



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

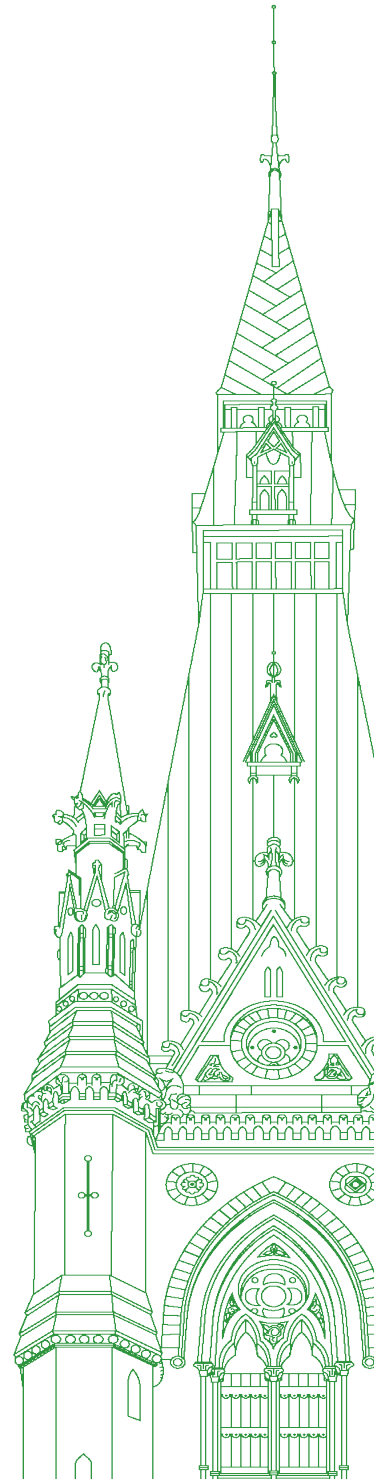
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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, January 28, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

PETITIONS

OPIOIDS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have a petition to present in memory of Wyatt Thomas Smith. It is signed by 25 individuals.

The petitioners are asking the government to declare the overdose crisis a national public emergency and take steps to end overdose deaths and overdose injuries by collaborating with the provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive pan-Canadian overdose action plan that considers reforms that other countries have used. They ask us to ensure that this emergency is taken seriously, with adequately funded programming and supports.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House on behalf of constituents across Canada who are expressing their concern over sex-selective abortion, which is legal in Canada because we have no restrictions at all.

The petitioners say that sex-selective abortion is antithetical to our commitment to equality between men and women, and that at this point in time, a DART poll indicates that 84% of Canadians feel that this should be considered illegal.

I am pleased to stand on their behalf, and I appreciate their support of my private member's bill, Bill C-233.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the raised hand function on my Zoom is not working. I see other members raising their hands manually, so I wonder if other members are in the same situation.

The Speaker: That is a very good point. I do not see any hands coming up on my screen. I will go through the list of names I have. If the raised hand function is not resolved once we are done, I will

have members say something and I will recognize them. Then we will go from there.

I see that it is starting to work again and everybody's hands are going up. I thank the member for bringing that up.

SIXTIES SCOOP

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to table e-petition 2830, sponsored by Colleen Hele-Cardinal. She is the co-founder of the Sixties Scoop Network. She launched this e-petition to call for a national apology for the harmful decades-long practice of scooping up indigenous children and adopting them out.

The petition is for the Prime Minister, and she cites that the sixties scoop refers to a practice that occurred in Canada of taking or scooping up indigenous children from their families and communities for placement in foster homes or for adoption. It is estimated that over 20,000 indigenous children were taken from families. In 2018, the Government of Canada announced a settlement agreement with the survivors of the sixties scoop.

She cites that the undersigned residents of Canada call upon the Prime Minister to work with the Sixties Scoop Network and survivors on a ceremony with the intent of asking forgiveness and issuing a national apology in the House of Commons. The federal government must accept responsibility for its role in the sixties scoop. Survivors have waited far too long for justice, and the first step the government must take is to meet the survivors in ceremony and ask for forgiveness.

The Speaker: I have quite the list of petitions that have to be presented today, and I want to remind hon. members to be as concise as possible and let us know the highlights of the petition, without going into a long description of what is being said or what is intended by the petition. I want to thank the hon. members in advance for their co-operation.

The hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington.

TERRY FOX

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to present a petition initiated by Burlington resident and CFL Hall of Famer Tony Gabriel. His petition suggests that Terry Fox should be the candidate chosen, out of eight worthy candidates, to be on the five-dollar bill. The government is considering this right now, and 1,251 people have signed the petition. As Tony would say, let us get Terry into the end zone.

Government Orders

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the horrific conditions the Uighurs are experiencing under the heavy hand of the Chinese government. This petition requests very strongly that our government recognize that the Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide and that sanctions be put upon the Chinese government through the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Magnitsky act, for these heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur community.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be speaking this morning from the traditional territory of the WSÁNEC Nation, the indigenous peoples of this territory.

In brief, the petition from my constituents relates to a call to recognize and truly respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, specifically referencing the situation on Wet'suwet'en lands. It calls for nation-to-nation negotiations and asks for work on the fracked gas pipeline to cease immediately.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap to present a petition signed by Canadians who are distressed by the atrocities facing Uighur Muslims and what they are being subjected to by the Chinese Communist Party. There is now growing international consensus on recognizing the situation of the Uighurs as genocide.

The petition calls on the House of Commons to recognize that the Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide and to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, otherwise known as the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible.

• (1010)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following an independent investigation with two full days of hearings from witnesses, survivors and various independent experts, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights concluded unanimously that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China are subject to ongoing genocide.

Following that, the petitioners put this petition together calling on Parliament and the government to come to the same conclusion and recognize, given the evidence, that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims face genocide in China. They are also calling for the use of the Magnitsky act to impose targeted sanctions and hold accountable the officials who are directly involved in this genocide.

I commend this petition to the thoughtful consideration of all members.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to stand today, for the first time this year, to present a petition. This petition calls on the government to act on the genocide of the Uighurs in China and invoke the Magnitsky act so that the people who are profiting in China are held to account for what is happening in their country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding. It calls for sanctions to be placed on corrupt Chinese officials so they cannot use Canada as a safe haven.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-UNITED KINGDOM TRADE CONTINUITY AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.) moved that Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to split my time with the member of Parliament for Outremont.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. minister's request will please say nay.

Hearing no opposition, I declare the request granted.

Now I will let the minister continue.

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise virtually in the House of Commons today in support of Bill C-18, an act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The United Kingdom is our largest trade market in Europe, and in 2019 it was the third-largest destination for Canadian merchandise exports worldwide. It was also a key source of innovation, science and technology partnerships. Two-way merchandise trade between Canada and the United Kingdom totalled \$29 billion in 2019, making it our fifth-largest international trading partner. The U.K. is also Canada's second-largest services trade partner, behind only the United States, amounting to exports of nearly \$7.1 billion last year. Finally, the U.K. is Canada's fourth-largest source of foreign direct investment, valued at \$62.3 billion in 2019.

It is clear that the Trade Continuity Agreement with the U.K. is critical to Canadian jobs by preserving a key enabler of our strong economic partnership, which is CETA. Because it is based on CETA, this agreement provides familiarity, continuity, predictability and stability for Canadian businesses, exporters, workers and consumers, which is more important than ever today as we grapple with COVID-19.

Once the agreement is fully implemented, it will carry forward CETA's tariff elimination on 99% of Canadian products exported to the United Kingdom. It will fully protect Canadian producers of all supply-managed products. It will maintain priority market access for Canadian service suppliers, including access to the U.K. government's procurement market, which is estimated to be worth approximately \$118 billion annually, and it will uphold and preserve CETA's high standard provisions on labour, dispute settlement and the protection of the environment.

Canada has a deep and historic relationship with the United Kingdom, one of our closest allies, from NATO, the G7 and the G20 to the ties of shared history, values and respect for the principles of democracy. When the United Kingdom held a referendum and, guided by the decision of its citizens, decided to leave the European Union, that decision not only affected the U.K.'s trade and economic relations with its largest partner, but it also meant that the United Kingdom would no longer be a part of CETA with Canada. Obviously, this had a potential effect on Canadian companies and businesses. That is why this trade continuity agreement is so important.

Canadian businesses and workers in many sectors rely on our interconnected trade relationship, from farmers and fish harvesters to financial service providers and innovators. They have told us that what they want most at this time is stability. This agreement provides exactly that. The TCA, Trade Continuity Agreement, ensures Canada and the U.K. can both sustain and build upon our important relationship by preserving the benefits of CETA on a bilateral basis while fully protecting our closely integrated supply chains and continued access for our exporters.

This continuity agreement is good for workers, it is good for business and it is good for both Canada and the United Kingdom. Without the TCA in place, Canadian businesses could have faced the uncertainty of new barriers and higher costs of doing business, particularly for our agriculture, fish and seafood industries. With this agreement, we can build a better future for both countries.

International trade is central to Canada's economic success and prosperity, and there is no doubt that trade will play a crucial role in our inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19. It is im-

Government Orders

portant for Canada to not only develop new trading relationships, but to also maintain and strengthen our existing ties. The TCA is not just about maintaining the CETA agreement. In fact, it sets the stage for an exciting new chapter in our future trade relations with the United Kingdom.

• (1015)

With the TCA, we will ensure immediate certainty for Canada-U.K. trade by replicating CETA on a bilateral basis, as the U.K. has left the EU. However, Canada has always said that, for the longer term, we are interested in the negotiation of a new, modern and ambitious agreement that can best reflect the Canada-U.K. bilateral relationship going forward.

The TCA includes a commitment for subsequent negotiations to begin within a year of its entry into force. My U.K. counterpart, Secretary Truss, and I have publicly committed to these negotiations. We will see input of Canadians from coast to coast to coast through public consultations on their interests in a new bilateral discussion with the United Kingdom.

I look forward to returning to the negotiating table within one year of the TCA's ratification to work on a new, high-quality, modern, inclusive and comprehensive economic partnership that includes ambitious chapters for small businesses, the environment, labour, digital trade and women's economic empowerment. To those who have pointed out areas where improvements are needed, we hear them, and I am eager to get to work on those issues. We will return to the House when we are ready to table negotiating objectives for this new, ambitious effort.

While we work to ratify this agreement both in Canada and in the United Kingdom, we have signed a memorandum of understanding between both countries so that trade can continue to flow while this agreement makes its way through domestic approvals in both countries. As we have negotiated both through the MOU and the Canada-U.K. TCA, businesses will continue trading at the preferential tariff rates under CETA with no additional paperwork. The TCA will provide stability and remain in place until a new agreement, which we aim to reach within three years, is ready.

Government Orders

With the TCA, we are seeking to ensure continuity. The last thing Canada and the United Kingdom would want to do is create any uncertainty for businesses and workers, particularly as we respond to the pandemic, restart our economies and begin to build back better.

The year 2020 has been incredibly difficult for workers and businesses across the country. For so many sectors, this agreement is exactly the continuity and stability that they have asked for. It is what we need to support Canadian jobs and families, and to grow our economy through trade and export with one of our closest allies at an economically challenging time. While CETA will continue to govern Canada-EU trade, this agreement will provide similar predictability for Canadian businesses that trade with the U.K., ensuring trade between our two countries continues to flow uninterrupted.

I will conclude by saying, as I have said before, that the trade continuity agreement with the U.K. is good for Canadians, it is good for the people of the U.K., and it is good for the strong, mutually beneficial relationship our nations have built over more than 150 years.

• (1020)

Therefore, I urge all hon. members to support Bill C-18 so that Canada can bring the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement into force as soon as possible.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that this agreement is very important to Canada and, of course, we need to look at stability and certainty, but could my hon. colleague give us some of the areas that she feels need to be negotiated in the future?

My hon. colleague outlined that there need to be some ambitious broader targets for an agreement with the U.K. in the future, which would be a priority so that we could go beyond this agreement.

Could she share with Canadians what the government's perspective is on the top three areas that need to be included in those ambitious and new modernized areas of this agreement?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, happy new year to my hon. colleague. We have a commitment through the TCA to get back to the negotiating table. I am very much looking forward to those negotiations with our close ally, the U.K., and to having areas of common interest and common ambition such as the environment, labour, digital trade, which is so important coming out of COVID-19, inclusion for small and medium-sized businesses and women's economic empowerment.

I would also like to say that I think it is really important to hear from Canadians. We are committed to making sure that we talk to Canadians and businesses, that we hear from them about what is really important in this new agreement, and that we take their input into perspective. We of course—

• (1025)

The Deputy Speaker: We will just leave that thought there for a moment. We are going to try and get a couple more questions in.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech.

Of course we support this bill that is so important for businesses in Quebec and the rest of Canada since it enables us to continue our trade relations with the United Kingdom. However, we object to the lack of transparency. During negotiations with the United Kingdom, the parties did not have access to the various texts at the Standing Committee on International Trade. That is a rather blatant lack of transparency, and I would like the minister to explain why the various parties did not have access to those documents.

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. We have been fully transparent with Canadians throughout our trade dialogue with the United Kingdom.

In September of 2017, our Prime Minister met with then U.K. prime minister Theresa May when it was first publicly announced that we were going to ensure a seamless transition of trade with the U.K. as it prepared to exit the EU. During that time, while the EU was still part of CETA, it was not able to undertake any new international negotiations, so our discussions focused on converting the terms of CETA, making it available and creating a bilateral agreement between Canada and the U.K. We are looking forward to getting back to the negotiating table.

Around transparency, I want to reiterate to our colleague that we will adhere to the commitments we have made and fulfill obligations under the amendments to the policy on tabling treaties. We are going to be hearing from Canadians about what they are looking for in the upcoming negotiations—

The Deputy Speaker: I will just interrupt the minister. We will get one more question in on this round.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. minister about the recent unanimous motions, from both the foreign affairs and international affairs committees, calling on Canada in these trade agreements to ensure that England respects its obligations under the Good Friday Agreement to the people of Ireland, to make sure we have an open border, and to make sure that support is in place for a referendum on Irish unity. There has been a lot of mistrust in the EU about Boris Johnson's attitudes towards Ireland.

Canada has deep roots in this. We have a long-standing history in the Good Friday Agreement, so I am asking the minister what kind of commitment she will make to ensure that England lives up to its obligations on the Good Friday Agreement and the open border with the Irish people.

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. Canada being a supporter and, in fact, a leader with respect to the Good Friday Agreement, I would agree it is good to see that the United Kingdom has agreed to that.

As we go forward with new negotiations, we will have an absolute opportunity to make sure that we are listening to Canadians, and the perspective of Canadians, just like that offered by my hon. colleague on those negotiations. We have also committed, through our amendments to the policy of tabling treaties, to share the objectives of the agreements with our parliamentary colleagues. We will do that. We will respect that.

There certainly will be an opportunity to listen to Canadians and we would agree.

• (1030)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed with great pleasure that I too rise virtually in the House of Commons today in support of our proposed legislation to ratify the agreement on trade continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom. Just as we welcomed the recent signing of this important agreement, the government is also very pleased to take the next step toward ratification so Canadian exporters can take full advantage of the agreement's benefits.

As we know, Canada and the United Kingdom have historically enjoyed advantageous commercial relations, which we have built together over more than 150 years. Two-way merchandise trade between us amounted to \$29 billion in 2019, making the U.K. Canada's fifth largest trading partner after the United States, China, Mexico and Japan. In fact, Canadian exports to the U.K. have increased by over \$2 billion since the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, as it is commonly known, was provisionally applied in 2017.

Preserving this trading relationship means businesses will continue to have unprecedented access to the U.K.'s 66 million consumers and \$3.68-trillion market. It also means lower prices and more choices for Canadian consumers and either a reduction or complete elimination of customs duties. Because this agreement is based on CETA, an agreement Canadians are already very familiar with, it provides the predictability and stability our businesses have told us they need as they grapple with the uncertainty brought on by this global pandemic.

[Translation]

The agreement on trade continuity brings with it significant, tangible benefits for Canadians. Once the agreement is fully implemented, it will carry forward CETA's tariff elimination on 90% of Canadian products exported to the United Kingdom. It will fully protect Canadian producers of all supply-managed products. It will maintain priority market access for Canadian service suppliers, including access to the U.K. government's procurement market,

Government Orders

which is estimated to be worth approximately \$118 billion annually. It will continue to balance investor protection with Canada's prerogative to regulate in the public interest, and it will uphold and preserve CETA's high standard provisions on labour and the protection of the environment.

This agreement will also continue to give Canadian companies a leg up on competitors in countries that do not have a free trade agreement with the U.K.

[English]

Indeed, Canadians welcomed the news of this agreement and the successful work of our negotiating team. I would like to expand on how critical our successful negotiation of this agreement is for the Canadian agri-food and agriculture industry.

Quebec is the home of the most dairy farmers in the country. It is followed by Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. We know that farmers working hard right across this country wanted and needed the stability that this agreement provides. This is also the case for our beef producers. The first thought that comes to mind for me is the incredible beef exported out of Alberta and Ontario. I had the opportunity to engage directly with our beef producers and cattle feeders prior to the conclusion of the negotiations to hear their needs and interests and make sure that they were taken into account.

I would also like to give much credit to the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, or CAFTA. As Claire Citeau of CAFTA said during her testimony before the international trade committee:

This is an important first step to ensuring that exporters preserve the existing access and benefits that are already in place. The temporary certainty and stability that a transitional agreement provides is welcome news for some of our members and the reason we call on parliamentarians to work together to pass this agreement....

I am urging all members to listen to the call of our agriculture sector to swiftly ratify this agreement. We have some incredible associations representing the interests of our Canadian farmers and producers. They are engaged. They are well informed. They are targeted, and they are in constant contact with us, as they should be. Their engagement has been critical, and I certainly look forward to continuing to work with them in the next phase of the negotiation process toward a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement.

[Translation]

I want to emphasize what a success this agreement is for our dairy farmers. Not one additional ounce of foreign cheese will enter the country under this free trade agreement.

Government Orders

• (1035)

As Daniel Gobeil, president of the Producteurs laitiers du Québec, so aptly said, “The government has granted no additional access to the United Kingdom, in keeping with the commitment made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture.... I therefore thank the government for keeping its commitment. This clearly shows that it is possible to enter into trade agreements without sacrificing supply management.

[English]

Canadian small and medium-sized businesses have also been very vocal. What they told us they needed most at this time, this turbulent time of crisis, is stability, stability in their trading relationships and stability in exporting their products, and this agreement fully delivers.

[Translation]

The agreement on trade continuity will enable many Canadian businesses that have come to depend on their U.K. clients avoid an unnecessary setback. Without this agreement, some Canadian businesses would come up against new obstacles and higher costs when doing business with the U.K.

[English]

Let me briefly paint a picture of what would have resulted if our government had not been as successful as it was, and if we had been unable to conclude a transitional trade agreement with the U.K. It is estimated over one billion dollars' worth of Canadian exports to the U.K. would have been subject to tariffs, and these tariffs would disproportionately affect our fish, seafood and agriculture exporters.

In addition to the tariffs placed on Canadian products being exported to the U.K., roughly 25% of all products imported from the U.K. would also be affected, with Canadian importers paying higher prices to bring in those goods, goods that our Canadian companies often need in order to operate, produce and grow.

Once ratified, the Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement will continue to be in place as we work toward a new bilateral comprehensive free trade agreement with the U.K. Indeed, this continuity agreement stipulates explicitly that within one year of ratification by both countries, the U.K. and Canada must come back to the negotiating table in order to conclude a comprehensive, longer-term trade agreement.

I know the minister and I look forward to leading a broad consultation process with Canadians from right across the country and in different sectors of our economy to ensure these future negotiations are directed in the best interests of Canada and respond to any post-Brexit developments.

With the time I have remaining, I would like to turn to some of the broader implications of our work as a government on international trade. Our Canadian government has been a leader among nations globally in advocating for free trade and stemming the tide of protectionist leanings. Indeed, we believe the contrary. Strong global trade partnerships, like our new agreement with the United Kingdom, are increasingly necessary and important, especially in

these uncertain times, especially as other countries are looking to turn inward.

I am therefore asking all members from all parties to support Bill C-18's timely ratification and passage, and in so doing carefully consider not only the importance of this particular agreement for our Canadian farmers and producers, Canadian SMEs and all our exporters big and small, but also the message it sends to the world about the importance of keeping trade open and keeping Canada at the forefront of the advocacy on free trade. History will thank us for it.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the parliamentary secretary. We know this is a transitional agreement and that U.K. cheese producers will be looking for a bigger share of the market. It seems to me that this just puts the problem off until next year.

The Bloc Québécois proposed a solution: an exemption for supply management, which would settle this issue once and for all in trade agreement negotiations. If the past is any indication of the future, some questions are in order because supply management has always been a bargaining chip for both the Conservatives and the Liberals.

Does my colleague agree the the best solution would probably be to have an exemption for supply management in trade agreement negotiations?

• (1040)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Personally, I think the Bloc Québécois and all Quebecers should be celebrating what we have achieved with this transitional agreement. I am very pleased and proud to say that, by preserving supply management, we have protected our dairy producers.

As I said, we discussed this in committee, and I think our producers are happy with the transitional agreement we negotiated.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, one of the real questions around the timing of the government's adoption of CETA was that, at that time, the Brexit vote was pending. Certainly, New Democrats, and I believe I myself, got up in the House and questioned the wisdom of concluding a trade deal with Europe when our largest trading partner in Europe was about to leave the bloc.

We are now in a position of being asked to rubber stamp a carbon copy of CETA, which was, for all intents and purposes, designed for a European trading bloc. If and when a successor agreement is concluded, 40% of the trade Canada has done with Europe is going to be outside of CETA.

Does the government think this will have any consequences or ramifications for CETA? Is there anything that ought to have been different in CETA, given that the U.K. is no longer going to be part of that trading bloc?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question coming from my colleague, but, as I am sure he and all parliamentarians understand, when we negotiate a trade agreement with our global allies, we do so on the basis of the history and circumstances as they are at the time.

It was the right move for Canada to conclude CETA at that time. It allowed us to grow our economy. It allowed us to export to a greater degree to our allies in Europe. As I mentioned, since CETA was provisionally applied in 2017, we have increased our trade by \$2 billion with the United Kingdom. I do think it was an important step and good move on Canada's part.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her work to help develop some of the economic measures in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

One of the faults that folks like us who are involved in politics fall into is that we often discuss trade in a way that does not resonate with people who live in our communities. When we talk about GDP growth or export volumes, that is often a step removed from the people who are benefiting from these trade agreements and may not even realize it.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned in her remarks the impact on seafood tariffs. In my community, this will ensure we get a higher price for our seafood products, which will encourage young people to join the industry and continue to work in rural communities.

Could the member give examples of how the trade agreements will lead to having people be better off in her community here in Canada?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for all of his work on the economic measures and the response to COVID-19.

Certainly, one of the big successes of this continuity agreement is for our seafood producers, our exporters of lobster and seafood, who will benefit greatly. I am very pleased about that.

In my community, I have many innovative tech companies, and I know they are looking to new markets. They were very pleased by the ratification of CUSMA and are looking to export into the United States for the first time now. With this agreement, they will be exporting into the United Kingdom as well. This is of benefit to many different sectors of the economy, from tech and innovation, to manufacturers and agriculture and seafood exporters.

• (1045)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to split my time.

The Deputy Speaker: As is customary now in this hybrid sitting of the House, we will only seek to see if there are any members present or participating who do not wish to grant unanimous con-

Government Orders

sent to the hon. member to share her time. That being the case, I ask all those opposed to her sharing her time to please say no.

Seeing and hearing no opposition, it is so ordered.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Abbotsford.

I rise today to speak on Bill C-18, which seeks to implement the Canada and United Kingdom trade continuity agreement.

The United Kingdom is Canada's third-largest export market, our fifth-largest trading partner and our oldest ally, with which we have \$29 billion worth of bilateral trade annually.

Businesses want stability right now. I look forward to hearing debate on the bill and to seeing it come to committee so there are no delays for businesses.

How did we get here today, debating this bill after the deadline, when its ratification should have coincided with the United Kingdom no longer being part of the CETA and the European Union?

Unfortunately, the failure of the Prime Minister and his minister to take trade negotiations with the United Kingdom seriously now means that instead of securing a modern trade deal that is even better for Canadian businesses and workers, we are left with an agreement that has few amendments from the previous one with respect to addressing emerging trade issues, has no end date and has no clear dispute resolution process.

The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union on June 23, 2016, four and half years ago. The government should have reasonably expected that a new trade agreement would need to be negotiated.

Through international trade committee testimony, we learned that negotiations had begun at some point during that time. However, we also learned that in March of 2019, the Minister of International Trade signed off on a decision to leave those negotiations.

I remember being in the House on Friday, March 13, 2020, when Parliament recessed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As one would expect, the focus of this House and of all parliamentarians had to change on a dime. Now the entire focus was on health, the economic crisis and emergency legislation.

Government Orders

As the months progressed, there was still other work to do, and important deadlines were looming. After all, the clock was ticking toward the moment when the U.K. would no longer be part of the CETA, and a Canada-U.K. deal needed to be struck.

In May 2020, when we all met as part of the COVID-19 committee, members of the Conservative official opposition started to question the Minister of International Trade on the status of the trade agreement. Let us remember that this was not Parliament but a committee with no power that was asking questions.

In the May 21 sitting of the COVID committee, my hon. colleague, the member for Abbotsford, questioned the minister on what steps had been taken to engage with the U.K. on a free trade agreement. The minister replied, "...we will continue to work with the U.K. to secure our strong and stable trading relationship". This relationship was so strong and so stable that with only seven months left to secure an agreement, Canada had still not returned to the negotiating table and was not working with the U.K.

At the COVID committee held on May 27, my colleague, the member for Prince Albert, asked the minister if the government would "commit to having a new trade agreement with the U.K. in place by January 1" of 2021. The minister's response was that they were "monitoring the situation very carefully." She went on to say, "They are in discussions right now", when in fact we were not back at the negotiating table yet.

At the COVID committee meeting held on June 2, my hon. colleague from Regina—Wascana questioned the Minister of International Trade by asking, "The United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan have all started free trade negotiations with the United Kingdom. Why hasn't Canada?" The minister responded that "...we will always act in the interests of Canadian businesses" and that "we will make sure that our further work will always take into account the interests of Canadian businesses."

With just mere months remaining before the U.K. would no longer be part of CETA, affecting \$29 billion in bilateral trade, we were still not at the table. Where was the sense of urgency to act in the best interests of Canadian businesses?

The official opposition had been calling for the resumption of all parliamentary committees starting in May 2020. However, this did not occur. The international trade committee could have been doing important work, such as studies and consultations, just as other committees were doing all spring and summer, safely, productively and virtually. However, from March until September, the international trade committee only met once.

The government finally returned to the negotiating table in August 2020, leaving only five months to negotiate a deal, write the text of the legislation, bring it to Parliament for its processes and debate, send it to committee for study and witnesses' opinions, and then go through the Senate processes.

We finally returned to Parliament in late September, after the prorogation of Parliament. This political manoeuvre set all timelines back.

My first question in the House of Commons after prorogation was for the Minister of International Trade on her government's

promise to notify the House within 90 days of negotiations starting on trade agreements, a notification her government promised to provide to win the support of the NDP during the ratification of CUSMA, the new NAFTA. Her response left us with more questions than answers.

• (1050)

The Prime Minister then made patronizing comments about the United Kingdom's government by saying the United Kingdom lacked "the bandwidth" to negotiate a trade agreement and put blame for delays on the United Kingdom. This claim was strongly rejected by the United Kingdom government and its Secretary of State for International Trade. Further to this, one U.K. trade minister stated that the Prime Minister's claims should be taken with a pinch of salt.

These comments made by the Prime Minister about the United Kingdom, one of our oldest and most steadfast allies, certainly could not have been helpful during live negotiations on a trade deal of such importance to our country. After all, the United Kingdom had been able to negotiate secure and signed agreements with dozens of countries already. How is this taking into account the interests of Canadian businesses?

Stakeholders from across many business and labour sectors testified at the international trade committee that the government did not consult with them prior to withdrawing from negotiations to see how this decision might affect them, nor was there a formal or robust outreach process during negotiations. What a lost opportunity.

Conservative Party representatives expressed concerns about the lack of formal consultations as a whole for this trade agreement. I have heard from industries that were looking forward to an updated CETA, including major economic drivers in our country like the cattle industry, which wanted a U.K.-1 trade deal, not a CETA 2.0.

While officials have stated that the agreement ensures that Canada and the United Kingdom will get back to the negotiating table within a year, there are no penalties in the agreement if one side decides not to. The lack of an effective sunset clause makes this transitional agreement no different, really, from a comprehensive or permanent one. Wide-ranging consultations on the original CETA occurred about seven years ago. Situations and challenges evolve with time, especially in this fast-paced world that we now live in with emerging economies.

The government's failure to address concerns raised by stakeholder groups, especially by the agriculture and agri-food industry, such as non-tariff barriers, will unfortunately continue. Those are very concerning, and there is no clear dispute resolution process in the agreement. Supply-managed sectors were happy to hear that there were no concessions made for their industries, and industries overall just want stability, although they would have preferred that trade issues had been addressed.

Canadians expect the government to secure good trade agreements for our exporters, agreements that spur job growth for workers and grow our economy. Many businesses and families are searching for stability, and we need to do whatever we can to ensure that all sectors in our communities can survive and thrive going forward.

A trade deal was first announced with a splashy announcement on November 23. I had a call with the minister shortly afterward, in which I highlighted the importance of the Canada-U.K. trade agreement and the importance of ensuring that Canadians were not left worse off than they were under CETA. We wanted something even better. Canadian businesses needed clarity on the requirements resulting from the new agreement.

One thing that has been clear through this process is the mismanagement and undisciplined management of this file. Only when pressed up against time, at the 11th hour, do we come to a place where resolutions happen. British trade officials were more forthcoming on this 11th hour aspect. They expressed concerns and actually said that if we failed to ratify by the end of the year, this failure might create damage and disruption for businesses. However, we are pleased that a memorandum of understanding came on December 23 and arrived in time to prevent tariffs.

Over the past year, we have been relentless as Conservatives in our pursuit to shed light on what has been transpiring on this file. Really, this was left to the final week of the final month of the final year, and it will be critically important for the Minister of International Trade to work closely with her U.K. counterpart to begin formal negotiations on a truly new and comprehensive free trade agreement. We need agreements that involve and protect Canadian businesses and address non-tariff barriers and other emerging issues, have a clear and functioning dispute resolution system based on accountability, and are even better for our exporters in Canada.

• (1055)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it feels like déjà vu in here. It is as though we are talking about the last trade agreement, since it appears that Conservatives are going to just criticize the agreement for the entire time and then eventually vote in favour of it. This agreement and having trade relationships are one of the tools that are going to allow our country to rebound out of the conditions that the pandemic has created for us when we are looking for opportunities to grow our country. Very simply, will the member be supporting this agreement?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, it is like déjà vu, because here we have a trade agreement that has come in at the 11th hour with rushed legislation, and then the government is blaming it on other people for it being at the 11th hour. I do agree with the hon. member opposite on that point.

As I mentioned early on in my address, businesses need stability. We want this bill to go to committee and we want resolution so that Canadian businesses do not have to pay tariffs. It is obvious that this is what industries want, and we will be moving this measure forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend and thank my colleague from

Government Orders

the Standing Committee on International Trade for her presentation and for outlining the government's many failures on this file.

I am wondering whether the agreement on trade continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom is a carbon copy of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union.

The provinces, and particularly Quebec, were at the negotiating table for CETA.

Do the Conservatives agree that that formula should be followed again, that it should be regulated so that Quebec is always invited to represent itself in trade negotiations?

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, when we are looking at trade negotiations, it is important that we have many voices at the table. That was one part that was definitely lacking in this process.

We had heard that there was not a formal consultation process. There was very limited outreach to a couple of industries, but on the whole, looking at all of the exporters, there really was no outreach. We heard testimony at the committee from major stakeholder industries representing thousands of companies that there was no consultation with them.

We look forward to the new consultation process that will be undertaken.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we heard from the minister earlier today was that this is a temporary, transitional deal, and that she looks forward to getting back to the table and working for a more permanent deal.

Given that it is being touted as a temporary and transitional deal, does the member have concerns about the fact that there is no sunset clause to ensure that negotiations lead to a successor agreement?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, we have identified that it is not a transitional agreement because there is no end date and there is no sunset clause.

In fact, it is an agreement until a new agreement is signed. There are some parameters and some timelines in there to get back to the table, but there are really no ties to it. There are no ramifications if one side does not want to participate. This is the agreement until a new agreement is signed. There are no specific deadlines in it other than wanting to get back to the table.

• (1100)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the member's summary of the timeline. The question on everybody's mind right is, how long is it going to be before the vaccinations roll out?

Government Orders

Given the delay in negotiating this agreement and the fact that the U.K. has at least one vaccine that it will be producing, does the member think the delay in negotiating this agreement was a matter of the Prime Minister just enjoying and trying whatever he could to keep Canadians locked down, or was he just so wrapped up in corruption with the WE scandal that there was no time to pay attention to this important issue?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, when we look at the timeline, we do have to remember that the government had pulled out of negotiations in March 2019, even previous to the pandemic.

We were away from the table for a year before the pandemic came upon us. Here the issue is that other countries were signing agreements and were at the table negotiating, and we were not there. As I mentioned, we did not get back to the table until August, and then the government prorogued Parliament, which set everything back again.

Here we have a government that really was not focusing on this issue, and now we are in a situation with a memorandum of understanding, which is good because it is giving certainty to businesses, but this also has a deadline of the end of March.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to engage in another trade debate. As members know, trade is very close to my heart.

The United Kingdom and Canada have a long and common shared history. We have common values, we are trusted allies and we also have a long history of doing business with each other. In fact, today, the U.K. is Canada's fifth-largest trade partner and that drives prosperity and economic growth in our country and in the U.K. However, to be fair, our exports to the U.K. are primarily minerals, chiefly gold, while imports from the U.K. are comprised mainly of high-end manufactured goods.

The challenge for Canada is to increase the value of the goods we ship abroad, especially to the U.K. Our trade surplus with the U.K. is somewhere around \$10 billion, but I would not crow too much about that. There is this imbalance between high-end manufactured goods and minerals, such as gold, that we ship to the U.K.

It would also be a mistake not to mention our services trade, which is very significant. A lot of Canadians do not understand that when we are talking about services trade, we are talking about things like engineering, some of the highest-paid jobs in Canada. When we do business with another country, when we sell engineering services to a place like the U.K., this is about Canada exporting high-value services and driving the growth of the economy in Canada.

Suffice it to say that trade is a key driver of economic growth and long-term prosperity in Canada, and the U.K., as one of our largest trade partners, is a country we have to engage with when it comes formalizing our trade relationship.

What is the challenge as we move forward?

We have always traded with each other, but for decades the U.K. negotiated trade agreements only as a part of the European Union, and much of its former negotiating expertise and power was ceded and vested in the EU's government in Brussels.

In 2009, former prime minister Stephen Harper had the foresight and vision to begin negotiations on a free trade agreement between Canada and the EU. This would take trade between Canada and the EU to a whole new level. I had the honour of leading that effort on behalf of Canada for some four and a half years.

On September 26, 2014, I joined European Commission President Barroso, European Council President Van Rompuy and Prime Minister Harper in Brussels to announce the end of those CETA negotiations, the trade agreement between Canada and the European Union.

One point of note is that our Liberal friends like to claim credit for all the trade successes of the previous Harper government. In the military, they call it stolen valour, something about which the Liberals know a little. They love to take credit for things that rightly were accomplished by others.

