security of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a tremendous impact on our dairy industry. In the first two weeks of the crisis, when social distancing measures were being imposed, consumers were shopping

compulsively and grocery store shelves were empty. Demand for liquid milk increased suddenly and then dropped just as suddenly when Canadian families finished stocking up.

The closure of schools, countless restaurants, businesses and the hotel industry led to a decline in demand for dairy products, especially cheese and cream.

Canada's dairy producers say they have never seen such fluctuation in demand from one week to the next. It caused quite a headache throughout the supply chain.

• (1450)

[*English*]

The industry pulled out all the stops to align production with consumer demand. Farmers did their part. Provincial marketing boards implemented measures to reduce production, including quota reductions.

It was so inspiring to see all the donations of dairy products to food banks across the country.

In my home province of Quebec, dairy producers and processors donated one million litres of milk to food banks.

In Saskatchewan, dairy producers donated products from 175,000 litres of milk to food banks across the country, enough for 30,000 pounds of cheese, yogourt and milk.

In Newfoundland, two dairy farmers joined forces with a local dairy distributor to give away milk in a drive-through in a local area arena parking lot.

On Prince Edward Island, farmers gave away blocks of cheese and cartons of milk.

In Ontario, dairy farmers contributed an additional 200,000 litres of milk to food banks across the province.

Despite these efforts, between the end of March and the first half of April, producers were forced to dump surplus milk on the farm. We must do our part to reduce this waste and preserve the integrity of our supply management system.

The industry reached out to government and asked that the Canadian Dairy Commission expand its dairy storage programs, which it uses to balance supply with fluctuations in demand.

The CDC buys dairy products like butter directly from processors to sell them off later when the demand recovers. Under its current borrowing capacity, the CDC has already succeeded in improving the situation, but it needs greater capacity to fully respond to the industry's needs.

The industry asked the CDC to temporarily purchase cheese, as it already does with butter. For example, the CDC would enter into a contractual agreement to purchase cheese from a processor, who would commit to buying it back within two years.

[*Translation*]

I am asking all hon. members for their support in introducing this bill to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act to increase its borrowing capacity from \$300 million to \$500 million. This measure will provide the assistance the dairy industry needs at this time of crisis. Canada's dairy producers welcome this measure. They confirm that it is a good way to strengthen our food supply chain.

This measure is in addition to the decisions announced by the Prime Minister last week, including a \$125-million contribution to the AgriRecovery program to help producers and ranchers keep their animals on the farm longer. We are also contributing \$77.5 million to help processors adapt to health protocols and automate or modernize their facilities or operations, and \$50 million to purchase excess food from the industry and distribute it to food banks and in northern and remote regions.

[*English*]

Important changes to our suite of business risk management programs would dispense an average of \$1.6 billion each year in direct support to farmers.

These announcements build on a number of other important investments and actions being undertaken to support our producers and processors, such as the \$50 million to safely welcome temporary foreign workers or an added \$20 million to help the Canadian Food Inspection Agency do its vital work. As well, as the Prime Minister has indicated, we will continue to support our producers and processors where support is needed.

The Canadian Dairy Commission has played a key role in our dairy industry for over 50 years. The commission helps to ensure that producers receive proper compensation for their hard work and that consumers have access to a wide variety of high-quality dairy products. It is vital to the supply management system in Canada. It stabilizes milk production through national quotas and, most important, it balances supply and demand through a range of programs.

● (1455)

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Dairy Commission currently plays a key role in many areas, including the payment of compensation to dairy producers after Canada signed free trade agreements with the European Union and the trans-Pacific region. This is not a small matter, with \$345 million already issued in direct payments the first year and nearly 11,000 dairy producers to support across the country.

We thank all Canadian Dairy Commission employees for their valuable contributions. Furthermore, the commission helps the in-

Government Orders

dustry fill labour market needs and invest in innovation, especially with respect to animal welfare and environmental protections. This is important to our dairy producers, who want to keep up with the latest technology and environmental knowledge in order to keep pace with evolving consumer demands.

Together, the industry and the federal government are investing \$16.5 million in the dairy research cluster 3, an excellent example of public-private collaboration. It brings together a team of 124 researchers from across Canada who are carrying out various projects aimed at enhancing public confidence in the dairy industry and driving economic growth in the dairy sector.

The cluster is making significant advances in developing new alfalfa varieties that will increase dairy production and therefore profits; in improving animal welfare on the farm, particularly through state-of-the-art feed management systems; and in reducing the amount of water used in dairy production. In the face of climate change, it is important, and economically worthwhile, to help the industry adopt more environmentally responsible practices.

One particular project has managed to improve a feed formula for dairy cows that could reduce the industry's greenhouse gas emissions by 17,000 tonnes and make it possible for producers to save almost \$78 million a year.

[*English*]

There are 15 projects in total that fall under the dairy research cluster and each one of them responds to the unique needs of the sector. It is so important to help our dairy producers stay competitive and keep their businesses profitable. It is just as important to support an innovative and sustainable industry to preserve consumer confidence in our high-quality dairy products.

We are happy to work with the Canadian Dairy Commission to develop a vision for the future and an ambitious strategic plan for the Canadian dairy sector. The industry has a bright future ahead, and we want to help it weather this crisis so it can capture even greater growth in the future.

[*Translation*]

The amendment to the Canadian Dairy Commission Act is a direct response to the recommendations made by the dairy industry to address the crisis. It is what the industry needs at this time.

This is further proof of our government's support for Canada's supply management system. I would remind members that this system was established by a Liberal government together with the provinces almost 50 years ago. It is a model of stability with a proven track record that has enabled our agricultural businesses to develop and prosper.

Government Orders

During negotiations of the new agreement with the United States and Mexico, we strenuously defended supply management despite attempts by the Americans to dismantle it. We will continue to defend it and we will meet one of the most pressing needs of milk producers and processors. I am quite familiar with their resiliency and determination. In recent years, many of them have welcomed me to their farms, cheese factories and facilities to talk to me about their work, their accomplishments and their aspirations. I have admired them for quite some time, and I take their well-being to heart. Let us then give them what they are asking for.

[*English*]

Even during this time of anxiety and pressure, our producers and processors keep working hard every day to feed us, as do all the farmers and workers in our food supply chain. They seed their crops, they care for their animals, they produce high-quality food and they protect our environment. It is thanks to them that our grocery store shelves remain full. It is thanks to them that the dairy industry remains a pillar of our economy during this difficult period.

[*Translation*]

Let us amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act to increase the commission's borrowing capacity from \$300 million to \$500 million, so that our food system can get back up and running and so that we can keep moving our dairy products from farms to families.

Let us continue to work with the industry and with provincial and territorial governments to support agriculture and agri-food businesses across Canada.

• (1500)

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that the House note that nobody should have to choose between taking a day off of work due to illness and being able to pay the bills. I call upon the government to work with provinces without delay to ensure that every worker in Canada who needs it has access to two weeks' paid sick leave a year, and to consider amending the Canada emergency response benefit, the employment insurance program and other federal mechanisms as the means to achieve this goal.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beauce.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple.

The minister mentioned CUSMA, the new agreement with the Americans. There are still some important points to negotiate, in particular with respect to tariff quotas.

We have heard a number of times and in different studies in committee that producers and processors early in the production chain should be allocated as much of these quotas as possible.

I would like to hear the minister's thoughts on that.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am working with the Minister of International Trade, who is responsible for allocating tariff quotas. We are paying close attention to this matter.

A consultation was already under way, but it has been postponed for a few months because of the COVID-19 crisis.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her remarks, in which she indicated that it is important to give the agricultural and agri-food community what it needs. Let's give that community what it is asking for.

In fact, I would like to make a plea to the minister. Again this week, in committee, we were told that the existing programs do not meet the needs. Of course, today's bill is very positive, and we are going to support it.

When will the new announcements be made regarding new investments, particularly with regard to the AgriAssurance program?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interest and collaboration.

We committed to doing more for farmers. That is a priority industry. However, I want to reiterate that farmers are encouraged to take full advantage of existing programs.

In recent years, the risk management programs have been providing an average of \$1.6 billion and could provide more to meet needs. Programs such as AgriStability should be used first.

We announced new measures last week, and we will continue to meet the most pressing needs.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is this legislation being brought two weeks too late? We had thousands of litres of milk being dumped several weeks ago.

Would this legislation have helped address that situation when it was at its peak?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, I would say no. The Canadian Dairy Commission already had a borrowing capacity of \$300 million, and it had all the capacity it needed to manage the supply. It was asking for this increase before the end of this month.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to follow up on that, my colleague from the Bloc mentioned that we should provide farmers with what they are asking for. I agree with moving this bill forward, and I urge the minister and my colleagues to do that today.

The CFA asked for \$2.6 billion and it got 10% of that. Can the minister follow up on the Prime Minister's comments that more will be coming?

Government Orders

• (1505)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are committed to supporting our farmers and ranchers across the country. I have to remind them to use the business management program as much as they can through AgriStability, which we have improved, and we have given them more flexibility. They can apply until July 3. They also have the possibility to obtain up to 75% instead of 50%, which the provinces allow, as an advance payment. We have put a calculator online so farmers can try to see how much they can get from the program. More support will be coming to fill the gaps and answer the most urgent needs.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, the minister said this legislation was not needed before because the dairy commission had the borrowing capacity to deal with what was a pandemic that resulted in having to dump milk.

What has changed in the future that it needs this extra borrowing capacity? Is this to deal with COVID, or the additional imports allowed from the United States as a result of the USMCA?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, it is directly related to COVID. With the closure of restaurants and hotels, the demand for milk and cheese has decreased significantly. The Canadian Dairy Commission will be using its normal tools, but will also have a higher capacity to buy milk and cheese to store them and resell them later when the demand comes back.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister.

Earlier, I neglected to thank her for introducing the bill to increase the borrowing capacity of the Canadian Dairy Commission.

My question concerns processors and dairy production.

There are people working in the dairy processing industry right across Canada. They are currently having to deal with the impact of COVID-19. They have to rework their product processing and come up with new products. Moreover, the fact that CUSMA comes into force on July 1 rather than August 1 only increases the problems they have to contend with.

Having one month rather than one year to transform their production process for goods that will go to market is a catastrophe, and on top of that there are the problems caused by COVID-19.

Has the minister come up with any solutions to help these dairy processors?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, we have already announced a \$1.75-billion compensation package for dairy farmers for the trans-Pacific free trade deals. We are also committed to continuing to deliver compensation for the agreement with the United States and Mexico.

The free trade agreement being ratified and entering into force earlier than we would have liked has had an impact on the dairy sector. However, when we are talking about the free trade deal with the United States and Mexico, we need to look at the Canadian economy as a whole. That is a plus.

For dairy sector processors, such as manufacturers of skim milk powder, it obviously makes a difference in terms of export capacity, over a five-year period, but that was part of our negotiations for the Canadian economy as a whole.

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on what my colleague from Beauce was saying earlier. He talked about the dairy industry and compensation. The minister frequently reminds us that the government has started to pay out compensation, a move hailed by all members. However, many supply-managed sectors have yet to receive compensation. The announcements have not been made yet, but these sectors are calling for modernization programs, among other things.

Given that we are in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, would the minister not agree that now is a great time to inject funds into agricultural businesses in urgent need of cash? It would not count as new spending because the money has already been promised, on top of any other assistance that could be provided.

• (1510)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues well know, we are currently in emergency mode.

We have introduced programs aimed at helping as many Canadians and businesses as we can. We have also begun implementing more targeted measures for each sector, including agriculture, for example.

Right now we need to respond to the more urgent needs. Our commitment to poultry and beef producers remains very firm. As my hon. colleague has suggested, what they want is investments. We will move forward once this crisis is over and we get a chance to look toward the future and begin our economic recovery.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauce.

It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-16. I know we are all going to be supporting this bill today, and that goes to show we are supporting Canada's agriculture sector. However, there are some issues with how this was brought about and it highlights many of the issues we have been trying to shine a light on with the government's approach to agriculture as a whole and the industry within Canada.

What is being proposed today, which I feel will be supported by all the parties in this House, is, again, additional loan capacity. It is not an injection of funds or a program that would give liquidity to the agriculture sector as a whole.

Government Orders

I did ask the minister if this was a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, or if it was more a response to what Canada's dairy sector will be facing as a result of the increased imports that will be coming from the United States as part of the USMCA.

The minister said in her response that the Canadian Dairy Commission had the loan capacity and the line of credit to deal with the COVID pandemic when it was at its peak, when restaurants and schools were closed, and many of the traditional customers of Canada's dairy producers were closing their doors and were temporarily on lockdown. As a result of those closures, many of our producers, especially in eastern Canada, had to dump millions of litres of milk, which is not something that any Canadian wants to see.

It was certainly good to see Canadians from across the country step up and do everything they could to help our producers, whether they were food banks, schools, or anyone who was willing to take their product and then donate it to those who had a use for it.

However, what that response says to me is that this is more a response to what will happen with the USMCA. The dairy industry in Canada is going to be taking a hit as a result of that.

We have given up a great deal of our trade sovereignty in signing that USMCA. Not only will it increase imports of American dairy products, but it will also limit Canadian dairy producers' opportunities to access foreign markets and it will limit the growth of certain products that are produced right here in Canada.

The other issue that comes to mind is how long it took for the Liberal government to address a problem that was highlighted very early on in Canada's agriculture sector. That has been an ongoing issue with the current government.

Let us take a step back to what was announced last week with the agriculture assistance package of about \$250 million. To put that in perspective, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture asked for \$2.6 billion as the amount needed to be a tangible relief for Canadian agriculture.

When that announcement came out to be less than 10% of what is deemed by the industry, by producers, food processors, our ranchers and farm families as what is needed for them to be able to keep their heads above water during this pandemic, it was extremely frustrating for our producers.

Let us put that in perspective. This is \$250 million to Canadian agriculture, when the President of the United States has given \$19 billion. That is putting our industry at a considerable competitive disadvantage.

We look at all the other programs that have been announced for Canadian businesses, and Canadian agriculture is getting a fraction of that. It is extremely difficult when the Prime Minister is saying, time and again, that Canadian agriculture is an essential service and that it is a critical pillar of our food security and of our economy. To say that in one breath, and then not offer the resources the people in that sector need to be successful, does not make a lot of sense. We are seeing the clear frustration of Canadian farmers, producers and food processors who have voiced their displeasure and frustration

over the past week since the announcement from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

• (1515)

Even today, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has said that there are business risk management programs in place that agriculture can access. Those business risk management programs were never designed to deal with a pandemic like COVID-19. They were designed to deal with other variables that impact various sectors of agriculture, certainly not a global pandemic. She talks about the \$1.6 billion in AgriStability, so let us use AgriStability as an example. Less than 35% of farmers have actually subscribed to AgriStability, because it is not efficient and it is not timely. They may not see a payment for months or even years down the road. By that time they could be bankrupt.

Let us take a look at AgriInvest. She said there is another billion dollars in AgriInvest, but producers have asked who has that money, where is it, and who has access to it. In many cases those dollars have already been spent, or they are being put aside for transition to the next generation.

In no other program, such as CEBA, for example, has the government told small business owners to drain their bank account before they can have access to or qualify for the emergency business account. However, that is exactly what the Minister of Agriculture is asking farmers to do.

Many of these farmers have maybe \$5,000 or \$10,000 in their AgriInvest account. It is not a huge amount of money we are talking about here, but the Minister of Agriculture is telling those producers they had better drain their savings accounts, and then maybe the government will look at other programs that may be of assistance to them. The government is not asking that of any other sector in Canada's economy, and it is not fair.

The ramifications of that are quite profound. Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, one of the Canadian experts on food security, has said 15% of Canadian farms are in jeopardy of going bankrupt if there is no federal assistance. That is 30,000 family farms in jeopardy. That is a huge number, and we cannot possibly fathom the impact that will have on our rural economies.

More important, what impact is that going to have on Canada's food security? What kind of impact is that going to have on the price of groceries on the store shelves?

I know that for many of us in this room, never in our lifetime have we gone to a grocery store and seen empty shelves, until now. I am hopeful that as a result of this Canadians across the country now have a much better appreciation of where their food comes from, who makes it, how we do it and why we do it.

Every single day we are asking Canadians across the country to stay home, to protect themselves and stay healthy. At the same time, because they are deemed an essential service, we are asking farmers, ranchers and employees at food processors to get up every single day, go to work and work hard to make sure we have food on our tables and on our grocery store shelves.

Government Orders

Those people are asking for respect, and that respect comes from being a priority to the current government and the programs it is putting forward. It is very clear that Canada's food security and our supply chain is not a priority for the government with \$250 million being given to farmers through various programs.

The other frustration with this is that these are not new programs and this is not new money. For the government to come out and say it has taken these steps to address the COVID-19 pandemic, even with changing this Dairy Commission legislation, they are still not addressing the pandemic.

These are not extraordinary measures to deal with an unprecedented challenge within our agriculture sector. These are just re-announcements of existing programs. What message does that send to Canadian agriculture?