Let me be very clear that the CETA agreement with the then 27 countries of the EU was the brainchild of Stephen Harper. It was under his government that negotiations were commenced and substantively completed. Over the last few years, that CETA agreement has governed our relationship not only with the EU but with the U.K. As my colleague just mentioned, our trade with the U.K. is up by about \$2 billion a year, again, driving economic growth in Canada.

The CETA agreement that Stephen Harper negotiated was arguably the most comprehensive, progressive and forward-looking 21st century trade agreement in the world. It liberalizes trade through broad tariff elimination. It promotes and protects investments. It opens up government procurement and includes rigorous intellectual property protections, dispute resolution and disciplines on sanitary and phytosanitary standards. It protects culture and our cultural industries. It contains some of the strongest commitments ever included in a free trade agreement to promote labour rights, environmental protections and sustainable development. We had expected that agreement to govern our commercial relationship with the European Union for decades to come, including our relationship with the U.K. Then Brexit happened.

• (1105)

Without trying to divine the exact reasons for the U.K. deciding to leave the EU, the British people freely voted to leave the EU and regain their sovereignty over policy-making, and that included trade policy. In the short term, that meant the U.K. was left with no trade agreements with any of its closest trade partners, including Canada, and the British government had to scramble to find the people necessary to competently negotiate trade agreements. Its top priority was securing a new trade agreement with the European Union to assure its most favoured relationship with Europe. Then there was Canada, with which the U.K. no longer had a trade deal since the U.K. was no longer part of the CETA agreement.

Therefore, what was the fix going forward? The solution was to replace CETA with a bilateral trade agreement, Canada and the U.K., which would preserve its trade with Canada without either side incurring economic harm.

That brings us to the debate we are having today, the Canada-UK Trade Continuity Agreement. As its name implies, it is more about preserving and carrying over our CETA benefits and obligations than carving out new territory on trade liberalization. It was unfortunate that the Liberal government and its trade ministers inexplicably chose to delay these negotiations and refused to engage with the U.K. for over a year. That, in turn, meant there was a last-minute rush by the government to rush through the legislation before the new year. When that did not pan out, the Prime Minister, sadly, turned to blame shifting, as my colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country mentioned. The Prime Minister claimed that the delays in finalizing this deal were because the U.K. did not have the bandwidth to negotiate.

The agreement was finally concluded, with really no substantive changes to the rights that each of our countries have under CETA.

What does this mean?

Someone recently referred to this new agreement with the U.K. as a “nothing burger”, suggesting that because there was nothing new in this agreement, there was little of value to praise. Although it is true that not much new policy ground was plowed, this trade agreement means absolutely everything when it comes to protecting our preferred bilateral relationship with the U.K.

The alternative would have been to leave us with no trade agreement at all, only with a much less advantageous benefits of the floundering World Trade Organization. Essentially, we would be returning to the wild, wild west of trade, and that is certainly not what either party wanted.

With this Canada-UK Trade Continuity Agreement presently before us, we are left with a status quo agreement that preserves our current trade and investment relationship under a clear set of liberalizing rules, and that is good news for the residents of Canada.

What does the future look like beyond this continuity agreement we are debating here today? Both parties have committed to pursuing an even more ambitious trade and investment agreement in the future. That negotiation would reflect the unique characteristics of the Canada-U.K. relationship, including our similar economies and social structures, our common approaches to foreign policy, securi-

Government Orders

ty and defence and our common shared approach to freer and fairer trade around the world.

We have three options to further our relationship with the U.K. The first is to take this agreement further by negotiating a more ambitious bilateral trade agreement with the U.K., using these unique characteristics to further eliminate trade barriers and expand investment opportunities. This might perhaps include greater regulatory alignment and broader mutual recognition of credentials.

However, what a lot of people do not realize is that Canada is part of the CPTPP and the U.K. has applied, or is in the processing of applying, to join the CPTPP. The U.K. has signalled its intention to join CPTPP because it knows that in the CPTPP it would make common cause with Canada and the other TPP partners in the Asia-Pacific region as a counterweight to China's belligerence and hostility in the region.

• (1110)

The COVID pandemic and China's increasing belligerence on the world stage make it highly advisable for like-minded nations to make common cause to counteract China's efforts to control and manipulate our system of global rules-based trade, and CPTPP is the perfect vehicle for doing so.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me very clearly and on the record thank the former minister of trade for the work he has done, particularly with respect to CETA, which is a very good agreement, good for Canada and good for Canadian exporters. I hope he agrees.

That is perhaps one of the reasons why I find it perplexing to suggest that successfully transitioning the very favourable provisions of CETA into a transitional agreement with the United Kingdom appears to have disappointed him. CETA is a good agreement and the transitional agreement replicating CETA is good for our Canadian exporters.

Does my colleague agree?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I do not fully agree with her assertion, but I do agree with her that CETA was a groundbreaking agreement and has benefited Canada and the European Union.

Government Orders

However, the delays caused by the Liberal government meant that we could not negotiate an even more ambitious agreement with the U.K.. Circumstances are at play in the Canada-U.K. relationship that make it a perfect opportunity for Canada to expand things like mobility of people, investment opportunities among our countries and regulatory co-operation and the mutual recognition of credentials, something that is much more difficult to do when we are dealing with the 27 countries of the European Union rather than the U.K., with which we share many values and many common social and economic characteristics.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there was a question asked earlier that has remained unanswered. Perhaps my colleague could enlighten me on the matter.

Specifically in the context of CUSMA, we ran into a problem when aluminum was left without any protection. Perhaps the best solution is to ensure that Quebec is at the table during these kinds of negotiations to advocate for its own economic interests—and we will see this next year, since this is a temporary agreement.

Would my colleague agree that the provinces should play a larger role in the negotiation process and that this should be formalized going forward?

• (1115)

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague that Quebec has a very special interest in Canada's trade negotiations, and I can only speak from my own experience negotiating the trade agreement between Canada and the European Union where Quebec was a key integral part of our negotiating team. In fact, a lot of Canadians do not realize that Quebec is among the most pro-trade oriented provinces in our federation.

Quebec understands trade and our previous Conservative government always consulted significantly with Quebec. That is why Quebec was always able to support our efforts to negotiate things like CETA, agreements like the TPP, agreements like our trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Jordan and other countries around the world. The key is collaboration. If we do not get that right, we will get an agreement that does not reflect the best economic interests of Canadians. We want to ensure we always focus on the economic interests of Canadians.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate anything my colleague shares in the House and his incredible work on trade on behalf of Canada.

He spoke about our relationship with the CPTPP and how important it would be to have the U.K. engaged in that well. The government talks about a whole-of-government approach. In this case, when it comes to trade, what I am hearing is that we need a whole-of-the-world approach.

I would like to hear a little more from him with regard to the impact Canada could have on the U.K. participating in that way.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. Because Canada and the U.K. are among the most trusted trade partners in the world, it is absolutely imperative that we find opportuni-

ties to promote our trade interests beyond our bilateral agreement. That is why I am very supportive, personally, of the U.K.'s interest in joining the CPTPP.

Sadly, the World Trade Organization has floundered badly. Its adjudicative powers, effectively, were emasculated by the administration of Donald Trump, so we do not have a robust global system of rules-based trade, which is why a lot of countries over the years have resorted to bilateral and plurilateral agreements such as CETA, the agreement we are debating today and the CPTPP.

I very strongly promote opportunities to take our trade agreements and use them as vehicles to promote freer and fairer trade all around the world, because Canada is among the best countries in the world at doing this.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today as the Bloc Québécois critic for international trade and speak about the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement, or CUKTCA.

CUKTCA seeks to ensure that the flow of trade between Canada and the United Kingdom remains unimpeded. Let us remember that Canada and the European Union are bound by a free trade agreement, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, and that the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union put an end to the provisions that connected London and Ottawa.

I will divide my speech into three parts. First, I will address the serious problem with the transparency of the negotiation process. Next, I will talk about the agreement itself and, finally, I will close by talking about the real meaning of Brexit from a historical perspective and about the precedent it sets with respect to Quebec.

First, let us talk about transparency. Members of the Standing Committee on International Trade discussed the transitional trade agreement with the parties directly involved without any documents whatsoever. It was truly a theatre of the absurd. We were asked to study the agreement without access to its content. We received witnesses who offered comments and recommendations on the agreement, but we had no real information on the content of the agreement. We were only told that the deadline was fast approaching and that we had to adopt the agreement by December 31.

We might also say that we were asked to give the government carte blanche, even though it sacrificed supply management on three occasions and in the latest free trade negotiations it abandoned Quebec's key sectors, like aluminum and softwood lumber. That is why we are reluctant to blindly trust the government.

In fact, the committee had to submit its report on the transitional agreement on the very day we received the text of the agreement and before we even had a chance to read it. The Bloc Québécois was very clear on the fact that we would not just stamp an agreement without reading it or having the time to study and analyze it, in other words, without being able to do our job as parliamentarians.

The members of the House of Commons are responsible for defending the interests and values of their constituents, but they are being forced to approve agreements at the end of a process in which they have no real say, despite the efforts of the Bloc Québécois, which tabled a number of bills regarding this matter between 2000 and 2004.

Under the 2020 agreement between the Liberal Party and the NDP, the Deputy Prime Minister undertook to provide more information to MPs, and that is a step in the right direction. However, as the recent agreement showed, it is clearly inadequate.

We need mechanisms to involve parliamentarians and the provinces in the next round of talks. It is vital for the government to keep parliamentarians informed every step of the way. Requiring this would reduce the risk of parliamentarians having to voice their opinions on agreements without having all the necessary information to make an informed decision. This would make the negotiation process more transparent.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for Parliament to adopt procedures that would increase democratic control over agreements. The minister responsible for ratifying an agreement should be required to table it in Parliament together with an explanatory memorandum within a reasonable period of time. Parliament's approval should be required before any agreement can be ratified.

Quebec was allowed to send a representative to the negotiations with Europe in the lead-up to the ratification of CETA between Canada and the European Union in 2017. However, it was the European Union, not Canada, that wanted Quebec there. Quebec has not had this opportunity again, but it should.

We believe that Quebec and the provinces must be invited to the bargaining table, since they have official standing to block an agreement that would interfere with their jurisdictions. Quebec's jurisdictions extend beyond its borders, as the Privy Council in London acknowledged decades ago in a decision that led Quebec to adopt the *Gérin-Lajoie* doctrine.

Of course, it is not a perfect system.

• (1120)

During the CETA negotiations, Quebec's representative said that Quebec's delegation was there to be a cheerleader for the Canadian delegation and its actions essentially amounted to backroom diplomacy. In other words, Quebec's role mattered, but not at the table where decisions were being made.

The only way Quebec will be able to advocate for itself on the world stage is by gaining independence. The Canadian negotiator will always be predisposed to protect Canada's economic sectors at the expense of Quebec's.

Government Orders

Now I want to talk about the agreement. I remind members that international trade has played a huge part in modernizing Quebec's economy. We made a strategic choice that gave SMEs access to new markets, most importantly the U.S. market, of course, which allowed us to break our total dependence on Canada's trade and economic framework.

The Bloc Québécois fully subscribes to the idea that free trade is necessary, but we do not mistake politics for religion. If a free trade agreement threatens Quebec in any way, we will not hold back from pointing out its biggest flaws and speaking out against them. We believe that the environment, public health, agriculture, culture, first nations, workers and social services must never be treated like commercial goods. We also believe that nothing justifies giving up our sovereignty for the benefit of multinationals.

What does this mean for the Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement, or CUKTCA? I will start with some background. There are already a number of trade agreements and treaties between Canada and the U.K., both with and without the European Union. The United Kingdom is Canada's biggest European trading partner, but let us put things in perspective. Investment and imports and exports of goods and services between Canada and the U.K. actually represent a relatively small percentage of each country's economy. Still, the United Kingdom is an important partner.

Ontario is the most affected province because it exports unwrought gold. That sector accounts for more than 80% of Ontario's exports to the United Kingdom. The U.K. imports a lot of cars and pharmaceuticals from Ontario, but their significance in the U.K. economy is fairly limited.

The United Kingdom is Quebec's second-largest trading partner. However, imports and exports of goods with the United Kingdom have been declining for the past 20 years. The U.K. now accounts for only 1% of Quebec's total exports and 3.5% of Quebec's total imports. In other words, Quebec has a trade deficit with the United Kingdom.

One sector that is really important is the aerospace industry, which provides the most stable trade between Quebec and the United Kingdom. Our aerospace sector is both a customer of and supplier to the United Kingdom, so maintaining that trade relationship is crucial for this strategic industry, which is struggling. Many research partnerships have been established, and the industry welcomes the idea of an agreement. Of course, the aerospace sector needs a proper aerospace policy, and we continue to fight for that in the House. This agreement is good for our aerospace sector, which in itself is a good enough reason for us to support it at this time.

Our personal financial services sector and our engineering firms may also benefit, since investments in infrastructure could explode in a post-Brexit United Kingdom.

Government Orders

Other reasons we welcome this agreement include the fact that the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism will not apply immediately. This mechanism allows a foreign multinational to take a country where it has invested to an arbitration tribunal if a policy or law made by that country impinges on its ability to make a profit. Any law intended to protect the environment or to enhance social justice or worker protections could be targeted. This upends democracy by giving multinationals sovereign powers. We are against that.

Under the CUKTCA, this mechanism would not come into force until at least three years after the agreement has been adopted, on condition that the mechanism is in effect under CETA, which is to say it will not happen. Since Canada and the United Kingdom are supposed to start negotiations this year to conclude a permanent agreement, we can say that it will likely not come into force.

• (1125)

Nevertheless, that should not be one of the items that Canada will defend when negotiating the permanent agreement. The Bloc opposes it and will stand firm against it. I moved a motion to study this mechanism at the Standing Committee on International Trade, and it was adopted. We should be studying it relatively soon. I truly hope that we will never again include this mechanism, which was removed from the the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement last year. In this case, Canada and the United Kingdom are western democracies with well-developed legal systems. There is therefore no reason why differences between a foreign investor and a host country cannot be decided within the existing legal system.

There is also the thorny issue of supply management. We support the pure and simple, iron-clad protection of supply management, and therefore the preliminary exclusion of agriculture from the negotiating table, except for the sectors that would find it advantageous and would specifically ask to be included. CETA, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, was detrimental to our agricultural model, and it caused real losses to our farmers. We would not have agreed to give up additional market share in the CUKTCA, the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement.

Fortunately CUKTCA does not include such provisions. The United Kingdom was not granted additional market access for cheese or other supply-managed products. However, some testimony during meetings of the Standing Committee on International Trade suggested that British cheese producers were pushing for more exports to Canada. In all likelihood, this problem will be put off until next year, new breaches in our agricultural model will be on the table in final negotiations, and London will put those demands at the top of the list. This is timely, because the Bloc introduced a bill to prohibit any future breaches in supply management. The House needs to walk the talk, so I hope it will pass the bill.

I now want to talk about local products. From the beginning of the pandemic, for several months now, people have been singing the praises of buying local, which is great. We need to practise some degree of economic nationalism, which comes more naturally for Quebec than it does for Canada.

Under CETA, Quebec lost a large share of the Canadian content requirement in the procurement of public transit vehicles. In the past, an agreement between the Government of Quebec and the So-

ciété de transport de Montréal required that 60% of the content in the city's subways and buses be Canadian. CETA now stipulates a local content requirement of no more than 25% in Quebec and Ontario, simply because of a grandfather clause. What is more, Quebec can also require that the final assembly take place in Canada. The other provinces are not included in that provision because they do not have any provincial legislation to that effect. The local content requirement of 25% under the grandfather clause is a step backward, but it could have been much worse had Quebec not been at the CETA discussion table.

The same provision is included in CUKTCA simply because it was copied and pasted from CETA. It is pretty clear that this will not be one of Canada's priorities in future rounds of negotiations for the permanent agreement, which once again shows the fundamental importance of inviting Quebec to the negotiating table.

The agreement aside, Quebec and its plan for independence can learn some lessons from the process itself. Of course, the United Kingdom and Quebec are in very different situations. Every U.K. citizen is free to praise or condemn Brexit. They are free to vote as they wish. The fact remains that Brexit is a historical first. We are talking about a state that left a customs union to which it belonged and is therefore no longer part of certain trade agreements. In that regard, the U.K.'s situation is similar to that of Quebec. Opponents to the plan, who have always played on economic fears, say that Quebec would not have enough public funds and that it is better off giving its money to Ottawa or spending it on the monarchy.

• (1130)

As for trade, we were told that Quebec would not automatically be a member of agreements signed by Canada, which would mean a blank slate and starting from scratch with trading partners. However, those trading partners would have no desire to cut ties with Quebec.

What guarantees are there with respect to treaties? Some time ago, a constitutional expert named Daniel Turp, a former member of the House of Commons and the National Assembly of Quebec, explained that countries would presume continuity if the new country expressed its desire to maintain the relationship in a given treaty. Mr. Turp's thesis focused on multilateral agreements, however. The jury was still out on trade agreements.

The only precedent for trade agreements dates back to 1973, when Bangladesh seceded from Pakistan and became independent. Pakistan was bound by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, better known as GATT, and Bangladesh automatically became a member from one day to the next. However, GATT was a multilateral treaty that did not need to be renegotiated to admit a new member. What would happen with a bilateral treaty? That is the question the British are answering now.

To sum up, Canada has already signed an agreement with the European Union, namely CETA. To ensure that the U.K.'s departure from the EU does not leave a void in relations between London and Ottawa, an interim agreement is being reached very quickly between the two countries, one that incorporates the content of CETA and will remain in force in the short term until both partners renegotiate a permanent agreement, thereby ensuring stability until then.

Brexit is showing Quebec the way forward when a trading nation achieves or reclaims its sovereignty. A newly independent Quebec would of course emulate this approach and quickly reach interim agreements to ensure that our businesses have access to markets while waiting for permanent agreements to be renegotiated with our partners.

Far from being caught off guard, the United Kingdom has already signed trade deals with 60 of the 70 countries the EU had deals with. One could say, then, that the U.K. was definitely not caught with its pants down, if you pardon me the expression. It even has an agreement with Japan now, where the EU had no such agreement.

Because they are provisional, transitional arrangements do not preclude newly independent countries from going back to the negotiating table, preferably sooner rather than later. Is there a fundamental problem in renegotiating what someone else has already negotiated for us? That is what the United Kingdom is going to do with Canada this year. If we did that too, we could support sectors that are important to Quebec, such as agriculture, aluminum and lumber. Indeed, there are many more advantages than disadvantages to defending only one's own interests at the negotiating table.

The Brits and Canadians are therefore quite unwittingly overlooking an argument that is often repeated to argue against Quebec independence. When it comes to trade sovereignty, if Brexit has given us a sneak preview of "Québexit", why not go for it?

• (1135)

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated hearing everything the member said. We have a lot to work through as a country in dealing with trade. I appreciate his concerns; I truly do.

The Liberal government calls this a transitional agreement, yet there is no end date and no penalty for not moving forward with negotiations or not getting a new agreement finalized.

Does the member have any concerns about the misconception of calling this a transitional agreement?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

That just adds to the absurdity of it all. Before the holidays, we were asked to study an agreement without access to the document. We were told that it was just transitional. To say that is to minimize the importance of it. We were told to adopt it before December 31, that it was urgent. Fortunately, that did not happen. We were firm on this. However, there is no firm commitment to go back to the

bargaining table. Of course, that is a problem. I share my colleague's concerns on that.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike my Conservative colleague who just asked a question, I do not appreciate the comments the member made, especially those toward the end of his speech when he talked about reasons for Quebec being its own country. I realize that is one of the main objectives of the Bloc, but the reality of the situation is that Canada is as great as it is because of all the partners here. It is as great as it is because Quebec is part of it. I, for one, certainly never want to see us even talk about going down that road, especially at a time like this when we are getting through a pandemic.

Although the nature of these agreements always put us in a position where negotiating seems to conflict with our ability to discuss them in the House, this trade agreement is a good thing for all of Canada. It is a good thing for Quebec. It is a good thing for Ontario. It is a good thing for Alberta and B.C. It is good for the entire country. It is an opportunity for us to come out of this pandemic and grow our economy so we can recover in a meaningful way.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, my goodness, I do not know where to begin. I was talking about all the benefits of the agreement and I said that it was very good for Quebec. I do not see what more I could add.

Canada is a great country. Quebec will be a very great country as well. I must admit that I do not understand my colleague's arguments at all. I find it funny to hear him note that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of Quebec's independence. It is about time my colleague figured that out. The Bloc Québécois has been around for 30 years. I invite my colleague to consider a career as an investigative journalist.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to say that his last comment made me laugh.

In my opinion, the free trade agreement with the United Kingdom demonstrates that instead of learning from their mistakes, the Liberals are repeating them. The NDP shares the concerns about protecting supply management, which we defended tooth and nail. Former MPs Brigitte Sansoucy and Ruth Ellen Brosseau, in particular, vigorously defended it.

I would like to talk about two other things.

Our dispute resolution mechanism allows investors and large corporations to take advantage of us. It undermines our democracy and the representation of our citizens. Under the free trade agreement with the European Union, Quebecers and Canadians will pay more for prescription drugs. In my opinion, in a health crisis, it is truly ridiculous to make the same mistake and accept an agreement that will increase the cost of drugs that sick people need.

I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

Government Orders

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question. I also thank him for his ongoing support of supply management.

If the investor-state dispute settlement system were implemented immediately, I would have been much harsher. However, since the process is fraught with challenges, we might as well say that will not happen with this agreement.

As I mentioned earlier, the CETA countries must absolutely agree on the terms and conditions of a mechanism. That is by no means certain. Since it could take three years, we can imagine that a permanent agreement will be renegotiated before that. The road ahead is fraught with challenges.

With respect to drugs, the price increase will not be immediate. We obviously share my colleague's concern on this matter. When the agreement is implemented in a few years, we will need a compensation program and Ottawa will need a program to compensate those who will bear the brunt of the hike in drug prices. We agree on principle that it makes no sense to hike drug prices in the middle of a pandemic.

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his enlightening speech on the CUKTCA. He knows this topic well.

Could the member talk more specifically about how milk producers will be affected and about how the United Kingdom will continue to be able to send its cheeses here until 2023? I would like to hear his thoughts on that provision in the agreement.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières.

Current cheese exports are based on quotas given up in the agreement with Europe. After that, there was an agreement between Europe and the U.K. about previously allocated quota. It is a step backward, but that is because of the previous agreement.

There is no additional step backward in this agreement. That is one reason we are supporting it at this stage. Even the slightest step backward would have been grounds for us to oppose it. The agricultural model is much too important to be sacrificed even a little bit. We have been very clear about that.

This is only putting the problem off until later, though. We know British exporters want more, which means the problem will probably surface again in a year. London will fight for it during the next round of negotiations, which is why we need to pass the Bloc's bill banning any further breaches in supply management.

• (1145)

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that wonderful speech.

He talked about how important farmers are to Quebec. I know they are important to his region. They are important for mine too. In the Lower St. Lawrence, the dairy industry adds up to about 572 farms, seven plants, 5,895 jobs and a GDP contribution in excess of \$400 million.

In light of these facts, I would like my colleague to explain to us why it is important, essential even, that Canada not give up additional quota for cheese or other supply-managed products when negotiating trade agreements like the CUKTCA.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, supply management is a proven system that works. I would rather talk about promoting supply management than about defending it.

Supply management is based on a very simple principle. Agriculture cannot be treated like any other commodity. It is as simple as that. Agriculture is too important. We are talking about our food sovereignty, what we have in our fridges and on our plates. We need farmers three times a day.

Supply management tells us that we cannot treat agriculture like one factory among many, that it cannot be treated the same way as any other product under the laws of supply and demand. We need to wholeheartedly defend supply management and fight for it tooth and nail. This system has prevented overproduction crises. It has prevented farmers from being wiped out financially, even when they are in very precarious situations.

This must be a fundamental battle in every respect. We will continue to wage that battle until the future of supply management is secure.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the virtual Parliament to speak to the agreement that was signed between Canada and the United Kingdom, what they are calling a “trade continuity agreement”, and the legislation that would implement that here in Canada.

It has been a bit of a rocky road to get here, and there are a number of problems with the way this has unfolded and that do bear description here in the House. However, I want to start by talking a bit about the nature of trade.

This is another agreement in the vein of corporate globalized trade that we in the NDP recognize has not been good for workers. Canada has signed a number of these free trade agreements, whether the original NAFTA or CETA or the TPP, and various reforms at the WTO. All of these have coincided with a period when a lot of well-paying jobs that fed families and provided the kinds of benefits that Canadians expect as part of a good quality of living, whether that is a decent pension, health benefits or other things that come with a good job, left the country. It is not a coincidence that this happened as these agreements were signed which made it easier for big corporations and some of the biggest economic players to move their capital and operations around to find places with the lowest standards for how they treat their workers and the planet. All of that was done in a context where the taxes these folks pay were continually being reduced as well. Therefore, what was seen was a period when working Canadians lost a lot of their good employment that provided them with a good livelihood, while the people at the top were able to move their assets around and keep more and more of the economic pie for themselves.

It has not worked out well for everyday Canadian workers, and it is why we do not like the model. That does not mean we do not like trade.

The NDP is very well aware of all of the opportunities that exist for Canadian businesses, including some of our small businesses, when trade is done right, for them to be able to expand their reach. We just want to see agreements that allow those opportunities to translate not into gross profits for a few Canadians at the top, but into more good-quality jobs for Canadian workers who will produce the things that get traded with other countries. However, if it just means that all of the value-added work goes somewhere else, that is not in the ultimate interests of Canadians, and there is a fair bit of evidence to suggest that that has been the trend over the last 30 years or so.

Why am I talking about that? Trade between Canada and the United Kingdom is as old as Canada, and at least with Europeans. We have had a long-standing trade relationship; it is an important one. A lot of the similarities and affinities between Canada and the United Kingdom provide for creating a real gold-standard trade agreement. If we listen even to the conservatives in the United Kingdom, they talk more about climate change and have put more emphasis on putting climate change at the forefront of their new trade agenda than even the Liberals here have done. There is a real opportunity to work with them and others in the United Kingdom to create a gold-standard deal that takes seriously the impacts of globalized trade for climate change and seeks to control and reduce those impacts.

We have an opportunity to create a gold-standard deal that takes seriously the rights of workers and human rights and seeks to actually incorporate those into the deal, not in a side letter that is not enforceable but actually into the core of the deal, to ensure that workers will be fairly treated and that if there is additional wealth created by an increase of trade between our two countries, it will find its way to workers and not just to the people at the top.

I would also hope that our good relationship with the United Kingdom will allow for an agreement that recognizes and takes seriously the rights and role of indigenous people in Canada, so that we do not run roughshod over those in the way that an agreement is concluded.

• (1150)

However, we do not have that here with this agreement. What we have, after knowing this was coming for a long, long time, is effectively a carbon copy of CETA, which was agreement in the corporate model that I just described and that we do not agree with. We did not agree with it at the time because we knew that an agreement like CETA and its intellectual property provisions was going to put upward costs on the price of pharmaceutical drugs in Canada when we already pay among the highest price for prescription drugs in the western world.

Why would we conclude an agreement that makes those drugs more expensive? Why then would we carbon copy that agreement when we have an opportunity to do something different with our largest trading partner in the European Union, representing about 40% of our trade with Europe? That does not make sense to New

Government Orders

Democrats, who have been elected to Parliament on a mission to reduce the price of prescription drugs for Canadians.

It does not make sense when we think about the integrity of our democratic institutions. These same corporate trade deals have also put serious limits and inhibitions on democratically elected governments to regulate in the public interest. That was also a part of the reasons for our initial opposition to CETA, the investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms. Now, I recognize that those would not come into force immediately upon the passage of this legislation, but I find it shocking, frankly, that they are even in there at all, because we have not heard the British government talk about the need for investor-state dispute settlement clauses.

Those are the clauses that have allowed foreign corporations to sue the Canadian government for hundreds of millions of dollars over the last 30 years. Those are the same clauses the Deputy Prime Minister herself said in the House last June were one of the biggest achievements she was most proud of from the CUSMA negotiations. In her words, "the investor-state dispute resolution system, which in the past allowed foreign companies to sue Canada, will be gone."

Here they are again, not because our trading partner was asking for them. How did they even get into the agreement? If Britain does not want them and Canada does not want them, why are they there and why is possible for them come into effect, which is the default incidentally, after three years if another decision is not taken in the meantime?

We object to these being present at all, and I am interested to know who at the table was concerned to put them in there, given that our government was trying to take credit for having signed an agreement with the United States and Mexico that finally got rid of them, which we thought was a good thing.

The other thing CETA did that we oppose was further attack the supply-managed sectors in Canada. We heard comments earlier that I agree with completely. The way we procure our food and supply our food is not as if it were commodity like any other, and so we want to make sure that our agricultural producers are compensated fairly for what they produce and that we can support those local producers and that our food supply chain is secure.

All of these agreements tend toward a more globalized food supply chain. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that when it comes to the things that really matter and that we cannot do without, we should not be depending on international supply chains. Supply management in Canada is a great tool to ensure that our local producers are paid fairly for the work they do, can stay in business and that Canadian consumers can get the products they need to eat at a fair price reliably.

Government Orders

Those were things we did not like about CETA. We had lots of time, and, frankly, when it came to signing CETA in the first place, it was a mystery to us in the NDP that the government rushed ahead with it. The Conservatives had negotiated this deal, the Liberals came to power, and in the meantime Britain decided to hold a referendum on whether to remain in the European Union. New Democrats thought it might be significant to the nature of trade between Europe and Canada whether the United Kingdom was a part of Europe or not, considering that it represented about 40% of our trade with Europe.

It still strikes me as totally ridiculous that the government decided to go ahead and pen a deal with Europe when we did not know if the United Kingdom was leaving the European Union, which we subsequently found out it was, and that 40% of trade with Europe was not going to be captured by that deal. It does raise problems. We will see what happens as we try to negotiate a successor agreement and what that will mean for the supply-managed sector. New Democrats are very concerned that there are further concessions in the offing. We will believe it when we see that that it is not really on the table for the Liberals, because we have seen them break that promise before.

• (1155)

The other thing that bears mentioning when it comes to CETA is the following quote from a report called “Taking Stock of CETA: Early Impacts of the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement”. It states:

Between September 2017 and May 2019, total Canadian exports to the EU, measured monthly, were essentially flat. Meanwhile, over the same period, total imports from the EU increased by over a third (33.8 per cent). This imbalance has resulted in a doubling of the monthly Canadian trade deficit with the EU, from –1.51 billion dollars in September 2017 to –3.43 billion dollars in May 2019.

In recent decades, the United Kingdom is the only major European country with which Canada has consistently run a trade surplus. But since September 2017, the Canadian merchandise trade surplus with the U.K. has shrunk significantly (falling by two-thirds), with exports declining by 32 per cent while imports rose 14 per cent.

That is an assessment of the deal on whether it is working for Canada. The government did not bother to negotiate a different agreement. It is asking for a carbon copy of an agreement that has seen Canada's trade deficit with Europe increase. Even the empirical evidence on the deal so far suggests that this has not been a wondrous deal for Canada.

I have a lot of sympathy for Canadian businesses that want certainty in an uncertain time. I think the government really let them down in terms of the process, but it did not just let them down in November and December when it failed to get this legislation before the House and passed before December 31. The government let them down a long time ago, when it walked away from the negotiating table and was not even trying to negotiate the kind of gold-standard deal that I spoke about earlier, or any kind of different deal at all.

Here we find ourselves, past the deadline. These businesses have already gone through that jarring uncertainty and what it means for their business models, so I understand their disappointment. I think the government ought to have behaved in a way to try to provide a lot more certainty about what was coming, but I think it is a disappointment that, in addition, all we are getting is the same as we had

in CETA with all of the problems that were there, and with all the evidence that shows that this has not been a deal that is working out very well for Canada.

I would say perhaps one of the only redeeming aspects of this entire farce of a process around negotiating our post-Brexit trade relationship with the United Kingdom is that it afforded an opportunity for certain committees of the House to reaffirm our commitment to the Good Friday Agreement, which Canada played an important role in brokering. New Democrats, my colleague from Saint John—Rothsay at the foreign affairs committee and I, presented a motion at the international trade committee and the foreign affairs committee that passed, I am glad to say unanimously, affirming Canada's support for [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] wants to be part of a trade relationship with the United Kingdom that in no way jeopardizes the Good Friday Agreement and, in fact, seeks to reinforce that peace, which was hard won in the nineties.

That is maybe one of the only silver linings to what otherwise was a terrible process. There was no real meaningful consultation with businesses, with unions or with Canadian civil society on what this trade relationship ought to look like. I stress this again, because the government likes to talk as if the deadline snuck up on us or as if we did not know it was coming. We have known for years that Britain was leaving the EU, and it was incumbent upon the government of the day to do the work so that whenever that deadline came there was actually something in place, yet there was no meaningful public consultation process on this.

The trade committee, on its own initiative, held some hearings in Parliament but, of course, like many things due to the pandemic, these were severely interrupted. It does not explain why there was not some effort by the government, in the years leading up to that, to try to engage people meaningfully on the question of the Canada-U.K. trade agreement or to try to involve Parliament, for that matter.

I would like to add that while we are talking about the abomination of process that is this deal, it bears mentioning that the government will talk about this as a transitional deal. I think that is misleading.

• (1200)

I get that our partner in the United Kingdom and the Canadian government perhaps committed in good faith, and it is in the agreement for all to read that they are going to start negotiating toward a successor deal within a year. I think there is some expectation that within three years the deal will be concluded. A couple of things will get more difficult after that three-year time horizon if a successor deal has not been concluded.

The fact remains that a transitional deal implies a temporary deal. The fact that it is a transitional deal, and the fact that it is essentially a carbon copy of CETA, are the reasons the government is saying that we should not be too concerned that there has not been a great process around it all: “Do not worry, we are going to negotiate another deal and it is really just like what we had.”

However, there were problems with what we had. The NDP is not satisfied with CETA. The NDP does not agree that CETA is the be-all and end-all of a trade agreement anyway, and I can tell members that a lot of Canadian workers across the country feel the same way. That fact notwithstanding, when we talk about a transitional deal it implies a temporary deal, and there is nothing temporary about this deal.

This deal has already been signed. The government has done the deed and the legislation, I gather from the debate today, is going to pass. New Democrats will be voting against it, but it is going to pass, and in a timely way. We all know, after what we just went through with Donald Trump, the pandemic and everything else, that three years is a long time in politics. A lot can change, and good intentions sometimes do not bear the fruit that people thought they would.

If, in three year's time, Canada and the U.K. do not conclude a successor agreement, this is what we are stuck with, and we will have been stuck with it after no meaningful engagement with the Canadian public or the Canadian Parliament except for this debate and whatever process will ensue at committee, which is something we are being asked to hurry up with and rush. The government has created a context where there is a legitimate need to act with some swiftness, because Canadian businesses have not had an opportunity to plan for an alternative, even though I think an alternative could have served Canadians better.

There is no sunset clause in the deal. There is no sunset clause in the legislation before us. In other words, there is nothing that compels Canada and the U.K. in any strong sense to conclude a successor agreement that might realize the potential for that gold standard in trade rather than repeating the same old corporate model that has not been serving Canadians well over the last 30 years. To me, that is a real disappointment, and I caution Canadians that this is not just some kind of transitional thing that is going away any time soon. It will only go away any time soon if it becomes a priority of our government and the government of the U.K., and political circumstances allow them to conclude a deal.

If we think back to where we were three years ago, nobody would have predicted what has happened in the interim. It would be a shame if this is the deal that Canada gets stuck with to define our trading relationship with the United Kingdom, because I think we can do a heck of a lot better.

I think we can do better when it comes to not having any provisions at all, like the investor-state dispute settlement provisions that cost Canadian taxpayers money and limit the ability of their democratically elected governments to regulate in the public interest.

I think it would be a shame if we did not get an agreement with the U.K. that takes climate change seriously and tries to mitigate the effects of globalized trade.