They are saying that the farmhouse is burning down and the Liberal government is standing by and offering them a bottle of water as assistance. That is just not good enough. It is not good enough for Canadian agriculture. It is not good enough for our farmers, our ranchers and our processors, who are working hard every day to do their jobs, and who do it with pride.

All they are asking for is that the Liberal government stand beside them and show that the work they are doing means something. I think the question the government has to ask itself is this: Is the Liberal government's food security plan to ensure that we have to import food from other countries to feed Canadian families?

• (1520)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really concerned, being on the trade committee, with what happened with respect to the USMCA regarding our sovereignty and how the U.S. now gets to dictate where we can or cannot export our milk products. I am a little concerned when the member says that this funding has come about not necessarily because of the COVID crisis but because of the possibility of that agreement and other agreements the government has signed on to.

Do you think it is using the COVID crisis to hide the mistake it made in its trade agreement?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Foothills, and I want to remind hon. members that when they ask a question to place it through the Speaker, not directly to the member.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I think there is no doubt about it when we have seen over the last several weeks that the United States has asked Canada to make sure that 100% of our TRQs go to retailers and when the dairy processors and producers are asking for those TRQs to be as close to the farm gate as possible.

The Liberal government has seen that in no other trade agreement in our history has Canada surrendered its trade sovereignty to another country, but that is exactly what has happened in the USMCA. Now the United States can get involved in any trade negotiations we have with new non-market trading partners. They also now control the growth of critical dairy products that are produced right here in Canada. In no other trade agreement is that possible, but that has happened under the Liberal government with the USMCA.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his great speech. I agree with him on many points.

I would like to hear his thoughts on the support being offered to the agricultural industry across Canada, compared to what is being done globally, including in the United States, for example.

What does he think will happen to our food security over the medium and long term if more is not done?

The agricultural sector is calling for urgent, essential measures.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is exactly right.

Canada has fallen well behind our allies and our competitors around the world when it comes to assistance for our agriculture sector. Bob Lowe, the president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, said in committee last week that it is very clear that Canadian agriculture is not getting the respect it deserves from the current government when compared to the assistance that is being given in other countries.

There is no question that there are incredible opportunities for Canadian agriculture, but it is going to be struggling through this as a result of the policies and the inaction of the Liberal government. The impact of that will be that Canadians are going to see higher grocery store prices this fall, or many products are not going to be available, unless we import them from other countries. That would be a shame, when we can be producing these products right here at home.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the Conservative government cut \$400 million in 2013 from the AgriStability fund and the business risk management programs. Why is it now, when we are improving the program, that this is such a significant improvement?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I am so happy my colleague asked that question. When we made those changes to the business risk management programs, there was no carbon tax. We had not lost \$5 billion in foreign market access for our commodities. We did not have illegal blockades, CN rail strikes, and grain backlogs.

The landscape facing Canadian agriculture now is very different than it was under the Conservative government. There were no demands for improvements for the BRM under the Conservative government because agriculture was doing well. It was a priority under agriculture minister Gerry Ritz, and our trade minister, the member for Abbotsford, who found 50 new global markets for our agriculture products. However, in the last five years under the Liberal government, agriculture has been an afterthought. It has been neglected, and this is the result we are seeing because of that.

Government Orders

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to speak to government Bill C-16, which seeks to amend existing legislation on the loan capacity of the Canadian Dairy Commission.

Although this amendment is welcome and important, I wonder what took the government so long to get around to it. A little over a month ago, Canadian dairy producers were forced to dump 12.5 million litres of milk in just a week. I received many calls from producers and processors in my riding, including major industry stakeholders. When I asked these stakeholders what the best course of action would be, they all said that they wanted the government to expand the loan capacity of the Canadian Dairy Commission from \$300 million to \$800 million, or an increase of \$500 million in loan capacity.

After speaking with the minister's office, I was informed that the Canadian Dairy Commission experts think the \$200-million increase is good enough. The point I want to make here is that this bill took an awfully long time to come into existence, considering that it amends just a line or two of the Act. Why did the government drag its heels on this file?

It is very important to note that many industry stakeholders have told me this legislative change is about two weeks too late. Many of them have already found their own way out of this mess with no help from the government. While it is clear to me that this bill is nevertheless important to the agricultural sector because it will protect our dairy industry, I am left wondering about money for the rest of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. This government likes to pat itself on the back for announcing various funds and loans for the sector, but it does not have a solid plan for saving the industry that feeds our country.

For example, the other day in committee, a representative from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture said that without immediate assistance, Canada could lose up to 15% of our farms because of COVID-19. That is about 30,000 farms. I cannot even begin to express how devastating that is to hear. Canada has had a very weak response to COVID-19 in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Just look at our neighbours, the United States. Their government announced a \$19-billion assistance program for the agriculture sector, while our government has done nothing after offering our sector \$252 million.

The government provided \$50 million in assistance to the beef and pork industries. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association told us the other day in committee that the money was appreciated, but that it was used up two weeks ago to cover the extra feed needed because of the pandemic. The government does not seem to understand that we are in a crisis and that our national food security and our sovereignty are in jeopardy. According to the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, it would cost about \$135 million to implement an adequate set-aside program.

Meanwhile, the pork industry is suffering through a nightmare in terms of slaughter capacity. It does not have the option of using a set-aside program like the beef sector, and the government seems

content to keep watching animals be euthanized, while telling these farmers to use the existing business risk management programs. I have news for the government: These programs do not work. Changes need to be made to these programs now to help our producers ASAP. The minister keeps boasting about the amazing on-line calculator for these programs. Could it be that the true purpose of the calculator is to calculate when our businesses will have to fold?

Getting back to this bill, it is very hard to debate it here today. I think I speak for all my colleagues when I say that it is definitely a step in the right direction, but when will the rest of the aid for the agriculture and agri-food sector be announced?

• (1530)

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture both said that the agricultural industry would be given additional assistance, but when will that be announced? Do they not realize that this industry is having a hard time staying afloat?

Every day, I turn on the television and I hear the Prime Minister announcing new programs and several billion dollars in funding for other industries. I have come to expect no new announcements for agriculture.

Right now, the Prime Minister seems to be, whether consciously or unconsciously, pitting the various industries in our sector against each other, the eastern provinces against the western provinces, or supply managed sectors against non-supply managed sectors. The division is clear, as are the Prime Minister's allegiances.

I would also like to remind the House that the Canadian dairy industry was led to believe that the coming into force of the CUSMA would be delayed in order to give the sector time to prepare for the reformed agreement. Unfortunately, the dairy industry now has only one month to prepare rather than a full year.

I would also like to point out that many of Canada's supply-managed industries are still waiting for announcements regarding their sector. It is wonderful to see assistance for dairy farmers today, but when will the government help other sectors?

Take Canada's poultry producers, for example. Like beef and pork producers, poultry producers will likely have to cull their flocks and absorb revenue losses associated with not processing their birds, but the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture have not announced any help for that sector.

Government Orders

We keep hearing that the AgriRecovery program will fix things for this sector. Unfortunately, the program covers only cull costs, not the value of the birds themselves. Plus, this program does not help processors if culling happens at the plants.

I am so tired of hearing that the government is working with the provinces to find a solution. Why can the government not take the initiative, show some real leadership and make a significant contribution of its own to the agricultural sector?

I could spend a lot more time quoting many very eloquent industry stakeholders. The consensus is simple: The government's COVID-19 pandemic response for the agricultural sector is not nearly good enough. The sector needs help fast, but I think the government's clock is broken.

I look forward to answering my colleagues' question.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauce for his remarkable intervention. He hit the nail on the head. We are rarely on the same wavelength, but there is little we disagree on these days.

I would like him to quickly talk about how the current programs, which the minister keeps reminding everyone to use, do not work. What are some of the criticisms of these programs?

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

I think it has been proven for several years now that these programs do not work. I am sure that the minister is aware that people have been saying for more than five years now that these programs are not working because people have to exhaust all their resources before they can access them.

For the past two and a half years, these programs have apparently been undergoing an overhaul. Last week, we were told that people have to draw from these programs even though they have to exhaust all their resources first. That does not work.

We had a clear example of that during a meeting of one of the House committees when representatives of the agricultural sector clearly demonstrated that these programs do not work. I do not understand why the government keeps saying that these programs are important and that they have a role to play.

• (1535)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Beauce for his remarks, which were very relevant as always, particularly with regard to agricultural issues. Heaven knows that the member knows what he is talking about since he was once a farmer himself. In another life, he ran a family farm for many years.

One of the things that upset me the most over the past two months when it comes to agriculture and food is the euthanasia of animals.

I know we are in a crisis situation, but how can we waste food like that?

I would like the member to explain how that situation played out in his riding of Beauce.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

In my riding, there is an agri-food processing firm, a slaughterhouse, that employs 1,200 people. Many of these employees had to leave the production line due to the public health measures. These measures ought to be respected, to be sure, but as a result the plant's processing capacity has been significantly reduced.

I can tell you that there are more than 100,000 hogs in Quebec farmers' hog barns. In Canada, there is a processing backlog of more than 140,000 hogs.

Pork production is unique and quite unlike other types of production. When piglets enter the pork barn, older hogs are taken away to be slaughtered. We currently have a problem that is only going to get worse with time and, unfortunately, we will have no other choice but to resort to euthanasia. Although this is being put off for now, we will never be able to deal with the backlog at these slaughterhouses. The summer holidays are not far off and it will be very difficult to achieve.

Since this government took so long to take action, animals will have to be euthanized in the cattle industry, not to mention the poultry sector, where hatching eggs have already had to be thrown out, on top of the 200,000 chicks that have been destroyed in Canada.

The saddest part of it all is that this food will not make it to our dinner tables. There is a certain degree of lag time in farming. It is inconceivable to think we can shut down the system today and turn it back on tomorrow and all the meat, dairy and farm products will be on store shelves the next morning.

That is the challenge facing the sector. If we want to maintain our food sovereignty, we are running out of time.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from La Prairie.

If we claim that agriculture and agri-food are essential services, then we have to put our money where our mouth is. We know that agriculture is an important pillar of our economy. In fact, \$68 billion in annual revenues come from farms. Every year we lose 5% to 7% of our farms. As my colleague said earlier, it is predicted that this year we might lose 15%. The losses are huge. Millions of litres of milk were dumped, and millions of eggs and chicks were destroyed. The poultry sector has posted losses of \$115 million. These figures represent the losses to date.

Right now, there is a backlog of approximately 100,000 slaughter-ready pigs. Day by day, as my colleague said, euthanasia is being put on hold, but it is going to happen eventually. The pigs are growing too fast and cannot be kept in their facilities. This is a highly complex issue.

Government Orders

As for beef, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association is projecting nationwide losses of \$500 billion. The beef sector also has a backlog of 100,000 cattle. Grain farmers are facing a loss of \$86 million. The government recently announced an investment of \$77.5 million to help slaughterhouses upgrade their facilities. However, the food processing industry says those upgrades would cost \$860 million. The funding is nowhere near enough.

Slaughterhouses are operating below capacity and sometimes close for days at a time. The restaurant market has collapsed. We need to be aware of these things. Many small eateries will not survive the crisis. Demand will stay low. The agriculture sector is urging us to take action and improve the ongoing programs while taking into account the unfortunate fact that the crisis is going to last longer than a year. I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news. All this uncertainty is putting us under tremendous pressure and threatening our food self-sufficiency, our food security and our national security. It is that bad.

There are also labour problems. We need to talk about foreign workers and seasonal workers. From the numbers we were given, about 85% or 86% of workers have arrived. However, many of those seasonal workers were already here. The more time passes, the harder things will be. There will be a labour shortage of more than 15%. This is not a criticism of immigration officials. On the contrary, I think they are doing a good job. However, we need to be aware of the problems and help our agricultural sector.

In his announcement, the Prime Minister said that it was an initial investment and that if more needed to be done, he would do it. Today I want to let him know that, yes, more is needed, and I hope I am not the last person to say so.

Of course we are here to talk about Bill C-16. Our party has been recommending this solution for several weeks. It has taken a long time, but we are very pleased to see it today. Clearly, we support the bill. It will make it possible for the Canadian Dairy Commission to store additional amounts of products that have a longer shelf life to absorb market fluctuations. This may result in less dumping of milk. Unfortunately, it is a little late, since a lot of milk has already been dumped, but things will be better in the future.

We have a positive attitude and are looking to the future. We are pleased to support the bill, but more must be done. I will compare our situation to what is happening in the United States. In Canada, several measures totalling \$252 million have been announced for the agricultural sector; in the United States, producers have received \$19 billion in aid. Of course, we do not have the same population. This represents 12 times the amount of assistance. According to OECD estimates, every year, year after year, the U.S. provides twice as much support for its agricultural sector than Canada.

● (1540)

Farmers are strong, proud and good people who get up in the morning to work so that they can feed our people. At some point they also have to grapple with international issues, and they are facing competition. In a hockey game, the players need to be on equal footing. If my stick is too short, I will not be able to win the game. We need to give our farmers the tools and support they need, and what is going on now is outrageous.

I will calm down a bit, but it is unacceptable. Of the \$252 million in assistance, \$125 million is not new money. The government can have fun with creative bookkeeping, twist definitions and call it unused money, but at the end of the day, this \$125 million is not new money. The government can make announcements, but it should not be presenting this money as new money, when that is untrue. That is misleading.

We are talking about the \$50 million that Canada is allocating to buy back food surpluses, but the United States allocated \$3 billion for that same purpose just this week. I do not know what it will be later, but the situation is totally surreal.

The government keeps saying that it is working hard to find solutions. I have a simple solution to propose to the government. Once again, I am reaching out and offering my help. I think that the other parties are interested in doing the same. We are here to work, but the government needs to listen to our constituents.

In her remarks earlier today, the minister said that we need to give people what they are asking for. To that, I say let's do it. We are ready. What are these people asking for? They are asking for a targeted emergency fund and quick action.

Small businesses are in trouble. The Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec said that it did not get any answers regarding practical measures to enable small agricultural businesses to be eligible for emergency loans. Sadly, these small businesses do not have a payroll of \$20,000. They get paid differently, with dividends, but that does not count. Sadly, that does not fit into the right column on the form. I do not know whether that can be inputted in the much-talked-about calculator, but these businesses are not eligible.

Processors are sounding the alarm over cold storage. They need support because they are storing a lot more inventory than before. Must even more food go to waste?

The government says the AgriStability program works and is asking farmers to use the existing programs. Let's talk about that.

First off, telling farmers to use the AgriInvest program is like telling students that they are going to get help because there will not be any jobs this summer, but only if they empty their bank accounts first. The same is happening with farmers. These programs are investments in case of need. It is appropriate to treat farmers like any other group in society. This is about saving money. I am sure the government will get up and tell me that this is what emergency measures are for. Yes, but this is an exceptional situation.

Marcel Groleau, president of the Union des producteurs agricoles, appeared before the committee this week. He was wondering if decision-makers even understand these programs, and he explained how AgriStability works. The example he shared was of a typical farm that brings in \$250,000 per year, spends \$100,000 and nets \$150,000. As it stands, the program requires the program year margin not to exceed 70% of the reference margin. This year, if such a farm were to lose \$80,000, or more than 50% of its revenue, it would not collect a cent from the existing program. Clearly, this program is not working. Without that margin, the program would pay the farm \$24,500 to compensate it for the \$80,000 loss. Ever since before the crisis, the agricultural sector has been asking the government to change the rate to 85%, which would result in a \$40,250 payment. That would be a program that works, just as it did before the 2013 cuts.

People are asking us to take action in a targeted way. I am going to set the rest of my notes aside because I am almost out of time and I want to appeal to parliamentarians to work together. Yes, we are all members of different political parties that each have separate objectives. However, with this COVID-19 pandemic, now is not the time to sound like a broken record or to toe the party line. It is time to work on behalf of farmers, who need us to take action.

If our response was appropriate, I do not think that, two days later, a large group of farmers would indicate publicly that it is no good. It takes a couple of days to read a document, conclude that it is no good, call one's friends and organize a meeting.

• (1545)

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we see these farms across Canada face financial hardship going into spring planting and in putting their cattle to pasture and things like that as they transition to the summer months, there is definitely a huge cash flow requirement at this point in time.

With the bill we are talking about today, the Liberals are looking at this fund and saying that, because of COVID, the government is injecting these funds into this organization. The reality, in fact, is that it is because of bad decisions made by the government in the past that our farmers are in such bad shape that they are not able to withstand stress such as COVID or anything else.

Does the member think that there needs to be more help provided to farmers who face this financial crunch as they go into the season?

I can tell the member that Costco in Saskatoon did not have beef this week, and that is a real thing.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

As I said earlier, I am not here to criticize past actions by any government. I am here as part of a call to action.

Let's put ourselves in the shoes of a vegetable producer for example. He has to invest between \$850,000 and \$1 million to sow his field. It should be noted that agriculture has never been easy and nor will it be two years from now. There are external factors such

Government Orders

as the weather and a surprise strike at CN last fall. On top of all that, this year farmers do not know if they will have enough workers at harvest time.