I think it would be a shame if we did not get an agreement with the U.K. that recognizes, in some kind of meaningful and enforceable way, the rights of indigenous people in Canada.

I think it would be a shame if we did not get an agreement that took upward pressure on prescription drug costs seriously. At the very least, if the Liberals are going to continue to sign deals like

Government Orders

this, they could get a national pharmacare plan in place and help to do something that would bring those pharmaceutical drug prices down for Canadians, both their out-of-pocket costs and the incredible costs on provincial government ledgers for those pharmacare programs that do not benefit from the purchasing power of the entire country.

I hope we are going to get there, and that is certainly where our emphasis is going to be, but in the meantime, it is hard to say yes to a deal that is unimaginative and part of a broken international trade culture.

● (1205)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is a trading nation. We need international trade. We cannot underestimate the importance of that global trading market.

I am not surprised, but a little disappointed, that the NDP consistently votes against trade agreements. The party seems to be of the opinion that the way we get a trade agreement is to say what we want and then wait for the other country to agree to it, or we do not have an agreement.

My question to my friend and colleague from Winnipeg is this. Would he not recognize the actual value of international trade for Canadian society as a whole, and indicate to those who may be following the debate what trade agreements, historically, the NDP actually stood in this place and voted for?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, it seems to me the hon. member has the memory of a goldfish. The last trade agreement that was before the House, the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, was an agreement that New Democrats voted for. There were tangible wins for Canadian workers. We got rid of the investor state dispute settlement clause I was just talking about, which somehow reappeared here. It is not because the British government was asking for it, so who was? Presumably, it was the only other partner in the agreement: the Canadian government. Otherwise, I do not see why it would be there.

We also got rid of the energy proportionality clause, which never should have been signed in the first place and was a serious problem when it comes to Canada's energy sovereignty. That is something that has been the subject of a lot of debate in the House recently. Of course, Conservatives did not care a whit about Canadian energy sovereignty when they negotiated NAFTA back then, and I was glad to see that go.

Therefore, yes, when we can point to tangible wins for real Canadians, not just the guys at the top, we are prepared to vote for agreements but, man, do they ever come sparsely. It is because we have both Liberals and Conservatives who are happy to run around the world figuring out how quickly they can sell out everyday Canadians to do a solid for their corporate buddies. The trends are there. One just has to look at the evidence.

Government Orders

• (1210)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working with my colleague on international trade, on the very agreement he was speaking about, the CUSMA. He brought forward initiatives for greater transparency in trade agreements, which Conservatives supported him on.

With the CUSMA, we asked to see economic impact studies and the government refused. Even yesterday, I think the Prime Minister was still saying CUSMA was a better agreement than NAFTA even though C.D. Howe said there would be a \$10 billion hit to our economy and a \$1.5 billion hit to our auto industry. I am wondering, because I am no longer on that committee, if the member has seen any change as far as openness, transparency and engagement of important Canadian stakeholders.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We do not have interpretation.

[Translation]

I think that is what the hon. member for Beauport—Limouilou was trying to tell us.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, the sound quality is very poor. Could my colleague bring the microphone closer to his mouth so that the interpreters can hear?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): He has a headset, but I think it is his Internet connection that is causing the problem since the sound cut out several times.

[English]

I would ask the hon. member for Oshawa to repeat his question.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working with my colleague on international trade.

My question was about openness and transparency. He moved different initiatives forward to improve openness and transparency in consultation on trade agreements. I remember, with CUSMA, we found out after the fact that the new CUSMA would be a \$10-billion hit to the Canadian economy and a \$1.5-billion decrease in auto exports. Even as of yesterday, the Prime Minister was saying it is a better overall agreement for Canada.

Has the member seen any changes in the new agreement as compared to the CUSMA? Has anything been put in place to improve the process?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the answer is that the process around this deal has been very bad. For me, the frustration is that the justification for the fact that there was not a lot of public consultation or engagement about the deal was that we were maintaining the status quo for now, and were going to get a new deal. That, to me, suggested all along that it really would be a temporary deal, and I was shocked to see that there was no sunset clause.

I have heard Liberals at committee say a hard deadline creates drama, but they could have set the timeline at whatever they wanted. It could have been three years or five years. If they are confident that they are going to conclude a deal, then ending this deal automatically should not have been an issue, and that provides the real incentive that one needs to get a successor agreement. I am concerned that we have had a very bad process now for what could

end up being a permanent agreement. I want to see the government acting soon on the changes that the NDP negotiated to our trade process and giving notice to Parliament so we can get that process under way.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about transparency for my colleague. I recall that we were the only ones to vote against CUSMA because of the unacceptable status of aluminum.

The NDP abandoned us along the way because it supposedly had a deal with the Deputy Prime Minister to be notified of the government's intent to enter into new negotiations 90 days in advance and to be informed of the objectives for negotiations 30 days in advance.

I am wondering if my colleague now feels that he was taken for a ride with the deal he made with the Deputy Prime Minister.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I think the proof of whether the government was negotiating in good faith or not on this agreement is going to be in the pudding. To come back to the frustration I was referring to earlier, the Liberals would say the process for this was not very good and they were already negotiating long before, which was true. However, they suspended negotiations. It is not clear whether a new negotiation was started in August of last year or they were resuming a previous negotiation that was already under way. The waters are muddy there.

It is important that the government begin to follow the process from early on with respect to this new agreement. It is also important that this agreement be a temporary agreement. If all those other things are true that this was not a great process and was just about maintaining the status quo until we get a successor agreement, the government should not be signing what is for all intents and purposes a permanent agreement. To me, that is the real—

• (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona is a very important voice in international trade, and I want to thank him for his work and expertise and for mentoring me on this file.

He started his intervention today by describing the deal as bad for workers and said that this deal allows for a race to the bottom that creates increased inequality that benefits big corporations but hurts Canadian workers.

How would the member propose we better protect workers in Canada? How would this trade deal be improved if the government had done what it promised and consulted extensively with Canadians, Canadian workers and the opposition parties, like the NDP?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, one thing I will zero in on is CETA. What is true of CETA, which will therefore also be true of the current agreement, is the way it opened up local government procurement at the provincial and municipal levels to essentially say that when projects are over a certain threshold, local governments are not able to have local content requirements or to prefer local contractors. That is one of the tools that subnational governments use in order to make sure that Canadian tax dollars spent in Canada generate work for Canadian workers. This agreement makes that harder to do. CETA was unprecedented in drilling down past the national level and making it harder for other governments to have that kind of localized spending as part of their infrastructure programs, for example. This is something we absolutely should have been looking at again.

I come from the construction industry. I have heard a lot of stories about workers being brought in from Europe to do construction projects in Winnipeg—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge.

It is great to have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-18. As the chair of the international trade committee, I think we have a great group of colleagues to continue working on a variety of things. Of course, Bill C-18 is one of them.

For the information of my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona, I had the pleasure of tabling the report yesterday on the Good Friday Agreement, which I know was so important to him. In case he missed it, I wanted to make sure he and the other committee members know that we got that done yesterday. I agree with it totally. It is very important.

Now we are dealing with this transitional continuity agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom and export promotion efforts behind Canada's free trade agreement. As we all know, Canada is very much a trading nation. As a medium-sized economy competing internationally, Canada relies on free trade and a transparent rules-based system to take advantage of global commercial opportunities and create economic prosperity at home.

Canada is one of the most open G7 countries, ranking second for both trade and foreign direct investment as shares of GDP, so members can appreciate how vital trade is to Canada's economy. The negotiation and ratification of free trade agreements reflect this government's commitment to international trade and to levelling the playing field for Canadian businesses, especially our small and medium-sized businesses, so they are able to compete and succeed in markets abroad. Allow me to elaborate a bit on this point.

Under the rules and protections of free trade agreements, Canadian goods and services benefit from a reduction or elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, such as quotas or other protectionist obstacles. These barriers make exporting to another country costlier and time consuming for businesses.

If we take the trade continuity agreement before us today as an example, without this agreement in place, some of our Canadian

businesses would face new barriers and higher costs of doing business, because the U.K. is no longer covered by the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, the CETA. Overall, after Brexit, it is estimated that 1.04 billion dollars' worth of Canadian exports to the U.K. would have been subject to tariffs. These tariffs would disproportionately affect fish, seafood and agricultural exporters. In addition to the tariffs placed on Canadian products being exported to the U.K., roughly 25% of all products imported from the U.K. would also be affected, with Canadian importers paying higher prices to bring in these goods.

While each trade agreement reflects a specific set of Canadian interests, their primary objective is to create a more open and competitive marketplace that improves access to foreign markets for the vast majority of Canadian exports, thereby supporting economic growth and creating opportunities and new jobs for Canadians. These objectives were top of mind when we signed CETA in 2016 with the European Union, when we brought into force the CPTPP with 10 Asia-Pacific partners in 2018 and of course when the new NAFTA came into force last year. We can add to that the trade continuity agreement with the U.K. once it comes into force.

We have already heard from a number of industry stakeholders, as well as the provinces and territories, about the importance of maintaining a preferential trading relationship with the U.K. However, this agreement is not just about maintaining the status quo, although that is important enough for our businesses and most Canadians. It is also about setting the stage for our future bilateral relations with the U.K.

Having said that, all the benefits of free trade agreements do not matter if Canadian businesses are not aware of how to take advantage of them. For these agreements to be fully realized, Canadian businesses need to be made fully aware of them and the benefits they offer, which is a job that I think falls upon all committee members and in particular those of the international trade committee.

As hon. members present know, most Canadian exporters are small and medium enterprises, or SMEs, as we call them. Many do not have the luxury of time or the resources to remain fully informed of game-changing international business developments like free trade agreements, much less fully digest their implications. As a result, many have not been in a position to take full advantage of the access provided by these agreements to increase their presence in international markets.

● (1220)

The government recognizes the need to encourage SMEs to pursue free trade opportunities and to support them in their efforts to do so, which the minister has been very aggressive in doing. Accordingly, the Prime Minister has prioritized export promotion and development, particularly for small businesses to take advantage of the opportunities that flow from trade.

Government Orders

In this regard, our ambitious export diversification strategy seeks to maximize opportunities for Canadians created by our existing trade agreements while pursuing new ones. That means continuing to attract and support Canadian companies doing business with the U.K. through the team Canada approach that we often talk about. This includes the trade commissioner service network; Export Development Canada, or EDC; the Business Development Bank of Canada; the Canadian Commercial Corporation; and Invest in Canada. These organizations are all working together, along with our provincial and territorial partners, to help Canadian businesses navigate the implications of Brexit. They remain committed to continuing to assist Canadian companies doing business with and in the U.K. and the E.U.

These relationships are critical in supporting prosperity through the economic recovery from COVID-19 and beyond. For all of us, the economic recovery from COVID-19 cannot come quickly enough.

I urge all hon. members to support Bill C-18, which would allow the government to implement the trade continuity agreement, without undue delay, to support Canadian companies as they seek to take advantage of the benefits of this agreement.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Humber River—Black Creek for her speech.

My colleague just mentioned that often because of their size, SMEs have not been able to take advantage of certain agreements and have not had access to information, tools and so forth.

What solutions have been proposed to better inform and equip our Quebec and Canadian SMEs?

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I wish a happy new year to everyone who is watching.

Small businesses throughout Canada, as I had indicated in my comments, are critically important. Small companies, whether in manufacturing or elsewhere, have a desire to grow but are struggling every day to find different ways to access funds and get help navigating international opportunities. I find an awful lot of them are unaware of this, whether we are talking about the Business Development Bank or others.

I have met with many small businesses and walked them through the process. They needed capital or access to funds, and I was able to connect them with BDC or others to help them. That is a big part of a member of Parliament's job. They do not have time to look up what the Government of Canada is trying to do. They are busy trying to make a living, survive and grow their businesses, and I think it is part of our role as parliamentarians to do outreach.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member hit the nail on the head when she talked about the notion that small businesses are not always aware of what is available to them so that they can be part of these agreements and explore opportunities for trade. There are so many entrepreneurs

who are really good at what they do and have passion, but they are not aware of some of the opportunities. It is important for the government to make them aware and help promote trade when possible.

Could the member comment on how important she thinks it is going to be to help small and medium-sized businesses grow as we come out of this pandemic and are looking for opportunities to get our economy to rebound and grow so we can tackle some of the challenges that our economy has faced during the pandemic?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, it was important before COVID-19 for us to provide opportunities through trade agreements such as CETA and the trade continuity agreement. These were really important before COVID-19, but since that has hit, and it has taken such a big hit on our businesses, it is even more important for us to be personally reaching out to everyone and letting them know the opportunities that are there.

The government has certainly put forth a variety of programs to help our businesses. The latest one, which came out this week, allows companies to borrow up to \$1 million. We need to keep our companies moving forward, and this trade continuity agreement is going to help those businesses keep their doors open. Somehow we always seem to be doing things in a rush at trade committee, but this is another one that is important for us to pass, so we can make sure we are protecting our businesses and opening the doors again for more trade.

• (1230)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure to rise in the House today in support of Bill C-18, an act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Just as we welcome the recent signing of this important agreement, the government is very pleased to take the next step in Canada's domestic ratification process, so Canadians can take advantage of the agreement's benefits. I am proud to say that despite the turns in the road to Brexit, and the uniqueness of the Canada-U.K. replication exercise, we were able to secure a deal that is good for Canada, works for Canadian business and fully protects our supply-managed products.

Our strong trading relationship with the U.K. has grown rapidly under the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA. In fact, Canadian exports to the U.K. have increased by over \$2 billion since CETA came into force.

The U.K. remains the second-highest value destination for Canadian direct investment abroad and the third largest destination for Canadian merchandise exports. Two-way merchandise trade between Canada and the U.K. amounted to \$29 billion in 2019, making it Canada's fifth largest trading partner after the U.S., China, Mexico and Japan. Once in force, the trade continuity agreement would preserve Canada's important trade relationship with the U.K.

Before I go further, I will elaborate on how this continuity agreement between Canada and the U.K. came to be over the past three and a half years and why preserving preferential access to the U.K. is a key priority for our government.

Following the U.K.'s decision to leave the EU, including the single market, the customs union and the free trade area, Canada engaged its partner in earnest to maintain our strong partnership post-Brexit and to mitigate potential disruptions in trade for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic.

In September 2017, Prime Minister Trudeau and then U.K. prime minister Theresa May pledged to seek a seamless transition for our trade relations.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I remind the member not to refer to names of current members of the House of Commons.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, thank you for that intervention.

Soon thereafter, our government undertook a trade dialogue to substantively replicate CETA on a bilateral basis as an interim measure in response to Brexit. I am happy to say the agreement before all hon. members today, including the member for Papineau, meets the commitment made by the Prime Minister in 2017.

Brexit posed a unique challenge for partners, such as Canada, that already had trade agreements in place with the European Union. Canada has shown adaptability and resilience in this unique challenge by achieving an agreement that mitigates potential disruptions for businesses due to the U.K.'s decision to leave the EU and CETA.

The agreement before us today ensures that Canada and the U.K. can sustain and build upon our very important relationship. This means businesses will continue to have an unprecedented access to the U.K.'s vibrant economy, which includes 66 million consumers and a \$3.68-trillion market. It also means the continuation of lower prices, more choices for Canadian consumers, and a reduction or elimination of customs duties.

Since this agreement is based on CETA, an agreement Canadians are already familiar with, it provides the predictability and stability our businesses need, and have told us they need, as they grapple with the economic effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Once the trade continuity agreement is fully implemented, it will carry forward CETA's tariff elimination on 99% of Canadian products exported to the U.K.; maintain priority market access for Canadian service suppliers, including access to the U.K. government's procurement market, which is estimated to be worth approximately \$118 billion Canadian annually; and uphold and preserve

Government Orders

CETA's high standard provisions on labour, the protection of the environment and dispute settlement.

• (1235)

[Translation]

I am proud to say that this agreement fully protects our supply management system. In other words, there will be no additional foreign cheeses entering this country if this agreement is ratified.

[English]

Critically, this agreement will also continue to give Canadian companies a leg-up on competitors in countries that do not have a free trade agreement with the U.K. These are crucial advantages we can look forward to preserving with one of our most important trading partners once this agreement is in place.

This government knows that Canada's trade relationships are critical in supporting our prosperity through the economic recovery in a post-COVID global landscape. It is important for the government to remain engaged with Canadians throughout the negotiation to understand and address specific interests.

I will reassure my colleagues that the government maintained an open dialogue with businesses over the course of the negotiation of this trade continuity agreement. Prior to and throughout the negotiation process officials engaged with interested businesses through direct consultations. Furthermore, as the trade continuity agreement replicates CETA, it also relies upon the extensive consultations with Canadians that took place throughout the CETA negotiations. Throughout those consultations we received valuable feedback that enabled the government to negotiate with a comprehensive knowledge of Canadian interests and seek an agreement that was of benefit to Canada.

Once ratified, the trade continuity agreement will continue to be in place as we work toward a new bilateral comprehensive free trade agreement with the U.K., which can be best tailored to meet our mutual interests at that time. Input from Canadians will help to ensure those future negotiations are in the best interests of Canada, our future trade agreement is tailored to our relationship with the U.K. and that it will be able to respond to any post-Brexit developments.

This government recognizes the need to encourage businesses to pursue free trade opportunities and to support them in their efforts to do so. This trade continuity agreement maintains crucial ties and preferential trade terms with one of Canada's key trade partners and ensures that Canadian businesses will not face yet another disruption or challenge at this time. Indeed, if this agreement were not put in place, this would be another setback that Canadian businesses frankly cannot afford.

Government Orders

For these agreements to be fully realized, Canadian businesses need to be made aware of them and the benefits they offer. The goal of our ambitious export diversification strategy is to maximize opportunities for Canadians created by our existing trade agreements while pursuing new ones. That means continuing to attract and support Canadian companies doing business with the U.K. through a team Canada approach to trade.

This approach includes Canada's trade toolbox, which is made up of the Trade Commissioner Service network, Export Development Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Canadian Commercial Corporation and the investing in Canada plan. These organizations are all working together, alongside our provincial and territorial partners, to help Canadian businesses navigate the aftermath of Brexit. They remain committed to continuing to assist Canadian companies, doing business with, and in, the U.K. and the European Union.

Finally, we have heard over and over again from Canadian stakeholders about the importance of maintaining a preferential trading relationship with the U.K. This government wants to ensure that Canadian businesses have the confidence and stability they need to continue to do business with the U.K. We can do that by ensuring that the crucial commercial relationship we have with the U.K. continues to flourish unimpeded. Our government looks to working with all members of Parliament to ratify Bill C-18 in the interest of our economy and Canadian businesses.

I believe I have about a minute or so left, but I do wish to thank our trade negotiators, who, over the last several years, have dealt with very intense negotiations, whether it was completing CETA when we first came into office in 2015; the renegotiation of NAFTA into CUSMA, where our negotiators faced long and intense negotiations with much uncertainty, but were steadfast and came out with a great deal and a great free trade relationship, maintaining stability and predictability with our largest trading partner; or the trade continuity agreement with the United Kingdom. I do wish to thank all those trade negotiators. They are unsung heroes for our country, our businesses and our workers.

● (1240)

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports the bill to implement the trade continuity agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom because we understand that it is important for Quebec businesses to ensure continuity in relationships. The negotiations began on November 21, 2020, whereas CETA was set to expire at the end of 2020.

Next time we negotiate with the United Kingdom, could we possibly have more notice?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for the question.

[English]

I would like to say first that it is great to have support from the Bloc Québécois in having this trade continuity agreement move forward in Parliament, as it recognizes the interests of Quebec's businesses and Quebec's workers, and maintains a very important

trading relationship for all Canadian workers and all Canadian businesses. I look forward to ensuring that Canadian businesses have continuity, predictability and stability in this trading relationship. It is very important.

I also look forward to our government's pursuing a strengthened bilateral free trade agreement that looks upon issues such as women in the workforce and digitalization, and that provides a long runway for these negotiations to take place.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud of our NDP position that opposes Bill C-18 based on some very clear grounds, including the fact that it replicates much of CETA, which cedes Canadian sovereignty and capacity with respect to the pharmaceutical industry and will certainly deal more pain to certain key sectors in our own economy.

I wonder if the member does not see a need to take a hard look at the approach to trade in his government, and recent governments' approach to trade, where free trade deals seek to benefit corporations as opposed to average Canadians and people across our country.

Is it not the time to do trade differently? Is it not the time to make sure that we are increasing capacity in our own country? Right now, we are struggling with the fact that we do not have the capacity to create our own vaccines and our—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, I have to give the member the opportunity to answer.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, free trade benefits Canada. We have seen it over and over again.

I was glad to see when we ratified and finished CUSMA how Unifor and several private sector unions came out and said that we had done a great job for Canadian workers. We have seen the benefits of those trade deals with the recent announcement by General Motors to maintain and expand investments in Canada. I would love for the hon. member to speak to those union members and see how happy they are for those ongoing investments by corporations, which are creating jobs, both direct and indirect, and are a very big multiplier here in the Ontario economy.

That is a win for Canada, a win for Ontario and a win for Canadian workers. I will always be at the table supporting them.

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always find this member's comments on issues like this to be particularly insightful, and today was no exception.

We have heard from a number of people in the chamber with comments suggesting that this deal was rushed, perhaps too much so. First, I would like the member's comments on that suggestion. Second, I would like him to tell us why it was so important to get this deal done quickly.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, first, we needed to have a goal where the trade continuity agreement provided predictability and stability for Canadian workers and businesses, and we did that.

Second, the CETA process was a very long process. This deal replicates the CETA agreement, which was done over a very long time, so it was very applicable to the U.K., which was a member of the European Union for a very long period of time. Therefore, we could put that in place—

• (1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Just before Christmas, we finally saw the text of the Canada-UK transitional trade agreement. This deal has the goal of implementing a copy and paste of CETA until a comprehensive agreement can be implemented. This is happening as the government said it needs more time to negotiate a full deal that reflects on Canada and on the United Kingdom.

My question is this. Why did we not aim for a comprehensive agreement from the get-go? It is a question we always ask ourselves. Japan, for example, already has a full deal with the United Kingdom, and had the same amount of time to accomplish this as our negotiators. Just like USMCA, this is another last-minute attempt by the government to save face after insulting one of our oldest and closest allies with some “bandwidth talk”. We need long-term goals and targets for the sake of business continuity and stability.

Stakeholders are thankful for the current arrangement of a transitional agreement, but also signal the concern this deal may turn into a permanent one that will not reflect economic realities. Throughout the international trade committee's study of this deal, many stakeholders had serious concerns on the status of consultations or that it would be done at the very last minute.

While at committee, the hon. minister could not even say how many pages were in the final document. I personally asked that question and the minister was unable to tell us how many pages the agreement was. That is of course a concern coming from the top negotiator on behalf of Canada and the government.

That was also after much fanfare from an announcement through Zoom that the deal was finished. We need to get this right. In the age of pandemic disruption, we need our small businesses to be able to survive through the storm for which a predictable market is the only lighthouse left.

To make matters worse, the Liberals kept being dead set on the deal being implemented by December 31, which means being

Government Orders

passed through the House by the deadline. Here we are on January 26, 27 and 28 and the deal is not in the House of Commons. The deal is not implemented. At committee, we were told that it would be passed and that mitigation measures could be in place. Once again, here we are on January 28 and there are no details from the government on this last-minute trade deal.

It almost seems like Liberals cannot multi-task and get more than one thing done at a time. We just need to look at the vaccine rollout, for example, on that front. After popping out the confetti on hoarding the most vaccine orders, we are now drastically falling behind. Provincial health care systems are now scraping the bottom of the freezer for more vaccines. Second doses are being cancelled for nurses and seniors. All this after Canadians were told we were ahead of the game.

On the other side, how can businesses feel safe with their investments in trade when the government over-promises and under-delivers? Could there be more scenarios as examples of the government's failures on trade? We can just look south of the border with buy American. Ever since the Liberal government came into office, it has been crisis after crisis on securing exports to our neighbour and closest ally. It always hits the snooze button on trade until it is too late for a reasonable outcome. Whether a Democrat or a Republican, the Prime Minister cannot even secure assurances for our industries.

• (1250)

For example, where is Keystone now? The Prime Minister simply said that he was disappointed and walked away from my constituents, from Albertans and from western Canada. This is not acceptable. Now the government is asking us to trust it on a last-minute trade deal.

When will the Prime Minister stop defending the government's incompetence and reset its trade policy? It is either simply not working or the wrong people are in charge and delays are causing us to overlook key issues that stakeholders have been voicing concerns about even before negotiations began. It is time to stop these last-minute trade deal and get stability for Canada's businesses. We all need stability as we recover from the pandemic.

At this time, after seeing this agreement, or not seeing the agreement and the absence of information, we must ask the government and ourselves as parliamentarians the following: How can we continue debating the implementation of this trade agreement and how can we respond to stakeholders and Canadians?

First, how much will delaying this implementation cost the federal treasury in mitigation measures? We are still looking for that number. We hope that by the end of this debate we will be able to get to the bottom of it. It is very important to know what the cost will be in mitigation measures. That question was put to the minister directly at committee and in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

Second, how much would the global tariffs enacted by the U.K. government cost Canadian businesses as we continue to give this legislation a full review? As we know, time costs money. Until we get to those numbers and the full ratification of the agreement, we will still be paying money from the treasury, taxpayer money, to bridge those gaps. That is the wrong way to do it.

Third, what is the overall value in economic disruption after December 31, the deadline? It is a logical and reasonable question. Again, any interruption in trade due to the lack of availability of a trade agreement will cause disruption and that disruption, again, costs money.

Fourth, what will be the effects of a transitional agreement on our economy and trade with the United Kingdom? Does the government already feel there are any shortcomings from the CETA that need to be addressed? We all understand that this agreement was cut and pasted from the CETA, but there are certain specifics regarding a certain market within Europe. The United Kingdom is one of those specific markets, which we may imagine could be the full cut and paste. Again, we need that clarity.

Fifth, can the government still pass the ratification in time before the end of the memorandum of understanding with full parliamentary scrutiny?

Sixth, had the government and hon. minister paid more attention and initiative, we could have probably had an agreement that included a comprehensive trade deal and avoided the mess we are going through.

I strongly believe we need to give this bill full scrutiny, especially given the nature in which it was prepared at the very last minute. This is in the interest of Canadians.

I wish we had a full agreement in front of us today, but, nevertheless, I look forward to seeing the bill in the House and at committee.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is amusing to watch the opposition dance around this all day long. Earlier we heard members from the Conservative Party talk about how little time they had to review this, to get into the details of this. Now suddenly the member is talking about why it is taking so long to get us to this point and we should have done this earlier.

The reality of the situation is that they are dancing around this because they support it. They are going to vote for it, but they are just looking for any possible fault they can potentially drum up in order to make the government look bad. This is a good deal for Canada, it is a good deal for all provinces, it is a good deal for our economy and it is a good thing to help us get out of the economic circumstance this pandemic has created.

Will the member not recognize and realize that this is very important for the economic success and growth of Canada moving forward?

• (1255)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, the member mentioned dancing. If anyone is dancing, endless dancing, it is the govern-

ment. This is not the first time the government is dancing around without coming up with a better deal.

We always have to aim for perfection. We have to aim for better. If we try to say that we are not going to aim for that perfection or for getting a better deal, then we are not doing our job. If the government is complaining about the opposition, it is because it wants us to not do our job, and that is wrong. We must ask for a better agreement, we must aim for a better agreement and we must emphasize to the government that it needs to get its act together to get a better deal for Canadian industries.

We are the international trade party in the House of Commons. Throughout history, we always aimed for better deals. If we are to ask for a better deal—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Repentigny.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Edmonton Manning for his speech.

He noted that members did not know how many pages were in the agreement and that some details are still missing today, January 28. I see that transparency is important to him. The Bloc Québécois thinks that not only members, but also representatives from Quebec and the provinces should also be involved.

Can my colleague explain why the motion moved by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, calling for consultation with the provinces, was defeated at the Standing Committee on International Trade?

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. We talked about that. I personally asked the minister how many pages were in the agreement. It is a simple question that anyone would ask at the beginning, but she was not able to answer it.

Throughout the committee hearings and in the House of Commons, we were faced with these uncertainties, with no direct answers. Usually in the House of Commons, we probably do not get them, but at least at committee we should have been able to get those answers and some clarity so we could transfer it to those in the industry. They are looking for stability in order to put plans in place and commit to trade throughout. However, those factors were not there, unfortunately.

We cannot afford that. The government should change course in order to be more transparent and commit to tell the truth about what is happening, especially when there is a negotiation such as this.

Government Orders

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the intervention of my neighbour from Edmonton was very interesting.

Knowing that we are in a global health pandemic, and that is the overarching theme with which we find ourselves, I wonder if the member could speak a little about any concerns he may have that this agreement, like the one before it, would put upward pressure on the price of pharmaceutical drugs for Canadians.

The NDP has been pushing for national pharmacare for a very long time, but knowing that this is the context we are getting this information, how does the member feel about the cost of pharmaceuticals for Canadians?

• (1300)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, as much as I would like to answer the question from my colleague and neighbour for Edmonton Strathcona, we still do not have the text in front of us. In order to answer that question, we at least need that text. This brings us back to what we were asking for, which is to have transparency and clarity in front of us so parliamentarians are able to examine what went into the document and are at least able to access—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we have a rare opportunity in this parliamentary session to advance free trade between age-old friends, two democratic nations, two advanced societies, that share so much history, culture, legal and parliamentary structures, and also language.

Some years ago, President Kennedy said this with respect to another great friendship, the one between Canada and the U.S.:

Geography has made us neighbours. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies. Those whom nature hath so joined together, let no man put asunder.

That is a great quote from a great president about the relationship between the two greatest free trading partners the modern world has known.

However, today we are talking about Canada's trade with the U.K., another nation with whom we have a shared history, economic partnership and an alliance borne of necessity. Until recently, we also had a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom, not directly, but through their partnership in the European Union. I might add that free trade agreement was brought about by a vision of Canada's previous Conservative government. I am proud to be associated with a vision that brought Canada into a position of being an equal partner with the great trading nations of the European continent, nations with whom we share values, history and institutions.

Compare that with a much more complicated trading relationship we have with the Communist Party in China. Our government would be much further ahead if we remembered these three rules for doing business in that country, as cited by an academic: one, never impose our own values; two, never interpret acknowledgement during a meeting as agreement; and, three, never assume the people we are meeting with have the authority to do the deal.

I am happy to say that in dealing with the United Kingdom, there is no such ambiguity. First, there is no incongruity in values between our two nations. Both countries value fundamental human rights and the rule of law. Second, our negotiating styles and contract-formation rules are similar, having their roots in the centuries-old English common-law tradition. Third, in English contract law, a person's word is his or her bond. Of course, any commercial lawyer would advise those involved to get it in writing, but at least during the negotiations if they feel like they are making progress they probably are.

I like doing business with people who understand the common law and the rules about contract formation. We need to do more trading with people like that. We want to trade more with countries that understand and respect our values, values that are intuitive among western nations. I am talking about the protection of intellectual property rights, physical and economic protections for workers, protection of children against forced labour, protection of the environment and protection against discrimination of all sorts. These values are as fundamental to the U.K. as they are to Canada. These are exactly the people with whom we should be doing business. Let us get on with it.

What is taking us so long? There has been a lot of debate about that. The government has known about Brexit for a long time. The only surprise is that we did not have a deal before the end of December last year. It is not as if we needed to start at square one; we already had the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement, CETA, with the U.K. by virtue of its being a member of the European Union trading block. The template was already there in the form of that international agreement. We just needed to make some tweaks and to make it U.K.-specific, making it bilateral instead of multilateral. That is what is happening, but later than it should have and could have been done. However, trade, commerce and standing up for small business has never been the current government's strong suit.

Canada is a trading nation. There is no stronger champion in Canada of free trade than the Conservative party. We have always known that lower tariffs lead to healthier competition among businesses and nations, and ultimately lead to better products and services to consumers at lower costs. What is good for consumers must be good for the nation.

• (1305)

World trade has increased by an average of 7% annually since the end of the Second World War, bringing much prosperity to the world, and Canada needs to be part of that economic growth and prosperity.

Government Orders

I am going to take the principle of free trade a step further. If free trade brings wealth to trading nations, then surely it must also bring wealth to trading provinces within a nation. We preach free trade, but we do not always practise it. There is too much senseless, myopic and harmful protectionism going on inside Canada, and the federal government has a central role to play in bringing the parties together. There was a free trade agreement of sorts initiated by the former Conservative government that did not go far enough and, unfortunately, very little progress has been made during the now five intervening years.

Eliminating interprovincial trade barriers will improve Canada's competitiveness internationally, putting us on a better footing to deal with the United States and countries like the U.K. and the European nations. It will boost our economy internally by tens of billions of dollars. The government was late to the show on free trade agreement negotiations with the United Kingdom. Will it now pick up the challenge of facilitating a broader free trade agreement among the provinces?

When I was first elected to Parliament in the fall of 2019 and came to Ottawa to check things out, I was surprised that people living in Ottawa have the distinct disadvantage of not being able to purchase Okanagan Valley wine in their LCBO stores. That needs to be corrected. British Columbians are a caring and sharing people and want all Canadians to experience great wine. Bring on free trade.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke about time lines. We know that the government had removed itself from the negotiations earlier last year and then restarted them later in the year, which led to delays. Could the member speak to how that has affected where we are at right now in needing this memorandum of understanding for three months so that we do not have tariffs charged to our Canadian businesses?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, as I said in my intervention, free trade has never been the government's strong suit. Liberals knew about Brexit just like the rest of the world knew about Brexit. These negotiations could have started much earlier, but that does not seem to have been the government's emphasis. Indeed, by the end of December, the U.K. had negotiated its Brexit deal with the European Union. Why could we not have negotiated a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom by then? Both sides knew that it has to happen. It is pushing against an open door, yet the delays are hurting Canada. There is uncertainty in the marketplace, and certainly among countries that trade with the United Kingdom. This is something that should have been done a long time ago to bring more certainty into the marketplace, which is so important for a trading nation like Canada to survive.

• (1310)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things that really held up Brexit was the refusal of the Boris Johnson government to deal with the issue of the Irish border. The EU was very clear that it needed to keep the open border. The foreign affairs committee and the international trade committee have called on the government to ensure that Canada plays a role in protecting the Good Friday Agreement. Canada had a huge role to play in bringing peace to Ireland. General de Chastelain was

a huge player in that, as was Justice Cory and former minister Warren Allmand.

Are the Conservatives going to support the NDP call to make sure that as we move forward with trade with the U.K., Britain maintains its obligations under the Good Friday Agreement to keep that Irish border open and to work for peace within Ireland?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, we have not seen the text of the agreement yet, due to the delays in getting the negotiations started even though we all knew that Brexit was a reality.

As for Ireland, it is a good friend of Canada, a member of the international community, and I would of course support freedoms and prosperity for those people. However, until we see the text of the agreement, I would reserve any further comment and to see how negotiations will go.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his excellent speech.

I would like to know if he agrees with the idea of parliamentarians and provincial representatives being more involved in the next rounds of talks on free trade agreements with other countries.

[English]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, international trade comes under the jurisdiction of the federal government, but, that said, for negotiations to be successful and for there to be broad acceptance of any international agreement or treaty, there needs to be broad consultation with provinces, stakeholders, unions and everyone who might be involved and might be affected by that agreement. Yes, I would say that the broader the consultations, the better. We are looking to the government to ensure that there is broad consultation and thus broad buy-in of the final text of the agreement.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to address the House of Commons either on the floor or virtually.

I want to pick up on something the member said in one of his answers. He said that free trade was not a strong suit of this party or this government. The member needs a strong reality check. I would challenge that member to indicate another prime minister who has signed off on more trade agreements with countries than the current Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and the government has signed off on more agreements than Stephen Harper did, and any other prime minister, from what I can recall.