Producers are telling me they are going to plant soybeans and harvest it mechanically; that way, they will be okay for a year. They will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars, but they will still be there next year. If they sow their fields with the current guarantees, they risk losing more than \$1 million and going bankrupt. They will not do that because agricultural producers are entrepreneurs. Keep in mind that they have to assess the risk.

As a result, there will be a food shortage in the fall and products will be a lot more expensive. We will be dependent on foreign imports provided, of course, that foreign countries will want to send us their goods. Some recent examples might lead us to believe they will not. By the fall it will be too late. We have to act now.

• (1550)

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. He is always so passionate and engaging. I think we agree on some points.

I do not understand why we are still debating this today. For more than three weeks now, we have been calling on the government to take substantial action for Canada's agri-food sector. I do not know whether my colleague has an opinion on this matter.

What will we have to do?

Earlier I mentioned that we are running out of time. What is the government waiting for?

The \$250 million announced last week will not fix the problems in the coming weeks and months for Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry. As my colleague said, there will be supply problems in the fall. This disruption will not disappear and will catch up to us.

What does my colleague suggest that we do?

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and comments. I really appreciate it.

Before answering the question, I would like to share my personal interpretation of this notion of time. We are not just running out of time. We are most definitely out of time. It is now or never.

The member for Beauce asked what we should do. We all need to sit down together to figure out a solution. We need to know what kind of wiggle room the government has and how much it can invest. Then we need to see what stakeholders think of our solution. We need to do something, even if it means working weekends and around the clock, so we can announce a fund next week. That is where we are at. We need to adapt our programs.

Government Orders

A lot of money has been thrown at the problem so far. I am not criticizing; we agreed with that. We had to take action. The government injected over \$252 billion. I do not for a second believe that there is no money for agriculture. What use is health care if people have nothing to eat?

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a health crisis. Everyone knows that. A health crisis affects the health of the population. More demands are being put on the health care systems of the various regions of Canada. Unfortunately, Quebec is no exception. We know that the Quebec health care system has been sorely tried by the COVID-19 crisis. Seniors' residences in Quebec are a good example of the major difficulties being faced by the Quebec government and the Quebec health care system in particular.

What are the solutions?

We know that the government is trying to find solutions to the problems facing Quebec and Canada, but it is relying on an old habit. It is the old habit of thinking that big brother in Ottawa knows better than everyone else, that big brother in Ottawa will solve the problem for the provinces and Quebec and will tell everyone else to step aside, because big brother has the solution. The problem is that, based on the slapdash way it managed the border closure at the beginning of the pandemic and the way it managed the Phoenix pay system, I am a bit worried when I hear the government saying that it has all the answers and it knows what to do.

The NDP leader made it very clear today that he thinks the federal government just needs to meddle in the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec. It just needs to shove the provinces aside. However, everyone in the National Assembly in Quebec's Parliament and everyone across Quebec agrees that Quebec's jurisdiction must be respected, more specifically with regard to health. I am not the one saying this. This comes from the National Assembly and the various political parties.

As a solution, the Liberals initially tried to take over the long-term care homes. However, they were promptly informed that it was none of their business. I think they got the message.

There are always roundabout ways of doing things. The federal government said earlier that the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec must be respected, yet the Minister of Health said it wants to provide money for mental health, home care and so on. It cannot do that. That is a roundabout way of doing something it is not allowed to do directly. It cannot offer money to sectors that are managed by the provinces and Quebec with strings attached.

What is the solution, then? I can say that the NDP's solution is completely off base. It is not surprising that the NDP, which had 59 MPs from Quebec in 2011 has just one left. The Liberals' solution is no better. The Conservatives have proven that they cannot maintain consistent measures over time and were not able to manage the health care systems in the provinces and Quebec.

The solution is set out in the British North America Act, that famous document that created Canada. The solution is right there in black and white. This document states that the provinces have jurisdiction over health, and this document is sacred to many. It is simple: Health care belongs to the provinces and Quebec.

The Constitution also covers how government services are funded. Since the Canadian provinces and Quebec start off with fewer financial means to manage their jurisdictions, the Constitution was written to include a system in which the federal government would transfer funds to the provinces and Quebec. They knew that the money was in Ottawa but the needs were in Quebec. The fiscal imbalance dates all the way back to 1867.

Let's look back in history. At the time, this was not a major issue because health was often managed by religious orders. However, it became a problem when the responsibility for health was transferred to the welfare state in 1960.

● (1555)

Quebec was going to manage the health care system and would obviously call on Ottawa to lend a hand by providing program funding and federal transfers. It was thought that Quebec and the federal government would fund the system fifty-fifty, but such was not the case.

What happened was that—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate my colleague's enthusiasm. He is a very talented orator.

However, today's debate is about Bill C-16, which deals with agriculture. Unless I missed something, he has not yet talked about agriculture at all.

It is not that I do not find his remarks about health and areas of jurisdiction interesting, but we are here to talk about agriculture.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the intervention by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Would the hon. member like to respond to the point of order?

Mr. Alain Therrien: As the House leader of the Bloc Québécois, I want to point out that we had agreements with the government and the other parties to meet physically once a week to talk about COVID-19 and problems arising from the pandemic.

We were told we would get 30 minutes every Wednesday to talk about anything we wanted in connection with COVID-19. The government stipulated that, whenever possible, it wanted to introduce bills for debate on those days. We agreed because it was easier for the government.

I would ask the indulgence of the House to simply say that every party is supposed to have 30 minutes to talk about all kinds of COVID-19-related things, but we are not getting that time today. I would ask the indulgence of the House to continue my remarks.

Government Orders

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would remind the member that it was the Conservative Party that actually wanted to see more members in the House, or more sittings of the House with the existing number of members we have today, to do exactly what he wants to do. However, today we are here for Bill C-16. If he thinks he can speak about something else, that is not appropriate. He should go back to topic and speak about what is at hand.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the comments made by the hon. members for Louis-Saint-Laurent, La Prairie and Prince Albert.

Statements by ministers take place during the meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic. The government usually decides the topic of those statements. If it begins with statements, for instance, all the other parties can add their comments.

Today the House has been reconvened to debate Bill C-16. The standing orders suggest that comments must be pertinent to the subject before the House. Usually there is quite a bit of flexibility, but sooner or later members must ensure that their comments pertain to the subject before the House.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I have a question.

In the second round of 20 minutes or 10 minutes that we will have later, will we also be required to talk about agriculture?

The Deputy Speaker: Certainly.

At this time, there is another three minutes remaining for comments on your speech in relation to the subject before the House.

Mr. Alain Therrien: We had a very clear agreement that on Wednesdays when we met in person in the House, we would get 30 minutes to talk about COVID-19. Today, we agreed to waive our 30 minutes in exchange for 20 or 10 minutes to talk about other matters related to COVID-19, a crisis currently raging in Quebec.

Now you are telling me that what we negotiated, what we discussed with the government and its leader, is no longer valid. That is what you are telling me. The agreements we secured are not valid anymore. That is what I am hearing. That is what you just confirmed.

The Deputy Speaker: Normally, during the meeting of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic, if the House is not recalled, there is a take-note debate of two hours and 10 minutes. That is the time to ask questions or propose ideas about COVID-19.

When the House is recalled, members must focus their remarks on matters relevant to the bill under study. As I said, members have ample leeway in their remarks on the subject at hand, but they do need to make sure they stay on topic.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that I do not like talking about agriculture. I know a lot about it already.

If I understood correctly, all the remarks we will be making, from when the bill is tabled to the end, will have to be about agriculture. That is my understanding.

I asked the government to add 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes for questions and answers to compensate for the 30 minutes we had to talk about the pandemic. Now you are telling me that what we discussed will not happen, that I did not understand what the government leader proposed. Is that what you are telling me?

• (1605)

The Deputy Speaker: I accept the hon. member's other comment, but the decision concerns the rules for the special committee. It is a decision made by the leaders of the parties in the House. In the House, and in committee, we must refer to the framework surrounding these debates. That is required in order to be able to continue.

I stopped the clock so the hon. member from La Prairie can continue his speech, if he so wishes.

Mr. Alain Therrien: What they did in 2015 is a bit embarrassing. Those whom we might describe as destroyers of the Quebec health care system are here and, from what I understand, they did not see fit to do better than what the others proposed.

I understand why the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent rose. He must have felt the heat and did not want to hear us talk and be taken to task. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear. That is what I understand, Mr. Speaker.

My Conservative colleagues think it is funny to cut funding for health care and to put us in a situation where we cannot take care of people because we do not have any money from Ottawa because of them. It is because of them.

That is the reality, hon. member from Louis-Saint-Laurent—

The Deputy Speaker: I accept and appreciate the member's intervention, but I have decided how we will continue our proceedings. According to the Standing Orders, the debate must remain relevant to the topic.

We must now resume debate regarding the recall of the House of Commons to discuss Bill C-16.

The decision is made, and so we will continue. The hon. member for La Prairie has three minutes and 30 seconds remaining to finish his speech.

• (1610)

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, when I was teaching at CEGEP and at the university, I would explain to my students that market globalization meant that some sectors were protected by governments because they were important sectors for a society like ours. I always gave the example of agriculture, since it is important to ensure that a country can feed its people itself so as not to be held hostage, as we saw recently with health equipment. If we do not want to be held hostage, we have to take care of our agricultural sector.

Government Orders

What happened when the Conservatives were in power? They were the first to sacrifice milk quotas on the altar of international trade. They were the first to sell Quebec milk quotas to open the borders to the benefit of western Canada. The Liberal Party followed suit.

The Conservatives criticize the government. They see the beam in their neighbour's eye. It is not a beam that they have in their own eyes, but a dozen two by fours.

The member for Beauce knows that they were the first party to make sure that milk quotas were jeopardized by international trade and trade deals. They were the first to roll over before other countries and fail to protect Quebec dairy producers. While the Conservatives are criticizing the government today, they are in an uncomfortable situation.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: At least he knows what is going on today.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: No, he does not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, French is the official language of Quebec. I will always speak French. If the member does not like that, it is not my problem. The member is upset because I am not speaking English, but in Quebec, the official language is French. That is why I will always address the House in French. I hope nobody here would question my right to do so. I do not need anyone giving me a hard time for speaking French.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleague, the house leader of the second opposition party, that French and English share equal status, and all parliamentarians may speak in either of these two languages. Earlier, during oral questions, a minister spoke in English, which seemed to offend the leader of the Bloc Québécois. That is his right, but French and English have equal status here.

Earlier, the member spoke about international trade agreements involving milk. Does he agree with the facts? I encourage him to confirm the following statement or deny it if he has evidence to the contrary. In 2015, when our government signed an international treaty, the topic of supply management came up. Is it true that the Conservative government at the time had come up with a \$4-billion plan to cover farmers' losses? Never before had a government made such a financial commitment to farmers. Yes, it was a matter of free trade, but we also offered fair and responsible compensation, which the current government did not do with the following agreement.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, the member can ask any farmer if they would rather get a cheque from the government or conduct operations on the ground and grow their business, and his questions will be answered.

I am not done, and I have more to say. The \$4 billion the previous government promised was not enough. All farmers and dairy producers agreed on that. Plus, that money never showed up, and the change in government is no excuse. The Conservatives are good at pointing the finger at the Liberal government. That money was not enough, and dairy producers said so back then.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

I would like to know what he thinks of current programs such as AgriStability. I spoke about this earlier in my speech and I said that they do not work.

Do we know why only 31% of Canadian farms participate in the AgriStability program? The answer is that it is a shared jurisdiction in Quebec. We spoke earlier of the Constitution and jurisdictions, an issue that is sometimes pertinent. Quebec could have chosen to participate, but it preferred to create a program that complements the federal program, which does not work. Participation in the Quebec program is much higher than the rest of Canada's participation in the federal program, and this has boosted the average participation rate in the federal program to 31%. Imagine what would have happened if the Quebec government had not been there to implement those measures.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, in the history of Canada, the enactment of the British North America Act of 1867, which became the Constitution, has led to many problems. My colleague speaks of agricultural problems and the fact that the Constitution does not properly address Quebec's realities. It is not surprising. Anyone with any knowledge of history and the contents of this document knows that a constitution sets out the division of powers, authorities and responsibilities. If there were a better understanding of this document, there would be a better understanding of current problems. I spoke about health earlier, but this also applies to agriculture. Unfortunately, we forget that the answers are often in this document, but that is an undeniable fact.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, let's get back to the issue of free trade and farmers. I remember 2015 very well. I was on the campaign trail. Before the aid package and the agreement were announced, a protest was held in front of my campaign office. Once the announcement was made, however, the protests stopped, because the \$4 billion that was announced was intended to help farmers maintain their operations. We were aware of the international reality, which necessitated certain concessions. We were aware of the need to help farmers overcome the obstacle and keep working, as they were doing.

This is not about assigning blame. Facts are facts, and the facts speak for themselves. After the election, the new government took office and brushed aside the \$4 billion in aid that our government had offered. That is why farmers supported us, including farmers in Beauce.

• (1615)

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, the money was never spent. When he says that, he is mistaken. The \$4 billion was never spent.

My father always used to tell me to study history to avoid repeating the same mistakes. Looking at that party's history, I can say that, most of the time, they did not walk the talk.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I speak to the bill, I have sad news to announce to the House.

During National Nursing Week in London, my hometown and a town that I represent, Brian Beattie, a registered nurse who worked in a retirement village, died of COVID-19. He was the first registered nurse in Ontario to die of COVID-19. Brian is remembered as a dedicated nurse who loved his job and considered the residents in his care like his other family. My thoughts and deepest condolences go out to Brian's family and friends.

I want to sincerely thank front-line health care workers, who literally put their lives on the line to take care of others and take care of our families.

It is often hard to switch gears in these circumstances, but today I am pleased to speak to Bill C-16, an act to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act. The New Democrats are relieved to see this legislation finally come forward and are happy to support it.

I want to acknowledge the great work done by my colleague, the MP for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, the NDP's agricultural critic. He could not be here today, as he lives fairly far away, but his work on behalf of farmers across the country is greatly appreciated, despite his absence.

The New Democrats believe that increasing the buyback limit that dairy processors have with the Canadian Dairy Commission from \$300 million to \$500 million, allowing this Crown corporation to purchase more surplus butter and cheese and helping processors with cash flow issues until the market stabilizes again will provide some help to dairy farmers and processors so they can weather the COVID-19 pandemic. These actions are ones we have pushed for. We know they will start to help the sector at this unprecedented time of need.

Because of the losses in liquid milk sales to restaurants and other retail sectors due to COVID-19 shutdowns in the sector, producers and processors need assistance. Of course, this help is late. I have heard from a lot of farming families in the area that surrounds my riding who have been worried for months. The uncertainty and stress caused by this pandemic have had a detrimental impact on everyone, especially farmers, so I am glad that we are here today to support this plan.

Before I get into truly addressing some details regarding this legislation and the supports that are much needed for our agricultural sector and dairy sector, I will speak to some of the key issues that women working in the agricultural sector sometimes face, issues that have been long-standing but exacerbated by this pandemic.

According to the United Nations, "With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, even the limited gains made in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back." The Canadian Human Rights Commission has echoed this statement, saying, "These disproportionate impacts could have long-term and far reaching consequences." As the Canadian Women's Foundation notes, "The pandemic circumstances intensify inequalities related to gender, and

Government Orders

other factors, such as economic status, race, culture, language, and other intersecting elements of our identities."

The lack of access to services is felt by women nationwide, but rural women or women living in smaller towns are especially hit hard by the issue of the provision of services, simply because of their location or gender. Rural women have to travel long distances to get the help they need. We know women have felt the impact of this pandemic at disproportionate rates, and when they work in the agricultural sector, they often live in rural and remote areas. Their access to services is therefore dramatically reduced.

This is why the announcement last week that Greyhound is suspending its bus service operations has raised many flags with women's organizations, as the ridership of these services is 60% women and Greyhound is used by many trying to get to work. I will continue to call on the government to help people in my riding of London—Fanshawe and others across southwestern Ontario who rely on the inner-city bus industry. Travel, of course, is a necessity of life in rural Canada, and every community in Canada should be able to count on reliable transit to connect people to their jobs, health care services, schools and family members.

Connectivity in person during this time is obviously limited, which for so many has put a great deal of emphasis on virtual connectivity. Again, this pandemic has exacerbated many of the failures within our infrastructure for farmers and people living in rural and remote areas across this country. There are issues that consecutive governments have ignored for far too long.

Women, and in particular women living in rural Canada, too often feel isolated, and this is compounded by their inability to access or afford a stable Internet connection or cellphone service. It is so important to physically distance right now, but social isolation must be avoided. I have heard from so many women who say they miss their families and their grandkids, the hugs and support they provide.