Members of the Conservative Party talk about the importance of trade and try to give that false impression that theirs is the party that negotiates and is capable of getting trade agreements when history does not necessarily reflect that.

The Liberal Party has always recognized the importance of international trade. Trade does matter. It means good, solid middle-class jobs for Canadians. We will continue to look at ways to build that relationship between Canada and other countries around the world in order to continue to strengthen Canada's economy and our middle class. It has been about that virtually since day one.

When we took government in 2015, initiatives that might have been started by the Conservative government were picked up and carried over the goal line. It is all about trying to recognize how important and valuable it is to have policies directed at Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, whether it is budget actions, legislative actions or agreements such as the debate we are having today on Bill C-18.

When we talk about trade, I like to try to put it in a way that most people can relate to. I am very proud of one of the industries in the province of Manitoba, the pork industry. It is symbolic and embodies so many reasons why it is important the government pursue international trade.

Manitoba's pork industry would not be what it is today, by a long shot, without trade. If I were to guess, 90% of it would disappear if we did not have trade, whether within Canada or internationally. Manitoba has a population of 1.3 million people. At any point in time, we have double that number of hogs in our province. We are not consuming them. Those hogs are up for trade. We sell them.

The community of Neepawa in rural Manitoba is thriving today, in good part, because of the hog industry. HyLife is a healthy, growing company today because of international exports. Over 90% of what is being processed there is being exported.

Let us think of the ramifications of that. Each one of those hundreds of employees working out of Neepawa now require a place to live, a place to do their grocery shopping. They have vehicles. There are indirect spinoff jobs, not to mention the hundreds of jobs that are there today because of that.

● (1315)

That is just one aspect of the pork industry in the province of Manitoba.

We could go to Burns Meats in Brandon. My colleague from Brandon would be tell us how that plant adds so much value to Brandon's economy and society as a whole. That industry processes over 10,000 hogs every day, which is one number I heard, and this is somewhat dated. There are well over 1,000 jobs, good rural Manitoba jobs. We could go to the city of Winnipeg and see the same industry. I think Burns there employs over 1,500 people. The best pork in the world comes from the province of Manitoba.

Let us think about the farming communities and the impact that has for our farmers, not to mention the others who feed into our farms, to have those hogs produced.

Government Orders

When we think of trade, we can quickly understand the value of that trade when we look at an example of an industry.

I just finished talking glowingly about the hog industry. I could go on forever talking about Manitoba's bus manufacturing industry or other manufacturing industries, in the City of Winnipeg in particular. We might have one of the largest bus manufacturers located in the city of Winnipeg, which exports all over the place. Again, it is providing those valuable jobs

The government and the Prime Minister understand the value of those jobs. That is why a mandate has come from the Prime Minister to pursue these agreements. Even though the Conservatives did not sign off on CETA, they like to take credit for it. The Conservatives might have started it, but they did not sign off on it.

I remember Deputy Prime Minister travelling to Europe. People were saying that the deal was on the rocks, that it looked like was falling off the tracks. It was not because of Canada. All sorts of things were happening in Europe. It took a concentrated effort by this government in particular and today's Deputy Prime Minister, the minister of trade back then, to put it back on track. On behalf of Canadians, they were able to get it across the goal line so we would have that CETA agreement. Hundreds of millions of additional dollars have been realized through trade, generated in part because of that agreement.

That is not the only agreement we have had to deal with in a very short period of time. We could talk about Asia or our neighbours to the south, whether it is Mexico or the United States. The United States is our biggest trading partner. We need to trade. I would remind my neighbours in the south that many of their states' exports come to Canada. Both countries benefit.

It is absolutely critical that Canada has trading relations with countries around the world. In fact, Canada is probably further ahead on trade agreements than any other G20 country. In good part it is because of the mandate Canadians gave the Liberal government five years ago. The driving force has been that we want to build Canada's middle class and those aspiring to become a part of the middle class. One of the ways we do that is by looking beyond our borders.

● (1320)

Let us think about the last year and the economic cost and impact the coronavirus has had on our country. It has been devastating. As a government, we have done whatever we can to support businesses, whether with the wage subsidy program or the rent assistance program or helping Canadians directly through the CERB program. Why are we doing this? In part, because we recognize how important it is for small and medium-sized businesses so that once we have fully dealt with this, we will be up and running.

It is a lot easier for us to recover in a better way if we have fewer bankruptcies and have more companies that did not have to lay off employees because of the pandemic. We want the population, as a whole, to have a larger disposable income as a direct result of not being able to work in order to protect and keep our society safer or because of demands for their services or products.

Government Orders

As much as the government was there for Canadians and continues to be there for them during this pandemic to ensure we minimize the negative damages of the coronavirus, we are also there to ensure we continue to grow. This means Bill C-18, the agreement with the U.K.

When the U.K. decided to leave the European Union, we had a responsibility and we took that responsibility very seriously. That is the reason we have this legislation right now. We want to ensure that a trading partner we have valued for over a century will always have a strong, healthy relationship with Canada. In good part, this legislation is all about that. At the end of the day, Canadian companies, businesses and Canadians as a whole, in all regions of our country, will be better served by the passage of the legislation.

I want to remind my Conservative friends of something. Other countries have acknowledged that we have some incredible civil servants on the trade file. One of the reasons for that is we have been so successful at negotiating agreements and working on these types of deals for a long time now.

The bureaucrats and civil servants are diligently putting in the effort to ensure our ministers and government as a whole, parliamentarians and politicians, have details we can go into the deals with, negotiate and try to bargain back and forth.

We listen to New Democrats and to the Bloc also. When I listen to the Bloc members speak, everything is what about this or that, or we did not get this or that. What do people think a negotiation is all about? For the NDP and the Bloc, they need a better appreciation for the fact that when we hit an agreement, it means there have been give and take.

The NDP traditionally does not support trade agreements. When I posed a question, a member mentioned “goldfish” memory and said that the NDP had supported CUSMA. However, the New Democrats did not support previous trade agreements with the U.S. and Mexico, but they were shamed into supporting this one.

Let us look at the number of trade agreements with the dozens of countries on which the New Democrats voted. They will say that it is because we did not get this or that, and they will have their list of things we did not get.

● (1325)

When we sit down and negotiate, we cannot expect to have everything. It is not like we ask for everything we want, put it on the table and then walk away and ask to be told when it is agreed to. It does not work that way.

When my New Democrat friends told me, as they did earlier today, that they are not supporting this legislation, I was not surprised. I was a little disappointed, but not surprised. I want to challenge the New Democrat members of the House of Commons to really think through the issue of trade. Earlier, I commented on why trade is so critically important to us as a nation. If members agree in principle with trade, I would suggest that the NDP members need to be more open-minded, and if they are not prepared to be more open-minded on it, then we could question how consistent they are with regard to the ethics of it.

They say that because of human rights not being protected in a trade agreement, we should not sign off on that trade agreement. We have had this discussion in the past. There are human rights issues in other nations with whom we have a considerable amount of trade. I do not see the NDP saying that we should stop all trade with China, though we have issues with China. I think that the NDP members do need to look at ways they can support progressive agreements. That is what this is, a progressive agreement, and they will have other opportunities to do so.

Members say that in this debate today, we do not have enough time or that there was not enough consultation. They should remember what the bill itself says. It is Bill C-18, an act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. That is actually what the bill says. It is not a permanent agreement. In fact, within a year after royal assent, from what I understand, we will be meeting our partners across the ocean, having ongoing dialogue and looking at ways we could even improve upon this agreement.

There is the opportunity for members to make speeches, now or into the future, or to write letters when they have opposition days. There are many opposition days coming up. They should have one of their opposition days about the content of trade agreements. They can say that they would like to see X, Y or Z as a part of a trade agreement and discuss that as part of an opposition day motion. There are all sorts of ways that members on all sides of the House, even members of the government, can do that. Many of my Liberal colleagues have continuing discussions with ministers or within caucus about issues that are important, including the issue of trade. I must say that the issue of the coronavirus is dominating these discussions, as it should, but there are many different avenues for people to have direct input on trade agreements.

● (1330)

I want to focus some thoughts on my friends in the Bloc. I have said in the past that I, for one, am a very proud Canadian. I think that we live in the best country in the world. All of our regions that make up our great nation are so critically important to how we evolve as a nation. For instance, I care about the aerospace industry in Quebec and the forestry industry. There are some things that we have in common, such as hydro as green energy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will have to ask the hon. member to pursue those thoughts during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had to chuckle as the member for Winnipeg North tried to rewrite the history of free trade. Now, he is entitled to his own opinion, but certainly not his own facts.

I would remind the member that his Liberals have now had this sudden conversion on the road to Damascus, because in 1984, it was John Turner and the Liberals who fought an election opposing free trade with the United States. In 1993, the Liberals fought an election opposing NAFTA when we brought Mexico into that relationship.

When the previous Conservative government came to power, Canada had free trade agreements with five countries. When it left power 10 years later, we had free trade agreements with 51 different countries around the world, and so it is pretty rich for the member to now claim that the Liberals are the great champions of free trade.

Would the member agree that his claims that, historically, the Liberal Party has been supportive of free trade ring hollow when we look at the facts? When we talk to stakeholders, they understand that in Canada there is one party that actually is the champion of free trade, namely our Conservative Party.

• (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, truth be known, the member is wrong, and it is as clear as that. The member is inaccurate. The facts cannot change.

If we listen to what the facts are, when the member said that Harper had signed on 51 trade agreements, it is not true. It is not a fact. It is misleading. This government has signed-off on more trade agreements than Stephen Harper signed-off on, and that is a fact.

If the member wants to say that there is only one free-trade type of party, I would disagree and say that there are at least two. However, if we had to say that there was one, it would have to be the Liberal Party of Canada, because it has achieved more agreements than the Conservative Party. I would say that there are two parties that understand the value of international trade: the Liberals and the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I admit that I am extremely surprised by what I am hearing. It makes no sense.

This debate is getting emotional. Some members lack ethics or are voting no, as though they are not entitled to take a position of their own, and the Conservatives are in no position to talk either. However, this is a parliamentary debate. We have every right to denounce, criticize or seek to improve an agreement.

Then there was the hon. member's lovely little speech about Canada being the best country in the world where every region is represented. When the hon. member is in Quebec, he feels at home. He even tried to make us laugh by saying that aerospace was important to him and his government.

I have a very simple question that he might be able to answer quickly. If Quebec is really a part of Canada, where is its signature on the Canadian Constitution?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member said that, "If Quebec is part of Canada", but it is a part of Canada, and a beautiful part of Canada.

When we talk about international trade, I can assure the member that the representations by Quebec to Ottawa are very much listened to, just as those of other regions are listened to. Everything is taken together collectively, and we advocate for what is in the best interest of our nation. All regions of our country are fairly represented in the trade agreements. I can tell the member that I would not support any sort of an agreement that would single out a particular province in any sort of a negative way.

I believe in our confederation, and I will do what I can to build upon the strengths of our confederation. I have no reservations in saying that, because I care for the province of Quebec as I care for the province of Saskatchewan or Manitoba. I see the value of a strong, healthy nation, and a nation—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things I heard this morning from the minister was that the government is hoping to continue negotiations in a year from now, and that its aim is to reach an agreement in three years to finish this off, but my hon. friend said in his speech that the NDP opposes trade. He is misleading the House when he says that, because New Democrats do not oppose trade. What we do oppose is trade agreements in which we give too much away. We want fair trade. That is what we are asking for.

We see so many flaws in this agreement that I have to ask the member this. When the minister said this morning that the aim is to reach an agreement within three years, and with all the hype the government has been giving us about how good this interim agreement is, why is there no sunset clause? What is the reasoning for that and why should we believe that the government's aim is to do it in three years when it has failed to meet a lot of the promises it made in the election campaign, especially with pharmacare since 1997?

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not think the NDP can have it both ways. I can appreciate that New Democrats seem to recognize the reality that international trade is important, but they do not seem to support Canadian businesses and society as a whole by entering into trade agreements that benefit Canadians in international trade.

I'm not 100% sure of the numbers, but I suspect there may be 60-plus countries that we have formal trade agreements with, and the NDP has supported only two, or maybe three, of them. I do not think New Democrats can have it both ways. We try to reach the best deals we can, which is why I emphasized earlier that we have an elite negotiating team when it comes to trade. We should be very proud of them and send them out more often, as often as we can in the world and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about the record of free trade in this country. It has hollowed out our manufacturing base as we have turned to ripping and shipping raw resources out of this country: raw bitumen, raw logs, raw minerals. A recent study shows that the trade deficit between Canada and the EU grew under CETA. That means we are exporting more oil and gas and raw minerals to the EU and getting back more manufactured products.

Right now, we are seeing that the EU is wanting to block vaccines from coming to Canada. We have hollowed out our manufacturing base, we have hollowed out our pharmaceutical industry and it is not helping Canadians.

What does the hon. member think about the EU talking about blocking the export of Pfizer vaccines to Canada during the pandemic?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government have been very clear. We will have six million vaccine doses, as a minimum, by the end of the first quarter. Nothing has changed and we will ensure that it does happen.

With regard to trade, the Green Party is definitely more consistent than the New Democrats. In our first four years in government, by working with Canadians, we generated over one million-plus jobs, the vast majority of which were full-time jobs. That was at a time when we had the greatest expansion in signed-off free trade agreements.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I got a real kick out of the back and forth between the parliamentary secretary and the member for Abbotsford, who had to go all the way back to 1984 to justify his point. I was nine years old in 1984. It was quite a while ago, but I think the parliamentary secretary hit the nail on the head when he said that the Liberal Party has been a strong advocate of trade, at least in the last 30-plus years.

Could the member comment on how he sees this trade deal as part of our coming out of this pandemic and growing our economy so that we can get things rolling again for all Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely critical.

I think we are on the right track; it is about building better. We have hope, with vaccination doses around the corner. We are going to maintain that commitment and then we are going to work diligently on building our economy and supporting Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. All Canadians need a proactive government, and they have that in this government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Oshawa.

[Translation]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Huron—Bruce.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to the Canada–United Kingdom trade continuity agreement.

• (1345)

[English]

While I support this agreement for the purpose of guaranteeing Canadian producers access to a critical market, it is unquestionable that the strength of this agreement has been impacted significantly by the government's dithering during the process.

Throughout the Liberals' time in power, they have repeatedly shown their lack of competence on issues of international trade and in relations with key allies, and this is no exception. From the Prime Minister's well-documented screw-up of the trans-Pacific partnership to being largely left out of the renegotiation of NAFTA, it should come as no surprise that the government has managed to dither away yet another opportunity to form a permanent and lasting relationship with the now fully independent United Kingdom.

Since the Brexit vote almost five years ago, the government has had every opportunity to be a world leader in the effort to form permanent and close trade relations with the United Kingdom. As a member of the Commonwealth and a close ally, the U.K. should have been one of the government's top priorities since Brexit, along with the renegotiation of NAFTA.

Over the years, the government has had a horrendous track record of misleading Canadians about the economic impacts of its trade deals, hoping no one would check its work. This has created doubt within Canadian industry and especially within my community. This has been best exemplified by the government's promise that a Canada–United States–Mexico agreement would be a win for the Canadian auto industry.

The Liberals promised the people of Oshawa and other automotive manufacturing communities across the country before the 2019 election that the agreement would benefit the auto industry even more than NAFTA did. After months of stalling the release of Global Affairs Canada's economic impact study, we came to find out the Prime Minister willingly misled many in my community.

Page 61 of Global Affairs Canada's impact assessment of the CUSMA deal states:

...the economic model projects that Canada's exports of motor vehicles to the United States would decline by US\$1.5 billion relative to the current trade regime under NAFTA, and imports from the United States would decrease by US\$1.2 billion. At the same time, automotive imports from non-North American countries could increase, resulting in a decline of the Canadian automobile production of 1.7%.

As well, an economic impact study of CUSMA by the C.D. Howe Institute released even before the government discovered that fact states that "Canada's real GDP stands to shrink by -0.4 percent and economic welfare to fall by over US\$10 billion."

The government over-promised and under-delivered, to put it politely. Needless to say, this has given workers in my community every reason to doubt the sincerity of the government. When the Liberals say to trust them, that they are securing a good trade agreement and that we need not worry about accountability or transparency, and then come back with a significantly weakened trade agreement, workers in my community take that to mean the government's word means absolutely nothing. Why would they trust the Liberals?

It is obviously critically important we make sure our producers have access to our third-largest customer for Canadian goods, but the government has a tremendous knack for instilling a sense of fear instead of a sense of confidence in those directly affected by the government's actions. Not only has the government once again given people in my community anything but confidence, but the Prime Minister managed to simultaneously alienate one of our closest allies again.

In March 2019, after months of negotiations and reports of a deal close to being struck with the U.K., the government walked away from the negotiating table. While continuing to negotiate would have been preferred, even a short break would have been better than waiting over a year to re-engage with the U.K. By waiting so long, the government has now hamstrung our domestic producers with the uncertainty of not knowing what the future trade agreement will actually look like.

Under the previous Conservative government, Canadian producers had the certainty that their government would work with them and consult them. We proved this by signing trade deals with 51 countries while we were in government, while before the 2006 election, there were only five. Canadian producers and workers knew that when it came to accessing new international markets, their Conservative government was going to be there every step of the way, using the influence of a strong, powerful country like Canada to make sure they had every opportunity to grow and succeed.

In a competitive global economy, a government working to open new markets is critical to the competitive advantage of our private industry and critical for job creation right here at home. However, it seems as though the government has put Canada in a situation of taking two steps forward under the previous Conservative government just to take three steps back with the current Liberal government. Now we are here today debating an agreement that has had very limited consultation from stakeholders, which the government promised would never happen again after rushing the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement through the House.

Because the government chose to watch the clock tick instead of negotiating a deal for over a year, we are now in the position of debating an agreement that has very little industry and labour consultation and still does not provide the long-term certainty producers are looking for in the post-Brexit era.

However, let us be honest here: Consultation has never been the government's strong suit. Take the example of when the government first stepped away from the negotiating table in March of 2019. Even if the government tries to justify doing so, what cannot be justified is the complete bombshell it dropped on our producers

Government Orders

here in Canada. In fact, following the pullout from negotiations, the Canadian Association of Importers and Exporters Inc. stated that it was not consulted whatsoever on the decision. How could a government be so incompetent and lazy as to not even think about consulting with such an important stakeholder?

Our producers expected their government to stop negotiating when a deal had been reached. Instead, without notice, they were blindsided with the government's sudden decision. Perhaps just as disturbing is the agreement's lack of a sunset clause. While the deal does provide a goal of reaching a new permanent agreement by the end of the year, how are Canadians supposed to trust the government when the Liberals have done nothing but repeatedly drop the ball over and over again on the issue of trade? Are they going to wait for over a year again to re-engage? Are we just supposed to accept that this is a new permanent trade agreement?

How are Canadians and our producers supposed to trust that the government will work on their behalf when it spent years insisting that the Canada-U.K. deal was getting done, only to step away from the table and come back a year later, when it was already too late? The government procrastinated and instead of achieving a head start, it dithered away all its time. Instead of debating a bill ringing in a new era between Canada and the United Kingdom, we are forced to debate a temporary agreement that just kicks the can way down the road. Our producers need access to markets, but they also need certainty. The deal provides the access, but again there is no certainty here.

Throwing another wrench into the entire process, the Prime Minister proved once again why the most important foreign leaders in the world and our key strategic allies have little respect for his abilities. In November, only a couple of months ago, he declared that the U.K. lacked “the bandwidth” to finalize the agreement, yet in the time between when his government stepped away from the negotiating table in March of 2019 and the time when the Prime Minister made this uneducated statement, the U.K. signed trade agreements with over a dozen countries, including one with Japan that was signed literally 17 days before the Prime Minister made that uneducated remark. It is another example of the Prime Minister alienating our trade allies. If he is not careful, he is going to have another world leader publicly criticizing him on how he acts when he is supposed to be representing our great country.

• (1350)

The former Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, tore off this Prime Minister's mask of respectability when he criticized him for being “flaky” for humiliating other world leaders during the trans-Pacific partnership talks and being more focused on his colourful socks than on securing a trade deal. In fact, Turnbull said that the world leaders negotiating TPP were even ready to leave Canada out of the deal—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are out of time. We have to go to questions and comments.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I get a real kick out of this member when he says that there were barely any deals before 2006, and then suddenly the Conservatives came along and deals were opening up everywhere and they were making new trade deals. There is also the fact that the world economy was opening around the same time, and many nations, in particular developing nations, were dropping tariffs throughout the world and opening up their economies to these trade deals. That is probably the reality of why that happened. It is the equivalent of saying that in 2006 there were only five million people on Facebook but by the time they left office there were 50 million, and they are responsible for all of that.

Would this member not agree that a good trade deal now, one that provides continuity for Canadians when we move through this global pandemic, is what we need for stability of our economy right now, so that we can work out the deal long term down the road, but right now we need continuity for Canadian businesses?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Absolutely, Madam Speaker, that is exactly what we need and exactly what we do not have. We are debating a continuity agreement instead of the real agreement that the Liberals have had five years to put together.

I would like to talk a bit about correcting the facts for this member. I would like the next Liberal speaker to just name one occasion on which the Liberals actually started a negotiation, completed the negotiation, and signed it. Every single one of the positive accomplishments they have made were treaties negotiated under our government, primarily under the member for Abbotsford.

The CUSMA, which the Liberals claim is so wonderful, is an agreement that, according to the C.D. Howe Institute and Global Affairs, and not Conservatives, is a worse agreement than the previous NAFTA. Canadian industries rely on their government to open doors and improve the economy, not make it worse, and the Liberal record is steadfast on worse agreements, if they even get one signed.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I noticed the member for Kingston and the Islands criticizing the Conservative record on trade. In fact, Conservatives are the leaders on trade.

I would ask this member to perhaps expand on the Liberal failures on trade, going back to when John Turner opposed free trade with the United States when he ran in an election. Can he imagine that? Later on, when NAFTA was being debated, the Liberals were against NAFTA. Of course, later on they had a conversion and they supported NAFTA, but all the way along it was always Conservatives who took the lead. Perhaps my colleague could expand on those comments that he just made.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Absolutely, Madam Speaker, one of the things that we can count on is for the Liberals to be inconsistent and incompetent when dealing with the trade file. As the member quite rightly pointed out, going back to John Turner, the Liberals fought an election against the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and again when Mexico was brought into the agreement.

However, we do not have to look very far back. In 2015, for example, the original trans-Pacific partnership negotiations were actu-

ally completed during that election. Our current Prime Minister, on his first international trade junket, went down and managed to screw it up. This was Mr. Obama's deal that included the United States, and even Mr. Obama was saying that our Prime Minister would be a signatory. When our Prime Minister embarrassed us and backed out of that deal, it was not long afterward that the nails were in the coffin of the Keystone XL when his best buddy, Mr. Obama, made sure that this deal did not go through and there were repercussions because of, to use former prime minister Turnbull's words, our Prime Minister's flakiness.

Our Prime Minister, unfortunately, needs to get to work—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is time for one more question.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I get a kick out of the Conservatives talking about this great record on trade when they have hollowed out our manufacturing base and put us in this position. We need to export raw resources from this country, to the point where when we cannot get a pipeline, we have to have an emergency debate about shipping raw resources out of this country because our economy is so badly affected.

We needed to protect workers in this country. We needed to protect our manufacturing base. We needed to protect our pharmaceutical industries. We needed to protect Canadian jobs. The free trade agreements have not done that.

● (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We need to give the hon. member for Oshawa time for a 15-second answer.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I love to answer questions from the Green Party: the party that is against development of any kind.

The member brought up pipelines. That is an incredibly serious failure of the current government, whether with respect to Keystone or Line 5. I am sure Canadians were counting on the member to be cheering, like his leader said, when that announcement was made, but it is shameful.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, COVID-19 has further highlighted many challenges that continue to impact our mental health and wellness. The CMHA found that 87% of Canadians do not have access to mental health supports and, in total, 1.6 million Canadians' needs will go unmet each year.

We as a nation must work toward building capacity and improving access to mental health services, as well as addressing the socio-economic determinants of health. This highlights the need for a strategic and focused investment that is supported by research. Adopting wellness practices such as daily exercise, healthy eating, sufficient sleep, strong relationships and helping others is beneficial to maintaining our mental wellness.

I want to commend the community organizations that are working to address mental illness and wellness. We must recognize there is no health without mental health. On special days like today, we raise awareness regarding mental health and well-being in Canada. However, the conversation must not stop when today ends.

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada and the United States are in the process of negotiations to renew the Columbia River Treaty. Global Affairs is working closely with the province, Columbia Basin first nations and local communities.

As the treaty is primarily in the federal riding of Kootenay—Columbia, I wrote to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs respectfully requesting that I be delegated observer status. It is important to ensure those impacted by the negotiation, worth hundreds of millions in revenue, be given a voice. My knowledge of the area would be beneficial as an observer during the negotiations.

A modernized treaty must be favourable to the constituents of Kootenay—Columbia and include co-operative development of water resources, flood risk management, power generation and recreation like Lake Kootenay. Of equal importance is the reintroduction of the salmon to the Upper Columbia River. At its inception, the treaty displaced over 270,000 acres of our ecosystem, including local farmers, ranchers and indigenous communities.

This is an important issue in my riding. I look forward to hearing from the minister at his earliest convenience.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 2,500 search-and-rescue volunteers in B.C. provide an invaluable service in our province. I know the Pemberton, Whistler, Squamish and North Shore search-and-rescue crews have been working tirelessly to respond to emergency distress calls this year, having been deployed almost 1,600 times since April.

Statements by Members

In a typical year, Whistler search-and-rescue encounters two to three fatalities, but this month has already seen four tragic deaths. This includes Max Vinegar, a young man who fell into a tree well while skiing and did not survive despite best efforts to save him. While the snow conditions have been outstanding and we rightly seek refuge in the incredible natural environment in our backyard, I ask that the following safety precautions are observed no matter one's skill level: always plan the route, ensure one has the appropriate equipment, check daily snow conditions with Avalanche Canada, designate a person to expect one's return, and should one find oneself in distress, call 911 as it could save their life.

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[Translation]

BELL LET'S TALK DAY

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is Bell Let's Talk Day, which is the perfect opportunity to talk about mental health.

This is especially important now, because beyond the COVID-19 pandemic lies another crisis. Our mental health is deteriorating as we nobly and honourably make sacrifices to save lives. There is no shame in speaking out about feeling overwhelmed by stress, stifled by anxiety or trapped by depression.

Anyone can need help. That help is out there, and people must not hesitate to reach out for it. In Quebec, we can rely on our highly competent health professionals. I urge people to call 811 or consult the Quebec government website to find out what resources are available to them. Above all, I urge people to listen to their loved ones, trust their own instincts and take care of themselves.

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● (1405)

BELL LET'S TALK DAY

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by wishing my colleagues and all Canadians good health for 2021. My thoughts are also with my father, who passed away 16 years ago.

Today is Bell Let's Talk Day, which is the perfect opportunity for all of us to talk about mental health. The pandemic is really putting our mental health to the test. The lockdown and curfew in place in Quebec are having a significant impact on the emotional health of my community of Alfred-Pellan.

Statements by Members

That is why it is more important than ever to speak with someone close to us, a help line or a health care professional. Above all, no one must ever think they are alone. We will get through this together. In the meantime, we must take care of ourselves, our loved ones and our mental health.

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[English]

ABBOTSFORD ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 15 years since I was first given the opportunity to represent the people of Abbotsford in Parliament. Much has transpired over the past decade and a half, but nothing quite like this past year. I have seen our community come together in a way that is truly remarkable. This should not come as a surprise, as Abbotsford consistently ranks as the most generous community in Canada.

I want to thank the many front-line workers who have given so much of themselves: those at the Abbotsford Regional Hospital, those in our many care homes, our first responders, paramedics, our Abbotsford PD and fire rescue services, our farmers, those who continue to work in our grocery stores, our teachers and their students, and essential workers of every kind who had to adjust to a new normal.

These are just some of the heroes who have stepped up when they were needed most. I thank everyone in Abbotsford, from youngest to oldest, for doing their part in keeping us all safe. May God bless them all.

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ORDER OF CANADA

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to recognize the appointment of one of my constituents, Ray Ivany, to the Order of Canada. The former president of Acadia University in Kings—Hants and Cape Breton native began his academic career as a faculty member at Cape Breton University, where he subsequently served as executive vice-president. He was instrumental in the development of the Nova Scotia Community College, where he served as president and CEO, and in recognition of his tireless contributions to the NSCC, the Dartmouth campus was named the Ivany Campus in his honour.

Ray served as the chair of a commission on Nova Scotia's economic future, which produced a report, "Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians," which provided an economic roadmap to government and to the private sector. His report championed the importance of immigration, and as Nova Scotia's population reaches one million, he can be credited as an important catalyst for action. The motto of the Order of Canada, "they desire a better country", is suitable to describe Ray's commitment to public service, and I hope all members of the House will join me in recognizing his contribution.

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MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one in five Canadians was struggling with their mental health before the

pandemic, but it has taken a great toll on many in our country. We hear about loneliness and depression among our seniors, anxiety in our youth and domestic violence faced by women. In the health committee, we heard that since the start of the pandemic, the levels of high depression in Canada have doubled, and high anxiety has grown by four times. Organizations like CMHA Peel, Roots, Indus Community Services, PCHS, the Boys and Girls Club and many more have played an important role in supporting mental health in Brampton.

Last April our government launched Wellness Together Canada to connect people with support services. For most people who are suffering, the hardest part is taking the first step. Today, on Bell Let's Talk Day, let us remember to do our part to start the dialogue, break the stigma and be there for those who need help.

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AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, documents released by the government recently confirmed what we already knew: Canadians are paying more in carbon taxes than they get back in rebates. I recently spoke to Doug from Trotsuk Farms in my riding, who showed me his latest carbon tax hit of \$5,400. If the Prime Minister has his way, that bill will increase to over \$30,000, and that is just the carbon tax on his propane, never mind the carbon tax on everything else.

Our farmers are taking a huge hit to their bottom line with no acknowledgement of their environmental contributions. The current Liberal government's plan to triple the carbon tax will only further devastate farm businesses and farm families. They need a Conservative prime minister who treats them with respect and who will secure their future.

The middle of a pandemic is not the time for higher taxes, but it is a great opportunity for the Liberal government to abandon its failed carbon tax completely.

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● (1410)

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have the pleasure of highlighting Tamil Heritage Month during the month of January. Adopted unanimously by Parliament in 2016, this month provides Canadians an opportunity to celebrate the vibrant culture and significant contributions of Tamil Canadians to Canada's social and economic fabric.

Thanks to our MP for Scarborough—Rouge Park, this year many of us had the wonderful virtual opportunity to learn more about Tamil culture and heritage and to recognize the many contributions Tamil Canadians have made to our great nation. January is an especially significant month for the Tamil community, celebrating Thai Pongal, the Tamil harvest festival. Belated [*Member spoke in Tamil*].

[English]

Tamil Canadians have overcome tremendous obstacles and have made significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of Canada. We will forever celebrate Tamil heritage for future generations by having declared January every year Tamil Heritage Month.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr Speaker, yesterday's anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is iconic in the struggle against anti-Semitism. Tomorrow is the fourth anniversary of the shooting at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec, equally iconic of our opposition to Islamophobia. The two hatreds are two sides of the same coin.

Therefore, yesterday it was appropriate to say “never again” on behalf of all victims of anti-religious hatred, regardless of their faith. Likewise, tomorrow the best way to show solidarity with Canada's Muslims is to pledge ourselves to oppose anti-religious violence, regardless of the target.

To deprive the simplistic ideologies of group identity and group hatred of oxygen, we must never, even in the name of sympathy, single out the victim groups as the existential “other”. They are us. Yesterday, there was a sense that we were all Jews. Tomorrow, there will be a sense that we are all Muslims. Every day, we are all family.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Bell Let's Talk Day and it is time to talk about mental health. Moreover, it is time for action. As leaders, we must do everything in our power to break the stigma and break down the barriers for Canadians seeking help. We can leave a legacy of action by being the change that is needed. We can lead the way by having honest and frank discussions. Let us show Canadians that it is okay not to be okay and that it is okay to talk about mental health and mental illness. Mental health challenges do not discriminate and mental health affects us all, so let us talk.

My name is Todd Doherty. I am the member of Parliament for Cariboo—Prince George. Mental illness and suicide have had a devastating impact on my life. I have lost friends and loved ones to suicide, and I have family members who continue to battle mental illness. I struggle with these losses, and I live with the physical and emotional scars of this every day.

Today, use the Bell Let's Talk hashtag on social media platforms, but more importantly, talk to friends, reach out to family, talk to colleagues and ask them if they are okay. No one should suffer in

Statements by Members

silence. Let us continue the conversation. Let us end the stigma. Let us talk.

* * *

TU BISHVAT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is Tu Bishvat, the Jewish New Year for the Trees. It is a time to honour the Jewish tradition of responsible stewardship of the earth, to reflect on the interconnectedness of everything in creation and to commit to environmental justice.

Victoria is home to Congregation Emanu-El, Canada's oldest synagogue in continuous use. Along with Greater Victoria Acting Together, it is engaging in the Tuesdays for Trees campaign, and both are planning a project with first nations youth to help remove foreign invasive species. The congregation usually celebrates Tu Bishvat by spending time outdoors together, and although this year has to be different, they still found a way to celebrate by encouraging people to get out into nature and share their stories, photos and videos online.

When discussing Tu Bishvat, Rabbi Harry spoke about the deep urgency of the environmental crisis, the need for a paradigm shift in how we relate to the earth and about the idea that the land does not belong to us; we belong to the land.

Today, let us all take a moment to stop and reflect on our relationship with nature and our responsibility to care for the earth.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

RAIF BADAWI

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House of Commons finally joined the Bloc Québécois in unanimously calling on the government to grant Canadian citizenship to Raif Badawi.

Quebeckers expect all members of Parliament to keep their word, and especially the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Before they came to power in 2015, they both demanded to know when Ottawa would act to get Raif Badawi released. They said that Canadians would continue to support him and that they would stand together in support of Mr. Badawi. More than five years have passed and they have done nothing.

Oral Questions

Today, the House of Commons stands together. Now is the time to act. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship must immediately grant citizenship to Mr. Badawi. The Minister of Foreign Affairs must renew talks with Saudi Arabia to get citizen Badawi released. I expect the Prime Minister to really step up on this file.

Ensaf Haidar and her children have waited long enough. Raif Badawi has suffered enough.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the veto of Keystone XL was not surprising, but it was a major blow to tens of thousands of families in Alberta and across Canada. Oil and gas is the biggest private sector investor in Canada's economy. It employs half a million Canadians, even after historic job losses under the Liberals, and it is crucial to securing the recovery. Canada's oil and gas is world-class, with the highest environmental and social standards.

The world needs and wants more Canadian oil and gas, and so do Canadians. However, Canada is wholly dependent on the U.S. as a customer, while Canadians, in many regions, have to rely on foreign oil with much lower standards. This is because of the Liberals' anti-energy agenda that killed the only west-to-east pipeline proposal, stopped west coast shipping and will block future pipelines.

The Prime Minister shut down Canadian oil while the U.S. ramped up. It is now the world's biggest producer and exporter and is eyeing Line 5, which supplies Ontario and Quebec.

The Liberals must reverse course to secure Canadian energy independence. Canadians need a prime minister who will secure jobs, secure our economy and secure our future.

* * *

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a new year usually brings with it hope and new resolutions. Under normal circumstances, it can also bring on the winter blues, and we have to cling to the promise of bright spring days to get us through.

[English]

Like last year, 2021 so far is no regular year. The mental health challenges we are currently facing as a nation are significant. Trying our best not to lose sight of better days to come can be challenging. Sometimes hope and willingness to thrive, no matter the circumstances, can get tangled in despair, especially in the context of self-isolation and loneliness.