● (1620)

In particular, I want to address the needs of women who need access to supports from government programs for mental health support and domestic violence hotlines. Those are just some examples. If they do not have that connectivity to online supports, they are left in further, more devastating isolation.

The New Democrats' vision of Canada is one of equality, balance and fairness, a country where women's organizations have stable funding so that women can access the support and advocacy they need, and where women have the tools that they need to access those services in their communities, whether urban, suburban, rural or remote.

Government Orders

Shelters across Canada have faced large expenses trying to adapt themselves to meet public health physical distancing requirements and to alter programs to deal with the new reality of a COVID-impacted world. However, without the necessary core funding that many shelters and organizations need, these supports cannot exist. Core funding has not been provided by the federal government for too many years, and these organizations cannot use the project-based funding to deal with this crisis situation. Too many fundraising events have been cancelled due to COVID, so another source of income for community-based support services that women need has been cut.

This, of course, is a serious financial crisis for the not-for-profit and charitable sectors. This crisis began long before COVID-19, and if things do not change it is one that will continue well past this pandemic.

I want to specifically highlight some of the stresses that are put on rural women and women who work in Canada's agricultural industry. Women are leaders in this sector, but I do not believe the government has done a good enough job of closing the pay equity gap and ensuring that women have access to affordable child care and to education. I know that although the number of women is slowly growing in the agricultural sector, many barriers still exist. A significant barrier to most people farming, especially to women, is the large costs associated: the cost of farmland, the cost of equipment, the labour challenges. This pandemic, again, has only exacerbated the difficulties that farmers in the dairy industry face.

Before I became an MP, I was a parliamentary staffer and had the great honour of working with the past international trade critic, Tracey Ramsey. Because of this incredible work, I was able to meet and work with amazing people in our agricultural sector, including in the dairy sector. Many people know that in the renegotiated NAFTA, Canada threw our dairy farmers under the bus to appease the U.S. The U.S. has now gained 3.59% access to our dairy market on top of the concessions that were in the other two Conservative-negotiated, Liberal-signed trade deals, the CPTPP and CETA, that bring the total loss to 8.4% of market share. That translates into 800 million litres of milk that will be permanently removed from our farms. I cannot imagine any other sector from which any government would dare cut almost 10% of our market share.

These are hard-working families across the country who take so much pride in producing top-quality milk for our communities. I do not know how much more dairy farmers can bear. Once again, I come to the point that because of decisions by consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments that have hurt our supply-managed dairy industry, this sector has been weakened. It is less resilient from the effects of this pandemic. Like so many other systems that I mentioned before that women, farmers and all Canadians rely upon, we need to reinforce social programs and these market protections, which protect people and protect Canadians.

Canadian farmers have benefited from the supply-managed system since the early 1970s. The system sets the prices and creates stability for dairy, egg and poultry producers. Supply management has proven to be an effective model that equalizes the benefits of dairy production across consumers, farmers and processors, and it stabilizes the industry against price shocks or over supply. During the negotiations of CUSMA, the Liberal government, every day, re-

peated its rhetoric that it would preserve and protect our supply-managed sectors, but protecting it meant not allowing pieces of it to be negotiated away.

There are three pillars of supply management: import control, pricing mechanisms, and production. In production, we have the quota system in Canada. We make sure that we are only making as much as the market demands. What is being thrown away in every single trade agreement signed by the current government is the pillar of import control.

Another key concern in allowing American milk into the Canadian market is that this product contains bovine growth hormone, created by Monsanto and used by American dairy farmers to increase milk production. There are no studies on the effect of this hormone on human health. I am so relieved when I buy milk and I see the little blue cow on the package, knowing that I am supporting Canadian dairy farmers and knowing that my milk is healthy and safe. I know what is in it, and therein lies the extraordinary value of our dairy sector and why we need to fight to protect it.

• (1625)

To add even more insult to injury, after selling out our dairy farmers in CUSMA, the government still has not provided the financial compensation it promised to support those same farmers. Ironically, this would not be necessary if the Liberals had actually protected supply management like they said they would, and we would not have had a surplus of American milk flooding Canadian borders, leading to the current Canadian supply glut, necessitating the recent dumping of 30 million litres of liquid milk.

Also causing harm to dairy farmers is the Canada Day start for the new NAFTA, which is only a few more weeks away, when those market concessions will hit our sector hard. This is another reason it was so vital that the NDP and my colleague, the MP for Elmwood—Transcona, negotiated with this government on future trade deals being negotiated in a far more consultative and transparent way. We pushed for Parliament to be able, for the first time ever, to view future trade deals in advance of ratification, instead of merely voting yea or nay after the deal is done. That is needed to preserve our food sovereignty and systems like supply management. It is to protect our farmers for future generations and to ensure that should we have these crises or emergencies in the future, we would be able and stable enough to withstand it.

Overall, the other measures announced for farmers by this government are not enough to offset the losses Canadian farmers collectively have suffered, nor will they ensure a strong food security system for Canadians. No one in Canada should be worried about where their next meal will come from. Canada's national food policy needs to improve food security by linking producers to the communities worried about having enough affordable food.

I live in an incredible area rich in agricultural land. However, farmers are facing significant challenges in southwestern Ontario. As the farm belt gears up for the growing season, the landscape has been radically changed by the COVID-19 virus and the lockdowns and security precautions that it has brought. The closure of the food service industries, with dine-in restaurant doors shut, has forced food producers and processors to adjust to a high demand for retail and direct-to-consumer products. The processing of food is incredibly different for home consumption than from food service, which is causing some significant challenges in our system. Again, although they have been delayed, I am glad we are passing these supports today.

With businesses and restaurants closed during the pandemic, the government has finally accepted the NDP's call for the government to buy surplus food to support food producers and help local organizations enhance food security for people in our communities. Canada is a privileged country because of its agricultural diversity, but it still faces many challenges concerning food. In 1976, Canada signed onto the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes a right to food. Yet, more than 40 years later, too many Canadians are still having difficulty putting food on their tables. It is well past time for the federal government to live up to its obligations and ensure access to safe, affordable and healthy food.

Farmers have been waiting for weeks for this emergency support, and while New Democrats welcome the bill in front us today that would increase the Dairy Commission's credit line, this should have been done weeks ago, and there is still a great amount to do. Instead of investing more to help our agricultural producers during this crisis, the government again has let farmers fall through the cracks. So many are not eligible for support programs. After everything this government has done to dairy farmers, this is the least it can do to support them during this pandemic. Instead of investing more to help our agricultural producers during this crisis, the government is letting them down. Many are still not eligible for support programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed many failings in our systems and social programs. Cracks have been created over many years, and people are falling through those cracks because of the government's consistent cutting and gutting. The undermining of the supports provided by these programs has cost us a great deal now.

The question remains, will we continue down a road where we are shortsighted? Will we look only to what will benefit a small group in a short term, or will we now repair the damage done by the cutbacks and decide to further build and strengthen the programs we have? Will we ensure fairness, balance and equality within sectors, including our agricultural sector? Will we value the work of farmers in every sector? Will we value the sourcing of local

Government Orders

food? Will we fall back from the belief that globalization and a neo-liberal agenda are inevitable or supreme and realize that it is actually through social stability, the strengthening of people and the foundations they stand upon, that will make us thrive?

Now is a good time to start to ask these hard questions and to talk about our lives post-COVID. I know what my answer is, and I am willing to do the work involved to achieve something better for everyone.

Before I officially conclude, I want to briefly take this opportunity to recognize a very important anniversary.

Fifty years ago, almost to the day, members of the Vancouver Women's Caucus travelled to Ottawa with the Abortion Caravan. In 1970, members of the Abortion Caravan marched on Parliament Hill in opposition to the 1969 amendments to the Criminal Code. However, this women's organization knew then that a lack of fair and equal access to proper reproductive rights was putting women's health in danger.

• (1630)

The Abortion Caravan arrived in Ottawa on Mother's Day weekend in 1970, a convoy of Canadian women, over 500 strong, arrived here with coat hangers and a black coffin in tow to demand the legalization of unrestricted access to abortion services for all Canadian women.

On May 11, 1970, approximately three dozen women entered the House of Commons, taking their seats in the various galleries circling the chamber. Once seated, the women quietly chained themselves to their seats, listening intently as NDP MP Andrew Brewin asked Minister of Justice John Turner if he would consider reviewing the abortion law. Turner tried to dismiss the matter, but just before 3 p.m., one of the women rose from her seat in the gallery and began reciting the Abortion Caravan's prepared speech, interrupting debate on the floor of the House of Commons. As parliamentary guards approached the woman, a second woman stood up in another area of the gallery and continued to give the speech. One by one, the women rose from their seats, adding their voices to the call for safe and equal access to reproductive rights.

The Abortion Caravan brought national attention to this issue. Sadly, women today are still forced to fight for access to health care options. Specifically on this 50th anniversary, I think about those brave women who were part of that caravan and built that movement to ensure that women of my generation have the freedom of choice.

Government Orders

I also think of the women in Fredericton today and the fact that the so-called feminist federal government still has done nothing to ensure that the women's clinic in Fredericton is properly and fairly funded to do what is needed to protect the rights women are supposed to have under the Canada Health Act.

Like those women 50 years ago, and like MP Brewin, New Democrats will continue to fight for safe and fair reproductive rights. In recognition of this 50th anniversary, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: "That the House recognize this week marks the 50th anniversary of the Abortion Caravan, commemorates the caravan's important contribution to modernizing Canada's reproductive rights laws and calls upon the government to take further action to increase access to abortion services, including by enforcing the Canada Health Act and ensuring that Clinic 554 in Fredericton is properly and fairly funded."

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for London—Fanshawe have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent.

We'll now go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague, who made a lot of good points.

Would she agree that the dairy farmers have been waiting for this to happen for a while now, and does she have any idea why the government took so long to make this simple change?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my incredible colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who ensures that I have what I need even when I think I already have it.

I do not know exactly why it took so long. I was certainly disappointed, but am finally relieved, as I am sure that a lot of farming families are too. We have a lot of work to do still. With a lot of the programs that have been introduced by the government throughout the COVID-19 crisis, there are so many people who are falling through the cracks. We are seeing that a lot of farmers are still not eligible for the supports that are being put forward, so I hope we can continue to work with the government to address this and help people who are falling through those cracks. I have faith that we can, if we really work hard and work together to start to address these inequalities.

• (1635)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pass on my condolences and respects to the family members of the person she talked about. It is a sad event, and what we are experiencing here in Canada is such a sad time and definitely draw tears to one's eyes.

I have a very simple question for my colleague about the agriculture producers in her riding. What is their biggest need at this time

as we go into the planting season and as they transition into the spring and summer?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, these supports are a start. They need a more responsive government that acts a lot faster to address a lot of the failings that have gone on for so long. As this pandemic has shown us, even in the manufacturing sector, we rely on a lot of imports. As I said before, my area is so incredibly rich with respect to that agricultural production.

Again, I will return to the idea of local food security and production. We know where our food is coming from, we know what is in it and we know that it is safe. The reliance on those local farmers is key. Therefore, I hope we can start to move forward on national programs that really enhance that food security and ensure we have that local production.

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the President of the Treasury Board.

[*Translation*]

I am very pleased to be here to ask members for their support for this bill, which is very important for Canada's dairy industry.

[*English*]

I am pleased to speak today in support of this bill to increase by \$200 million the Canadian Dairy Commission's capacity to buy milk. The proposed amendment to the Canadian Dairy Commission Act will significantly help Canada's dairy farmers to manage their surplus milk, while helping to meet food security demands across the nation.

Our dairy farmers have adopted the social media "#HereForCanada during COVID-19 and always". I would like to share the collective message to Canadians from the Dairy Farmers of Canada's website, which reads, "One day, not very long ago, we woke up to find the world had changed. But one important thing has stayed the same: Canadian dairy farmers continue to work tirelessly, day-in and day-out, to ensure that Canadians can feed their families with milk produced to standards among the highest in the world." This is such a powerful message, one I know that is filled with the passion of the dairy farmers in my riding.

Every evening at 7 p.m., we hear Canadians out on their porches cheering and banging pots and pans in support of our front-line workers. Those workers include Canadian dairy farmers and processors, who are working tirelessly to feed the nation in these uncertain times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on all sectors of the economy. One of the major challenges is that the dairy industry is facing volatile demand for its products. When the crisis first began, consumers started panic buying and shelves were quickly emptied. However, soon after, demand plummeted once consumers had stocked up and restaurants were closed. Demand for milk took a further nosedive following mass closures of hotels and schools, which had stopped buying cheese, cream and other dairy products.

With thousands of litres of excess milk and no place to sell it, some farmers have been faced with the difficult task of disposing milk that they know would otherwise nourish us. At the same time, we are also hearing about the struggles of food banks and community organizations to provide adequate food supply to those most vulnerable in our communities.

Across the nation, dairy farmers and processors, despite their own overwhelming challenges, are stepping up in a big way for Canadians. They are donating dairy products to food banks and their communities. In all, the industry has committed more than \$10 million in dairy products to food banks across the country to support Canadians in need. Despite these efforts, however, some producers were forced to dispose of their milk as a last resort.

What is greatly needed is greater capacity to store butter and cheese processed from milk. That is where our government's bill to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act comes in. The role of the commission is as critical as it has ever been at this time of extreme challenges to farm income and food security due to COVID-19. In periods of lower demand and high production such as in recent weeks, the CDC purchases butter from dairy processors, stores it and then sells it back when the demand improves.

Currently, the act limits the CDC's line of credit to \$300 million. This has not changed in 25 years. The bill before us proposes to raise that limit to \$500 million, and for very good reason.

To help restore stability in the marketplace, dairy producers and processors supported the CDC's request to increase its line of credit in order to extend existing programs and create new ones, such as storing cheese. This credit extension will give the industry some breathing room until this crisis has passed and equip the CDC with the means to manage future crises. It will minimize food waste and ensure we can all enjoy the fruits of our dairy farmers' hard work.

Dairy Farmers of Canada has welcomed the announcement, saying it will help to offset the impacts of bottlenecks in the supply chain that have prevented the smooth operation of the dairy value chain that allows milk to get from the farm to the store shelf. Increasing this capacity of the Canadian Dairy Commission directly aligns with our government's key actions to ensure food security.

● (1640)

Last week, as part of the federal investment package of \$252 million to support our agri-food sector, the Prime Minister launched a first-ever surplus food purchase program. It is being supported by an initial \$50 million fund and will help redistribute surplus foods to local food organizations that are serving vulnerable Canadians. Dairy Farmers of Canada also welcome this measure as a way to get our dairy products to those most in need.

Government Orders

This government believes in the importance of food security, and the recent allocation of \$100 million through the food policy for Canada in support of food banks and other community organizations on the front lines is a testament to this fact.

Food Banks Canada is receiving \$50 million, with an additional \$20 million evenly divided between Second Harvest, Community Food Centres Canada, Breakfast Club of Canada and Salvation Army. These organizations will work with local partners to meet urgent and increased food needs, including those in indigenous and northern populations. Organizations can use the funding to purchase, support and distribute food, hire temporary help to fill volunteer shortages and implement biosecurity measures, such as the purchase of personal protective equipment. The last \$30 million will be allocated later to fill the gaps and respond to further needs.

As well, we will invest \$25 million through nutrition north to serve Canada's northern remote communities.

I am so inspired by everyone who is going above and beyond to help. Our deep thanks goes out to our dairy farmers and all those working in the agriculture and agri-food sectors. In uncertain times, it is more critical than ever for Canadians to have access to good, high-quality and nutritious foods, which include our dairy products.

That is why the Government of Canada is taking the step to further support our dairy farmers and processors, who provide Canadians with the food they need to keep them and their families healthy. With this bill we are delivering for our dairy industry in its time of need and supporting an industry that gives so much back to our economy, with over \$6 billion in sales on the farm, almost \$15 billion in processor sales and tens of thousands of jobs.

I began by quoting a message from our dairy farmers to Canadians, which concludes, "They say farmers help keep Canada strong, but the truth is feeding Canadians is what keeps us strong."

I invite my hon. colleagues to step up as well and join us in supporting this bill.

Government Orders

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

I eagerly invite my hon. colleagues to collaborate by supporting this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, dairy farming is important to so many in my community. After all, Perth—Wellington has more dairy farmers than any other electoral district in the country, something we are very proud of and think is very important.

However, when I talk to different individuals and farmers, they are greatly concerned with the slow-to-action process the government has taken. Would the hon. minister agree that this action should have been taken two or three weeks ago, before so many of these farmers had to dump their milk?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Mr. Speaker, I also would like to acknowledge the dairy farms in my riding. They are very pleased with the action we are taking today. It will help dairy farmers across Canada.

The measures are coming in response to the request by the Canadian Dairy Commission, which is already saying how happy it is. I am hoping that all of us in the House can join together today and get this done.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member quoted the Dairy Farmers of Canada twice in her presentation. The quote from the organization was wonderful, but really was not related to the funding that came from the government; it was more about its industry in general.

Could the member advise us as to how the dairy industry feels about the funding that has been announced by the government?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. I was quoting from the dairy farmers themselves and their organization to show their heart and commitment to Canada, and to producing such a high-quality product for Canadians.

There is great support for this measure by the dairy industry. Again, we are looking for the support of all members in the House today to move this forward as quickly as possible so we can implement it.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I hear all the time from farmers in my riding, particularly in the non-supply-managed commodities, is the concern with the business risk management programs. When the government introduced the Canadian agricultural partnership to replace Growing Forward 2, there was a commitment to have a complete review and reworking of the business risk management programs.

Here we are, a few years later, and that still has not happened.

Could the minister commit today that the government will undertake a full and comprehensive reworking of the business risk management programs, so they better support farmers in the non-supply-managed commodities?

Hon. Deb Schulte: Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect on the comments I have heard my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, say

many times, that it is really important for farmers to access the risk management program. There are resources there, and it is important that they access that program.

That is the most important one for them to be able to get the supports they need right now. They need to go to that program. There are calculators on the website to help them see how this is going to benefit them, and they need to take advantage of this program. It is there for them, and we would like to see them use it.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the minister says that those programs are there for farmers, but the fact of the matter is that they are not. Only about 30% of farmers are actually enrolled in those programs, and of that 30% so many are not able to access the funding through that program, or if they are, they have it clawed back in future years.

It is very simple. The Liberals committed to a full review and reworking of these programs. Will they do that? Will they do it, especially now, when we are in a pandemic and farmers are at the front lines? They are the ones who are feeding us on a daily basis. They are feeding our country, and they are feeding the world.

Could the Liberals at least commit to a review of these business risk management programs, which they agreed to a number of years ago?

• (1650)

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the members in the House of what we have done, and that we are targeting support to some of the most critical challenges facing the food supply chain at this moment, helping to cover extraordinary costs and address food security concerns.

We have a \$77.5-million emergency processing fund available. We have \$125 million in a national AgriRecovery initiative, including set-asides for cattle and hog management. We have expanded the CDC's borrowing capacity by \$200 million in this movement, and there is a \$50-million surplus food purchase program. We are working with the provinces and territories to increase AgriStability interim payments to 75%.

These are some of the measures we have taken to support our farmers.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add my own support to this bill to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act.

As others have said, this bill is urgently needed by our Canadian dairy sector. We are talking about an industry that drives our economy, and our rural communities in particular, with over \$6 billion in sales on the farm, almost \$15 billion in processor sales, and tens of thousands of jobs. That is why our government continues to support a strong supply management system in Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Dairy Commission continues to be an excellent partner in supporting a strong and critical supply management system for dairy producers across the country, as it has been doing for the past half century. One of its main roles is to help maintain the balance between supply and demand and avoid surpluses, as we have seen during the COVID-19 crisis.

Because of the closure of restaurants, hotels and schools, the demand for dairy products dropped significantly, leaving dairy producers with a surplus. Producers and producer groups did everything they could to manage the surplus by reducing quotas and donating to food banks. However, more needs to be done. That is why this bill is so important.

The Canadian Dairy Commission needs a greater capacity to fully meet the industry's needs, and that is what this bill offers by increasing the commission's borrowing capacity to fund the purchase and storage of surplus dairy products.

I therefore urge all my fellow MPs to support this bill to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act. Canada's dairy producers have endorsed this measure, which will give the industry the help it desperately needs and help sustain the supply chain. This amendment to the Canadian Dairy Commission Act is another sign of our government's strong and ongoing support for the dairy industry and our supply management system.

[*English*]

We know that international trade is also vital for our economy and our jobs in this country. Canada is indeed a trading nation. To maximize our trade opportunities, we have completed trade agreements with our key trading partners in Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America.

That said, we are balancing our pro-trade agenda with our continued strong commitment to supply management. I can tell everyone that during the negotiations for the new NAFTA, we defended our system against a concerted effort to dismantle it entirely.

At the same time, we also know that some access to our Canadian dairy markets was granted, which is why we sat down with supply management groups and worked out the best way to deliver full and fair compensation to Canadian supply-managed producers.

To help dairy producers manage the impact of the CPTPP and CETA, we committed to an investment of \$1.75 billion. We have already sent out \$345 million to dairy farmers in direct payments based on their quota holdings. I want to recognize the great work done by the Canadian Dairy Commission in helping us deliver these dollars to producers as quickly as possible.

As well, we have invested \$350 million in programs to help dairy producers and processors boost their production and compete. The

Government Orders

producer portion of this investment is \$250 million for the dairy farm investment program. Right across Canada, this program is helping well over 3,000 dairy farmers make key investments in animal comfort, new feeding and milking systems, ventilation systems and many others. These innovations are helping dairy farmers reduce their costs, boost their productivity and improve their efficiency. The result is a stronger, more profitable operation. That is good news for our dairy industry, for our communities, for consumers and for our economy.

Of course, we will continue to move forward with the compensation, not only for dairy producers, but for poultry and egg producers as well. We will sit down with the industry to determine the best way forward for compensation for new access under the new NAFTA.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

We absolutely have to help our dairy producers remain financially viable while meeting consumer demand for an industry that is both innovative and sustainable. We are pleased to be working with the Canadian Dairy Commission to develop a vision for the future and an ambitious strategic plan for Canada's dairy sector. This bill will help the sector get through this crisis and secure its future.

I would also like to remind the House that, in recent decades, the industry has made major progress on the production, innovation and environmental sustainability fronts. For example, the carbon footprint of a glass of milk is now just one-third of what it was in the 1950s. We owe that kind of progress and so much more to innovation in the areas of dairy cow genetics, feed and management and to farmers' outstanding work.

Our government is proud to be helping Canada's dairy industry pave the way when it comes to innovation and technology. Let us support our industry and show our pride in its hour of greatest need by passing this bill. Let us keep working with producers and processors to support every part of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the President of the Treasury Board.

I would like to begin by thanking him and sincerely congratulating him. I have been dealing with him and his officials over the past two months. We have always had a cordial, efficient and productive relationship. I thank him from the bottom of my heart. I very much appreciate it.

Government Orders

As the President of the Treasury Board, he is the architect, or one of the architects, of the government's tax policies. Nobody expected this—we understand that—especially in terms of the emergency assistance needed.

We understand, and we all agreed on the principle of emergency assistance. However, this is having unintended consequences that are directly affecting agriculture. Some people, especially young people and students, who will be eligible for this beginning on Friday, might be tempted to stay home and collect the \$1,200 a month rather than go to work in the fields.

In contrast, the provincial government, under the leadership of Minister André Lamontagne, proposed additional financial support for people to work in the fields. He is proposing an extra \$100 a month for people who choose to work in the fields.

Could the government have taken the same approach to encourage people to go to work and thus avoid the unintended consequence of people staying home and getting paid to do nothing?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to underscore that in Quebec City we are a tightknit community and my team and I have the pleasure and honour of working with the team of the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. I think we are all very proud to be the members of Parliament for our ridings and we can also be very proud of the collaboration that exists between our teams.

On the subject of the Canada emergency response benefit that we have put in place, as I said earlier, in the Quebec City region tens of thousands of families are receiving this emergency benefit because they absolutely need it to make ends meet. That being said, we know that there are problems, which is why the Canadian government announced very important aid a few days ago to the tune of \$3 billion to increase the pay of workers in essential sectors of the economy. We know that the Quebec government will use that aid wisely.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has made these comments about supporting the dairy industry, and we certainly do support this bill. I just want to acknowledge the great, hard work and long hours that the people in the dairy industry put in to be able to provide this great product for us in Canada, and our processing.

I am wondering if the minister can further acknowledge and mention what further asks came from the dairy industry in the lead-up to this particular bill, Bill C-16. There is the \$200 million that has been put in. Were there other things that were asked for?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, although there are no dairy producers in my riding, I would like to say something that I know to be true: Unfortunately, dairy producers, like all other agricultural producers, work very hard.

I do not have to go too far back in my family tree to find some farmers, but I am not one of them, and there are not many in my riding. Nevertheless, and as the member said so well, the sector

needs help. As the Prime Minister has already announced, and as the minister has repeated, we need to continue working with the sector to ensure that it can keep doing its job while feeding 35 million Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak to Bill C-16 in the House today as well. This bill is an act to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act. It is a bill to increase the amount that the commission can borrow to \$500 million.

Before I start, I want to thank my colleagues from Foothills and Beauce for their presentations today, and the excellent speeches they made in regard to the need for further support in the agricultural industry. I also want to acknowledge the hard work, as I just pointed out, of the people in the dairy industry and their work in trying to convince the minister, who was trying to convince us and farmers that she's walking the talk. According to the reports I am getting, it is not working so well for her. We certainly want to give the minister some more ideas today as far as what kind of help we are hearing about in the country that might help her make a more firm commitment. I hope to leave the minister with those ideas.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Huron—Bruce, another great region of Canada, as far as agricultural production goes. Maybe that is why my ancestors in the Wingham area left there in the 1870s, to go west and find greater fertility on the bald prairies out in Elgin, Manitoba. Many of my ancestors still live there. I will have to get back and see them again sometime.

In supporting Bill C-16, we know the importance of the dairy industry in Canada. We also know the shortfalls that the government has had in regard to dealing with the dairy industry. My colleague from the Bloc today was trying to do a bit of a history lesson. He said he was a teacher, but I want to reiterate. My colleague mentioned the great trade agreements that we have had. I have had people from the dairy industry in my office supporting the TPP agreement that we signed. My colleague from Abbotsford signed that agreement with the prime minister and our minister of agriculture from Saskatchewan as well at the time.

These were great trade agreements that people in the dairy industry realized were an opportunity for them to continue with their industry in a very extensive way, and that the Conservative government at the time had their backs. We had put forward, as my colleagues from Quebec have indicated, a \$4.2 billion plan to help the dairy industry with any kind of support it needed as the adjustment took place for the great pluses in other areas of the industry and other industries in Canada that were going to take place under the TPP.

Government Orders

I want to acknowledge that the government did make \$2 billion available to the dairy farmers of Canada just a week or so before the election last fall, which seemed to be a bit suspicious timing. The Liberals did that because the agreement they were signing with the United States was not as good for the dairy industry as the one we were looking at signing with the TPP, so the Liberals felt there needed to be support there. We in opposition know and acknowledge again how important the dairy industry is.

There are many sectors that are hurting in the Prairies and in Ontario, because I have spoken with Ontario cattle people. I have spoken with my Quebec colleagues, and some in the Maritimes too, in regard to the hurt in the agricultural industry today. There does not seem to be the acknowledgement there that is on a parallel, as other colleagues have mentioned, with some of the other industries that have been supported in this COVID-19 pandemic. I reiterate that, to the question I asked of the minister a while ago, she said the Liberals would be there to help with the asks of the agricultural industry. In the question that I asked earlier, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture indicated that it would take \$2.6 billion to support that industry.

• (1705)

This was a few weeks back when the organization made this claim, and yet the minister announces \$252 million, of which \$150 million is for the AgriRecovery program. As my colleagues have said, that is budgeted regularly every year in every province for the partnership arrangement that the provinces are involved in, to have an AgriRecovery program. Therefore, these are not even newly budgeted funds, and that is the biggest portion of that \$252 million.

I acknowledge the expansion of the \$200 million today in support of the Canadian Dairy Commission Act because of the need to make sure we do not have these kinds of perishable agricultural products spoiling and not being saved for further use. That is a very big concern, but it is a parallel that is not drawn by the government's commitment to the agricultural industry in sectors such as the beef and pork industries at this time. I would compare, as others have, the spoilage of butter, cheese and milk products not being acceptable to it being just as unacceptable to see piglets or culled cows being euthanized in Canada today as well. That is the result of a lack of immediate support and a delay in the support from the government in trying to meet and adapt to the needs of our agriculture industry, particularly our livestock producers.

The government thinking it can do it through the AgriRecovery program is, I guess, one step better than trying to do it through AgriStability, but I want to correct the Minister of Seniors. She just said the government was working hard to try and get the AgriStability program to 75% margins when, in fact, that is where it is and the industry is wanting it to go to 85%. The Minister of Agriculture acknowledged that, so I want to make sure they are on the same page in their own cabinet.

I want to reiterate that there is support in AgriStability, but many farmers have been through disasters before and support comes 18 months to two years after the fact. It is far too late for an immediate hit in a pandemic situation like this. What I mean by "immediate hit" is this. I have had feedlot operators tell me that it is costing them \$800,000 a month to feed the cattle they have in a 10,000-

head feedlot back home, and that one is a reasonable size in a province the size of Manitoba. I also know that from the bigger feedlots in southern Alberta, these are 20,000 to 25,000 heads of cattle each. I have been on many of them. They are huge operations and it costs upward of \$2.4 million a month to feed that many livestock in those areas. This is about food security. We could talk about the size of the operations or anything else, it is all relevant, but we really have to make sure we are dealing with food security.

One of the programs I have heard a lot about, and that farmers have indicated they would qualify for and sign on to, is the Western Livestock Price Insurance Program. I will pass their suggestion on to the minister, that she should look at it and utilize it. It does not work now because, as I said in my question to her today, the premiums are not affordable. If it were made affordable, the government could use it now and go ahead with its AgriRecovery.

However, let us go back to March 13, the day the House rose. All parties agreed to that, so we know there was a disaster going on that particular day. We could use that as a reference point. If we look at Western Livestock, the Ontario people tell me it would work for them. If the premiums were affordable, they would sign up immediately, knowing full well that they would get a return out of it this year. The big problem with any insurance program is liquidity, so if the government were able to help with premium levels becoming more affordable, then it would get the buy-in from the livestock industry across Canada to make the liquidity viable. That is a big issue with that program.

To develop that, the farmers would have to sign on for three or four years and the government would have to look at supporting the industry as well. Farmers have told me that is what they would do, because they know it would be more predictable in helping them stabilize their livestock industry, both on the pork side and the beef side.

• (1710)

If they are going to sign up, we could look at agreeing on that in the House. It is all because we would have a recognition of the COVID-19 area.

That commitment is what makes it liquid, and the provinces would therefore be able to phase themselves in. We pretty well have to do it through federal funding right now, because the provinces are already being supported by the federal government in many ways.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for Brandon—Souris for his intervention, for his wealth of knowledge when it comes to the agriculture sector and specifically for his comments on Bill C-16.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member could comment on some of the things he has heard from his constituents regarding the impact on the Dairy Commission and the dairy producers as a result of this pandemic.

Is this agreement that we are talking about today more to do with the USMCA, and what impact is the USMCA having on dairy producers across the country?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for Foothills for that question. It is very relevant.

I did mention that this agreement the government signed, the USMCA, is weaker for the dairy industry than what we had before, the same as the \$2.2 billion support level that was brought out a week before the election campaign. This support level is needed right now in the industry. Of course, it is caused by the pandemic that we are in, but the trade agreements needed to be much more solid for the long-term sustainability and viability of a very needed industry like the dairy industry that we have here in Canada.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned other sectors in agriculture that were not included in Bill C-16. I would like to draw his attention to my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country where we have a tree fruit industry and will read what the BC Fruit Growers' Association had said.

The financial support package to the Canadian agriculture industry announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau this morning is profoundly underwhelming.

I wonder if the member can expand on his thoughts of what the government should additionally be doing to not let down farmers.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for Kelowna—Lake Country for that intervention. I had the opportunity to visit her region in the early 1990s to deal with the new environmental programs they were using in the fruit industry and the orchard industry. It is a great industry, and a great part of Canada.

The government has a need, as I have said, to support some of these other areas, whether it is through AgriRecovery or AgriInvest in those areas. However, AgriStability is the weakest for the livestock industry for sure.

When we are in a pandemic situation like this, which is not a natural disaster that we would normally think of affecting crop production and orchard survival, there is a very serious need for an immediate set-aside program, and perhaps a per-head, per-day subsidy might be utilized. I do not know if that is what the Liberals are looking at in the AgriRecovery program now, but it would help that sector.

We need to look at all of the sectors of supply. The purchasing power of Canadians has dropped, because everyone has had to stay home and everything else. That affects the industry in British Columbia and throughout our wine-growing areas of Canada.

• (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: I have just a brief comment to hon. members.

When posing a question, if one is using a citation from a document or quoting, and if that quote happens to include the given name or family name of an hon. member, members are still not allowed to incorporate that into the quote. So that members know for

next time, even by citation, members are expected to change it up when they read it, such as the hon. member for Papineau or whatever the case may be.

If there are any questions on that, members can get back to me.

We have one last short question and response.

The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the essence of the discussion tonight is just how woefully short the efforts of the Liberals have been, including to assist agriculture.

On this, including the \$200 million for the Dairy Commission, how is Canada stacking up in its assistance for its agriculture sector as a whole compared with the money being given by other countries such as the United States?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question because we are just not stacking up at all compared with our U.S. neighbours. I always look at things on a population basis. We have about 37 million people in Canada compared with 370 million in the U.S., so Canada has one-tenth of the U.S. population. The U.S. just put \$19 billion into its agricultural industry with a stroke of a pen, and the money is out there. Canada has put \$252 million forward. If we were making a parallel effort to that of the U.S., we would have put forward at least \$1.9 billion, and our industry in fact asked for \$2.6 billion.