[Translation]

There are resources on the federal government's website to help everyone access support. Let us come together now, more than ever, in the hopes that we are on the final stretch of this race against the pandemic.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Line 5 pipeline provides all the jet fuel for Pearson airport and most of the propane that Ontario's homes use for heating in the winter. The pipefitters union says that 6,500 trades jobs will be lost if the line is shut. Another 20,000 spinoff jobs could be lost as well.

Is the Prime Minister finally going to stand up for Canadian energy workers, or will more families receive pink slips this spring?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands very clearly the importance of the energy sector to the Canadian economy and the importance of the energy sector as a provider of valuable, high-paying, very often union jobs. As finance minister, I am very aware of this and very aware of the importance of the energy sector in contributing to Canada's balance of trade. Yes, our government has and will continue to stand up for the energy sector and for energy workers.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister is aware her government shut down two pipelines, and now the Americans are trying to do the same. Line 5 has operated safely for decades, but now its future hangs in the balance because the governor of Michigan wants to shut it down. The U.S. department of transport will have the final say on whether Line 5 survives this threat.

Why is the Prime Minister sitting back as the United States considers shutting down another Canadian pipeline?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, our government understands very well the importance of the energy sector to the Canadian economy, the importance of the energy sector as a provider of great, high-paying, often unionized jobs and the importance of the energy sector as a contributor to our balance of trade. When it comes to the trading relationship with the United States, let me say that our government has a lot of experience in dealing with a sometimes volatile, but always essential, relationship. We are going to keep on doing just that.

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, The Economist has shown that most Canadians will be vaccinated six months after the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union have all completed their vaccine rollouts. That was before the latest cut of another half million doses for Canada.

Weeks ago, the Prime Minister said he had a plan for 367,000 doses per week. Now the Prime Minister will only deliver 15% of what he promised just a few weeks ago. Is 15% a success in the eyes of the Deputy Prime Minister?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind Canadians of the situation with vaccines. Canada has secured 10 doses of vaccine per Canadian and has the most diverse and extensive vaccine portfolio in the world. More than 1.1 million doses have already arrived in Canada. Six million will arrive by the end of the first quarter. Every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be by September.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the rate we are going, the vaccination campaign the Prime Minister put forward in December will not take shape for another 18 months. It is a failure.

Because of the Liberal government, we will be behind Europe, the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries at every stage of this pandemic. Delays are now a matter of life and death. Why is the Prime Minister always lagging behind in this crisis?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that the vaccine issue is urgent. It is our government's priority. That is why we have secured 10 doses of vaccine per Canadian and why we have already received over 1.1 million doses. That is why Canada will receive a total of six million doses by the end of the first quarter and why every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be by September 2021.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister says this issue is urgent. Two weeks ago, the Prime Minister said that Pfizer would deliver 367,000 doses of vaccine per week. The week after that, we received just 79,000 doses. This week, we received zero doses. Every week is worse than the last.

The provinces are ready. Where are the vaccines they were promised?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that 1.1 million doses have already arrived in Canada and that six million will arrive by the end of the first quarter. The Prime Minister and the entire government are very committed to this urgent work. The Prime Minister himself just spoke with the heads of Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca. The work is proceeding.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we learned today from journalist Philippe Bonneville that the government put more than 5,000 tourists up in hotels when they returned to Canada.

Oral Questions

They were housed and fed at the expense of taxpayers. Now we have seen everything. As of October 31, the government had already used \$73 million in taxpayers' money to place people who travelled during the pandemic in a hotel for 14 nights and provide them with free restaurant meals at a time when everyone is making sacrifices.

I have no problem with a mandatory quarantine, but travellers should be the ones who have to foot the bill. Will the government send them the bill?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

This program was never designed to encourage Canadians to violate clear public health advisories against international travel. I want to take a moment to tell Canadians that they should not be travelling right now.

We are taking immediate action to address this issue so that other international travellers cannot access this benefit upon their return.

I hope the opposition members will support and help us.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer my question, but she talked about the \$1,000 benefit.

All those fine people got a nice all-inclusive vacation paid for by taxpayers. Those people could not go to work, so the government gave them \$1,000, the benefit that the minister was referring to, to cover their lost income. What a joke.

I hope that the minister is listening, because the government has to do three things: require tourists who have claimed this \$1,000 quarantine benefit since October 3 to pay it back, enforce a mandatory supervised quarantine at the traveller's expense, and send the bill to all those who got to quarantine for free at a hotel.

When will the government do something about this?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate to all Canadians and all Quebecers that international travel is not advised right now. It is dangerous for the country, and it is dangerous for our communities.

Regarding the program, let me say this: we are taking immediate measures to resolve this problem to stop international travellers from having access to this benefit on their return. As far as the borders are concerned, we are working on measures to make Canada's already very strict measures even stricter.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the provinces have learned that Canada was going to receive 3.5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses instead of the six million promised by the Prime Minister. Having fewer vaccines means that there will be more infections and more deaths.

What will the Prime Minister do to ensure that we have enough doses to vaccinate all Canadians? What is the plan?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the plan is as follows. First, we have the most complete and diverse vaccine portfolio in the world, with 10 doses per Canadian.

We have already received 1.1 million doses and we will receive six million by the end of the first quarter. Every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be by September 2021.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not a plan. Those are some goals, but Canadians need to know what the plan is to achieve those goals.

Provinces learned today that there are only 3.5 million doses instead of the six million promised. We know that fewer doses means more infection and more death. We need a clear plan.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: What is the plan? What is the plan to make sure everyone in our country is vaccinated? I ask him to lay out that plan in detail so Canadians can rest assured. What is the plan?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are rightly focused on vaccines and so is our government, and that is why I am glad to have the chance to offer Canadians these facts and this plan. We have the most diverse and extensive vaccine portfolio in the world: 10 doses per Canadian, 1.1 million doses have already arrived in our country and six million by the end of the first quarter, and every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be by September.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's objective is to vaccinate every Canadian who wants to be by September. To do that, we need 60 million doses, or two per person. We need to get two million doses a week.

What will the shortage be this week? It will be two million. What will the shortage be next week? It will be 1.9 million.

Who will be left behind because of this failure?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that we have a very solid plan in place with seven vaccine manufacturers, and our strategy from the very beginning was to ensure that Canadians have access to a vaccine by the end of September. We have four million vaccines coming into this country prior to the end of the quarter, 20 million from approved vaccine suppliers by the end of the second quarter and all Canadians will have access to a vaccine prior to the end of September.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are familiar with the refrain that we have the largest vaccine portfolio in the world, and that we will be able to give every Canadian 10 doses.

What we learned today is that Pfizer will only be sending us 79,000 doses next week. We are not even close. It would seem that one plus one does not equal two for the Liberals.

I would like to know why the minister cancelled an order for 16 million doses of the Moderna vaccine two weeks ago.

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is inaccurate to say that we cancelled a contract with Moderna. On the contrary, Moderna is providing two million vaccine doses to Canada this quarter alone and we have secured 40 million vaccine doses from Moderna in total. In addition, I would like to say that Susan Athey, a professor at the University of Stratford, a leader in vaccine strategies, says that "Canada is a role model" around the world. That is because of our vaccine strategy that has been in place and will deliver for Canadians this year.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague has a point. We actually need about two million doses per week to meet the needs, if we do the math on it, and yet we are behind two million doses this week and are going to be behind 1.9 million doses next week and 1.9 million doses the week after that. This math is not really working out for me. If we are about six million doses behind, when are those coming?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this is a global environment that is extremely competitive as all companies ramp up their supply chains. We will receive six million doses of vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna prior to the end of the quarter and 20 million from approved vaccine suppliers prior to the end of Q2, and prior to the end of the third quarter all Canadians will have access to a vaccine should they want to. That is why people from around the globe and within Canada are hailing Canada's strategy relating to vaccines. I point to Professor Chagla; Professor Kindrachuk, an assistant professor at the University of Manitoba; as well as Lorian Hardcastle from the University of Calgary itself.

• (1435)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we want to quote people, the Economist magazine said that Canada is not going to be vaccinated until 2022. Again, by our math, we should be getting about two million doses per week to meet the September timeline, yet the minister is saying we are only going to be getting six million doses by the end of March. We should be getting eight million doses by the end of February. If we are two million short this week, 1.9 million short next week and 1.9 million short the week after that, what is the government doing to make up the shortfall?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe “shortfall” is the accurate term to use. Indeed, we have the most diverse portfolio in the world and we are assuring Canadians that of approved vaccines alone, there will be sufficient numbers to vaccinate all Canadians prior to the end of September. There is a significant ramp-up that is required in the global supply chain and we need to acknowledge the global environment that we are operating under. Notwithstanding that, Canada is extremely well placed and we will make sure that Canadians have access to vaccines. That is my priority as procurement minister and our priority as the government.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, do you want the good news or the bad news? I will start with the good news. We all need a boost. The IMF is out with its revised projections for economic growth and world output growth is up. Advanced economies' projected output is up. American GDP output is way up, almost double.

Now for the bad news. Canada's is one-third lower than projected just back in October. That is equal to \$30 billion in lost GDP and lost paycheques for Canadians. Now that Canadians will not have those paycheques, what does the government expect them to do? Put it all on a credit card?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *[Technical difficulty—Editor]* based on the tremendous uncertainty about the future path. There is tremendous variance among economists' forecasts. The Bank of Canada's Monetary Policy Report, which came out last week, predicted a 4% growth rate in 2021. It is also worth pointing out that in November, the Canadian economy outperformed forecasts on jobs and GDP growth.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, something strange happened in October. The IMF had us growing this year at 5.2% and now it is 3.6%. That is a massive drop, and the only thing that has happened since then is that the government has released a “fantasmic” economic statement and a Speech from the Throne full of crazy ideas to re-engineer our entire economy. Even a former Liberal adviser is out saying that the government will have spent a trillion dollars to achieve nothing for our economy.

Once again, with \$30 billion in lost GDP and lost paycheques along with it, what does the government expect all of those jobless people to do to pay their bills? Are they just expected to put it on the credit card?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's priority today is fighting and conquering the coronavirus. We absolutely understand that all provinces and territories have put in place some necessary restrictions to fight the virus, and we support that work. The best economic policy for Canada right now is a strong health policy, and that is why the Government of Canada is providing strong support to Canadian workers and Canadian businesses to get through to the other side of the coronavirus. Once we get there, we will come roaring back.

Oral Questions

• (1440)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that I have to ask the Prime Minister yet again when he is going to close the borders. It is completely absurd.

How can it be that non-essential travel still has not been banned? How can it be that quarantine periods are still not mandatory or monitored? How can it be that people who are intelligent enough to cancel their trips are not being reimbursed for the cost of their tickets?

What is going on? When is this going to change?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic, our government took the spread of the virus extremely seriously. We have advised Canadians to cancel all non-essential travel. We have banned foreigners from entering the country. We have required arrivals to quarantine for 14 days. We are now requiring arrivals to be pre-tested before entering Canada. We are currently examining further options and policy decisions to restrict our border.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to get a little tired of and fed up with the government's indecision.

It is the same old story. In the first wave, the Prime Minister was so slow to close the borders that the City of Montreal got fed up and did what the federal government should have done at the airport. We are now in the second wave, and the Government of Quebec is trying to monitor quarantines, rather than the feds doing it because the Prime Minister cannot be bothered. Governing means planning ahead, and this Prime Minister is not even capable of reacting.

When is he going to get to work?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last March we told travellers entering Canada to self-isolate for 14 days to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Canada. We have since strengthened our measures at the border.

Oral Questions

Travellers returning to Canada are subject to a mandatory 14-day isolation under the Quarantine Act, and must provide a negative PCR test before boarding their flight into Canada. With this, we are protecting the health and safety of returning Canadians and those who are around them.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 486 holiday travellers returned to the country with COVID-19 and then went on to infect 1,250 of their loved ones. That is two times higher than the previous month. Trips down south, enabled by this government's inaction, are helping the virus spread.

In addition to ensuring that irresponsible vacationers abide by the quarantine, the Prime Minister must prohibit non-essential flights once and for all. He needs to ensure that people who are responsible enough to cancel their vacations get refunds for their tickets. Spring break is coming up soon, so when is the Prime Minister going to do something?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been saying all along that Canadians must not travel for non-essential reasons. That has been our position since March. On top of that, travellers must quarantine for 14 days once they return and must comply with this quarantine.

We recently decided to add the requirement that they get tested before they can come back to Canada. We are now looking at additional measures to restrict travel abroad.

* * *

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nav Canada is planning to close air traffic control towers across the country. One of those control towers is in Regina at the international airport.

I met with Nav Canada officials on December 4 to talk about the process to close these towers and how it would decide which ones would be shuttered. It said that this process would take months.

My question is for the Minister of Transport. Why is it that Regina airport employees received notice of layoffs on January 14, if this report is not even finished yet?

• (1445)

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety and security of the travelling public is a top priority of mine and a top priority of our government.

Nav Canada is undertaking several studies to assess the level of service needed. No decision has been made. It is important to note that any changes in the level of service proposed by Nav Canada will be subjected to a rigorous safety assessment by Transport Canada. The process provides for full consultation with all affected stakeholders.

No compromise on safety will be taken.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago we found out that foreign airlines were receiving Canadian funds, funds from Canadian taxpayers. Today we are hearing that two of these foreign airlines will actually be pulling out of the Canadian market after having received our funding.

Does the minister still think that it was a good idea to help foreign airlines before helping the airlines right here at home?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member opposite is referring to the wage subsidy program. That program has been an essential part of our federal government's work during this unprecedented pandemic. It has played an essential role in helping more than four million Canadians keep their jobs. That has been one of the most important measures which has led to a much stronger jobs recovery in Canada than, for example, in the United States. It is an essential program, and we are glad it is in place to save Canadian jobs.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while speaking of the United States, for 10 months the airline sector in Canada has been struggling to survive, with no help from the government, yet it was FedEx, an American company, that was awarded the contract to distribute the Moderna vaccines.

Why did the government give a sole-source contract to FedEx, an American company, when so many Canadian airlines are just struggling to survive?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we ran a limited competition after seeking expressions of interest from the market. We heard from various suppliers prior to signing a contract with FedEx. In fact, FedEx put forward a proposal to partner with Innomar Strategies, a Canadian distributor for vaccines, so we actually do have some Canadian content in that distribution package.

The role is very complex and we are very pleased that we have been able to distribute vaccines across the country—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Albertans are deeply concerned about the proposed Grassy Mountain coal mine. Open-pit coal mining is a dated and destructive industry. It is an environmental disaster for water protection and an economic disaster for farmers, ranchers and those in the tourism industry. This project would result in severe consequences for Alberta's water and these impacts would be felt downstream in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the U.S.

Recognizing that this would have a devastating impact on so many people, will the minister put a stop to this destructive project?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a development that is within provincial jurisdiction, but it is a project that we are watching very closely. Whatever processes are subject in this matter we will be adhering to. It is something that we are watching very closely and we will be discussing it with the Government of Alberta.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Nav Canada announced a study to close air traffic control towers at airports across the country, including Windsor, throwing our community into disarray as the officials hold non-public meetings.

Windsor, Tecumseh and Detroit's airspace complex includes five airports. Eliminating the air traffic control puts public safety in jeopardy, especially in the dangerous riverside descent area that already had mid-air collisions between Canadian and U.S. planes.

I presented a legislative solution that would empower the minister to put public safety first and foremost. Will the minister support this proposal to become law?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the hon. member that I have discussed this matter also with my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, who is from Windsor. Let me repeat that the safety and security of the travelling public is our government's top priority.

As I have said earlier, Nav Canada is undertaking several studies to assess the level of service needs, particularly during the pandemic when there is a lot less traffic. It is important to note that any changes to the level of service proposed will not compromise on safety and it will be done in consultation with the stakeholders. Eventually, Transport Canada will assess whatever decision Nav Canada—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Northwest Territories.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, gender violence disproportionately victimizes indigenous women across Canada and in particular in Canada's north. A recent Statistics Canada report confirms that gender-based violence is on the rise, especially against indigenous women, and has gotten worse during the pandemic.

Oral Questions

Although a staggering 39% of women in the north report they have experienced sexual assault, the survey also found that just one in eight sexual assaults was reported to police.

Could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update the House on what the RCMP is doing toward reconciliation with indigenous people and ensuring that everyone can feel safe?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe we all agree that indigenous women have a right to feel safe in their communities.

The partnership between Pauktuutit women of Canada and the RCMP is a very positive step forward on the national police force's efforts of reconciliation with Inuit women, girls and gender-diverse persons. The agreement will review the RCMP's cultural competency training, the establishment of a family violence coordinator in Nunavut and consultation with Inuit women on the RCMP's body-worn cameras pilot project.

Our government will continue working together with provincial and territorial governments, first nations, Inuit and Métis communities to end the ongoing national tragedy of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): The United States has announced protectionist measures that will have a devastating impact on our businesses. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, to date, 180,000 SMEs could close their doors. That means that 2.4 million Canadian jobs are in jeopardy. After the vaccine procurement fiasco and the government's poor border management, our economy is in jeopardy.

What is our Prime Minister waiting for? When will he react?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want Canadian businesses and workers to know that we are actively engaging with our American partners at all levels and that we are always going to stand up for the best interests of Canadians.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister raised this with the President on their call, where he emphasized that workers in the U.S. and Canada benefited from our integrated secure and resilient supply chains. They have agreed that we will consult closely to avoid any measure that will constrain our bilateral trade and economic growth for our two countries.

We are going to continue to work together to support a sustainable economic recovery and create jobs and grow the middle class here in Canada and in the United States.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of an unprecedented health crisis. Sending cheques is easy, but we need a economic recovery plan.

Our business owners are struggling. Millions of jobs are in jeopardy, and these new U.S. protectionist measures will be a risk. Our Prime Minister is always in reaction mode, always late and unable to make quick decisions.

What is he waiting for? When will he take action to protect jobs across the country?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing is more important to us than working with our neighbours south of the border so we can indeed advocate in the interest of Canadian jobs, Canadian workers, Canadian businesses. Our record will speak for ourselves in our relationship with the Americans. We continue to work hard on behalf of Canadian businesses and Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “The resignation of Julie Payette is an unprecedented move that calls into question the judgement of [the] Prime Minister...who appointed her without sufficient vetting.” Who said that? It was Daniel Béland, the director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada. The Quintet report is definitive: the toxic environment has existed for years. There were tantrums, screaming and public humiliation, and the Prime Minister turned a blind eye to it all.

Will the person responsible for this fiasco do the right thing and take away the former governor general's lifetime pension?

● (1455)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that every Canadian deserves to go to work each day in a safe workplace free from harassment. That includes the hard-working and dedicated employees who work at Rideau Hall.

We took this matter very seriously right from the beginning and put in place an independent review process. Following that process, the Prime Minister accepted Madame Payette's resignation.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had the report since January 12. An extremely redacted version was leaked to the media in English only, as though francophones did not deserve to know what was going on.

The Prime Minister voluntarily turned a blind eye to the former governor general's troubling past because he gets a thrill out of making a big impression. As recently as September, he said in the midst of an investigation, “We have an excellent Governor General...”.

Is he still as proud of his personal choice?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not be providing comments on the specifics of the report out of respect for the privacy and confidentiality of former and current staff and others who participated. To maintain impartiality in this process, the report has been released following the appropriate redactions, in accordance with the law.

Everyone deserves, as I said, to work in a safe workplace, including the staff who work for the Governor General.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and U.S. President Joe Biden talked about vaccination last Friday.

The Prime Minister's Office released the following information: “They discussed collaboration on vaccines and acknowledged that the two countries’ efforts are strengthened by...the flow of critical medical supplies.”

Now that Canada and the United States have agreed that the vaccine should flow freely between our two countries, I have one very simple question: How many doses of the Pfizer vaccine did Canada get from the United States?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we share Canadians' sense of urgency around securing access to these essential vaccines as quickly as possible.

More than 1.1 million vaccines have been distributed across the country to date, which means Canada is on track for the first quarter. Our government is responsible for vaccine distribution, and we will not stop until the job is done.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just like us, the government needs to be looking for solutions.

The Major-General in charge of vaccine supply recently announced that Pfizer deliveries will be delayed once again. Our expectations for next week were pretty low to begin with, and now we are being told that we will get even fewer doses the week of February 8. Quebec has fewer than 9,000 doses left. We are running out.

Now that Canada and the United States have agreed that the vaccine should flow freely, what is the government waiting for? When will it go get vaccines directly from the United States?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said all along, we will be getting four million doses from Pfizer this quarter. I am in constant personal contact with Pfizer to confirm the numbers. Those are the facts, and we will keep working hard for Canadians.

[English]

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to get two million doses to Canada every week to make his September timeline. This week, Canada received zero out of the two million, and next week does not look much better. This is not a role model. Lives are at stake.

My son, who is compromised, finally had hope when his two caregivers had appointments for their vaccines, but that quickly evaporated when they were cancelled due to lack of supply. This is not a poker game the Prime Minister is playing where he can bluff his way through.

How does the Prime Minister plan to get two million doses next week after getting zero this week?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as supply chains and manufacturing for these vaccine suppliers ramp up, we are going to see increasing numbers of vaccines rolling into this country, beginning with hundreds of thousands of vaccines in February and into March, and then millions in the following quarters. Indeed, we expect four million Pfizer vaccines and two million Moderna vaccines this quarter, and 20 million vaccines from those suppliers in the second quarter. By the end of September, all Canadians who wish to have access to a vaccine will indeed have such access. That is our commitment to retain our schedule. We are on track.

• (1500)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to get two million doses per week to meet his September timeline. Right now, this week, we are at zero. Next week Canada is to receive 79,000 doses, and Canadians have not been encouraged to believe that shipments will return to normal anytime soon. This means Canada will be shorted 1.9 million doses, while the EU is actually considering an export ban on vaccines and Canadian companies with the capacity to produce vaccines have been put on the back burner by the government.

Who is going to be left out next week when we are 1.9 million doses short?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the opposition sows doubt among Canadians, we are working tirelessly to get vaccines to Canadians. Our aggressive approach is being noticed. Industry experts and researchers are recognizing that Canada is indeed a role model in

vaccine procurement. Professor Susan Athey from Stanford University, a leader in vaccine strategy, has referred to Canada as a role model around the world.

We know more work lies ahead, and we will continue to be tireless in ensuring that all Canadians who choose to be vaccinated will receive a vaccine by the end of September. There will be four million from Pfizer and two million from Moderna in this quarter alone.

* * *

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many businesses in the tourism, hospitality, arts and culture sectors have been particularly hard hit since the beginning of the pandemic. Many of them have benefited from government programs like the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account, but they still need assistance.

The government has launched a new program for the sectors that have been hit the hardest. Can the Minister of Small Business tell us how this program will help businesses in my riding?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her hard work on behalf of businesses in her riding, Vimy.

[English]

Many businesses continue to be hard hit and are struggling with reduced revenues and uncertainty because of COVID-19. On Tuesday, our government launched the new highly affected sectors credit availability program, otherwise called HASCAP, as another way of providing a critical lifeline to our hardest hit businesses. HASCAP will provide 100% government-guaranteed low-interest loans of \$25,000 to \$1 million, and for those businesses with multiple locations under one entity, up to \$6.25 million so they can bridge to the other side of this pandemic.

Our government will always stand up for our amazing small businesses and entrepreneurs in Canada.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, the government promised high-speed Internet to the communities of Madsen and Shoal Lake 39 in my riding. This funding was announced five years ago, yet these communities are still waiting for improved service.

Oral Questions

If it was not to deliver high-speed Internet as promised, where was this funding actually spent?

• (1505)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with great urgency and great focus to connect every Canadian to high-speed Internet.

In our first mandate, we supported our partners to connect 1.7 million households across the country. In this mandate, the universal broadband fund is already working. We approved the first project under the program in Alberta, which connects 7,179 households to this important and essential service. Another project, northeast of Sudbury, will bring high-speed Internet access to 74 households, 68 of which are indigenous. Every day we get closer to connecting every Canadian.

If my colleague wants to speak about the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for many rural Canadians, including thousands in my riding, wireless high-speed Internet is the only broadband solution available. Internet in my riding is offered to constituents at speeds of zero megabytes and up. However, with access to more spectrum, they could receive 50 megabytes for downloads and 10 megabytes for uploads.

When the government is auctioning spectrum, what is it doing to hold providers accountable to ensure they deploy spectrum in rural communities?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important advocacy, both with spectrum auctions and subsidies for communities where the business case to connect households to high-speed Internet is simply not there.

Our government is there. Spectrum auctions include a carve-out for smaller rural communities. We have worked diligently to ensure that smaller Internet service providers receive at least a third of our investment. The other third has gone to indigenous communities, and the last third goes to larger ISPs.

If my colleague wants to connect to talk about how we can support his community in getting connected, my team and I are always here for him.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of B.C.'s public fisheries have grave concerns about the upcoming 2021 fishing season and what it will mean for the future of their families. Despite recent data that supports keeping many B.C. fishing areas open, the Liberals have repeatedly ignored their own science and shut things down instead.

The member for Abbotsford and I recently asked to meet with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to bring these concerns directly to her. She would not spare the time and apparently could not

care less. Why is the minister refusing to meet with us and hear the concerns of thousands of our B.C. public fishery families?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the challenges being faced during the pandemic with respect to declining stocks as well in B.C. waters. We are making sure that we are doing everything we can to address these concerns. We know this public group has been hard hit. We will continue to work diligently with stakeholders to make sure we can address these issues as we go forward.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we begin this new year, seniors in Quebec and across the country are very concerned about social isolation because of the lockdown.

When the crisis hit, our government reacted quickly with strong measures. However, the opposition does not have a plan to help seniors during this difficult time. Can the minister update the House on what our government is doing to support isolated seniors during the pandemic?

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his work on behalf of seniors.

Our government has taken strong action to support seniors in their communities, providing over 2,000 senior-serving projects through the new horizons for seniors program. I have been inspired by the stories of seniors connecting with their families and one another virtually for the first time as a result of these programs.

This is in contrast to the Conservatives, who have criticized our investments to support Canadians during the pandemic. It is important our government is supporting seniors through this difficult time.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Jackie, a constituent of mine in Port Alberni, is self-employed and her home-based business has struggled since the beginning of the pandemic. Jackie applied for the CERB because she was told she could. She used the help to pay bills and support her family because she did not qualify for any small business supports.

The Liberals are now telling Jackie she needs to pay the CERB back. Meanwhile, some rich corporations that received the wage subsidy have been paying out millions to shareholders, but the government is not going after them. Why is the government going after Jackie and other Canadians who did nothing wrong, while refusing to hold the ultra wealthy accountable?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic hit, we quickly introduced the CERB, helping 8.9 million Canadians put food on their table. We know this continues to be a difficult time for many. No one, not Jackie or any Canadian, is required to make repayments at this time. In fact, we are actively looking at options to support Canadians where it is determined they were ineligible.

As the Prime Minister has said, we are going to work with Canadians who need to make repayments in a way that is flexible for them and understanding their unique circumstances. There will be no penalties or interest for anyone who made mistakes in good faith.

* * *

• (1510)

MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, despite huge levels of effort from the government and billions of dollars spent, some sectors of our economy are still falling between the cracks.

The situation right now for the commercial bus lines, the coach bus sector, such as Wilson's Transportation here on Vancouver Island or Maritime Bus in the maritime communities, is that this entire part of our transportation infrastructure is imminently at risk of going under. This is an integral part of our tourism sector, and it is integral in reducing greenhouse gases and serving remote first nations.

We have to have one of two things, either money has to be provided to the sector or the big banks have to back off. What can be done?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right, the inner-city passenger bus service industry has been hit very hard by the pandemic.

As the member mentioned, our government has provided a lot of financial support for businesses that have been impacted by COVID. The member knows that the inner-city bus service is regulated by the province. I also acknowledge that it is important to our cities and provinces, therefore, we will continue to monitor the situation. I am happy to work with the member on ideas we can work together on.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, an outbreak of COVID-19 decimated Minoru Residence in my riding, infecting 74 and claiming the lives of 11.

Points of Order

As a result of the government's failure, seniors in long-term care facilities now need to wait even longer for the vaccines they needed months ago. What steps will the federal government take to immediately stop treating Canada's vulnerable seniors as an afterthought and get vaccines into arms?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to protect those living and working in long-term care.

We have provided \$740 million to provinces and territories to bring in measures to control and prevent infections, including in long-term care. On November 30, we announced an additional \$1 billion, in the fall economic statement, to create the safe long-term care fund.

We are working closely with the provinces and territories to protect those in care by providing guidance to prevent and address outbreaks, and to set new, very important national standards.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Bernard Génereux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance's Internet connection was abysmal. I did not understand most of what she said.

I am putting myself in the shoes of the interpreters, who have to try to interpret the remarks of someone with such a bad Internet connection. I am not sure if members are aware of it, but this is significantly hindering the work of the interpreters. That is why I moved a motion at the Standing Committee on Official Languages to study the issue. All the interpreters are buckling under the strain because Zoom does not work well and this exposes them to certain health and safety risks and problems.

Once again, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that every parliamentarian must check the quality of their Internet connection.

The Speaker: The hon. member raises a good point. I would like to remind all members participating virtually in the proceedings of the House to ensure that they have a good Internet connection.

• (1515)

[English]

Please make sure there is a direct line to the router. Wi-Fi transmission is not always the best.

The next point of order goes to the hon. member for Sarnia Lambton.

Government Orders

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That for the consideration of the appointment of the next governor general of Canada, the House call on the Prime Minister to re-establish the advisory committee on vice-regal appointments, which led to the appointment of former governor general, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement. Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: I am afraid we do not have unanimous consent.

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is in response to the question for the member for Edmonton Strathcona, because I inadvertently left the impression that the Grassy Mountain coal project was under provincial jurisdiction.

To clarify the record, the Grassy Mountain project, which is a proposed metallurgical coal mine, is currently being assessed by a joint review panel with the Alberta Energy Regulator. Both the public hearings and the comment period have ended. The joint review panel is preparing its report, and once we have all the necessary information and analysis, we will make a decision on the process. Our government conducts impact assessments using fair and predictable processes that are grounded in science and indigenous traditional knowledge.

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify that statement.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Thursday, and as usual, we would like an update on the business of the House. I would also like to note that this week marks the return of the House after the Christmas break, and it is a great pleasure and honour for us to be here.

We want to thank all those who ensure that the hybrid sittings of the House generally go smoothly. We want to thank the House of Commons team, the technicians and the parliamentary leaders of the government and other opposition parties for their co-operation as Parliament resumed.

Now, we are back to work. We have bills to debate, and we would like the government to give us a preview of what lies ahead, particularly with respect to a subject we all agree on, namely eliminating the \$1,000 benefit. When will the government introduce the bill so that we can debate it, amend it if necessary and pass it?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I also want to thank all the parliamentary leaders for their collaboration in developing a hybrid Parliament that can operate safely. I also want to thank everyone, the Speaker and his team, and everyone else who makes it possible for us to get together and debate.

As for my colleague's question, this afternoon and tomorrow we will continue debate on Bill C-18, an act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, at second reading.

On Monday, we will have a day of debate on the Standing Orders, pursuant to Standing Order 51. This debate must take place between the 60th and 90th sitting days of a Parliament. We are in that period now, and the debate will take place on Monday.

On Tuesday, we will resume debate at second reading of Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures.

[English]

On Wednesday, we will start second reading debate of Bill C-19, which provides temporary rules to ensure the safe administration of an election in the context of COVID-19.

Finally, next Thursday, February 4, shall be an allotted day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[English]

CANADA—UNITED KINGDOM TRADE CONTINUITY AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present. This is the first time I have presented in this format, and it is an interesting way to present a speech, but these are the circumstances we are in, and we will make the best of them.

Usually when I start a speech, I give my perspective on the economic context we are in. Obviously we are in unprecedented times. I was around in 2008 and 2009 during the last economic downturn. The circumstances were completely different from what we are faced with here today, but nonetheless there is pressure from everyone to perform and to deliver for Canadians from coast to coast, so that is where we are. We know where our deficit levels are and we know where our debt is going to roughly be at the end of this pandemic, so we know we have a tremendous burden to lift future generations from under the debt they are in.

I will go back to review some of the past trade agreements, such as the Canada-European free trade agreement, which includes countries like Switzerland, Liechtenstein and others; Canada-Honduras; Canada-Jordan; Canada-Colombia; Canada-South Korea, which was probably one of the best deals and advantageous for Canadian producers and farmers; CETA; and TPP. These were all deals that were negotiated by the previous government.

The former minister spoke, and Gerry Ritz is likely out there listening today as well. He was the agriculture minister for most of it. I thank them for all their efforts, and the current government here today is doing its best to work its way through Bill C-18 and eventually come to a long-term deal between Canada and the U.K.

There are some legitimate criticisms, I think, with some of the negotiations along the way. Was it always going to be a revision and an extension of CETA? Was it going to be something new, such as a true free trade agreement between the two countries? Maybe we will get both here. That is the context.

I have some key points from my perspective as someone who lives in a rural riding where there is a pretty heavy agricultural footprint and impact on the Ontario economy, but these points would apply to farmers from coast to coast. One of them is that in a good, quality long-term Canada-U.K. deal, even though we are talking about a transition agreement, it will be very important that we get the edible bean sector right when we look at tariffs and non-tariff barriers and a number of different things with the U.K. In my riding alone, the Hensall Co-op, which is about 40 minutes north of London, Ontario, ships about half of the white beans for the entire United Kingdom, and they are sourced from all over southwestern Ontario. They are short-day beans, and they are some of the highest-quality white beans in the world, so we want to make sure that stakeholders like Hensall and other advocacy groups or industry groups are at the table when the consultations take place to make sure that we get absolutely everything right and improve upon what we have with the CETA deal.

To put it into context, they ship about 15,000 20-foot containers per year of edible white beans, so it is a huge number. I believe it is around 40 or 50 containers a day that they ship. It is a great bean for farmers to grow, because it is a short-day bean, which is good. As well, it also allows for cost savings and cost effectiveness in using the equipment. Farmers can use the same combine they use for traditional GMO soybeans. They would be able to clean it up and put it back out there or use it first and then clean it up, but they can use the same header for both the edible white beans and soybeans. That is a great bean for us to grow, and it is at quite a premium in our area.

Government Orders

Regarding the red meat sector, anybody who is on the trade committee has heard me complain about CETA and its outcome. When CETA was finally ratified or first announced, however members want to look at it, the trade for Canadian beef farmers would eventually end up at about \$600 million a year, I believe, just in beef alone, but I think we are at about 1% or 1.5% of where we thought we would be. We thought we would be at least at the tariff rates. All beef cattle have hormones in them, and whether we add or do not add to it, they are going to have hormones.

• (1525)

There needs to be an understanding. Obviously there is an opportunity for beef farmers to grow beef on grasslands and maybe not add some of the different components used in beef farming today. Nevertheless, while the science proves out, it is very costly for farmers. Even if they wanted to grow beef cattle the way Europe and the U.K. are asking, it does not make financial sense. We need to take a close look at this issue. I would call this maybe a non-tariff trade barrier.

In addition to that, on the pork side, the situation has been even worse with the European Union. About \$100 million a year in pork is traded between the European Union and Canada, and Europe has almost all of it. We ship about \$2 million or \$3 million worth of pork to the European Union, and the European Union ships about \$97 million to Canada. People in Huron County or Bruce County or anywhere else in southwestern Ontario or across Canada are seriously scratching their heads at how we could have a deal with the European Union or the U.K. and have a trade deficit in beef and pork.

The issue with pork is around trichinella, and the way they are dealing with it does not make sense. In our negotiations, using experts and scientists, we have to finally come to a way to agree in order to move forward.