Therefore, our industries here on the agricultural side are not even close to being competitive with our U.S. neighbours. That is on top of the fact the new trade agreement is not as plentiful as the old one was, either.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here tonight. I just want to correct the record. The member for Brandon—Souris was incorrect in some of his comments at the beginning about his origins. Wingham is in the riding of Huron—Bruce, smack dab in it. Of course, Huron—Bruce county has some of the best agricultural lands in the country.

I would also mention to him that former NDP member Pat Martin was also not too far down the road from where his relatives grew up. I am pretty sure he is not related to him. Maybe he had it too good in Huron—Bruce and he moved out west. I do not know, but we are happy to have him here tonight.

If we go back in history to the years from 2006 to 2015, those were 10 of the best years that Canadian agriculture has known. It is indisputable and I cannot reiterate that enough.

Government Orders

When the Conservative government came into power in 2006, there was a lot of work to do and we did a number of different trade deals. It really changed the direction and dimension of agriculture. It was not only agriculture, but it certainly benefited from a number of those trade deals. We also did things with red tape and a number of other things that allowed farmers to get out from underneath some red tape and bureaucracy so they actually could focus on their operations. I can think of people not too far down the road from me who upgraded their machinery a few years ago. They put GPS equipment in, and have different rippage and tillage systems for their cash crop. Those were very good years.

It could be a fluke, but it likely is not, but over the last five years there has been a downward trend in the sentiment and reality for agriculture in the country. Farmers have a different outlook on agriculture, unfortunately, than what they did just five years ago, and it is not in just one sector. It is not just in dairy; it is in all of the other supply-managed sectors. It is in the cash crops, beef, pork and in all the other sectors that we would call agriculture. Their outlook is diminished and there is a number of different reasons why.

That is where we need to start this discussion today with Bill C-16. We are not anywhere near where we were just a few short years ago.

Three trade deals need to be discussed as well today: the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, what the government now calls CPTPP; and then the USMCA.

When we were in the 2015 election, we came to a resolution midway through it. There was an agreement with TPP, which included the United States. The supply managed sector said that this was setting up for future generations in agriculture. It was a very positive time. It put everything to a conclusion, a finality, and allowed everybody to think about moving forward and about the investments and growth that would be there.

Subsequent to that, we have had a number of issues. Some of them are in direct compensation. I am speaking particularly around dairy. There have been a lot of complaints about that. There is a lot of uncertainty around TPP. With USMCA, there are some ballpark figures. However, certainly the way in which these dollars will be delivered are still to be seen. That is an issue.

What we are dealing with today is something we will call a positive. It is an action that needs to be taken. As the member for Brandon—Souris said, it is not enough for all of agriculture. I wish we could be talking about further compensation for pork and beef, but we are not having that conversation today.

Also, I would like to talk about processing capacity. It would have been fantastic if we could have had something in the bill. I know there has been some money allocated to processors, but I understand it is pretty well for PPE. I do not understand, for the life of me, why Cargill, one of the largest processors in the world, with deep pockets, needs money for PPE. It seems to me it would have its own money for it. Maybe it could have help getting PPE, but certainly it could afford to purchase its own.

• (1720)

I have talked to trucking companies that truck directly to dairy, and trucking companies that truck to other facilities. They are ineligible for all of these programs. They are the ones that do not usually have front-line people on the cutting edge of what is being used for PPE, so that is a frustration.

If we look at the province of Ontario and what has happened in the last number of years with processing, specifically around beef and pork, it is very frustrating. We have seen Quality Meat Packers close. We have seen Ryding-Regency have its licence pulled in December. Right now, there are about 12,000 head of cattle processed each week in Ontario. Of that, 1,500 could have been from Ryding, but Ryding is out of the picture. This is not to say that Ryding was completely innocent with respect to its infractions, but the frustrating thing in the Ryding situation was the cloud of secrecy after the initial violation occurred.

No member of Parliament in this House, except perhaps the Minister of Health, the Minister of Agriculture, the Prime Minister and maybe cabinet, would know exactly what the issues were at that specific moment back in the fall of 2019. No one knows. I tried to find out exactly what happened, exactly what the final straw was as to why it was pulled, and we do not know. The media does not know. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association does not know. I do not think Beef Farmers of Ontario knows, to this day, what the final straw was. The issue is that once it is pulled, that is it. It has to start back from scratch. That is a problem.

In the future, it needs to be transparent and open, so that if it is the will of the House of Commons to help deliver a financial package or a dollar solution to it, that occurs, because now, for example, kosher beef, almost all of which Ryding provided to Canada, is coming from Mexico. We saw last week in the news that ground beef is coming from Uruguay.

I would challenge the Minister of Health and the ag minister to show anybody on this side of the House of Commons that Uruguay and Mexico are as diligent with their inspectors regarding ear tags and cattle being unloaded at a processing facility with a limp. Currently, if one gets the wrong inspector, the animal is euthanized. It is five feet from being put on the line, and now it is scrapped.

Government Orders

How about traceability? How about the new transportation rules the government has imposed? How about the new rules it imposed at cattle auctions for further processing of horns, etc.? I bet it is not even close to what we put our producers through here, and the fines they get, such as a \$1,500 fine if the animal does not have an ear tag so they know what farm it came from. There is a lot we need to do with the CFIA and transparency. There has to be a reality whereby if we are importing beef, those countries have to be held to the same standards we are, or we have to come to an agreement as to what all the standards are.

There also needs to be an investment in greenfield processing capacity, at least in Ontario. I am sure there are other parts around the countryside. Conestoga Meats in Breslau is a great example in the pork sector. It is a kind of public-private partnership. In spite of the pandemic right now, it is doing very well. Farmers have a share of the hooks, and it works out quite well.

The other thing I wanted to talk about, which I did not get a chance to do earlier today, was really to go back to what the member for Brandon—Souris said. To my mind, the minister said that we are going to go with our business risk management programs, and she talked about the calculator. One of her pork farmers received \$11 a head. If that is not proof enough to the House that this is not working, every person who has a pig farm in this riding is losing \$70 a head because of this pandemic and the processing capacity. They are losing money unless they have a contract, which many do, but some do not.

• (1725)

When farmers are losing \$59 a head and the agriculture minister says that AgriStability is going to give \$11 a head, what is the point? It is not enough. As I said earlier today, it is not like this is old MacDonald's farm with 10 pigs in the barn. There are thousands of pigs, and the losses are in the millions and hundreds of thousands.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for sharing his experience and for the real detail he went into talking about this issue.

What does it mean to his constituents that there was nothing to deal with the processing capacity across Canada and with the impact that will have?

There was the announcement of a \$50-million set-aside for cattle and \$50 million for pork producers. This will come nowhere near addressing the culling of animals, even for dairy producers. Bill C-16 does not include funds to address the culling of animals resulting from not only the COVID-19 pandemic, but even the increased imports through USMCA.

What impact does it have that there is nothing to address the bottleneck in the processing capacity? How critical is this situation?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the set-aside is good, because, as I said, if farmers are losing \$70 a head, the worst thing they can feel is knowing they have to keep paying for something they will lose money on.

Pork and beef farmers do not want to euthanize their animals. They want to see their animals become food. However, the reality

of the situation is that if the barn is full and weaner pigs are coming in, there is no space and farmers have to sell their pigs for what they can get for them. That is where we are at. We know the processing capacity in Quebec, for example, where some Ontario hogs are sent, is reduced, and things get backed up and pigs end up in Manitoba or wherever else.

This is a short-term problem, yes, and set-asides and other things will help, but for the long term, we have our heads in the sand if we are not looking at food sovereignty in this country and our processing capacity in the provinces to process what we have here.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like him to tell me what he thinks of the impact of government's lack of action in terms of providing short-, medium- and long-term support for agriculture.

Around the world, in the United States for example, considerable sums, about \$19 billion, have been allocated. There is far greater support for pork producers.

What will happen here? What is the concern in the short term?

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the situation is absolutely baffling. I have spent so much time on the phone in the last five or six weeks talking to farmers and other people, and they ask me why the government does not do more for them. They are not looking for a brand new pickup truck in their parking lots. They are looking for an actual conclusion. They have lost a market because of this pandemic. They are not asking for what happened in September. They are not asking for what happened in October. They are asking for what happened from March 15 to today. It is baffling.

They can roughly estimate what they need right now, but it is like there is nobody to talk to. It is so frustrating. Hopefully one of these days the government will wake up and get to the table.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member for Huron—Bruce say the word “baffling”, and I have to agree with him that this is baffling.

I have heard some of the comments from the Minister of Agriculture that these business risk management programs continue to exist for farmers and farm families, but they ignore the reality on the ground that all of us rural MPs are hearing about from the farmers. They say the business risk management programs are just not working.

Government Orders

I am reminded of a famous Ike Eisenhower quote: “Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil, and you're a thousand miles from the corn field.” That seems to be the impression we are getting right now from the government. It is an Ottawa-knows-best approach that ignores the realities on the ground.

Does the member for Huron—Bruce have a comment on that?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I would say once in a while Perth County will give Huron—Bruce a run for its money on farmland production.

The agriculture minister toured my riding just before the election for an announcement. She toured the beef farm of a Liberal supporter. Farmers told her exactly what she has been hearing today. I cannot figure out how we can sit in the House of Commons and say AgriStability and AgriRecovery is our offer. It is ridiculous. If we want to lose our food sovereignty and be completely reliant on the United States and imports from Central America and South America, the goal is being accomplished with the inaction here today.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé for standing up for Quebec farmers, of course. All the comments we have heard throughout the debate clearly show that all farmers in Canada are affected. One thing we keep hearing over and over again, in both French and English, is that this is not enough and it is not coming fast enough. We keep hearing that. I want to thank my colleague for standing up for our farmers.

We are here today to debate Bill C-16. Of course, there are other bills worthy of study in the House, such as Bill C-216, which was introduced by the Bloc Québécois and also addresses the aspect of “not enough”.

I remind members that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-16. In fact, I would have liked to have seen it go further, because we are talking about the COVID-19 crisis and I heard all my colleagues talk about going beyond what is offered in this bill, which we obviously agree with. This crisis has shown just how essential the agricultural sector is. Of course, it is also essential in normal times. We can also see how fragile this industry is. This fragility was evident last year, in particular with respect to the consequences of agreements.

It was assumed that these agreements would come with compensation, but such compensation was never received, which has hurt our farmers. Add the effects of the crisis on top of that, and it becomes even clearer that farmers urgently need our help. We support what Bill C-16 does. We are absolutely in favour of it. However, I want to join my colleagues in saying that it is not enough.

The subject I want to talk about in the House of Commons today is food sovereignty. We are discussing Bill C-16, which is about milk and our dairy farmers. I represent a very remote region, a rural area in Quebec whose agriculture sector is also suffering. My farmers' presence in the dairy and vegetable sectors has shrunk to almost nothing. Regarding what is being said in the House today, I have to

say that it is also urgent for outlying regions or regions that are not normally thought of as farming regions. Since food and sovereignty are issues we want to bring to the fore, the fact that we have farmers in our area is important to me, because our farmers' presence is dwindling.

There is another topic I would have liked us to discuss in the House today. We are talking about agriculture, but we are on the COVID-19 committee. With all due respect to my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, I would have liked us to be able to discuss related topics that would inform the debate and the proposals. Debating a subject that we all agree on is one thing, but we also need to know how to make proposals so we can push things further.

When it comes to food sovereignty, the whole issue of the fishery has not been addressed in the House since the beginning of the crisis. We finally have access to Parliament via the COVID-19 committee. I am seeing major parallels. When it comes to agriculture, for example, we are talking about the market. There is a surplus on the market and it is hurting producers' income. They are uncertain. Doubts remain, and producers are concerned. We are seeing exactly the same thing in this other industry, which is also a food sector. Mariculture and fishing are part of it. These sectors are hurting because, like farmers, they will not be able to dispose of their stock and they will have additional costs.

• (1735)

They will not be able to invest. It will take years for businesses in the fisheries and agriculture sectors to pay off their debts.

We need to talk about debt. I know there are people in my riding who are worried about going bankrupt and who are acutely aware that they are operating at a loss right now. We will have to support them after this is over.

I talked about shrinking to almost nothing. Here, we talk about things and make decisions. Yes, we need to pass this bill, but we need to do more, and we need to do it faster. The future is riding on this.

I do not know if my colleagues feel the same way, but I suspect they do. When an industry is under pressure like the agriculture sector is now, whether it is because of treaties or a public health crisis like this one, we need to think about the next generation. We want food sovereignty, but we have no guarantee whatsoever that there will be a next generation.

Government Orders

The message being sent to young people who want to get into farming or fishing is that no one knows what lies ahead. We need them, but they will not get paid. They will not get any support when they need the government. It will always limit their power and what they can do. The government will not be there for them. This is what I heard earlier, in every language: We will not support them. That is the message. This raises the whole issue of the next generation.

I also want to talk about initiatives and adjustments based on needs. Certain images come to mind. For instance, we were talking about livestock earlier. There are a lot of regulations around animal welfare. That is excellent, but it can cause problems for regions like mine, for example, where we no longer have an abattoir. That is one concrete example.

A farmer from back home comes to mind. He lives in Longue-Rive. A few times over the years, he has thought about simply quitting. He cannot do it anymore, given all the regulations and all the assistance that is out of reach for him.

I am also thinking of all the fishers. It is the same thing. There are fish quotas. They will have to buy equipment, a boat or assorted fishing gear and repair nets. There are a lot of expenses to cover for an industry that is not being supported either, not in the regions or anywhere else. My colleagues in British Columbia or my colleagues in Atlantic Canada might say exactly the same thing about this industry that might not have a big enough next generation.

All the discussions we have here, all the recommendations we hear, all that delays our providing help—all of this stalling—only make these sectors of the economy even more fragile.

I wanted to symbolically include the issue of fishing, which is related to agriculture. To me, these sectors are in similar situations.

Yes, of course we have to help the dairy industry, but we also have to help all the other industries, including the pork, turkey, poultry, egg, fishing and mariculture industries, to ensure that we have true food sovereignty. True food sovereignty requires a next generation that we must support.

I would like our debates to cover broader subjects than just agriculture, the focus of Bill C-16. We are here to help people cope with COVID-19. This will have repercussions for years to come.

I would like us to eliminate these silos—these issues are interrelated—so we can help our farmers, fishers and, above all, our communities.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made many good points in her speech. I saw a report published in *The Globe and Mail* earlier this week by a grain farmer in Alberta, whose name is Mr. Nielsen. He indicated that he got into agriculture because he loved it, not because he thought it would be easy. The dairy industry is certainly not easy, as I pointed out earlier today.

Mr. Nielsen also makes a comment that farmers face weather, market volatility and costs of input on a regular basis, but they manage for that as much as they possibly can.

The mental health of farmers is something we need to look at too, and I would ask my colleague to comment on that. That article published by *The Globe and Mail* indicates that 58% of farmers meet the threshold for anxiety and 35% already meet the level of what is classified as depression. Even though they are like that, they love the industry. I was a farmer all my life so I know where they are coming from.

Could my colleague expand on that or does she have anything to add?

• (1745)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. I also thank him for letting me speak about mental health as well.

That is of course collateral damage. There are two considerations in our communities. We are talking about agriculture. However, depending on the size of the farm, we know very well that some farmers live a solitary life. It is a huge endeavour that entails many risks, whether it is a dairy, horticultural or grain farm. Farmers experience a great deal of stress and anxiety.

As I said earlier, there were flaws in what the government offered as a result of the agreements. There is compensation that has not been paid. We see what is currently happening. There is even more pressure on farmers, whose work is considered essential. The fact that they are considered essential also means that our help is urgently needed.

This was also among the demands made by Quebec, the provinces and farmers with respect to mental health. They obviously need support, because these people work hard. I had a spouse who was a farmer, and I saw what a life of farming was all about, with all its demands. I saw the stress, but also the desire, since farmers love what they do. As my colleague said, it is a passion. We need to support them.

I want to expand on the topic of rural life. Many rural ridings have high rates of suicide among men, primarily, and among farmers, as we heard earlier. These two aspects combined make this situation even more urgent.

I completely agree that we need to support them on this. Obviously, if we want to help them, we need to provide financial support, because that is where the stress comes from.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments.

Earlier, she mentioned the importance of the next generation and the fact that businesses are heavily in debt and on the verge of bankruptcy.

Does she believe that the federal government should provide direct assistance rather than offering loans to farm businesses that are already heavily in debt? What does she think about that? What message would she like to send the government?

Government Orders

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I believe that when we want to help an essential industry, and I believe that this is an essential service, we need to do more than offer loans. Obviously, if farmers are already in debt and have already been waiting for help for a year, we need to come to their aid quickly.

When businesses are in trouble, when they are on the verge of bankruptcy, they are unable to repay a loan. That could take years and it puts businesses at risk. Of course, direct assistance would be preferable to send a message to the next generation, which is wondering whether it should continue in an industry operating at a loss that has its share of problems. Even if these people are passionate, even if they have a sense of duty and want to feed their fellow citizens by doing the noble job of a farmer, they need to have the money to be able to do that.

With this crisis added on top of everything else that has happened, I think that we need to give them direct assistance.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-16.

This bill makes sense because milk storage has to align with supply and demand. As everyone knows, there is currently less demand for milk, so it makes sense to increase storage capacity.

Quebec's dairy production is integral to its economy. Some 11,000 dairy farm owners across Quebec produce over three billion litres per year. Those farms are worth up to \$2.5 billion. The industry accounts for 28% of Quebec's agricultural revenue.

In good years and bad, Quebec's dairies invest over \$700 million in maintaining and improving their facilities. Those investments certainly create significant economic opportunities in Quebec.

Quebec's dairy farms employ over 80,000 people. In 2014, they supported 82,661 direct and indirect jobs.

In terms of Canada's GDP, Quebec's dairy industry generates \$6.15 billion. That is a lot.

In terms of tax revenue, the industry contributes \$1.3 billion to various levels of government.

On the national level, 36% of dairy sector revenue comes from Quebec, making it the primary milk producing province. Quebec is the top province in terms of volume of milk or number of farms engaged in this production.

What is more, dairy production ranks third of all Canadian farming activities with nearly 11% of some \$41 billion in total agriculture revenue. That is quite significant. It is only logical to support dairy production businesses in Quebec, but also in all the regions. More specifically in my region, the Lower St. Lawrence, in which I represent the riding of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, more than 590 farms are tied to dairy production. That is more than 5,100 jobs and economic spinoffs of \$272 million a year. More than seven plants are also tied to dairy production and these processing plants provide 800 jobs.

The dairy industry's contribution to the GDP is more than \$400 million in the Lower St. Lawrence region alone. It is a

very important part of our economy and a lot of jobs depend on it. We must support them. It is very important.

This has been going on since April and we are wondering why the bill we are debating today was not introduced sooner.

A great amount of milk was lost because, among other things, production could not be reduced. There was also less overall consumption. Since April, I have personally had several discussions with representatives of producers, in particular those in the Lower St. Lawrence. They laid out the facts for me. They even had to dump milk. That seemed unbelievable and unacceptable to us. We must therefore ensure that we review storage and adjust the different systems in place.

More specifically, the data we obtained indicated that with schools, restaurants and different institutions closed, consumption dropped by almost 35%. In the end, it makes sense because it is about supply and demand.

Supply cannot necessarily stop. We know that cows are not equipped with a tap or button that shuts off milk production. On the consumption side, I was surprised to see that milk was being rationed by some stores. With COVID-19, they wanted to protect people's access to milk. Some stores restricted sales to a quart of milk per person. When people cannot consume more, rationing leads to problems with demand from the public.

Another surprise we got during the COVID-19 crisis is that CUSMA is going to come into effect on July 1 rather than August 1. That came as a shock to many people, particularly dairy farmers in my region and across Quebec. Moving up the implementation date will be problematic, because quotas are going to go down. Indeed, for dairy farmers, the dairy year begins on August 1 and ends on July 31.

• (1750)

Moving up the implementation date for CUSMA will mean a reduction in milk protein. Dairy producers got the nasty surprise of having to sell their stock in a very short time period: specifically, 55,000 tonnes in the first year, and 35,000 tonnes after that. In the past, the limit was nearly 85,000 tonnes. Canada's dairy farmers estimate they are going to lose \$340 million a year, which is a huge amount for that industry.

Government Orders

Those farmers feel cheated. When I talk to them about this issue, they recall their agreement with the government, which claimed to want to support them. When they are hit with that kind of surprise, especially during this time of crisis, what message does that send to our farmers? Does the government want to support them or discourage them? The current deal does not reflect what the government said at the outset. Words must be put into action, and this proves that the government has failed to support dairy farmers in the regions and across Quebec.

I have to point out that the 3.5% quota in CUSMA for the United States represents a loss of production for dairy farmers. Some of the farms in the regions of Quebec are small operations, and we must support them. My colleagues spoke about the next generation of farmers. I have recently heard from farmers who tell me that they are falling through the cracks of the system. They are not eligible for the \$40,000 Canada emergency business account because they do not have a payroll of at least \$20,000. What will they do? They are worried and do not know if they will make it through the crisis.

Right now is sowing period in Quebec. Although it has been delayed, in particular because of current temperatures, farmers do not have the money they need to buy seed and to plan for the upcoming season. They are thinking about calling it quits and they do not know what to tell to their children who want to take over the farm. These farmers do not feel supported by the government. They feel helpless and are trying to find solutions with the help of colleagues and farmers in the region, but are not finding any. They therefore contact us, their members of Parliament, so that we can speak on their behalf, which I am proud to do today.

This is worrisome. As we experience this pandemic, a historic crisis, we want people to be safe and secure, and also healthy. Safety and security includes food security. We do not want to receive our supplies exclusively from multinational companies. We want to support local businesses and enable farmers to continue by helping them financially.

Earlier, my colleague mentioned psychological support, and I am saddened to see what farmers in my region are going through. There is only one farm outreach worker for the entire Lower St. Lawrence region, which is totally unacceptable and inefficient. We say we want to help farmers. Farmers are very isolated. They work long hours every day and every week on their farms. They may not have anyone to confide in and talk to about their problems, not to mention their financial burden. They really need an outlet for their stress. They should not just be seeing financial problems. The government urgently needs to rectify this situation.

Farmers need cash and financial support from the government. We need to send a very strong message. I will be watching closely to make sure the government adjusts its measures.

• (1755)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is more of a comment than a question.

I listened carefully to what the member said. I hear not only his heart, but also his head. I would like him to know that even though I do not know him well, I think he speaks clearly and eloquently and is thinking with both his head and his heart. It is clear that it

comes from deep within. I just want to commend him and encourage him to keep going.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, I am flattered. I thank my colleague for his comments.

I sincerely hope he has heard the heartfelt pleas I have proudly expressed on behalf of farmers in my region. They are at the end of their collective rope because they are trying to find solutions to the problems I mentioned. They need both financial and psychological help, and we hope the government will hear their pleas.

• (1800)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for his very insightful intervention. He raised a number of very relevant points.

I too found it moving, and I would like him to tell us about the farmers he mentioned earlier, the ones who called his office to say how bad things were getting and to ask for help and support.

As an MP, how does he feel, and what message does he want to send to the government and the Treasury Board? We need to take advantage while they are here and tell them that it takes money. The \$252 million they announced is barely 10% of what was asked, and the overall aid package that the Canadian government is offering to the agriculture sector is proportionately 12 times less than what the United States is providing. Tomorrow morning, in a context of global free trade, our farmers are going to be asked to compete with these people, despite not being on a fair footing.

How does my colleague feel about that, and can he comment on his desire to speak for farmers?

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague's comments and completely agree with him.

The message we must send to our producers and farmers is that we are there to support them. Every year 5% to 7% of farms are abandoned by the producers. That sends a very strong message. They are sounding the alarm and we must listen to them and support them.

The money announced by the government represents barely 10% of what was requested. The government is providing \$250 million, while the Canadian Federation of Agriculture asked for \$2.6 billion. That is totally inadequate. The government needs to be consistent. If we want to support them we must have more targeted measures and financial programs that are specifically designed for them.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not long ago we all saw pictures of farmers dumping milk, and it was a lot of milk. I was quite shocked when I saw those pictures, and I am sure many other Canadians were as well. I have learned that this waste of Canadian milk is one of the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic is having on our economy and our agriculture sector.

Because restaurants and other retail vendors have had to close their doors, or have seen a dramatic decrease in sales, the overall demand for milk and milk products has been greatly reduced. This is why 30 million litres of milk had to be dumped over the last few months. What a waste, and what a huge impact the loss of sales must be having on the Canadian dairy sector.

I would like to recognize the hard work of my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. My hon. colleague, a farmer himself, has worked tirelessly for years not only to represent his constituents but also to fight for the needs of the Canadian agriculture sector and farmers right across the country. He has also been a vocal advocate for the protection of the dairy industry and the needs of dairy farmers, especially in the face of the constant attacks on this sector during the negotiations of the most recent international trade deals.

It is from my hon. colleague that I learned of the importance of protecting this vital sector. It is also from him that I learned how slow the government has been to respond to the pressing needs of dairy farmers and their families. Five weeks ago the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford sent a letter to the Minister of Agriculture supporting an appeal from the Dairy Processors Association of Canada to the government to take the very action proposed in the very short bill that is before us today.

While the numbers may be slightly different, as the original request involved slightly higher numbers, the idea was exactly the same. We also know that Mathieu Frigon, president and CEO of the Dairy Processors Association of Canada, made the same request last month.

Why did it take the government so long to respond and finally come forward with a bill that would provide the necessary assistance? That is the question on the minds of many Canadians.

Why does it take so long for the government to respond to the needs of Canadians during COVID-19? How on earth did it take over five weeks to produce this very simple bill, a bill that would provide critical assistance not only to the entire dairy industry but also to the dairy farmers and their families? Canadians must wonder just how much damage dairy farmers have had to suffer because the government was too slow to respond.

Of course this is just one example of the government dragging its feet. The government's response to the COVID-19 crisis has been characterized as a patchwork of initiatives and programs designed largely to cut people out instead of making sure no one is left behind. Announcements are made with no or only sketchy details to back them up, and the resulting programs end up being so complicated and chaotic that the people who need them have a hard time figuring out how to access them.

I am sure I am not the only member whose office has been overwhelmed with just trying to get the proper information about the eligibility criteria of various assistance programs so we can help the many desperate constituents calling our offices for help.

Yesterday's announcement was a series of initiatives to help Canadian seniors, and it is a good case in point. Many members in the chamber have been getting a barrage of calls and emails from seniors describing the hardships they are facing due to the COVID-19 crisis, and they are imploring the government to help.

As the NDP critic for seniors, I have been working non-stop since the very first week of the crisis to persuade the government to pay attention to the needs of seniors and to take action. It took eight full weeks to get the government to respond. We all know that only happened because we negotiated an agreement on our last unanimous consent motion and we put the government's back to the wall. What a shame it took that kind of effort to get the government to pay attention to the desperate needs of Canadian seniors.

That being said, while we are happy the government has finally recognized Canadian seniors need help during the pandemic, it is too little after the government had committed to help seniors without delay. On support for persons with disabilities, the government has been silent so far.

• (1805)

Again, the government has come up with a program short on details and missing the mark on what is needed. By offering a one-time payment, the government is ignoring the shortfalls seniors were dealing with before the pandemic, and the needs of Canadian seniors that will still be there next month.

What happens next month? Will all Canadians get assistance next month when they face the same increased costs for groceries, transportation and medication, just to name a few?

When asked yesterday, both the Minister of Seniors and the President of the Treasury Board basically threw up their hands and said they would have to figure that one out. How does that make any sense? How are Canadian seniors supposed to feel assured when the federal ministers responsible admit the assistance being provided is too low?

Let me get back to the bill at hand. The bill is about increasing the credit limit threshold for the Canadian Dairy Commission, from the existing \$300 million per year to \$500 million per year, in the existing buyback agreement the CDC has with producers to manage storage. This will allow the already struggling dairy industry, which has been hit hard by successive trade deals in recent years, some breathing space in the form of certain products like butter, various types of cheese and milk powder. Those products with a longer shelf life can be purchased by the CDC in larger quantities, then bought back under the existing agreement by producers when market fluctuations normalize within a set period of time once the COVID-19 crisis is over.

Government Orders

Pierre Lampron, president of the Dairy Farmers of Canada, is quoted as saying:

Never have we seen such fluctuation in demand for milk from one week to another, and despite the best efforts to manage production to align with consumer needs, bottlenecks resulted in milk having to be disposed at the farm, something no dairy farmer wants to see.

New Democrats are glad to see the government finally take this step. Farmers have been waiting weeks for this support. After everything the government has done to dairy farmers, it is the least it can do to support them during a pandemic. Instead of investing more to help our agricultural producers during this crisis, the government is letting them down. Many still are not eligible for support programs.

If it were not for the concessions being made through successive trade deals like CETA, CPTPP and now CUSMA, we would not have a surplus of American milk flooding Canadian borders, leading to the current Canadian supply glut and necessitating the recent dumping of 30 million litres of liquid milk. We have a supply management system in Canada, and this unprecedented supply glut in Canada speaks to the need for negotiations to take our food sovereignty seriously when engaging in future trade talks.

That is why the agreement the NDP negotiated with the Deputy Prime Minister regarding future trade deals is so important. Parliament will, for the first time ever, be able to review future trade deals in advance of ratification instead of merely providing a ye or nay vote after the deal is done. However, it is important to discuss the concessions that were made because of CUSMA to our supply-managed dairy sector. We are giving up a few percentages of our market, as we did under CPTPP and CETA.

The Liberals constantly say in the House that they are the party that defends supply management and are the ones who brought it in. However, now we have started to see more cuts. The problem is that when we were negotiating CUSMA and opening up parts of our markets to the United States, especially in supply management, in a sense what the government asked dairy farmers to do was pay the price for another jurisdiction's overproduction problems.

When I say that, I mean that I am really baffled when I see corporations and businesses in Canada that make material or produce milk, do our farming or do anything, and taxpayers have to pay them a subsidy not to do their maximum production.

I find it baffling that we have to allow other countries to bring their products in so that our farmers, such as the ones we are discussing today, cannot produce to their maximum.

● (1810)

I would like to make an illustration by using this as an example. The state of Wisconsin produces more milk than the entire country of Canada. As it does not have supply management, it has wild fluctuations in price and many farmers have been experiencing bankruptcy down there. There are serious concerns about mental health. They do not have the protection there, and in a sense we are trying to open up our market because of the U.S. demands. We are trying to pay the price for their over-production.

It goes further. Under clause 3.A.3 of CUSMA, we have now agreed to establish threshold limits on exports. We have put those

threshold limits on things like infant formula, milk protein concentrates and skim milk powder. This means that Canada has agreed to absolutely limit exports in those categories. Furthermore, if we exceed those thresholds, we are subject to a punitive tariff, which would essentially price us out of the market.

Currently, we know that the dairy industry is pleased to get this support, but I understand there is anxiety about events set to occur this summer. The implementation of the new CUSMA on July 1 is expected to cause difficulties for the dairy industry unrelated to COVID-19, and are certain to add to difficulties caused by the pandemic. The difficulty arises because the implementation date of July 1 does not coincide with the start date of the dairy industry's fiscal year, which is August 1. Export limits on certain dairy products such as skim milk and new tariff-free market access to foreign dairy products are supposed to have been phased in over several years. Effectively, this all means that the first year of that process will only be one month long, between July 1 and August 1, and Canadian dairy producers will lose about 11 months of transition. It has been estimated that the situation will cost the dairy industry tens of millions of dollars on top of the costs of the other concessions.

Talks are under way to have the government provide some sort of compensation package to help the agriculture sector affected by the new CUSMA, but those talks have been stalled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. What baffles me is that taxpayers are going to be paying for something that our Canadian farmers can produce, but we have to ask farmers to dump that and we will pick up that cost. This is not acceptable. The government needs to focus on providing relief to our agriculture sector and our farmers and their families, and not delay any further talks to provide compensation.

Of course, we support quick passage of this bill. It is important that we provide assistance to our dairy farmers and those in the dairy industry as soon as possible. It is my hope that there will be no delays in getting this aid out of the door as soon as possible.

Let me also say that it is critical for the government not only to develop programs to help all Canadians through this COVID-19 crisis, but also that this assistance be provided in a manner that is accessible and available. Too often, we have seen critical delays in the development of programs, even after they have been announced, and confusion about the availability criteria and difficulties for people easily accessing the programs. The government needs to do a better job thinking about how its programs are constructed. Canadians in need are paying the price for the government's disorganization.

Later today, I will be meeting with some representatives from the labour movement whose members are experiencing just such a problem. Unionized workers across Canada who had negotiated supplementary unemployment benefits are unable to access those top-up funds because of the risk of being cut off from the CERB program. This makes no sense, and is unacceptable. So far, appeals to fix the crack in the CERB program have fallen on deaf ears. The government needs to fix this problem and any other similar problems that have been identified with eligibility for CERB.

I am glad that we are moving today to help those in the dairy sector, but there is much more work to be done. I do not think anyone assumes that this pandemic crisis is going to end any time soon. The government needs to act now and to act quickly to make it clear what assistance will be available in the coming months. Canadians are depending on it.

I thank everybody for listening.

• (1815)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that it is the job of opposition parties to hold the government to account, and it is the job of opposition parties to push for more and better all the time. I get that. I understand that, but let us look at what really happened.

I want to go back to the member's comment when he said, "Why did it take so long for the government to respond...to the needs of Canadians?"