On country of origin labelling on beef and others, during the Obama administration we dealt with this issue for years. Now we are dealing with Italy on the same type of thing with regard to durum wheat. It is just not fair. I do not believe our negotiators are pushovers for one second, and I do not believe any government wants to be pushed around, but the evidence starts to mount after a while that we are in fact getting pushed around and are not being treated fairly.

Government Orders

When we look at some of the successes we have had with TPP, we see that the corn-fed beef program in Ontario has been a huge success. Korea is in the same boat. We are shipping product to Korea. Korea wants it, and it is a good, quality product, but what is happening in Europe is a little disappointing. It is shipping 100% of its tariff rate quota of cheese, while we are shipping 1.3% or 1.5% or 3% in beef, and that is unacceptable. That is the reality of the situation. It will be for the current government or whichever party is elected the next time an election rolls around to push our trade officials to do more and to do better. I will leave it at that.

Around the world, it is tougher times. With the new American administration coming in, immediately we saw Keystone being shut down. The next thing we will see is the buy America provision. We cannot help but be frustrated. I toured the Decast plant in Utopia, near Barrie, Ontario, and the number one complaint after the tour was the buy America provision and what we could do if buy America were not in place in the United States.

When we put it in context, the government recently negotiated the USMCA, and here we are right back at the table again, dealing with issues like buy America and other items like softwood lumber. It goes on and on. Finally and forever, we need these issues dealt with, and I hope we do that.

• (1530)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and all of his work on the international trade committee, which I very much enjoy working on with him.

I took notes during the member's speech. I look forward to working with him during the consultation process in order to get farmers in his community, particularly the white bean farmers, involved in providing feedback and advice to our government as we negotiate a comprehensive trade agreement.

I would like to ask a question related to an issue that other colleagues in his party and in his caucus have raised: the absence of a sunset clause in the transitional agreement. To my mind, that is an important feature, as it would ensure stability for our exporters to know that at no point in time would there be an absence of an agreement between our two countries.

Could you share your thoughts on that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would just remind the parliamentary secretary that she is to address all questions and comments through the Chair.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak for my colleagues, but I do believe that we have to continue to grind forward and take the U.K. on good faith. Obviously other countries that have similar transitional agreements will be doing the same thing we are trying to do.

We are 98% of the way there anyway, but the parts that we may have gotten wrong in CETA, we have to fight like heck to fix. I do not think we need to do a bad U.K. deal just to say that we have a deal. We just have to continue to grind it out until we feel like we have made everybody happy, or as close to happy as we can get.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we all want Canada to have a good, mutually beneficial trade agreement and relationship with the U.K.

This transitional deal was penned with hardly any public consultation or parliamentary involvement. We do not want this to be the final agreement between our two countries. We want a deal that has a far better process for negotiating the successor agreement.

A new agreement should not have ISDS provisions. It should address the problems of globalized trade for climate change, protect human rights and respect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Does my colleague agree on those issues that I just highlighted?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, I tried not to make a big partisan speech or revisit who was the greatest trading partner or all that.

I just tried to lay out where we could have benefits. I will say there could be some criticism on the part of the government for the lack of consultation, obviously. I think it would admit that as well.

The reality is the government basically took the consultation from CETA and lumped it into the Canada-U.K. deal. It has to do a better job of consulting going forward. The public service and negotiators are going to have to do that as well.

Just as I mentioned with the Hensall Co-op, companies like that, white bean growers and the different commodity groups have to be consulted, because there are some areas where CETA has not worked for producers. We have to make sure we have it fixed for Canada-U.K.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Huron—Bruce rightly spent some time talking about agriculture. He mentioned former agriculture minister Gerry Ritz, who did so much to open up global markets for Canadian agriculture.

One of the forward-looking agreements that the member mentioned was South Korea, which was a trade agreement that very shrewdly opened up the South Korean market to Canadian beef.

Perhaps the member could expand on the opportunities that properly negotiated trade agreements can open up all around the world as we look for markets for our agricultural products.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, probably in time TPP will be the best deal, but I think for South Korea, country-to-country is likely the best deal all the time. When we look at the benefits it has brought to my area and western Canadian farmers, it is likely the best now.

There is a big responsibility that agriculture and the ag minister have this year with the certification, and the screw-up they had a couple of years ago, so they need to fix that permanently so that we do not have any issues shipping beef to the U.S. and then having it processed and shipped to Korea.

However, yes, South Korea has to be the best deal ever country-to-country.

• (1535)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

It is an honour to rise today to speak to this continuation agreement that has been set up with the U.K. as it relates to trade.

I am going to talk about why I think it is so important to have continuation right now in our trade agreements, particularly with this trade agreement, especially in the context of COVID-19 with everything that is going on in the world and the uncertainty. I will mention a couple of businesses in my riding of Kingston and the Islands that depend on trade, and I know they would want to know that there was stability in the marketplace right now related to trade.

Over the last year, there has been a great degree of change. With that change comes uncertainty, and that makes entrepreneurs and people who run businesses nervous. I would argue that probably the most nervous are the small and medium-sized businesses we all have in our communities. They are genuinely worried. They do not know what the world is going to look like in a week, four weeks, two months or even a year from now.

When we have trade agreements and trade relationships with other parts of the world that we have to negotiate, it is extremely beneficial to make sure, if we can put off those negotiations in order to maintain stability right now, that it is in the best interests of people, because they will know what to expect. It is one less thing business owners will have to worry about when they think about what is around the corner and what is going to happen two weeks or a year from now. As long as they know that certain markets are going to continue to move and operate in the same way that they have been, that provides stability to them.

I have been listening to members speak today on this topic, and I have been thinking about businesses in my riding that depend so much on trade.

The first I would mention is INVISTA, formerly DuPont, and it is one of the larger manufacturers in my riding. INVISTA makes nylon that is literally moved around the world. A lot of people probably do not realize that in order to make an air bag, for example, the nylon used in it needs to be moved to various parts of the world. The raw materials come from one area, I think in the United States, to Kingston where they get transformed into nylon. The nylon then goes to another part of the world where it is manufactured into material and probably goes somewhere else to be made into air bags. People usually find it surprising when I tell them that roughly 80% of the air bags in vehicles sold in North America come from nylon that is created and manufactured in my riding. When we think of large businesses that employ a lot of people in my commu-

nity, we can think of why a business that operates on that scale would want stability in the marketplace right now as it relates to trade agreements.

However, I do not want to just focus on big business, because that is not what this is all about. There are many other businesses.

I think of Tom, who started MetalCraft Marine in my riding. When he was 25 years old, he built a boat, pretty much self-taught, and eventually turned his business into a boat-building company. He now builds specialized, custom boats that are shipped all around the world. He primarily builds fire boats, but other rescue boats as well, and then sends them to Panama, Europe and other parts of the world. The boats are built at a dock in downtown Kingston where he employs 60 to 70 people, such as electricians and welders, and are sent to fire departments and emergency services throughout the world. Someone like Tom wants to know that there is continuity in our trade relationships right now. I would imagine that Tom does not want any surprises or changes right now when it comes to a trade relationship, and he most likely does not want the anxiety of having to worry about what a different impact might mean to him.

• (1540)

I can think of an even smaller company, Tri-Art paint, in Kingston. This company started in the eighties in the back of a paint supply store making custom paint for artists: artisan paints. This has blown up into a worldwide company now, located on a small street in an old industrial area in Kingston where it is manufacturing artisan paints that are being sent all around the world.

I remember talking to the folks at Tri-Art when there was a lot of discussion about what Donald Trump was going to do with the old NAFTA, and the concerns they had. At that time, I talked to them about the new free trade agreements that were opening up in Europe. They were thrilled, because they were already selling so much of their product to Europe, and knowing that they could expand on that business and sell to markets in Europe was really rewarding for them. This is a small, family-run business. It is another great success story that developed into basically a worldwide distributor of art paint. I think of the folks at Tri-Art and what they are going through right now. People are worried about what their relationships are going to be like with the United Kingdom moving forward. They do not want the anxiety of having to worry about changes that may affect them. They want stability right now.

When I think of these businesses, I think of the stability that this agreement offers. It offers a time period almost like an extension of the trading relationship with the U.K. we had before Brexit. It gives them an opportunity to get through this time of uncertainty with the pandemic. Once we are out of it, our economy starts to come back and we start to see growth and pick up on new opportunities again, we can go back and more thoroughly get into the details to make sure that we finely critique and go back and forth in the negotiations with the U.K. That is how I see this agreement and why I see it as being so important right now, given the time that we are in.

Government Orders

I want to take the last couple of minutes I have to address some of what I have heard today in the House. In particular, as I said earlier, I heard Conservatives dancing around the issue. One Conservative in the House was talking about how there was not enough time to negotiate and look at the details of this. Another Conservative gave a virtual speech asking why this was not happening fast enough, saying that it needed to happen back in December and now we are still waiting. I found it interesting that they just seemed to be all over the place. We know at the end of the day that Conservatives are going to support a free trade deal. They are going to support this.

I think it is in the best interests of everybody to make sure that we give confidence to our businesses and to that trading relationship, so that it does not affect our market and the interconnected economy we have, but I also took note of a comment that a Conservative made earlier about how, until 2006, Canada had very few trading partners and if it had not been for the incredible Conservative government that came along, we would not have had any of the great trade relationships that we do now. The reality of the situation is that the global market started opening around that time. Lots of developing countries were removing and slashing tariffs, looking for agreements and looking for opportunities to work with other countries.

I think that globalization has really shown itself within the last 20 years in terms of making that interconnection happen. Of course, we are going to have struggles with that when we compare the ways the different economies work and the ways that they value things. That is why I think waiting until later, once we can get through this continuation agreement, to finalize and ratify something more comprehensive is the right way to go.

I am thrilled to support this today. I want to see this go to committee. I want to see this passed, so that we can get moving and make sure that confidence is with our businesses throughout Canada.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me begin by reiterating to our colleague that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this agreement between the United Kingdom and Canada.

However, I also want to reiterate what we said some time ago about how the way the agreement was analyzed and studied by the Standing Committee on International Trade is completely unacceptable in a democracy like ours. The fact that committee members did not have access to either a paper or electronic version of the document so that they could analyze and study it is unacceptable. That needs to be said.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about one of the concerns of the Bloc Québécois. In the past, the government promised not to make any concessions in the dairy sector, which is already operating at a disadvantage because of previous agreements. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the agreements when it comes to the dairy sector.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have been sitting here all day and am definitely aware that the Bloc members are supporting this. I am glad to see that. It shows that they value the need to have these relationships continue when it comes to our trade with the U.K.

When it comes to dairy, I have heard members of the Bloc talk a lot today about supply management specifically and how they will defend it to the end. All I would say to that is it was the Liberal Party that brought in supply management. The Liberal Party has been there from day one with respect to supply management.

Will we maintain the integrity of that system? Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the key provisions in this trade deal is noted as problematic in CETA as well. The Minister of Finance, when she was the foreign affairs minister, actually opposed it. It is about the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism. It is a hugely problematic provision, but there are no changes with respect to it in this trade deal.

Could the member advise me on why we would want to include this clause in the trade deal when it is an issue that even the government and the Deputy Prime Minister had acknowledged was a major concern?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, as I said, this agreement is a continuation. It will provide stability over the short term. A comprehensive agreement will come later on, and the member can validly start to discuss those points then. We can have that discussion.

I am going to go back to something the parliamentary secretary to the House leader said earlier. He said, with all due respect, that the NDP wants to have it all ways. By the very nature of the definition, coming to an agreement in a deal with another country means there are going to be concessions from both sides to find a middle ground somewhere. When the time comes, I think NDP members will have to realize that on some things they will have to move a little in order to get something else they want. That is the whole point of negotiating.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy sparring with the member for Kingston and the Islands. He has acknowledged we are debating a continuity agreement, so there is really no new market access and investment relaxation taking place here.

Both the U.K. and Canada have signalled that they want to move toward further negotiations on a more ambitious agreement. What areas of market access might the government be planning? What areas of investment liberalization has the government signalled it wants to explore as it now moves toward negotiating a more ambitious agreement with the U.K.?

• (1550)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I also enjoy speaking with the member for Abbotsford.

I think he knows that I am not able to answer that question directly, but by the very nature of the suggestion that we want to be more ambitious, we can go after things that perhaps were not considered before or fix things, as the NDP said before. That is what we mean when we talk about being more ambitious.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be here in this chamber today, as a local member of Parliament from Ottawa, to give my colleagues the flexibility to follow public health measures and participate virtually.

I am speaking today about the importance of the agreement on trade continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Government of Canada's trade negotiators have successfully concluded negotiations on this agreement, which is also referred to as the Canada-U.K. Trade Continuity Agreement, or what I will call the TCA.

For centuries, Canada and the U.K. have long benefited from strong transatlantic ties. As maritime nations, we understand the value and importance of the ocean, not only for our livelihoods but as a vital route for trade and commerce.

[Translation]

For the Canadian fish and seafood sector, the United Kingdom was the number one destination for exports to Europe, and many of the benefits of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement were associated with preferential trade with the United Kingdom.

[English]

As we know, the winds have shifted across the Atlantic, and we have also had to shift sails and chart new courses. The Canada-U.K. TCA is critical in this regard, as it not only seeks to maintain this important trading relationship with the U.K. on the beneficial course we set under in CETA 2017, but also enables us to look to new trading horizons with the U.K.

Last year, in 2019, the United Kingdom was Canada's largest fish and seafood export market by value to the European Union, with an annual average of over \$100 million in exports. The U.K. was our sixth-largest export destination globally. Our transatlantic trading ties matter and will continue to matter. The Canada-U.K. TCA reflects this.

For fish and seafood, Canada's top exports to the U.K. from 2017 to 2019, the average annual export value included prepared shrimp at \$81.3 million, live lobster at \$22.7 million and prepared salmon at \$22.3 million. Ensuring the stability of this trade and preferential market access to the U.K. is important for Canada's fish and seafood exporters. The TCA seeks to maintain these benefits until Canada and the U.K. can negotiate a permanent agreement, in keeping with the special bilateral trading relationship we have with the U.K.

I would also like to highlight some of the additional key benefits of the TCA.

From a trade and environment perspective, both Canada and the U.K. have agreed to pursue high levels of environmental protection.

Government Orders

In doing so, we also recognize that products traded from sustainably managed fisheries and aquaculture operations—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue on a point of order.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, it is important to point out that there are problems with the interpretation. The interpreter just said that it is hard to hear the speech because the member is wearing her mask in the House. I completely understand the health measures, but this debate is so important that I think members need to speak clearly. There are also Internet connection problems, so I think that the least we can do is to speak clearly to make the work of our interpreters easier.

● (1555)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Regarding the interpreters, there did not seem to be a problem previously, but I will look into it. We must first ensure that the microphones are working.

Obviously we have to take certain precautions, and that includes wearing a mask. Some hon. members prefer not to wear a mask while others prefer to keep their mask on. We will try to turn on more microphones and check with the interpreters to see if there are other problems. If that is the case, we will address those as well.

[English]

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[Translation]

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Speaker, I prefer to wear a mask for the sake of my health. However, I will speak more slowly and hope that will improve things.

[English]

I would like to highlight some of the additional key benefits of the TCA.

From a trade and environment perspective, both Canada and the U.K. have agreed to pursue high levels of environmental protection. In doing so, we also recognize that products traded from sustainably managed fisheries and aquaculture operations underpin the vitality and economies of many of our coastal and maritime communities. Implementing the TCA reflects our commitment to linking economic and environmental collaboration with our trading partners. Further, the implementation of the TCA will provide predictability and stability for Canada's fish and seafood sector to grow and develop in the U.K. market post-Brexit.

Government Orders

In addition to replicating the preferential tariff provisions under CETA, the TCA includes meaningful transitional tariff rate quotas for Canadian exports of processed shrimp and frozen cod to the U.K. Like CETA, under the TCA these two products will be duty-free and quota-free by January 1, 2024.

In the meantime, and with the implementation of the TCA, these Canadian products will benefit from meaningful duty-free TRQ volumes to the U.K. in addition to the annual duty-free TRQ volumes we currently enjoy under CETA. This means that up to 12,400 metric tons of Canadian processed shrimp will be able to enter the U.K. annually duty-free, while Canadian exporters will still maintain access to the 23,000 metric-ton annual duty-free TRQ volume to the EU under CETA. Further, Canadian exporters will enjoy an annual duty-free volume of frozen cod to the U.K. of 791 metric tons, while continuing to have access to the 1,000 metric-ton annual duty-free volume of the same to the EU under CETA.

[Translation]

This trade continuity agreement is important. Not only does it provide room to grow the volume of duty-free exports before 2024, but it also preserves Canada's capacity to export a constant volume of its products to the United Kingdom and the European Union without disruption.

[English]

We are all familiar with disruption. We have all been living through unprecedented disruption amid COVID-19, including having to adapt here in the House. The timely implementation of the TCA, however, represents a chance to avoid disruption. Accordingly, I would like to emphasize that implementing the tariff-related provisions of the TCA is of utmost importance to Canada's fish and seafood sector.

In May 2020, the U.K. announced its United Kingdom global tariff duty rates, or UKGT. The UKGT outlines the most favoured nation tariff duty rates on imports into the U.K. for those that do not have a preferential trade agreement with the United Kingdom. What this means is that if the TCA cannot enter into force, bilateral trade would return to a pre-CETA MFN basis and Canadian exports would face the UKGT duty rates.

For fish and seafood, this would be particularly disruptive and result in a substantial increase in tariffs applied to U.K. imports from Canada. This bill, to implement the TCA, includes measures that would enable us to steer clear of such disruptions.

From 2017 to 2019, U.K. fish and seafood imports from Canada covered 51 tariff lines. Under the UKGT scheme, all but six of these would immediately become subject to incremental tariff increases of up to 20%. Under the UKGT and based on historical import patterns, Canadian fish and seafood exports could be faced with over \$23 million in levied tariffs in 2021.

Without the tariff relief of the TCA, Canadian exports to the U.K., including shrimp, lobster and salmon, will face incremental tariffs estimated to be roughly \$1.5 million per month. By comparison, under a fully implemented TCA, tariffs in 2021 would be expected to fall below \$0.2 million for the year.

• (1600)

[Translation]

The implementation of tariff relief measures under the trade continuity agreement will help minimize trade disruptions for the Canadian fish and seafood sector.

In doing so, this agreement will help maintain jobs and opportunities in Canada's coastal and rural communities and pave the way for future trade growth in our important fish and seafood export sector.

[English]

As the winds continue to shift, we also need to be mindful that key competitors, such as the U.S. and China, do not yet have preferential access to the U.K. market. As the U.K. is a mature seafood market that demands high-quality fish and seafood products, Canada has benefited from its trading relationship with the U.K. under CETA. It is, however, important that we move quickly to maintain our competitive position within the U.K. market when CETA ceases to apply to our trading relationship.

There is strong interest among fish and seafood stakeholders to maintain preferential access to the U.K. and they have expressed satisfaction with the outcomes negotiated in the TCA. It is thus important that we move quickly on the TCA to ensure continued support for Canadian prosperity and for Canadian business to access and succeed in international markets.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that our work is drawing so much attention. I feel as though I am in the George Orwell novel *1984*. We know the government is here somewhere, but it is not here in Parliament.

I would argue that anything having to do with international relations and borders is complicated. With all the international flights, the government simply cannot close the borders. We saw Brexit coming four or five years ago. It was not a surprise. It was made official in January 2020. The government finally reached a deal on November 21 and tabled it on December 9. Yet it prorogued the House in September.

My question is simple: Why does the government take so long to introduce its bills when it comes to international issues?

[English]

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Speaker, as the minister mentioned this morning, this is something that we have been working on from the beginning. As the member can see, there has been no disruption or pause in our trade with the U.K. This is, of course, a continuity agreement. We will be able to provide assurance and predictability for businesses, aquaculture and agriculture while we negotiate a bilateral comprehensive agreement, which, as the minister mentioned this morning, is expected within three years. In fact, in the agreement it says that we must negotiate starting, at most, one year from now.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, building on my colleague's comments about this Orwellian atmosphere we find ourselves in and listening to Liberal members tell us that two plus two equals five, I would like to know, given the fact that we are getting zero vaccines this week and that the U.K. is one of the potential providers, whether the delay in sending vaccines to Canada that has so concerned my colleague has anything to do with our depending on some of our vaccines from Canada? With the delay in the tabling of this legislation, was there something going on behind the scenes with respect to vaccines?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Speaker, I would debate the premise of that question. As my hon. colleague knows, there has been no disruption in our trade with the U.K. This is a continuity agreement. We will continue and negotiate a permanent bilateral comprehensive agreement and, in fact, our supply chains have not been impacted. The supply chains continue with the U.K., and that is exactly what this agreement is about today.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have heard members of the government say many times, both today and before when it was discussed at the trade committee, that this is what they used to call a “transitional agreement”. I am glad they are not really calling it that anymore. Now the emphasis is on trade continuity. All of this is emphasized as a reason for why it is okay for there to have been such a bad process in reaching the agreement that is before us today.

I have put this question to many people from the government over the time we have been discussing this, including the Minister of International Trade herself, but have not been able to get a good answer to it. What is the difference between a so-called transitional agreement that has all the same features as a permanent comprehensive trade agreement like CETA, which has no expiry date, and a permanent comprehensive trade agreement? The emphasis is on continuity and transition, but what we are really dealing with here is a permanent comprehensive trade agreement. If there is a difference between the two, perhaps the member could enlighten us all as to what that difference is.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that because of this agreement Canada is ahead of China and the U.S. right now in having preferential market access to the U.K. When we modernize the agreement, we will be looking at including more for small businesses, for women, for the environment and on digital trade. That is the purpose of moderniz-

Government Orders

ing the agreement, and that takes time. This agreement would provide the stability that our sector needs.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we resume debate, I would like to come back to the point of order raised by the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue regarding the difficulties with the interpretation.

I would ask members who have a paper copy of their speech to submit it to the interpreters. This would make it easier for them to follow along and ensure that everyone understands what is being said in the House.

● (1610)

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here in 2021 in my office here in Prince Albert. It is nice to see everybody online. I am glad we are able to participate and speak to this important piece of legislation.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. She is a wonderful member of Parliament, and I look forward to listening to her speak after me. She will do a wonderful job.

The unfortunate part of this whole situation that we are dealing with here today in regard to Bill C-18 is the fact that it has only happened today. This should have been done last September. It should have been tabled in Parliament last September so that it could have gone to committee, been properly reviewed and been implemented before January 1.

Right now, it is correct that Canadian businesses are selling into the U.K., but not based on any trade agreement that is negotiated and finalized through Parliament, either here or in the U.K. It is based on goodwill, and goodwill is only as good as one comment by the Prime Minister to maintain goodwill, who has a history of not making good choices in his comments about some of our trading partners. Therefore, there is huge risk, and we have been trying to tell the government, going back two years, that this needed to get done.

As we look at the timelines and go back to this agreement, I want to highlight some of the things that have gone on here. We all understand the importance of trade. I live in Saskatchewan, where we build and grow more things that we could ever consume and thus have to trade those things around the world. We want preferential market access and fair trade deals. We want deals in which countries recognize each other as fair trading partners. We are all in favour of—

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Sorry, I have a point of order.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, the interpreters are having connection problems again. They are having a hard time hearing my hon. colleague's speech and following what he is saying.

The House of Commons interpreters are doing amazing work. Connection problems and the fact that some members wear masks complicate things and make it impossible for the interpreters to do their work properly, so this is a major problem. Francophone members of the House of Commons have a right to understand the debates, as do anglophone members. That is democracy.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I can see that the member is not wearing a mask right now, so that is not the cause of the interpretation problem. I do not know how good the connection is at the moment, but we are certainly experiencing some difficulties. I recognize the right of all members to understand what is being said.

I will look into this issue, see what can be done to solve the problem and get back to the House. In the meantime, I will allow the member to continue in hopes that the interpretation will work as it should.

[English]

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. I want people in both English and French to hear what I have to say, because they need to understand the bad job done on this agreement. As I said, coming from Saskatchewan, we are a trading province. We sell and export, whether it is potash, grain and oilseeds, forestry products—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will ask the hon. member for Prince Albert to disconnect and reconnect his microphone to see if that fixes the problem. If that does not work, we might try one more thing.

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, Saskatchewan is a trading province. We sell potash, forestry goods, grains and oilseeds all around the world. Trade is very important to us. What is frustrating for us is the instability. What is also frustrating for us is when we see a problem coming on the horizon and no action is taken to deal with that problem.

I will go through the timelines to show what was going on.

In September 2017, the Prime Minister sat down with the then British prime minister and talked about the importance of having a seamless transition after Brexit. In July 2018, they did better and gave notice that Canada and the U.K. transitional trade agreement would be a seamless trade deal. In March 2019, when the U.K. published its first round of tariffs, we should have said that this was fine, that we did not need to do a deal.

Tariffs are not the only things to talk about in a trade deal. Did we talk about regulatory harmonization? Did we talk about labour transitions and moving labour back and forth? Did we talk about environmental aspects? A lot of other things can go into a trade agreement, not just tariffs.

What is frustrating in this whole deal is that the Liberals pulled out. They walked away. Not once did they consult with anyone in the chamber, or the business community, or in a variety of different ways or even Parliament. They just withdrew. In the meantime, our competitors did not. In the meantime, other countries said that there was still more to be had there and they kept at it.

In January 2020, the EU-U.K. withdrawal agreement was ratified. There was a transition period until December 31, 2020. Then did we say the EU deal was done, that we had better get at this thing? In May 2020, we see the new tariff schedule and realize there is a problem. One would think the Liberals would have reacted then. At that point in time, and I remind the members of the government, we were asking those questions. We were asking where the government was in regard to having a seamless transition with the U.K. We were told not to worry.

In July, the Liberals finally thought they should do something. In August, they entered into some sort of agreement. It is interesting that when they talked about trade negotiators, I asked what the deadline would be once they started the negotiations. I was told it would be December 31. How do we get that through Parliament in such a way that it could be ratified and done by December 31, that we actually had something secure in place?

Then there is the whole idea of a transitional agreement, or a continuity agreement, which they are calling it today. When look at it as a continuity agreement, we get it. We needed to buy some time to put something in place to provide that seamless transition. That is fine, but then we see there is no trigger mechanism to force a renegotiation. There is nothing in there such as a sunset clause or another trigger item to force both sides back to the table to get the real trade agreement completed, something that addresses a lot of the Conservative issues that are hanging over the EU trade agreement.

I know our agriculture producers have been saying over and over again that the Canada-EU agreement has some issues that need to be dealt with and we do not want to inherit those issues with a U.K. trade deal. There things need to be worked on, but there is nothing to trigger that in this continuity agreement.

Looking back in November going into December, we would have something in place for December 31, but nothing that would ever be ratified right now. It is total disrespect for everybody involved in trade with the U.K. It is a big deal. It is our fifth-largest trading partner and we sell almost \$20 billion worth of goods there. We import roughly \$9 billion worth of goods. We have a trade surplus with the U.K. and we want to maintain that trade surplus.

How can the Liberals be so nonchalant about it? How can they not take it more seriously? One of the things I have complained about over this last year is that we do not have a full-time trade minister. We have a minister who is in charge of trade in small and medium enterprises. Do not get me wrong. I am not criticizing the minister. This is not her fault. It is not her fault she is given too much. Both roles require full-time ministers. Small and medium enterprises need to have a full-time trade minister and trading companies and trading businesses that trade abroad need a full-time trade minister.

• (1615)

It just shows that the Prime Minister does not understand the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises. Nor does he understand trade and the impact it has on the economy. It shows how he treats this and how nonchalant he has been about it.

What really frustrates me with the government is that the response does not happen until it is a crisis. It is a crisis that has blown up in our face and now we have to deal with it. Now we have to react. As I said earlier, we could see this coming on the horizon. We could have been proactive and done a lot of things to head this off.

We should be talking about a finalized trade agreement at this point in time. We should be like other countries that have complete trade agreements with the U.K. right now. We should have been talking about this last September.

As we look at this, it shows a pattern with the government. It has to be a crisis. We can see another crisis on the horizon called “buy American”. Again, the government entered into a deal with the U.S. We would have thought it would have learned from previous trade deals that buy American was an issue. We would have thought that it would have solved the forestry problems, aluminum and steel problems, but no. The government put its head in the sand, ignored the hard stuff and kind of got it through. Now we can see what the President is doing with buy American.

There are two ways to look at buy American. It could be a huge problem. No question about it. However, I will also remind the government that under the agreement between Stephen Harper and Obama, a Conservative and a Democrat, we got a waiver from the plan to buy American. Canadian businesses could do business on a federal level in the U.S. I would also remind colleagues that our biggest problem back then was with municipalities and states. There was no agreement there. Now 38 of 50 states have signed on to WTO agreements that allow us to use a waiver to sell into those contracts.

The Prime Minister is best buds with President Biden. I expect him to cash in on that. I expect him not to make the same mistakes he did with Obama, because Obama was crying out for help on TPP. If the Prime Minister would have listened at the time, we would not have had to go through another U.S.-Canada trade agreement. It would have been done in the TPP.

The frustration I have is not with the agreement itself. Businesses want it. They need it. We have to help them get through. We have to ensure there is bankability and stability.

Government Orders

I hope the Prime Minister does not say anything over this time period until it is actually in force that would cause the U.K. to say “screw you and bugger off”. In the meantime, let us get this done and move forward. Let us go forward with a real agreement that businesses can take to the bank.

• (1620)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague who sits on the international trade committee for all of his advocacy and work on international trade matters.

I listened with a lot of interest to his speech. One thing that concerns me is this recital of the negotiation calendar without the context, which is completely normal. That is because we do not share our hand in poker. There are many reasons why in trade negotiations we may have to strategically pause to restart on a better footing. There are many reasons why in negotiations there are opportunities that need to be seized at particular moments in time.

With this agreement we were able to, as the member himself pointed out, secure stability for our exporters in the context of Canada having a trade surplus with the United Kingdom and not making any concessions on the supply-managed sector, which is so important to constituents in his riding.

Is it better to rush through something to get a deal that is so-so, or is it in the interests of Canada to get the best—

• (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is only five minutes for questions and comments. I would hope that members keep their questions within the one-minute mark to allow other members to participate as well.

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with the parliamentary secretary on the trade committee. She is doing her best to defend the government, which is hard to defend, so I compliment her on how hard she tries to do that.

With respect to the strategy around this, there is no a strategy. There have been no consultations. There has been no work done with people outside of government to ask what is needed in the agreement. There has been nothing done that would allow the government to say that its stakeholders are saying it should do this or do that, and that it needs to step away because of it.

You talk about how you protected supply management, yet you do not have a deal. You have a continuity agreement—

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. I want to remind the member speaking that he is to address all questions and comments directly to the Chair. That was the point of order brought forward.

I want to go to another question, so I will let the hon. member finish up very quickly.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, my point is that nothing is protected. This is just a continuity agreement that is not even in place yet. Let us see what the final agreement has in it and whether you take care of supply management then. The reality is that you have not done a good job taking care of your commitments with respect to supply management.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member to address questions and comments to the Chair and not directly to the member.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to circle back to the parliamentary secretary's remarks. She was saying that sometimes one might pause strategically in trade negotiations to try to get a better outcome, but the outcome here, it seems to me, has been to obtain the status quo, and doing so late in the game, blowing through a couple of different deadlines and causing a considerable amount of anxiety for Canadian businesses in the process.

Does the member have some thoughts on whether this was a case of a well-deployed strategy that got results, or the misstep that it appears to be?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, the reality is that this is not a strategy. I see this as a crisis reaction. That is quite common with the current government: It is not until there is a crisis that it reacts. Sometimes it creates a crisis so that it actually can act. If it had been proactive and respected Parliament like it claimed to do, we would have been dealing with this last September. We would have put this through committee, people would have been consulted appropriately, we would have had a chance to have the appropriate number of witnesses, and this would have been in place for January 1 so it could move forward. None of that was done.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question: What impact does the member believe this agreement will have on our agricultural producers? I am thinking of supply management in particular. What will be the impact of reopening these negotiations?

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that supply management always comes up in every trade negotiation. The trick is to provide the market access for the commodities that are not supply managed, such as grains, oilseeds and beef, while still maintaining the pillars of supply management here in Canada. Sometimes that is done through compensation or other mechanisms that allow supply management to thrive and grow in light of allowing market access for the groups.

We have no clue what the current government would do with supply management, depending on what is on the table. It has no history of even following through on commitments that were made in trade agreements before, where it was supposed to compensate the supply-managed sector and never did, or it took so long to do it that the sector almost had to protest to get the government to act and fulfill the commitments it had made to the sector.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be the last of the Conservative Party members to speak on this topic today. We are here to talk about the Canada-U.K. Trade Continuity Agreement that will replicate essentially the same terms and conditions as Canada has in the Canadian-European trade agreement, but in this case with the U.K. because the U.K. is no longer part of the European Union. This continuity agreement largely maintains the terms and conditions of CETA, but makes sure we have stability and continuity to be able to continue the trade agreement with the U.K.

What I would argue, though, is that this agreement is the floor or should be the minimum requirement of our relationship with the U.K. from a trade perspective going forward and should be viewed as barely the starting point.

My colleagues today have spent a great deal of time talking about the delays, the lack of consultation and all of the things that have challenged us in getting to this point with the agreement, which has left us behind the power curve with a trade continuity agreement. I would like to move beyond this agreement and talk about how we absolutely must make broadening and expanding our trade relationship with the U.K. a priority.

First, Canadians need the government to provide a plan with defined timelines to replace this continuity agreement, which is supposed to expire in a year, with a comprehensive Canada-U.K. trade agreement. Second, Canadians absolutely need the government to facilitate, support and coordinate an increase in our trade with the U.K. A trade agreement is merely the beginning; we need further action to ensure that the agreement is leveraged and actual increased trade results from it.

Even before COVID, we saw that the global economic balance of power was fundamentally changing, with economic power being used by some countries as a mechanism to increase their political power and strategic interests. Trade has been used as a weapon to influence behaviour. We only have to look to some of the things that the People's Republic of China has done to Canadian soybean, canola, pork and ginseng exports, frustrating the process and introducing non-tariff trade barriers that have mitigated our ability to leverage our exports, causing a distinct disadvantage in our economic outlook. We can also look at the devastating effect China has had on Australia with its embargo on critical Australian exports, which has undermined Australia's economic stability during COVID.

Therefore, with some of our partners, we need to be wary of trade being used as weapon. After COVID, we will need stable, dependable and robust trade. It will be critical for Canada, as some countries will race to gain even greater strategic advantage in their recovery. The key to defending against those who would seek to use trade as a weapon and to secure our recovery is to minimize our vulnerabilities and diversify and balance our trade, placing greater emphasis on relationships with countries that share our values, defence and security priorities and unwavering respect for the rule of law.

That is why our trade with the U.K. must be a priority. The U.K. is Canada's fifth-largest trading partner behind the U.S., EU, China, Mexico and Japan. We export considerably more to the U.K. than we import from it, but of the \$19.8 billion we export, over 64% is gold, and we only represent 1.98% of the U.K.'s exports.

• (1630)

There are lots of opportunities for us to expand our exports to and imports from the U.K., but with our exports being significantly more than our imports, one could argue that we continue to need the U.K. to buy from us more than they need us to sell to them. That is the downside. It makes us vulnerable, but the upside is that there is a great opportunity to expand and mitigate that.

While the focus of the government at the moment, and our country, must be on vaccine acquisition and distribution, it is not the only thing we need to be focused on. I know that we are capable of doing more than one thing at a time. We need to prepare. We need to leverage our current trade opportunities and to broaden them with the U.K.

First of all, we need to start by developing a comprehensive plan and to include the provinces. We need to include businesses and we need to ask for broad consultation and to identify what those core capabilities are where we can use the trade agreement that we have right now and broaden it. We need to basically ensure that the government plays a key role in facilitating and supporting businesses as they expand into those new markets.

We absolutely need a dedicated minister of international trade. We need more trade representatives who are focused on all regions of the U.K. and northern Ireland. We need to ensure that we have dedicated programs and infrastructure to support and facilitate Canadian businesses to understand where the opportunities are in those markets.

We have a trade agreement. We need to find and figure out how we are going to leverage that trade agreement to turn it into real jobs and business opportunities. It does not happen without effort. It is something that we need to focus on now and we need to have key dedicated government, provincial and industry representatives to be able to get there.

We also need to start working on negotiating the key areas of the next comprehensive agreement. One thing that is missing from this agreement is a dispute resolution framework. Even though we are great friends with the U.K., we need a comprehensive structure that tells us how these things will be worked out if we were ever to find ourselves in a dispute.

Government Orders

We do need to jointly address how we would deal with non-tariff trade barriers. Perhaps we need to think in terms of economic alliances, the same way that we look at defence and security alliances. Perhaps we need to unite when one adversary is not abiding by trade agreements when we have trade agreements with other people. That gives us the ability to have a greater influence to change and alter that behaviour.

Perhaps we also need terms to address potential nationalistic and centric policies. We are in an emergency and we have seen countries invoke their defence production acts, but with us largely dependent on international global supply chains, perhaps we need to look at broadening and thinking about, in advance, how we would mitigate those buy American policies or, if there were ever, a buy U.K. type of policy. Could Canada be included as part of that umbrella with the U.K. and address it in that manner?

We need regulatory alignment for existing areas like health, and perhaps vaccines, where we would look at the process that the U.K. goes through to approve and monitor a vaccine and perhaps rather than us having to do it again ourselves, because we were part of it or jointly reviewed it or agreed to the same regulatory conditions, we would be able to facilitate it faster in our country because we have shared regulatory alignment that we have negotiated in advance. We need streamlining for businesses and professionals who want to do things or emerging—

• (1635)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member's time is up. I know the time just flies by. I am sure that she will be able to add to her thoughts during questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

• (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, where I agree with the member is that this is happening at a time when government needs to be very much focused on the coronavirus. Among other things, part of that is obviously the vaccine. In that respect, it is great that we will be able to hit that target of six million by the end of the first quarter, as we have been talking about for many weeks now.

However, when it comes to the issue of trade, I am sure that the member opposite appreciates the fact that by working with Canadians and negotiating teams we have been very successful at accomplishing a significant number of signed-off trade agreements between Canada and numerous countries around the world in the first five years, which absolutely coincides with the generation of over a million good, full-time jobs. Therefore, there is a direct correlation between trade and jobs and growing Canada's middle class.

Government Orders

Would the member not agree that this particular agreement is a continuation and that we will still have the opportunity to look at better ways and to give it more attention in the months ahead?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, there is no question that trade is important, but there needs to be a sense of urgency and we need to expand these trade agreements, particularly with those who are like-minded with us, like the U.K., because not all trade is equal and not all relationships are the same. People trade with people they trust, and people trust people they feel secure with and can count on in difficult times as well as positive times. Therefore, we need to leverage the trade agreements with partners who are of like mind with us to create those jobs, and we need to do it quickly because recovery will be dependent upon it.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are obviously talking a lot about trade since this is a trade agreement. However, the bottom line is that we would not be here today discussing it if this agreement had not resulted from a debate over national independence, given that England expressed its desire to leave the European Union.

This debate has snowballed, and the Scottish independence movement is gaining traction right now. The Scottish people actually want to return to the European Union, as is their right. They want to return, and it is up to them to decide for themselves what they want to do. That is exactly what England did when it decided to leave the European Union, saying that it was not to its advantage to stay.

My question for my colleague is simple: Does she not believe that a people's right to self-determination is a wonderful thing?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, it certainly is a wonderful thing, but we are here to discuss Canada's role and our need for an expanded free trade agreement with the United Kingdom.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke a lot about regulatory harmonization and common standards. I note that the U.K. was just in such an arrangement and decided to leave in order to have more independence.

My concern always is that, particularly when Conservatives start talking this way, it really means a levelling down of our standards. What we have seen in many cases under this kind of free trade regime is that downward pressure is put on regulations that safeguard the interests of workers and the planet. Could the member might provide a couple of concrete examples of the kind of regulatory harmonization she has in mind?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, as with anything else, regulatory alignment is always a balance, and so I would leave that to the comprehensive consultation and input from provinces and businesses, as well as my hon. colleagues. This is about things that we need to target and to start looking at, not necessarily whether we have the solutions on them just at this point.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as fol-

lows: the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, COVID-19 Emergency Response; the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, Canada Post; and the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Ethics.

● (1645)

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hard-working hon. member for Sudbury.

Today I speak in support of Bill C-18, an act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles is rising on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry to bother everyone, but once again there is no French interpretation.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There was a problem with interpretation, but apparently it was an internal problem. It should be fixed now.

I will let the member for Surrey—Newton continue.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation demonstrates how the Government of Canada continues to pursue trade opportunities for Canadian businesses and exporters while maintaining certainty and stability in the face of global geopolitical developments that are entirely out of Canada's control. The United Kingdom is Canada's fifth largest trading partner, with bilateral merchandise trade between Canada and the United Kingdom averaging \$27.1 billion between 2017 and 2019.

However, I am not here to throw around these numbers that have been widely discussed in this House. Instead, I want to speak about the real-world consequences on Canadian businesses that rely on international market access if this bill is not passed.

Brexit was not something that Canada could control. As international allies of the European Union and the United Kingdom, we are bystanders who have always respected the democratic will of the nation's populace. That being said, this government had to immediately consider the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of such an exit.

Since September 2017, when the former U.K. prime minister landed in Canada to discuss the future trading relationship between our two countries, that is exactly what we worked on. In those initial meetings between the two prime ministers, it was agreed upon that the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union, otherwise known as CETA, would serve as a model for a new bilateral agreement with the United Kingdom.

As a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade for several terms, I was privy to the negotiations that went into CETA, and I saw that it was a perfect template to provide a seamless transition in post-Brexit trade with the United Kingdom. This House spent years studying and debating CETA before it received royal assent in May of 2017, so to suggest that Bill C-18 is anything but transparent in terms of its details is nonsense.

Further, it has been suggested by members from across the way that Canada somehow dragged its feet on this agreement. However, once again, this is political posturing that does not reflect the reality of the past few years. The opposition is well aware that under European Union membership rules, the United Kingdom was prohibited from implementing a free trade agreement until it officially left the European Union.

As we all know, Brexit only became official on January 31, 2020. Of course, soon after that date, the world was hit with the global pandemic, which we are still battling in every corner of the globe.

To affirm the reality of what has happened over the past four years, our government has been in a working group with the United Kingdom in a transparent manner to negotiate our post-Brexit trading relationship as per the European Union's membership rules. Further, our government's timeline is completely in line with the significant dates associated with Brexit, as the transition period for the U.K.'s departure just came to an end on December 31, 2020. In spite of what has been said across the way in attempts to score political points, this bill and the continuity agreement are perfect examples of how nimble Canada has been in our trade negotiations across the world, despite circumstances, rules and regulations outside of our purview.

● (1650)

The bill is a necessity to ensure that tariffs are not applied on 98% of products we export to the U.K. This bill is needed to protect the supply management that the Canadian dairy, poultry and egg sectors rely upon. This bill is also significant for the access it provides to the United Kingdom government's massive procurement market, which is estimated to be worth approximately \$118 billion.

These kinds of opportunities, particularly with the United Kingdom government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, are vital for Canadian manufacturers and service providers.

Most importantly, this bill completely acknowledges that this is a stop-gap measure by ensuring that, within 12 months of this continuity agreement being implemented, our two countries will hammer out a new comprehensive bilateral agreement that will be in place within three years.

Government Orders

Earlier in my remarks I mentioned the real-world consequences that would impact Canadian businesses and exporters if this bill was not passed. Extensive in-house modelling and analysis from Global Affairs Canada describes those impacts in stark detail.

Without this agreement, Canada would be subject to the U.K. global tariffs. These would be applied without any special treatment to all Canadian imports, and for service sector providers, all certainty that was achieved through CETA would be completely lost.

The preferential treatment that Canada has enjoyed with the U.K. represents billions of dollars that provide a direct infusion to the Canadian economy and labour market. In fact, Global Affairs Canada puts potential trade losses without this agreement in place at \$2 billion, impacting the food, chemical, apparel, machinery and equipment industries dramatically.

This is a bill that recognizes the scale of trade between Canada and the U.K., and takes into account the looming January 31, 2021, deadline while still committing to a robust process for a future bilateral relationship with entirely new terms.

To conclude, this bill and support for it comes down to whether we support opportunities for Canadian businesses and exporters. This is particularly the case with the fact that we will spend the year after its hopeful passage negotiating new terms in close consultation with provinces and the Canadian business and export communities.

This bill is about how we, as a nation, can provide hope in the face of great global economic uncertainty, and reach into the future to continue to grow to the benefit of our country and our workers.

I encourage all members of the House to stand in favour of Bill C-18, which will only continue to blossom if we move forward as a nation that is unified in our pursuit of opportunity.

I want to thank the Speaker and all members for the opportunity to speak to this bill in the House of Commons.

● (1655)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with this member of Parliament on the trade committee. He is a good member of Parliament, for sure.

The question I have for him is in regard to the timeline that he says is wrong. It is not wrong. The reality is that the way I portrayed it is exactly the way it happened. Another reality is that there was no consultation. In fact, if one talks to the bureaucracy, they consulted but the Liberal government did not consult.

If the member says the government consulted, and all these people were consulted, could he inform us how many meetings the Minister of International Trade had with different industry groups, specifically on Bill C-18?

Government Orders

How many consultation meetings did the trade committee have with stakeholders in the past year or two years in regard to Bill C-18?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, as the hon. member mentioned, I had the opportunity to work with him on the international trade committee for many years, and in fact we travelled together to different places to advocate for Canadian businesses and workers. The passion and the teamwork that he showed were enormously appreciated.

The member asked me about the consultations. When CETA was brought into effect, at that time all those consultations happened. In fact, this is based on CETA, so all the consultations that we are talking about were at that time. Moving forward, as I mentioned, once this comes to that stage we, as a committee, will be going out and consulting with different businesses and organizations, and the minister and the government will be making those consultations as necessary as we have done already.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know whether the member opposite is comfortable with how the agreement was negotiated and this issue has been presented. The Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion signed an agreement with the United Kingdom on November 21, 2020. She only tabled the implementation bill for this agreement along with the text of the agreement on December 9, 2020, less than a month before CETA ended and two days before the House wrapped up for the holidays. The Standing Committee on International Trade did not have a chance to study it. The government is the only one driving this sense of urgency.

Is the member comfortable with that? Is he comfortable with the fact that the affected provinces were not consulted?

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my answer to the hon. member for Prince Albert, many consultations were in place when we passed CETA, and this is totally based on that agreement. I will tell members that time was of the essence to make sure that industries and businesses, particularly in Quebec, were able to take advantage of those 98% of goods that would not be taxed. That is why we had to pass it. Moving forward the government, the minister and the committee will be doing the work to have proper, long conversations with the stakeholders.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier I raised the issue that this U.K.-Canada trade deal does not address the ISDS provisions. That is not the only concern. It also does not address the upward pressure on pharmaceutical drug costs related to the patent issue. The government member responded by saying that this is a transitional deal, yet there is no sunset clause to this transitional deal.

Does the member think that it is appropriate to not have a sunset clause to ensure that we will have an end date with negotiations?

• (1700)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, Canada and the U.K. have a long-time relationship when it comes to trade. I am certain that, moving forward, even though we do not have a sunset clause, we

will come up with a bilateral trade agreement that will benefit Canadians as well as businesses in the U.K.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Surrey—Newton for his excellent speech.

[Translation]

I have the honour to speak to the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement.

As members know, the agreement will preserve the existing commitments between our two nations. It will help strengthen our trade relationships as we prepare to begin official bilateral talks on free trade in the coming year.

The United Kingdom is already a key market for Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. We exported an estimated \$553 million worth of agri-food products and seafood to the United Kingdom last year.

The government always takes a balanced approach to trade agreements, to reflect the diversity of our agriculture and food industry. On top of ensuring stability for our agri-food exporters, we will continue to support our supply management system for dairy, poultry and egg farmers across Canada. Furthermore, I would remind members that our support for supply management did not stop us from signing 15 trade agreements with a total of 51 countries, giving our farmers a competitive edge in two-thirds of the global economy.

The same goes for the U.K. agreement. The trade continuity agreement fully protects Canada's dairy, poultry and egg sectors and provides no additional access for cheese or any other supply-managed product. This is yet another sign of our government's strong support for Canada's supply management system and the rural communities it supports.

The Government of Canada is also committed to not opening up access to the market for supply-managed products in future trade agreements. At the same time, we have kept our promise to fully and fairly compensate our farmers for the impacts of CETA and the CPTPP.

Last November, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced a major investment for Canadian milk, poultry and egg farmers. She announced \$1.4 billion in direct payments to Canadian dairy farmers over the next three years based on their quota. That is \$468 million by March 31, 2021, \$469 million in 2021-22 and \$468 million in 2022-23.

For instance, a farm with 80 cows will receive a direct cash payment of roughly \$38,000 a year for the next three years. This funding is in addition to the \$345 million that was already paid to dairy farmers in direct payments last year and the \$250 million for the dairy farm investment program. This brings the total compensation to dairy farmers in response to CETA and the CPTPP to more than \$2 billion.

The minister also announced that for supply-managed chicken, egg, broiler hatching egg and turkey farmers, we will provide \$691 million for 10-year programs. These programs will respond to the demands of the poultry and egg working group, following the ratification of the CPTPP, and will support investments in their operations to improve productivity for further market development. Program details will be designed in consultation with sector representatives and launched as soon as possible.

Our government remains committed to providing the sectors with full and fair compensation for the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement. We also remain committed to supporting our supply-managed processors for the impact on the markets. Thanks to the funding we announced on November 28, dairy, poultry and egg farmers will be able to make key investments in their operations and improve their activities to be even more competitive. This will help them to be more efficient and more innovative. The investments they make in their operations today will allow our young farmers to position themselves for growth and success in the future.

Our important announcement clearly shows that farmers can count on our government to keep its promises and do everything in its power to help them and help the next generation succeed. These farming families are the heart of our communities.

We know that our dairy, poultry and egg farmers want our system to stay strong and sustainable, and we want that too. We believe that supply management is a pillar of rural prosperity in Canada, and it works. It is an effective economic model. It brings stability and prosperity to our family dairy, poultry and egg farms.

• (1705)

Our supply-managed producers and processors have deep roots in our rural communities. Some farms and food companies go back generations. Others were founded more recently by passionate young women and men. One such example is Dalew Farms, which is where I buy local meat here in my region.

We will absolutely protect our supply management system. There is no question about that. This system guarantees a supply of high-quality products for Canadian consumers. It is a model of stability that provides high-quality products at fair, predictable prices for farmers, processors and consumers. Supply management also provides a living for farming families and sustains rural communities across the country. Our milk, poultry and egg farmers are powerful drivers of our economy, with nearly \$12 billion in farm gate sales, creating more than 75,000 direct jobs in Canada's production and processing sectors.

Beyond farms, dairy and poultry processing contributes about \$22.6 billion to our economy. In all cases, our producers and processors deserve our utmost respect. They work hard every day,

and the entire family is often involved in making the business successful.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they overcame surpluses caused by changes in demand, labour shortages and market volatility to ensure that our grocery store shelves were fully stocked with their excellent dairy, poultry and egg products.

Our government was proud to help our supply-managed farmers weather the storm. We launched the \$50-million surplus food rescue program to help food banks and other organizations redistribute surplus food, including poultry, turkey and eggs, to Canadians in need.

This program does not just provide Canadians with nutritious food from our agricultural exports during a difficult period. It also helps poultry and egg farmers stabilize their markets. In addition, to help dairy farmers manage their excess milk, we increased the Canadian Dairy Commission's borrowing limit by \$200 million so processors could temporarily store cheese and butter and avoid waste.

Our egg, poultry and egg farmers are always looking for ways to improve. They are innovating and are proud of putting the best food on our tables. I am pleased that the supply management system provides them with a fair return on their efforts and investments. Our farmers and processors want to have a strong and prosperous business that they can hand down to their children. We will help them achieve that.

Agriculture is one of our government's priority sectors for stimulating Canada's economic growth. We will continue to invest in this sector. We will continue to listen to our farmers and processors as we set the best course for Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry. We will continue to ensure that they are protected under the Canada-United Kingdom trade continuity agreement and under all future agreements.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would really like to get some answers from my colleague, who is defending the Liberals' position on supply management.

The Liberals made a lot of concessions in the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement. They relinquished Canada's sovereignty over the right to establish our own tariffs and agreed to put a limit on powdered milk exports. What is more, we still have not heard anything about the compensation related to this agreement that the Liberal government signed with the United States and Mexico.

Government Orders

We do not know what the compensation will be or when it will be paid out. Once again, the government is leaving dairy farmers in the lurch. We also still do not know how poultry and egg farmers will be compensated for their losses. There are still a lot of unanswered questions.

I would like my colleague, who seems to think that everything is perfect on the Liberal side, to answer these questions because they are the questions that farmers are asking me every day.

• (1710)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is a valid question, and we are working on that issue right now. However, today we are talking about the Canada-United Kingdom trade continuity agreement.

As I said in my speech, one of our priorities is to ensure the continuity and security of supply management. It is because of this agreement that all of the agreements that we already signed with Europe are able to continue. We want to ensure that there is continuity and that businesses, business owners and farmers know the rules of the game that led to this agreement. That is very important.

It was very important for us to ensure this stability. We have wanted to do that from the start and we succeeded.

We are currently entering into negotiations with the United Kingdom in order to come to a permanent agreement, while still ensuring that we properly protect supply management.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I have to disagree with my colleague because, as a member representing a northern riding, I will take snowbanks over green spaces any day.

That said, I liked his speech, especially when he said he wants to protect supply management. However, we have to be clear. First of all, I welcome the compensation, but the damage caused by the undermining of the Quebec agricultural system in the last three agreements is permanent. Farmers do not want to get cheques; they want to get 100% of their income from 100% of their production, which they can no longer do because of the last three agreements.

There seems to be some openness to protecting the free trade agreement. Will my colleague support Bill C-216, which was introduced by the Bloc Québécois to stop the government from weakening supply management? This would give weight to the permanent agreement we will enter into with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, my regards to my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue. I am sure the snowbanks here are comparable to the ones in his region.

To answer his question, it is clear, as I said in my speech, that protecting supply management is the reason we are doing this. We have to negotiate agreements with other countries to make sure farmers and businesses are properly compensated.

That said, this is also a business opportunity. We have to help those businesses and farmers access these new markets. It goes both ways. We have to help them financially and encourage them to benefit from these agreements in the near future. We have to make

sure they can sell their products in the 51 countries with which we have agreements.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, initially the NDP opposed CETA and we had many concerns, whether the investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms or the increased cost of drugs that patent protection for pharmaceutical companies would create. One thing we know is that CETA is widely understood to put upward pressure on the cost of pharmaceutical drugs.

Why are the Liberals entrenching these same provisions in yet another trade agreement while dragging their heels on delivering a national pharmacare plan?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, as the member knows, this is a continuity agreement. Basically, we are taking it out of CETA, and it is the basis to make sure that there is continuity and stability for our markets here in Canada. It also gives us an opportunity to continue negotiations for a new agreement with Great Britain, and that is exactly what we are going to be doing in the next year. It is important that we take in all of these concerns as we move forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to share my time with the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

In 1987, Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, with the United States and Mexico. The purpose of that free trade agreement was to reduce obstacles to North American trade as much as possible. The goal was to create a stable economic environment by reducing or eliminating tariff barriers, enabling the free flow of all goods and services and defining product standards, such as intellectual property. Since NAFTA, Canada has signed many more trade agreements with European, South American and Asian partners. Canada has access to most of the world's major markets.

Bill C-18, an act to implement the agreement on trade continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom, is unique because it is a carbon copy of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union signed in 2017. The bill maintains the status quo in trade between Canada and the United Kingdom and provides time to negotiate a permanent trade agreement between these two countries. For reasons of stability in the current economic context, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-18.

This agreement is well received as it will kick-start Quebec's and Canada's economies after the current health crisis is over. This recovery will last years because Canada and Quebec cannot repay the tremendous debt we have accumulated without major consequences. As an aside, this crisis may lead to a major transformation of relations between Quebec and Canada.

The United Kingdom is an important market for Canadian exports. Our exports to the United Kingdom are estimated to total more than \$18 billion. This market represents one-third of our trade with all European countries. The United Kingdom is one of our most important partners. It is not far behind the United States, Mexico and China.

A significant portion of international trade between Canada and the United Kingdom is in precious metals, such as gold. The mining industry is one of the largest in Quebec, and gold alone accounts for a large part of Canada's total exports to the United Kingdom. The mining industry is essential to the development of my region of Abitibi—Témiscamingue and for the economy of Quebec. Predictability is essential, and we achieve it through clear trade agreements that make it possible to identify the long-term benefits.

The Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement fully protects Canada's dairy, poultry and egg sectors. The agreement does not provide for additional access to the cheese market or any other supply managed products. It is business as usual. I do want to remind the House that the damage has already been done. Canada made concessions at the expense of dairy producers under supply management in the last three agreements signed, namely the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Europe in 2017, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership in 2018, and the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement in 2020. In total, producers, processors and businesses lost out on nearly 10% of market share and more than \$400 million because of these concessions.

That is why the Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-216 in the House. Unfortunately, the supply management system has become a bargaining chip for Ottawa in negotiations with its future international partners. On three occasions, even though the federal government promised to fully protect it, it broke its promise and created new breaches.

Producers want all their income to come from their work and do not want part of it to come from a compensation cheque. Our bill would ensure that the federal government could no longer make commitments that undermine supply management, whether in a treaty or an international trade agreement. The Bloc Québécois is calling for supply management to be protected in all other negotiations, including those that will be needed to make the agreement with the United Kingdom permanent. It is about the survival and sustainability of the Quebec agricultural model.

This agreement has some negative aspects, but we have to raise certain things.

The Bloc Québécois takes issue with the federal government's lack of transparency in the recent negotiations with the United Kingdom. How is it possible that the Standing Committee on International Trade discussed a transitional agreement with the parties directly involved without access to the document? Worse, the committee was supposed to submit its report on the transitional agreement the same day that it finally received the document.

It is hard to protect the interests of a population when the government does not provide all the information. This lack of transparen-

cy is unfortunate and in keeping with other international trade agreements recently negotiated by Canada.

● (1715)

Government Orders

The Bloc Québécois believes it is time to look at procedures we should implement here in Parliament to give the elected members of the House of Commons more control during trade agreement negotiations. For example, why not require the minister responsible for ratifying an agreement to table it in Parliament along with an explanatory memorandum and an economic impact study well before it is finalized? Why not require that same minister to inform the House of any intention to engage in trade negotiations 90 days before they begin and to submit his or her objectives 30 days ahead of time? That just makes democratic sense.

International agreements are binding not only on the Government of Canada but on all Quebecers, all Canadians, and our businesses. Maybe we should invite citizens and businesses to be part of the decision-making process so they can have their say because, in the end, these free trade agreements affect our businesses.

The Bloc Québécois believes that parliamentarians and provincial representatives need to be more involved in the next rounds of talks leading to a permanent agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom. In fact, in order to be able to defend their own interests, the provinces should participate in the negotiations of all upcoming trade agreements between Canada and its partners.

In the upcoming negotiations leading to a permanent agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom, the provinces need to take part in the negotiations on decisions involving provincial jurisdictions such as standards, government contracts and government procurement. The more Quebec is involved quickly in these negotiations, the better chance it will have at defending its economic interests. It is because Quebec knows what is good for Quebec that it is in the best position to defend its own interests.

We need to raise the Canadian federation's democratic bar. With Brexit, the United Kingdom is trying to reclaim its sovereignty, control over its economy, and its autonomy. There is an interesting lesson in there. With Brexit, the United Kingdom is reclaiming all its power to become an economic force once again. I find that inspiring.

However, in order to raise the Canadian federation's democratic bar, the provinces need to participate in the negotiations when there are decisions to be made that affect provincial jurisdictions. Why reject such common sense now? On the contrary, we need to develop mechanisms. The United Kingdom taught us a lesson in sovereignty. Can we use it to make the provinces' economies run even better and to protect our domestic economy?

Government Orders

In closing, the Bloc Québécois believes that we need to pass Bill C-18 on the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement. We need to avoid making the current crisis worse with sudden economic losses. According to some assessments, Canada's GDP could drop by \$350 million and 2,500 jobs could be lost if we do not manage to come to an agreement with the United Kingdom regarding this trade continuity agreement. Action needed to be taken and Canada chose the status quo, which is wise.

However, the elected members of this House did not take the opportunity to change the approach when negotiating this agreement. Obviously, they did not take that opportunity because they did not have the chance to do so, but that is something that needs to be done. Elected members need to have access to the reports and assessment notes before voting in the House. It just makes sense. Elected members need to be more involved in the negotiating process and the provinces need to be able to negotiate on any matters that fall under their jurisdiction. Agriculture is a perfect example of that.

As members, we have the duty to make the voices of our constituents heard both in this Parliament and in every federal government process.

• (1720)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Obviously, the federal government is responsible for negotiating free trade agreements, including the one with the United Kingdom. What would my colleague recommend so that the federal government can improve Canada's trade relationship with the United Kingdom? What does my colleague think the priorities should be for the upcoming negotiations?

• (1725)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I will answer my colleague's question by pointing out that there is something to learn here about economic nationalism, the importance of protecting our interests, and the importance of producing the things we need right here at home, so that we can be less dependent on exports.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we must not rely on international trade because a plane can be grounded at any time and people can suffer. This is what we saw with protective masks, for example.

This may send the message that international neoliberalism as we have known it for the past 30 years is coming to an end and that we have an opportunity here to create a strong national economy.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the speech from my hon. colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, who is a great asset to Parliament and to the Bloc Québécois. He made a huge contribution to today's debate. I congratulate him on that.

He spoke a lot about how Quebec and the provinces should be more present in this debate. Would it not be simpler if Quebec were independent? Would Quebec businesses not be better off if we could negotiate our own international agreements?

How would we manage that?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for his vision and foresight. It is indeed interesting to ask the question. Has the United Kingdom not taught us a lesson about sovereignty? Why did such an important country decide to back out of the European Union? It did so to protect its interests. Sovereignty is about three things: signing your own agreements; passing your own laws and collecting your own taxes.

The member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert is passionate about the French language. Another fundamental lesson from this agreement we learned from the European Union itself. The official language of the European Union is no longer English since the withdrawal of England. It is now French. Does anyone see this as an opportunity for Canada to look at what is happening elsewhere in the world and to strengthen the position of French in our own Parliament and in our relations with the provinces? Is this not an opportunity to ensure that every province, not just Quebec, has the mechanisms to protect its language? This is another lesson on sovereignty from the European Union and England.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech. I find it interesting to hear that England's exit from the European Union is a model for sovereignty, because I think one of the great lessons to be learned from Brexit relates more to the economic disaster it has caused in Great Britain.

I wonder whether the risks and the devastating economic repercussions for Great Britain projected by economists could also serve as a lesson for a sovereignty proposal.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, his comments and his awareness.

I will give an example. With regard to international trade, we have to be at the negotiating table to protect our interests. If Quebec could have been at the negotiating table, it would have imposed a veto. If the provinces really were listened to in this country, we could have imposed a veto and prevented another breach in supply management.

Quebec could have stood up, taken a firm stand, refused to give up another 3% and opposed the notion of sending a compensation cheque to producers under the pretext that it is all right to stop producing in exchange for a cheque, instead of having agricultural producers earn 100% of their income, which supply management used to protect.

With free trade agreements, we run the risk of limiting an individual's ability to earn their income even in their own country. That is what the federal government did in the context of supply management. It has opened three breaches in supply management. Trust in Canada has been undermined. Bill C-216 would establish a legislative mechanism to ensure that, in future, we will be able to protect our national interests and leave behind the concerns brought on by new forms of compensation.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

The House resumed from October 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-204, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (final disposal of plastic waste), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the motion, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader had six minutes remaining in the time for his remarks.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I add to some of my earlier comments. I will do a very quick review.

Bill C-204 was introduced by the member for York—Simcoe. Given the summary of the bill, one could be somewhat skeptical of it, especially since it is coming from a member of the Conservative caucus. I do not know if the Conservatives had a discussion about this issue, especially the members who were sitting in government in 2010 to 2014, because the bill attempts to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to prohibit the export of certain types of plastic to foreign countries for final disposal.

The reason I started off this way is that a few years ago there was a huge issue in the Philippines. When Stephen Harper was the prime minister, there was a company that shipped all sorts of plastics, which it claimed to be garbage, to the Philippines. When the containers were opened, the waste did not have much to do with the recycling of plastics; there was just a lot of garbage. That is what it was. There were used diapers, and it was an actual mess when they unsealed the containers, with odours coming out. It became a diplomatic issue for us.

We can learn something from this: We need to recognize that it is not appropriate for Canada to be shipping garbage around the world to different places without proper checks in place. In certain situations, it should not happen at all, period.

In 2016, I believe, reflecting on the garbage or recycled plastics that were shipped under the Harper regime, we strengthened some of the guidelines to prevent those sorts of things from happening in the future. Diplomatically, it was raised at a fairly high level, and President Duterte indicated that he had serious concerns about the waste and wanted it out of the Philippines. Fortunately, we were able to find a place for the garbage and got rid of it here in Canada at a facility, where it was burned.

The point is that we recognize the need to look at environmental issues. When we look at specifics, the government already has a fairly comprehensive agenda to tackle the issue of plastic waste. This includes strengthening controls on plastic waste exports under the Basel Convention, for the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste and recyclable materials. This is the type of

Private Members' Business

agreement that governments around the world need to look at, support and then follow, because it is a great way to ensure that controls are not just between one, two or three countries, but widely accepted around the world.

Canada does play and has played a leadership role in recent negotiations for amendments. These amendments would reduce exports of non-recyclable, hazardous plastic waste to countries unable to manage them in an environmentally sound way. What I really like is the fact that as we continue to go forward and talk about this, especially but not exclusively with young people, we find that the environment is a huge issue. People have many different ideas.

As a government, we have been moving forward on this file in significant ways. I could talk about the emissions legislation to get to net zero by 2050. I could talk about the two billion trees we are committing to plant. Also, back in October, we indicated we would be banning plastics, in particular six items: plastic bags, straws, stir sticks, six-pack rings, cutlery and hard-to-recycle takeout containers.

• (1735)

I think the government has demonstrated its interest in moving aggressively and progressively on issues facing the environment, and we have to take into consideration plastics if we are going to deal with them. We are committed to doing this and have been working on it now for a number of years.

At the end of the day, as we continue this debate, members should feel comfortable in knowing they have a government that is progressive on the issue of plastics and our environment. We will continue to move Canada forward on this issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to speak in the House in order to share what I believe is necessary to truly fight climate change, reduce greenhouse gases and protect the environment.

I thank my colleague from York—Simcoe for his work on the environment. In a way it is reassuring to see members of the Conservative Party truly concerned about the environment.

That being said, we see that, like his party, Bill C-204 is somewhat ineffectual. In fact, it shows that, regrettably, the Conservative Party does not want to stick its neck out when it comes to the environment, likely to not upset their base in western Canada.

Private Members' Business

The points I want to raise in this intervention show that the transition to green energy is not only essential, but may provide an extraordinary opportunity to create wealth and jobs. It is something to keep in mind for our friends in western Canada for whom the federal government would do well to do everything it can to protect thousands of jobs by steering them to a low-carbon economy.

Make no mistake: This bill is very important. Of course the Bloc Québécois supports a bill that prohibits the export of plastic waste for final disposal. Exported plastics destined for recycling should be properly sorted and labelled and definitely traceable. They should not be used for fuel in foreign countries, nor should they ever end up in the environment.

However, it would be utterly dishonest to not push this a bit further. As important as it is to prohibit the export of waste, we need to re-examine how we produce things in the first place, especially certain single-use products. Let me make this perfectly clear. We need to rethink the life cycle of materials in our economy. If the government really wants to take action on this issue and walk the green talk, it should transfer funds unconditionally—there can be no conditions whatsoever—to the provinces that, like Quebec, are already implementing a circular economy strategy and extended producer responsibility.

The federal government must act now to give Quebec recycling companies the means to recycle more complex plastic products. It appears that the limitation of Bill C-204 is that it does not go far enough. It does not address the fundamental problem, which, I believe, is how we produce things in general to ensure that we reduce our waste.

There is a very real and urgent need to reduce our production and consumption of single-use plastics. When I said that we need to rethink how materials circulate, it is important to understand that we need to transition to a circular economy. As a formality, let us take a little look back at what the circular economy is all about.

In short, it is a way to produce, trade and consume goods and services by optimizing the use of resources at all stages of the life cycle of goods and services. In a circular logic, the goal is therefore to reduce the environmental footprint while contributing to the well-being of individuals and communities. The circular economy has two main objectives: to rethink our methods of production and consumption in order to use fewer resources, and to protect the ecosystems that generate them.

How can we optimize resources that are already circulating in our societies?

There are three steps: using the products more frequently, extending the lifespan of the products and their components and giving new life to resources.

The circular economy proposes a number of strategies and business models that optimize the use of resources as long as we give priority to the shortest and most local routes. Whether from an economic, social or environmental perspective, the circular economy has many advantages and positive spinoffs. It makes it possible to create wealth by giving value to our raw materials, keeping our raw materials here, promoting the local economy and establishing successful companies.

The circular economy acts as a lever of economic growth by promoting the development of new business models and environmentally friendly technologies and products. That is a sustainable solution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the environmental impacts of production and transportation.

In short, giving value to our raw materials at every step of their life cycle is a win-win situation. One person's waste can be transformed into useful material for others. For example, in Quebec, glass powder can replace up to 30% of the cement used in concrete thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% and providing a great use for recycled glass.

Quebec has already committed, through RECYC-QUÉBEC and its recycling companies, to implement a production, exchange and consumption system based on the circular economy model. The federal government must provide more money to Quebec and the provinces to encourage them to do more. These initiatives are beneficial at all levels.

It is a cycle. We need to produce less and transform our waste into new products. We need to give them a second life here in Quebec and Canada instead of sending them overseas to be disposed of. The government has some responsibility here.

One way to produce less waste is to produce less single-use plastic.

● (1740)

This Liberal government had promised to ban single-use plastics, but that promise was deferred because of the pandemic. However, this pandemic has shown we must act urgently, as it has led to increased use of single-use plastics, despite the government's promise to ban them in 2021.

The list of COVID-19 plastic products, such as surgical masks, gloves, visors, disinfecting wipes and cutlery for takeout meals, has reversed the trend towards banning synthetic polymers.

In June 2019, Ottawa announced a plan to ban single-use plastic products in 2021. The ban unfortunately covers just six products: plastic bags, straws, stir sticks, six-pack rings, cutlery and food packaging made from hard-to-recycle plastics. That is all well and good, but there are a number of other products missing from the list. We are still far from the goal of achieving zero plastic waste by 2030.

I have to say that the Liberals' environmental initiatives are utterly inconsistent. The Prime Minister had the gall to announce millions of dollars to help protect biodiversity around the world only to authorize, just a few hours later, 40 exploratory drilling projects in a United Nations-recognized ecologically or biologically significant marine area.

To make matters worse, Ottawa also chose to expedite project approvals by abolishing the environmental assessment process in place up until now. Ironically, this is happening at the start of what the United Nations has named the decade of ocean science for sustainable development and at a time when there is a collective awareness dawning that 2021 is the year when we must not miss the boat on environmental protection. With announcements such as these, I can say that my planet is suffering.