The reality of the situation is that, in a matter of one month and three days, we went from the World Health Organization declaring a pandemic to having money in the bank accounts of 5.4 million people. Of course, the government cannot accomplish that all on its own. It is done with the incredible work of the government agents who work to implement these programs. Some of them probably worked day and night. Some of them probably came in and worked on this project, who had absolutely no experience on how to do this, but rose to the occasion to deliver on behalf of the needs of Canadians.

Would the member recognize that one month and three days from declaring a global pandemic to putting the money into 5.4 million bank accounts would not at least constitute a small measure of success that the NDP could accept?

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, a lot of good work is being done by many people on the Liberal side, many people on the Conservative side, the Bloc and the NDP. Everybody is trying to do what they can do. What bothers me, what bothers Canadians and a lot of us, is that the Prime Minister is out there working hard every day, making news media announcements because of pressure that has been put on him. He comes out and gives people hope, and then we have no idea what the hell that means. We try to find out information, but the telephone lines are plugged and our offices are working more and more to try to get that information. Even the ministers do not know.

All I am trying to say is that if we are going to try to come out with plans and have announcements to affect the people and help Canadians, let us make sure that we have all the details in hand and

Government Orders

not two weeks later when everybody is working, and then we find out who has fallen through the cracks.

• (1820)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech today, and to my Liberal colleague along the way, I know everyone's trying to work hard, but he talked about a month and three days, when our American cohorts put that same amount, or way more, on a parallel basis, out in three days, not a month and three days.

I just wanted to say that we continue to work at trying to improve these programs. A fine example is what we are debating here today. The dairy industry deserves to have this to make sure that it does not have to destroy the product that it has processed. All of the input costs are in that process, and it would be a shame to have to throw it out.

I want to say that in so many other areas, we have heard the government say, "Here is 10% of what was asked for," and maybe it will give them some later. To your point about how we just do not know what is coming next and the uncertainty of that in dire straits, when they have already seen what has been asked, leaves everybody in a state of flux. I wondered if you could expand on that.

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to place their question through the Chair. I am sure that the member meant that we will let the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain answer that, and not me.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, I will go back to the last point from the previous question, that we all are working hard. As the member has asked, the problem is that the announcements are being made with no details that follow. We go on there, we do some technical briefings and we are basically wasting two hours of everybody's time, because we have to get some more information as they work.

I believe Canadians are getting the hope that something is being heard and something is going to come forward, but rumours that go through, because nobody knows any of the details. Somebody hears one thing and another person hears another thing, and then we find out that on some of the programs, and I will use EI and the SUBP fund as examples, people would get more money on EI than on the CERB, but they had to go on CERB because they were laid off after March 15. Now, not only are they losing out on \$75 a week on their unemployment, which is \$300 a month, they are also losing \$150 per week on their SUBP payments. That is a total of \$900. This is the stuff that happens when everybody is not at the table explaining the details to them of what can actually happen.

We have people who are actually losing \$900 a month who paid into a program, but the government has made a new program that stops them from getting that.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to a comment made by an hon. government member. He said that he understood that the opposition had to ask for more.

What the opposition does not understand is why the government did not act faster. As my NDP colleague graciously pointed out, it took the government over a month to take action. I hope no one will try to tell me it was complicated. Today, we are changing one number in an act. We are crossing out the number 300 and changing it to 500. That took over a month, so do not tell me that the government acted quickly.

I really enjoyed my esteemed colleague's heartfelt speech. He clearly cares about agriculture. That is something we have in common, and I am pleased about that. He talked a lot about the attacks on supply-managed sectors in free trade agreements. He spoke about the need to protect these sectors in the future. I imagine he would agree that supply management should be protected through legislation.

I have other sub-questions. Does my colleague think that this is a good time to make compensation available and to send money to farms in Quebec and across Canada?

Does he think that a way of saving the dairy industry would be to grant import quotas, the percentages awarded, to processors rather than to distributors?

[English]

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we help our dairy sector, and the cost will be a lot higher than what the government has offered.

Farmers were told, even with the CUSMA deal, that we would compensate them for all the losses that we had taken out of their production. That has not happened. Now with the pandemic and with what will happen between July 1 and August 1, it will be devastating, which is creating mental issues for our farmers. They have expenses, but have no income. They are finding out now that they are doing all this work for nothing. Therefore, it is critical that we ensure these people, who have gone through this hard time because of new rules, get compensated on a fair basis.

- (1825)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have more of a comment than a question.

In response to the comment that was made by the Conservative colleague across the way, suggesting that the U.S. had delivered its stimulus funding within three days, that is absolutely and factually incorrect. In fact, if the member googles it, he will find an NBC article that references that. By April 21, the first 80 million Americans waiting for stimulus funding had not received it. To suggest that somehow Americans had received stimulus funding so incredibly quickly is just factually incorrect. I would encourage him to look that up and to understand the issue before commenting on it. In fact, Canada was far beyond any other country in terms of delivering stimulus funding and the timeliness of it, especially when we use comparator countries to Canada.

I am not trying to belabour this point, but in the spirit of trying to put the right facts on the table and on the floor, we need to have a conversation as it relates to what actually happened. To suggest otherwise is just factually incorrect.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, that was not a question and so I cannot answer. I think we all heard it, and I will just leave it there.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier today I had the honour of introducing to the House of Commons a petition that a constituent of mine had initiated. The petition called for mandatory life jackets for children 14 or under. The petition was initiated originally by a constituent of mine who tragically lost her son in a boating accident.

It turns out that the original sponsor of that petition was the member for Hull—Aylmer. Many of my constituents urged me to introduce the petition in the House of Commons. I just assumed that the reason for that was that the member for Hull—Aylmer might not have been coming back to the House for a long time, given the very slow rotation of MPs coming in and out due to the present circumstance. However, I want to make clear that he was the member who sponsored that petition and he was the one who originally initiated it from the parliamentary side.

This is a great passion of his. I know he is trying to save young people from the tragic end that my young constituent suffered. I want the House to be clear that he deserves full credit for initiating that petition and sponsoring it to Parliament.

The Speaker: So noted.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Green Party supports this legislation to amend the Canadian Dairy Commission Act. We also support additional measures to help our farmers.

As has been pointed out by many other hon. members in this place today, Canadian farmers need help. They need help to deal with the sudden disappearance of demand for their products. Tens of thousands of restaurants, cafés and diners closed their doors two months ago. Hotels and schools were emptied out. At that moment, the demand for dairy products to go into their coffees, baked goods, sandwiches and desserts evaporated.

Dairy cows do not suddenly stop producing milk when the demand for it disappears. And as dairy farmers cannot lower production quickly, they were faced with an unstoppable supply and no demand. Some milk was dumped, but instead of dumping it all, dairy producers across the country have donated hundreds of thousands of litres of excess milk to those in need. Dairy Farmers of Canada has announced that producers have committed to donate \$10 million of dairy products to food banks across the country. Dairy producers have also donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash. I applaud them for their support feeding people in need.

The Green Party does not like to see anything wasted. We believe in the idea of a circular economy, where nothing is wasted and every product has a full life cycle, so I can say we do not like to see dairy products dumped needlessly. Dedicating more federal funds to help with the storage of butter and cheese is an important way the government can support dairy farmers and avoid wasting valuable food.

Unfortunately, the trouble for Canada's farmers and for food security in this country did not begin with the COVID-19 crisis, and it will not end when restaurants and cafés reopen.

The average age of a farmer in Canada is 55. Most aging farmers who have been surveyed report they have no succession plan for their family farms. Families that want to transfer farms between generations should be able to do so without facing a huge tax bill. This is something we can also fix.

At the same time, more and more young people are pursuing farming as an occupation. That is the good news. The bad news is that unless they grew up on a family farm and intend to take over from their parents, many young farmers have great difficulty accessing land to farm.

In British Columbia high property values are a major factor. On one hand, agricultural properties that are not protected by the agricultural land reserve are increasingly being developed for housing. On the other hand, ALR-protected farmlands that are not available for development are still too costly for young farmers to buy or lease. The unfortunate result of this situation is that agricultural lands end up sitting fallow or not being used for food production.

On Vancouver Island we have a very long growing season and one of the best climates in Canada for food production. We also have a large amount of prime agricultural land, but the number one crop being grown on Vancouver Island is hay.

Why are we not growing more food? This is a very relevant question to be asking right now. Food production has become too centralized and we are far too dependent on international supply chains. Up until the 1950s, about 85% of the food consumed on Vancouver Island was grown on Vancouver Island. Now we import 95% of the food we eat.

In the event of a serious supply chain disruption, such as an earthquake, Vancouver Island would be in a very perilous situation. We have a three-day supply of food in our stores and warehouses. We have a growing population. We need to get very serious about increasing our capacity to produce food locally.

That applies across the country. We urgently need to support efforts to relocalize food production. It is one of the most powerful actions we can take to develop resilient communities that will be able to weather the challenges of climate change in the coming decades.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light many issues and weaknesses in our food production chains in this country.

- (1830)

Nearly a decade ago, the federal government got out of inspections of abattoirs and passed that responsibility on to the provinces.

Government Orders

The fallout of that decision is still rippling through small farms in B.C. today. Many small regional abattoirs shut down, because it was too expensive to comply with new provincial regulations that mandated a separate, dedicated washroom and office for the inspectors when they visited.

In many cases, this just strengthened the market position of big corporate players. Now, small-scale farmers who used to get their animals processed close to home at their local abattoir have to truck their animals for hours to a large abattoir. In many cases, the large abattoirs charge more than they used to pay and have large minimum orders.

Many small-scale farmers have had to get out of raising animals for meat. Every time this happens, it hurts local food security. It increases centralization in our food production, and it also means a lower quality of life for the animals being raised.

Many small farmers have farms that resemble the farms in children's books. Large industrial farms with tens of thousands of animals being raised in close confinement have very little to do with the farms in our children's storybooks. Bigger is not always better. The move to big feedlots and bigger slaughterhouses has led to issues such as the spread of COVID-19 among the workers. This is a provincial issue. Nonetheless, it has created serious problems for farmers and for the supply chain, and it will increase food prices for consumers.

The canola trade issue with China has highlighted another problem. Concentrating agricultural production on certain export crops leaves our farmers susceptible to trade disputes and unfair trade practices. It is important that Canada continue to do its part to feed the world when so many are going hungry, but it is just as important to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have the ability to feed their own populations, and direct foreign aid can help increase the capacity in those countries to help them become more self-reliant.

As I mentioned earlier, re-localizing our food production is key. For the first time in decades, we are seeing a significant increase in the number of young people who want to be farmers. That is a trend we can support and encourage. We need to figure out what role the government can play in connecting young farmers with land that they can farm on. These kinds of arrangements require long-term thinking, because it can take years to bring a former hayfield back to food production, but it can be done and is worth doing.

Government Orders

Organic regenerative farming can sequester carbon. It is a key tool in the fight against climate change. We need to support organic regenerative farming. We need to increase food security with more local food production. The government should provide more local food infrastructure funding so that communities across Canada can count on locally produced food, as much as the weather in their regions will permit.

I want to give a shout-out to the Cedar Farmers Market, which opened this past weekend, and today the Island Roots Market opened outdoors for the first time this season.

Local food production enhances our food security. It lowers the carbon footprint of the food we eat. We must develop and strengthen urban growing, and farms and community garden initiatives. This has been shown to create good employment, as well as nutritious, fresh produce and fruit for people living on low incomes.

Prior to being elected, I worked for a local non-profit, Nanaimo Foodshare, and I did skills training for people with barriers to employment and people with diverse abilities. We worked with them with food. We taught them how to grow food, how to cook food and what nutritious food was all about. We got them jobs in areas of food production, working on farms, working in processing, working at grocery stores and in restaurants, and engaged them in all those aspects related to food.

I remember being in the van with a group. We were going to a farm, and a young first nations fellow said to me that he did not want to go to work on the farm that day. He was not interested in a job on a farm.

● (1835)

At the end of the day, after spending the day out in the open air planting, digging and working with his comrades, he told me he really wanted a job on a farm, so I got him a job on a farm. He really enjoyed it. He loved it, actually.

Other young people I work with also love working on farms. They love feeding the chickens, taking care of the animals, planting crops and watching them grow and taking care of other things. There are a lot of young people who benefit from that.

The urban farms in my community grow a lot of local produce, which goes into good food boxes that Foodshare supplies. They go to low-income families, seniors, students and people with diverse abilities, because nutrition is key to physical health, mental health and our well-being. The young people with diverse abilities who face challenges in their lives feel a sense of pride in helping other people in their communities who face challenges. They are proud to step up and help other people.

I stated earlier that the trouble for Canada's farmers regarding food security in this country did not begin with the COVID-19 crisis and will not end when restaurants and cafés reopen. The sad reality is that a very large number of restaurants and cafés will never reopen. Those closures will have a ripple effect and negatively impact suppliers such as dairy farmers. Many restaurants and cafés were operating on very thin profit margins, and in some cases, newer restaurants were operating at a loss while they worked at building clientele. Many restaurants are very dependent on tourism in

the summer months. Summertime is the high season for them, a time when they can make the money that gets them through the rest of the year. The dairy industry and many other industries depend on the restaurants and hotels getting tourist business.

The tourism industry is also facing tremendous uncertainty. Tourism employs more Canadians across the country than the oil and gas sector does. The prospects for tourism operators this year are grim. Hotels, motels, tour operators and fishing charters are only a few of the businesses in my riding that might shut down forever. Again, widespread closures would negatively impact businesses that are intertwined with tourism, like restaurants and farms. We need to make sure that these businesses are supported in order for them to weather this storm and survive until next year's tourism season.

We should start thinking about marketing strategies to increase domestic tourism. Our country will have to be creative as we come out of this crisis. We will not be able to rely on foreign tourism for a while. When it is safe to do so, we will need to encourage more Canadians to rediscover the tourist destinations in their regions. This is another facet of re-localization: rediscovering all there is to appreciate about the places we call home, reconnecting with nature and our parks and reconnecting with our communities, neighbours and local farmers.

Agriculture is very important to all of us. No matter what we do, what kinds of occupations, pastimes or passions we have, as my good friend Farmer Brown likes to say, "We all eat for a living."

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his thoughtful speech.

I would like to focus on one point in particular. He mentioned that the restaurant industry is currently going through very hard times. That is the reason for lower demand. He mentioned that many small restaurants may not be able to reopen. Consequently, the agricultural sector's difficulties may last much longer than the COVID-19 crisis because there will be an adjustment period.

Does my colleague believe that it would be useful to take this opportunity to make changes to permanent programs based on what the sector is asking for, such as revisiting AgriStability and increasing the margins to 85%?

Some demands were made before the COVID-19 crisis.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, it is very important to look at some of these programs that were proposed before COVID-19. A lot of valuable ideas were floating around. Now that we are in a crisis, we are seeing how these programs could help farmers and small businesses. An example is the guaranteed liveable income, which the Green Party has been promoting for decades, to ensure everybody has a floor of income that they cannot fall below.

These ideas have been around for a while and we should support them. A lot of learning is coming out of this crisis, especially when it comes to seniors and what has been happening in care homes. There is also the deficit in our health care system, the lack of maintenance of our hospitals and aging infrastructures. A lot of lessons are coming out of this. We were talking about them before this crisis and we can fix them after this crisis.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, we need to take this opportunity to work through the issues.

I would like my colleague's opinion. He mentioned that small businesses are more precarious. I would like his opinion.

The Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec has made some specific demands because many small businesses are not eligible for the assistance measures because of how payroll is calculated, among other things.

What does the member think? Is that acceptable? What should we do?

• (1845)

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I know we need to improve programs for farmers, who are small businesses owners. Small businesses have been encouraged to pay themselves with dividends for years. I ran a small business and that is how I paid myself. If I were still in business right now, I would not be eligible for a small business loan because I would be paying myself with dividends.

A lot of farmers work with contracts and contract out, so they are not eligible for the programs coming out. This is imperilling them. This is causing problems and we could end up losing a lot of small

Government Orders

farms. In the areas where development is encroaching, that increases the dangers of losing farmland in our country.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's speech. He talked about the problem of so much food being imported into his constituency, which is at about 95%. How would Canadian farmers be able to feed the country if indeed the oil and gas sector were dead?

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I spoke about regenerative farming, which requires a lot less fossil fuel input. Regenerative farming is a very key part of dealing with climate change. I have talked to farmers and grain growers in meetings. They have talked about how they have changed their system of farming so it is far more regenerative and sequesters carbon.

We are working through development now where we see things like Caterpillar that has an excavator that runs on batteries. We need to have an electrified system so we can have farm equipment that can be charged and run. We can do it. We just need to have a little creative thinking and innovation and work toward the future we want to see.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage on division, deemed read a third time and passed on division)

[Translation]

The Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Monday, April 20, 2020, the House stands adjourned until Monday, May 25, 2020, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

Have a good evening, everyone.

(The House adjourned at 6:49 p.m.)

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>