This year, the current government has completely missed the boat when it comes to the environment. It had the opportunity to initiate a true green shift by making massive investments in the energy transition away from oil with money allocated for the economic recovery. It did not do so. It has understood nothing. The current health crisis and the environmental crisis are not mutually exclusive. Our government's failure to take action on the environment over the past decades and this pandemic are intertwined. We must recognize this and take action now.

The pandemic, just like increasingly mild winters, is a sign that nature is changing. This week, in the month of January, the temperature was -3°C in the Gaspé. Not only is there a connection between COVID-19 and nature, but the political decisions we are making connects them more closely. Failure to take action on the environmental front will lead to a world where potential epidemics will be part of day-to-day life. The issue is how will our societies manage these threats.

The problem is that this government is inconsistent. On the one hand, it is promising to plant two billion trees in 10 years; on the other, it is investing billions of dollars to expand the Trans Mountain pipeline. It wants to fight climate change, but continues to invest millions of dollars in oil projects. In March 2020, this very government stated with a straight face that the pipeline was consistent with the plan to fight climate change in Canada. This Liberal government does not see the environmental disconnect between expanding the oil industry and meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets. I am not making this up.

Non-recyclable plastic ends up in our waterways, decomposes, and ends up in our air and our food. This poses serious threats to human health. We have to think about the long-term impact of an excessive amount of plastic.

Until now, the government has rejected the idea of banning the export of plastic waste. It has opted for exporting plastic to be recycled. However, in June 2019, before being elected, the Liberal member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie said he was concerned about exporting plastic. He said the following:

In some cases, it is recycled, but not the way we might think. We know that China will use some of that plastic as fuel to meet its high energy needs instead of using other types of fuel.

The government's argument that we must not prevent materials from being recycled abroad does not hold water. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has acknowledged that the current situation is akin to shipping our problems elsewhere. We can and, more importantly, we must do better. I sincerely hope that he will be able to convince his government of this.

Private Members' Business

• (1745)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour to be rising today in the home of the Nuu-chah-nulth people on the unceded traditional territory of the Hupacasath and shishálh people.

I am here, rising again to talk about plastics and the impact of plastics choking our ocean and the species that live in our marine economy. As someone from a coastal community, I can tell the House first-hand the impact it is having on our coastlines, and we have the longest coastline in the world.

This is an urgent issue that the Government of Canada needs to take even more seriously, and its obligation to the environment needs to be backed up with the words that were used at the United Nations in its commitments there, and also at the G7. When the government hosted the G7, it had a commitment for an ocean plastics strategy in the G7, a commitment around eliminating and reducing plastic pollution.

Bill C-204 is presented by the member for York—Simcoe, and I really appreciate his efforts on this bill and his enthusiasm. The House certainly knows the position of the NDP on plastics. In fact, this is my 87th time rising on the issue related to plastics. It is because it is an urgent issue, and we cannot take half measures to tackle this issue.

Back in 2017, I presented Motion No. 151 to the House. The motion was to develop a national strategy to combat plastic pollution. Thousands of Canadians reached out to their MPs to support this motion. We had many stakeholders from my riding and other coastal communities who rallied together to support the motion, which received unanimous support in the House, and I appreciate all members from all parties for supporting it.

I certainly want to highlight the work of my former colleagues Murray Rankin, Nathan Cullen and, of course, Megan Leslie, who have done really important work in relation to plastics. I want to thank the current members for Victoria, Vancouver Kingsway and Windsor West for their tireless efforts and work to protect our coastal communities from plastics.

It is because of this work that the government has made some efforts and steps in terms of banning certain types of plastics, such as grocery bags, straws and plastic cutlery. Those measures will come into effect this year. The government made commitments around derelict and abandoned fishing gear. This is a start.

However, we have a ton of work to do. When it comes to this issue being a priority for Canadians, a release that came out the other day from Oceana showed that a poll commissioned from Abacus Data found that 95% of Canadians are concerned about the impact plastic pollution has on our oceans. People across our country want to see real action when it comes to tackling this really important threat to our ecosystem.

When we go across the country, we hear concerns from people and hear stories about people seeing plastic washing up on their shores, but we do not have responsibility in place. There is still no extended producer responsibility.

Private Members' Business

The government is focused on a circular economy. The amount it is looking at reducing in its ban for this year of the six single-use plastics covers only a fraction of 1% of the amount of plastic that is currently being used. In fact, Canadians are laggards. In 2016, only 9% of plastics were recycled in Canada, while 86% ended up in the landfill, 4% was incarcerated and 1% was actually released directly into the environment, so we are not doing enough. We need to do a lot more here in Canada.

As well, we obviously need to stop the export of plastics abroad. The importance of today's bill is real, but it is also a half step. Honestly, we need to realize that we have signed on to the Basel convention, and we need to actually honour our agreement and commitment there.

In terms of this bill, in 2018 Canada shipped more than 44,000 tonnes of plastic waste to other countries because of our inability to recycle that plastic ourselves. Much of that plastic ended up in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Cambodia. We certainly know it ended up in the Philippines. As members know, I rose in the House back in 2018 on what became an international embarrassment, as our waste was sitting in Manila in the Philippines. They wanted it sent back to Canada, and for good reason. A lot of these developing nations do not have the capacity and the infrastructure to recycle and dispose of the plastic we have been sending there.

• (1750)

We have children living in plastic slums on the other side of the world because of plastic being shipped by Canada. We can find Canadian labels in most of these plastic slums, and in their rivers and waterways. It is something we should all be embarrassed about as Canadians. We need to take this very seriously.

We know that the Liberals have dismissed the idea of banning plastic waste exports. They have again signed onto the Basel Convention, but we know that there are loopholes and ways that plastic is escaping through the United States and other countries we are still shipping it to, so their strategy is not enough. The Liberals need to adhere to their international commitments.

We know that if we take action now, we are going to see results. This is what Ashley Wallis from Oceana had to say:

Canada has an opportunity to lead in the fight to end the global plastic disaster. There is public appetite for stronger federal action. Now is the time to meaningfully reduce plastic pollution production and use, including banning more of the unnecessary and harmful single-use plastics that are choking our life-sustaining oceans.

I could not agree more. I know that we are talking about banning the shipment of plastics, but we actually need to eliminate the unnecessary use of single-use plastics in our country. We need to, of course, stop shipping our plastics to other countries.

When it comes to the Basel Convention, clearly our country is not following through with our commitments. We need the government to listen to this. We would not be talking about this bill if Canada was actually honouring its commitment. We are a signatory to the original Basel Convention, which sets restrictions on shipping waste to the developing world, but we refuse to ratify parts of that agreement of stopping the plastic waste exports, because the government knows that it would not be in compliance of it. We

want the Liberals to stop offering just words that they are committed and actually take real action on this.

Again, we have not heard the Government of Canada talk about extended producer responsibility and work with the companies that are creating plastics and redesigning it. I think of Nathan Cullen, who is now a B.C. cabinet minister. When he was the member of Parliament for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, he tabled a bill that would redesign packaging and ban the design of plastics that could not be recycled and reused.

The article on the Oceana release also cites:

Two-thirds of Canadians polled support expanding the ban to other harmful plastic products, including hot and cold drink cups, cigarette filters, and all forms of polystyrene.... These items—and many others—are commonly found littered in the environment...[including] our waterways, yet they are missing from the proposed ban list. This is despite recent scientific modelling confirming we need to significantly reduce plastic waste generation—not just increase recycling—if we want to have a fighting chance of curbing the fatal blow of plastic into our waterways.

We need to do this. I could speak all day on plastics, as members can imagine. Again, I see it first-hand.

I appreciate my colleague bringing the bill forward as his private member's bill. The more we talk about this issue the better, but we do need the government to stop talking on their end and take greater action. These lofty goals of banning six single-use plastics is going to make a difference of 1%. We are laggards.

We use more plastic per capita than any other developed country in the world, and that has to change. I know the government wants to create this circular economy idea, but that still means we will be doubling plastic use by 2035 if we continue on this trajectory. We need to reduce and eliminate our use of plastics. We need to obviously recycle what we have here in Canada, instead of shipping it overseas, and we need to honour the Basel Convention.

I want to thank my colleague. We will be supporting the bill to get to committee where we will be bringing forward amendments to improve this legislation. I hope the changes we will be bringing forward will be welcome.

Again, I want to thank him for bringing the bill forward, and I want to thank all of my colleagues in the House for talking about this very important issue, but let us take some action. Let us make some changes, so that children abroad are not living in plastic slums, because the plastic waste coming from Canada is choking out their waterways and their environment. They deserve better. The earth and the future deserve better.

• (1755)

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great opportunity to speak to this issue, and I want to compliment my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni. He is clearly a leader on this issue and I appreciated his recognition of the member for York—Simcoe and his enthusiasm for this. He is generally a great guy.

This is not a partisan issue. I completely agree with the member for York—Simcoe when he describes it as a common sense way to improve what we are doing.

We have all heard this number, that 300,000 tonnes of plastic waste is collected in Canada and over one-quarter of that winds up getting exported to other countries, many of which we know cannot afford to deal with this plastic waste. We know that it goes to these countries and it is supposed to be recycled, but we all know, and we have heard the stories and seen the reports, that this plastic waste is sent to the a landfill or burned.

I can appreciate my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni talking about having seen it himself on the west coast of Canada. However, I have had the privilege and honour of travelling in my previous life. I have seen first-hand the impacts of Canadian plastic waste in the developing world in places like Southeast Asia. One of the most striking things about these beautiful places is that they are stunning landscapes and the people are lovely and wonderful, yet there is a constant flow of waste and plastic. We see it blowing around or being burnt as garbage. I can give a few examples.

I am thinking about my trip to Southeast Asia where I spent some time in Cambodia, which is one of the most remarkable countries in the world. What Cambodia has been through is truly remarkable. My friend and I were travelling from Phnom Penh, the capital, to Sihanoukville, which is a beautiful little coastal town where we would stay there for a couple of days. It took us several hours by bus to get there. The amount of garbage we saw along the side of the road was remarkable. Every few kilometres we would see garbage being burned, and it was mostly plastic. We would see children sorting through it and playing in it. It was a striking thing to see in a country that was so beautiful.

It occurred to us then that if every kid perhaps in the western world spent a week in countries like Cambodia, maybe they would think differently when they complained about something. When I think of it now, much of that plastic waste that was being burned came from Canada. It is shameful.

I had another experience in Nicaragua, which is another country where our waste goes. It is another great example. I was there to visit the Buena Vista Surf Club, an eco-friendly place off the grid. To get to it, I had to drive north of San Juan del Sur past the town dump, which was riddled with plastic and a constant burning of it. It was horrible to be surrounded by such natural beauty and see this waste, knowing so much of it came from our country.

We are all familiar with the 2019 Marketplace report on the village in Malaysia and the embarrassing story of that non-recyclable Canadian waste that the Philippine government sent back to Canada. I agree with my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni. We are paying lip service to the Basel Convention. It is embarrassing.

Private Members' Business

We should be ashamed of ourselves. Our allies like Australia are leading by example, Australia with its recycling and waste reduction bill from 2020. It received royal assent and came into effect as of December.

• (1800)

The objectives of that bill are:

(a) to reduce the impact on human and environmental health of products, waste from products and waste material, including by reducing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted, energy and resources used and water consumed in connection with products, waste from products and waste material;

(b) to realise the community and economic benefits of taking responsibility for products, waste from products and waste material;

(c) to promote a circular economy that maximises the continued use of products and waste material over their life cycle and accounts for their environmental impacts;

(d) to contribute to Australia meeting its international obligations concerning the impact referred to in paragraph (a).

This should also be our objective.

Bill C-204 represents a truly unique opportunity for Canadian innovation to deal with our own waste. It represents an opportunity to support some of the existing innovative Canadian companies that are recycling and keeping plastic waste out of our landfills in Canada now and from going to places like Cambodia and Malaysia, companies like Cielo Waste Solutions in Alberta or Goodwood Plastics in Nova Scotia.

This represents an opportunity as well for Canadians to reduce their total waste. If Canadians saw how much waste we produce, instead of it being shipped away in other parts of the world where we do not have to think about it anymore, they would think more consciously about the waste we are producing.

It is also an opportunity for Canada to lead in the world by example as Australia is doing. It is an opportunity for Canada to stop polluting countries that can least afford to deal with our waste.

Bill C-204 is an important first step. I am a big believer in us getting this done. It is time for us to stop paying lip service to this issue of caring about the waste that we produce. We need to do something. I really hope all members in the House will support the passage of Bill C-204.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about Bill C-204, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Issues around plastic and plastic waste are complex and multi-dimensional. Our government recognizes that plastic serves Canadians in many ways and plays an important role in the Canadian economy.

Private Members' Business

This pandemic has shown us that some plastics play a key role in saving lives and reducing disease transmission. However, end-of-life management of plastics continues to present major challenges. We must continue our work to reduce the quantity of plastic we send to landfills by reducing plastic waste overall, increasing plastic recovery in Canada and preserving its value in the Canadian economy.

The government believes that plastic waste should never be sent to other countries, where it ends up in unregulated landfills, local environments or the ocean. We applaud the Conservative Party's interest in tackling the growing problem of plastic waste, especially considering that the Conservatives have always opposed our government's efforts to tackle the problem. However, we do not support Bill C-204 because it is quite problematic as written.

[English]

First and foremost, our government will not be supporting this bill as we have a comprehensive agenda to achieve zero plastic waste and eliminate plastic pollution that includes action both domestically and internationally.

To stop problematic exports of plastic waste, Canada needs to begin at home. We need to reduce and better manage our plastic waste and ensure we export only clean and ready to be recycled plastics.

That is why our approach addresses the entire life cycle of plastic, and includes proposing a ban or restriction of select harmful single-use plastics, where warranted and supported by science; making producers responsible for their plastic waste; proposing the development of minimum recycled content requirements for products; investing in small and medium Canadian businesses and organizations, to advance innovative solutions; investing in sector-based and community solutions, to reduce plastic waste and pollution; advancing Canada's plastic science agenda by supporting research to better understand the value change, and the impacts, of plastic pollution on our environment; leading by example, in reducing plastic waste from federal operations; and, finally, working with industry to prevent and retrieve lost fishing gear and reduce plastic waste.

We are also taking action, through collaboration with provinces and territories, on this important issue through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. The government is working with all levels of government as well as with industry, organizations and first nations communities to mobilize and engage Canadians to reduce plastic waste and pollution, including by empowering Canadian households, businesses and institutions to use and recycle plastic responsibly.

In addition to our domestic action, we are also already tackling the issue of plastic waste internationally, which the hon. member's bill fails to recognize. We have taken important steps that will help prevent illegal exports, and will implement newly adopted international controls and transboundary movements of certain plastic waste. In fact, progress has been made to address this issue since Bill C-204 was introduced in February 2020.

Canada recently finalized its acceptance of amendments to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, to control the transboundary

movement of non-hazardous and non-recyclable plastic waste. As such, as of January 1, 2021, exports of certain plastic wastes to parties to the convention are subject to the Canadian regulations, and require permits and consent from importing countries prior to being exported from Canada.

These controls will ensure exports of plastic waste from Canada only take place when the importing country determines it can manage the waste in an environmentally sound manner. This regime should reduce exports to developing countries and improve the quality of plastic waste that is traded for recycling plastic waste under the Basel Convention.

As part of accepting these amendments, Canada has also established an arrangement with the United States, which is a non-party to the convention, to ensure the continued environmentally sound management of non-hazardous wastes and scrap, including plastic waste traded between our two countries.

● (1810)

Furthermore, we are actively working to implement additional measures to prevent illegal shipments of waste overseas. As was expressed during the first hour of debate on this matter, this work includes activities such as communication of regulatory requirements to Canadian waste exporters, taking action against those who break the rules, and collaboration between all relevant departments and agencies, including Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency and Global Affairs Canada.

A second reason the government will not be supporting Bill C-204 is that the bill is unlikely to effectively tackle problematic plastic waste exports because it does not cover plastics that are exported for recycling. This is a significant issue, as there is little economic incentive to export plastic waste across long distances for final disposal. As such, the bill would not cover plastic waste that is exported for the purposes of recycling, but that go to countries that are not in a position to effectively recycle mixed or contaminated plastic waste. By failing to control exports of contaminated or mixed plastics if they are exported for the purposes of recycling, the bill would not reduce exports of this plastic waste or create incentives for trade in clean and ready-to-recycle plastic waste.

The bill is also unlikely to be effective due to the contents of the list of plastic waste. The list contains many entries that would not commonly be considered plastic. For example, ethylene is a gas at room temperature and is not considered a plastic material. While it can be used as an ingredient in producing certain plastics, it has other unrelated industrial uses. In these cases where precursor substances that are used to make plastics are on the list, the bill would also capture non-plastic materials.

Another reason the government will not be supporting this bill is that, as mentioned by my colleague during the last debate on this matter, Bill C-204's proposed ban on plastic waste exports would likely put pressure on landfills in provinces and territories. This runs counter to our collaborative approach to achieving zero plastic waste and transitioning to a circular economy for plastics.

Our government firmly believes in taking concrete action to reduce plastic waste in pollution and we are doing so, but putting pressure on municipalities, provinces and territories, which this would do, is not an effective approach.

[Translation]

In closing, although the government is pleased that the member for York—Simcoe raised the important issue of plastic waste exports, the solution that he is proposing is not an effective one. The government agrees that it is important to address the issue of Canada's exports of plastic waste and will continue to implement its comprehensive strategies both domestically and internationally.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I ran for office was so that I could work to improve our relationship with the environment and help leave a sustainable planet for future generations.

Bill C-204 on the disposal of plastic waste is a step in the right direction. I will give an overview of the plastic waste situation, suggest solutions and close by talking about our moral, international, intergenerational and economic responsibilities.

Plastic waste is the other pandemic we are facing, and we are not the only ones. It is a problem for the entire world's flora and fauna.

I would like to give a few examples that show why we need to be responsible about our exports and imports and especially about our consumption habits. I am sure that it comes as no surprise to anyone here that there is a seventh continent, the plastic continent.

This continent is located in the North Pacific subtropical gyre. There is so much plastic waste in the North Pacific subtropical gyre that it has been nicknamed the seventh continent, the great Pacific garbage patch or plastic island. It is estimated that the area of this continent is between 1.4 million square kilometres and 2 million square kilometres. To give you an idea of what that means, I will tell you that the area of Quebec is about 1.7 million square kilometres and that of Ontario is about one million square kilometres, which means that this ocean of plastic is larger than Quebec or Ontario.

Scientists have recently realized that the North Atlantic gyre also contains a large amount of plastic. They even suspect that plastic can be found at the bottom of the Mariana Trench, which is 11,000 metres deep. According to National Geographic, there are

more than five billion pieces of plastic in our oceans and rivers. Nearly 73% of the garbage on beaches is plastic waste. Plastic production has grown exponentially from 2.3 million tonnes annually in 1950 to 162 million tonnes in 1993 and 448 million tonnes in 2015.

By 2050, all seabirds will be ingesting plastic on a regular basis. Currently, 700 species of marine animals have already ingested plastic or have been caught in plastic waste. Only 9% of plastic waste is recycled and 12% is incinerated. Approximately 79% of this waste ends up in landfills or in the wild. Why would anyone want to export it? I say no, it is time to stop doing that.

I could go on and on, but there is one last statistic I really want to mention. Fully 40% of the plastics we use are used only once before they are tossed in the landfill or end up in the wild. Plastics have a lifespan of between 450 years and infinity.

Quebec and Canada are not beyond reproach. We have contributed to this disaster over the past 70 years. We have exported our waste to various countries, handing off responsibility for dealing with what we should have dealt with. By sending our trash to those countries, we have helped pollute vital bodies of water and jeopardized the lives of the people who depend on them and those trying to manage the waste as well as they know how. For example, right now, in a suburb of Accra, Ghana, waste covers an area of over 10 square kilometres, including a major river. People are burning the waste and are being exposed to arsenic, lead, cadmium and mercury fumes on a daily basis for a measly two bucks a day. As far as I know, our waste does not go to Ghana, but waste we exported in the past has been handled just like this in other countries. The people in that country suffered the same consequences: pollution and toxic fumes. Why?

● (1815)

The reason is that they lack the necessary infrastructure or knowledge to deal with this waste properly. However, we have the knowledge and the ability to set up the infrastructure at both the provincial and municipal levels. It is time to stop offloading our responsibilities onto others.

When I rise in the House, whether to ask a question or deliver a speech, I try to offer some solutions. I know that they are not always heard, and I know that sometimes my suggestions come across as criticism, but it is important to listen.

Private Members' Business

Twenty-five years ago, when I was still in CEGEP, a man who had lost everything, his wife, his children, his home, his business, had the idea of starting a new business recycling recycled plastic pellets. He wanted to recycle something that had already been recycled. I remember he told me at the time that the plastic pellets were in our waterways and that he wanted to gather them and reuse them to make objects as strong as our grandmothers' Tupperware containers. People thought he was crazy. The banks refused to finance his venture, and he was even told to see a doctor because he might be bipolar. Where would we be today if he had succeeded?

Young people around the world are doing everything they can to rid the earth and bodies of water of plastic. There are floating garbage cans that suck plastic out of the water, boats that collect them, and more. These people are meeting a need. They are removing our garbage from nature. However, what will we do after that?

It is about time that we act responsibly, improve our recycling infrastructure here and, above all, stop offloading our problems onto our neighbours. It is all very well to stop exporting our plastic waste, but we should do something else besides burn or bury it here. We should listen more carefully to and support people like the gentleman I met 25 years ago. It is time to assume our leadership role. We should not fool ourselves. Even if we stop exporting our garbage, we must accept our responsibilities here.

According to National Geographic, only about 17% of our plastic waste can be processed. That means we need to find a responsible solution for processing the remaining 83% of plastic waste here. Quebec is not perfect, but it is working to create a circular economy with the help of Recyc-Québec and its recycling companies. A circular economy goes beyond traditional recycling. It is about reusing, making, repairing and innovating, and choosing renewable energy sources while using the product for its entire life cycle. In short, the goal is to get the most out of the resource and upcycle it into something new, such as park benches, clothing, carpets, toys, reusable water bottles, and so on.

Back home in Beauport—Limoilou, organizations like Mouvement pour une ville Zéro Déchet and Les Amis de la Terre and businesses like La Récolte and Le Vélo vert offer solutions to help people reduce their consumption to reduce their waste. Their ideas are gaining momentum, and the people of Beauport and Limoilou are becoming increasingly aware and engaged.

We, as parliamentarians, need to follow their example and be aware and engaged. This bill is a step in the right direction. I am not perfect, and neither are you. No one is. We are working together to improve our consumption and our use of plastics, particularly single-use plastics. We must not wait until we are perfect to take action. We need to act now and improve over time.

Let us be innovative and creative. Let us be daring. Let us reduce our consumption and buy intelligently so that we can reuse our purchases. Let us recycle properly and give credit to those who dare to do things differently. Most of all, let us stop exporting our own waste. We need to set an example. We have a moral and ethical obligation to our planetary environment and to future generations, who should not have to repair or maintain the planet because of our mistakes. We need to stop exporting our plastic waste. We also need to collectively think about how to manage such waste better

so that we can turn an environmental disaster into a success and become an internationally recognized economic example. Let us export our knowledge and expertise, not our waste.

● (1820)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: We have a couple of minutes left in the time available.

Hearing and seeing no interest in resuming debate, I invite the hon. member for York—Simcoe for his right of reply. The hon. member has up to five minutes for his remarks.

The hon. member for York—Simcoe.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the matter before us tonight is straightforward. Canada should not be exporting its plastic waste for other countries to deal with. That is why Bill C-204 would prohibit plastic waste intended for final disposal from being exported to foreign countries.

The 44,000 tonnes of plastic waste our country is sending overseas each year is having a significant and detrimental impact on the environment. All too often this plastic ends up being illegally burned or dumped in landfills or in our waterways. This is affecting our air. It is affecting our oceans. It is threatening our very future. We can and must do better, but instead of doing better and doing the right thing, Canada has fallen behind. We are so far behind, we think we are in first place. While we are doing nothing, other countries are taking action. The United Kingdom and Australia are moving to implement stronger domestic laws to control the export of plastic waste. Additionally, 98 countries have ratified the Basel Convention's plastic export ban, something Canada still refuses to do.

It goes both ways. Many of the developing countries have been inundated with plastic from Canada and are now prohibiting these imports because of the negative impact these are having on their environments and their citizens. Bill C-204 would provide an opportunity for Canada to show global leadership and protect the environment. We are well positioned to do this. Not only do we have leading plastic-recycling capabilities, but Canadian businesses are also innovators. We are problem solvers, ready to make a difference in our circular economy.

In fact, Canadian industry has already developed made-in-Canada solutions to manage our plastic waste that can be utilized in so many different ways, including in construction and as fuel. With Bill C-204, our country could get behind these companies and support their efforts. Instead, Canada is exporting its waste to foreign countries. We should be leveraging this kind of innovation and making a difference right here at home. I truly believe that real, meaningful change does not come from Ottawa; it comes from Canadians. From coast to coast, Canadians know it is fundamentally wrong to be exporting our plastic waste, especially when we have the means to manage it here properly.

This is not a partisan issue. Members of all opposition parties have spoken in favour of Bill C-204, and last year the environment committee, including members on the government side, recommended that Canada implement a plastic waste export ban. That is why it is so disappointing tonight that the Liberals have indicated they will not be supporting this bill. They have done this while calling the export of plastic waste to developing countries beneficial, when clearly it is not. It is neither beneficial for us nor those countries, and certainly not for the environment.

Now it is time to adopt a better approach. With Bill C-204, we could finally ensure that our country will take responsibility for our own plastic waste. Over the past year I have had an opportunity to meet with environmental advocates, industry experts and others who are passionate about stopping plastic waste exports from Canada. I am grateful for their contributions and the contributions of my colleagues in the chamber tonight. I am certain that by working together we can see Bill C-204 proceed to committee. There, we can ensure that it accomplishes its objectives while being as robust and effective as it can be.

When considering this issue, I asked members to ask themselves what kind of country we want Canada to be. Do we want Canada to be the kind of country that shows leadership and does what is right, or do we want to be the kind of country that continues to avoid taking responsibility, because it is just too easy to keep plastic waste out of sight and out of mind whatever the consequences? Bill C-204 would be an opportunity to finally put an end to the export of plastic waste from Canada to foreign countries. As one member said, now is the time. Let us make this happen together.

• (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

In the usual manner that we put the question to the House with our hybrid Parliament, if a member of a recognized party who is present in the House wishes to request either a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I invite them to rise in their place at this time and so indicate.

I see the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

• (1830)

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 3, 2021, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that I have to come back here to talk about the plight of Wayward Distillery in Courtenay, as well as Dave, the owner, and his employees. They are true heroes. They stepped up to help Canadians. They basically pivoted their distillery to supply hand sanitizer at the height of the pandemic back in late March and early April. They supplied hand sanitizer to keep local police, health care workers, people in non-profits, and front-line service workers safe. They then carried on to donate tens of thousands of dollars of sanitizer to the community in the spirit of goodwill and with the understanding that we are all in this together.

In that spirit, I really cannot say enough about Dave, his employees, the sacrifice they made and the sense of urgency and seriousness they took, using their own supplies to help support making sure we were all safe in getting through this difficult period of time.

Dave and his employees were then engaged by a supplier to Loblaw's to come up with a large amount of sanitizer for its workers. They were supplying those workers to make sure they were safe. They pivoted their business to stay afloat, keep the ball rolling and keep their employees employed.

Then, they found out, and we all found out, that the Government of Canada had procured hand sanitizer from countries around the world, including China. That hand sanitizer flooded the Canadian market and drove prices down. Little did Dave know, but the supplier had now outsourced a supply from somewhere else, including a foreign supply of hand sanitizer. It then suddenly cut off Dave's contract.

As we can imagine, when a company is supplying a high volume to local front-line service workers at a large chain like Loblaw's, it has to order ahead of time. It cannot just order a few days ahead or a week ahead. Therefore, Dave ordered six weeks ahead worth of sanitizer before the contract was just cut off. The foreign sanitizer that flooded the Canadian market was cheap. It was less than the cost for Dave to even afford to get his to market. Dave is now stuck with hundreds of thousands of dollars of sanitizer.

Adjournment Proceedings

I raised this question in December, and the Deputy Prime Minister referred me to her office and to her staff. In turn, they sent the regional director's contact to me, and Dave had a meeting with them. They took his contact information and said they would put it on a list, but they have not ordered any sanitizer and have not helped facilitate that to this day.

Dave is sitting on the sanitizer. Dave cannot collect the wage subsidy because, while he was selling sanitizer at cost, or even below cost, his revenue was going up, so that made him ineligible to apply for the emergency wage subsidy to support his employees. He was also excluded from the CECRA loan. Every step of the way, Dave has been excluded.

This is just another example of the government's procurement process. We need a federal procurement strategy that puts Canadians first. We hear the President in the U.S., Joe Biden, talking about an American strategy to source out local companies and keep jobs local. We are not doing that here in Canada.

The government has abandoned Dave and Wayward Distillery. If he goes out of business because he and his employees put Canadians first, it will be an absolute stain on Canada. These are heroes. I am urging the government to fix it, to fix the eligibility for its programs and to procure from Dave and the Wayward Distillery. They deserve much better. Canadians need to know that we are supporting those heroes who helped us at the beginning of this pandemic and who continue to be there for us.

• (1835)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have travelled with my hon. colleague previously, certainly pre-pandemic, to Nunavut to visit and engage with small business owners. I know how dedicated he is to small businesses in his community and right across the country.

When I listened to the story of Dave and the Wayward Distillery, I could not agree more with my colleague. They are certainly the true heroes of this pandemic and, like so many entrepreneurs and small business owners, they are clearly adapting and doing the best they can in very difficult circumstances. I would like to respond in more detail, but this is the first time I am hearing of this particular issue and I would be happy to dig into it further.

The criteria that we have put in place have received very positive feedback from the entrepreneurs I have spoken to, but I can understand how, in Dave's case, not experiencing any revenue drop means that perhaps his company, in particular, is not eligible for some of our programs. I am always happy to go through the myriad programs that our government has put in place. There are many of them, as my colleague opposite knows. Without these programs, many Canadian workers and business owners would have already closed and lost their paycheques.

We have tried to adapt and adjust our programs along the way in order to respond to specific situations. I can think of numerous examples. The rent program is, of course, one of them. We heard from opposition members, from our own caucus and from entrepreneurs across the country that certain adjustments needed to be made, and the rent subsidy now is responding exactly to what entrepreneurs on

the ground need. The program, as my colleague knows, covers 90% of rent and goes directly to the business owner, not the landlord.

Applications for that program opened very quickly. I understand that my colleague opposite originally asked about this, pointing out or very clearly criticizing the government for delays when, in reality, less than a week after we passed the legislation, it was effective. When it went to the Senate for ratification, the Senate was able to review and approve the legislation within, I believe, a single day. Right across the government, from members in the House, to the many people working behind the scenes as public servants, to senators, everybody is working in tandem to bring forward the support and assistance that we know small business owners need.

Let me continue to explain, in response to the member's question during question period, that the wage subsidy was continued until the summer. There was never, not ever, a gap in providing wage support to business owners. We moved quickly and we instituted that extension in a way that provided continuous support for all small business owners.

• (1840)

[Translation]

I hope my colleague knows that the federal government has been there since day one of the pandemic. The government is also committed to being there for as long as it takes. The government implemented—

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, the time is up. The member has one more minute to answer the question.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend. We talked and worked together to fix the rent program, although we were disappointed it was not backdated. There are gaps. We know that start-ups have been left out. We were concerned about the CERB clawback and the businesses that could go under as a result of that.

Dave is still not able to access these programs, because he did the right thing—

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. member momentarily to see if interpretation is working.

We are getting the French translation now. We will continue with the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni. If he wants to start at the top of the minute, that is fine too.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I will start at the beginning. I want to thank my hon. colleague. We have worked together on a number of issues, including the commercial rent program. We were glad to see the Liberals fix the broken program, but we were also disappointed that they did not backdate it.

We know there are gaps in the programs for start-ups and there is a CERB clawback. There are people like Dave who helped Canadians and came to our rescue. They are now excluded from the programs because their revenue has gone up, even though they did not make proper profit.

We are hoping the government will work with these individuals and find ways to get them access to the emergency programs so that we do not lose the businesses that did the right thing. We really need a strategic, socially responsible and more sustainable approach to public procurement in Canada.

Sandra Hamilton, who lived in my riding, says that the heart of the U.K. recovery strategy is procurement and aligning policy objectives with the United Nations 2030 sustainability goals. It is really important that we marry up these things, do what other countries are doing and learn from other countries. I am hoping this will be applied to procurement when it comes to recovering from COVID-19.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I am always curious to see and hear what other countries around the world are doing, so that we can learn from them and use good ideas that may exist elsewhere. I hope to continue working with my colleague to see how we can further adjust the existing programs.

[English]

I also want to remind my colleague that just this Tuesday, the Minister of Small Business announced the new HASCAP program, and as of next week, small businesses will be able—

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary because we are experiencing some gaps in interpretation. I should point out that this is in no way related to any issues with the wonderful work of the interpreters.

I ask the parliamentary secretary to finish her last few thoughts, and we will move to the next speaker.

• (1845)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I join you in thanking our incredible translators. I enjoy flipping back and forth from French to English. I hope it does not cause any anxiety in that respect.

I will finish by again thanking my colleague for raising these issues. He certainly has my commitment and that of every member of this government to continue to work hard to support small businesses, including those in his riding.

CANADA POST

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to address a number of issues facing my region.

My question last year may at first glance seem a little strange. The retirement of postmasters would not normally be a national is-

Adjournment Proceedings

sue. However, for four post office locations, that brings the possibility of permanent closure. With closures, my constituents may not be able to access things such as prescriptions, e-commerce and financial services. On this issue more needs to be done, but I do appreciate that some steps have been taken.

There are real concerns related to how the Liberal government treats rural Canada. The Liberals' attitudes toward us are infuriating. It seems that at best it is indifferent, but more often than not it is downright hostile. An example of the indifference is that I hear regularly from constituents who are simply told by government departments to go to a local federal service location for help. In some cases that is more than 300 kilometres away.

Like service delivery, rural connectivity is a huge concern. COVID has made this more relevant than ever. Although steps have been taken to address early challenges in broadband programs, I speak to rural ISPs, communities and individuals who have shared that the program is simply not responsive to their needs. Failing to address this only adds to the division between rural and urban Canada at a time when there are already deep divisions across our country. That is where the hostility we face comes in.

Rural Albertans are dealing with an unprecedented increase in crime, something the Liberals have failed to address. While the last Parliament voted to study the issue, the Liberals failed miserably on any follow-through, which is the Liberals at their finest. While the provinces attempt to take action, the revolving door of the justice system, weak penalties, troubling recidivism rates, an evolving gang culture and increases in the smuggling of illicit drug are significant issues that demand action and are compounded by economic uncertainty. Rural Canada, and specifically rural Alberta, feels left behind.

My constituents are fed up with a Liberal government that is more concerned about punishing law-abiding firearms owners than fighting crime. On that front, Liberal policies are not only hypocritical, but dangerous. Criminalizing hunters, sportsmen, farmers and ranchers does nothing to help combat crime and emboldens the real lawbreakers. It is nothing more than a costly political move that is based on blind ideology. The evidence of this hypocrisy came yesterday, when the Liberal-NDP coalition voted against a Conservative measure to increase penalties against the real problem: smuggled guns and gang violence.

Adjournment Proceedings

These ideological attacks against rural Alberta have escalated in recent months with the carbon tax, which will be \$170 a tonne, more than three times what the Prime Minister promised the carbon tax would be. Now the Liberals say they have a national mandate to impose their tax. I can assure the Prime Minister he does not. He does not have that mandate in the region I represent, nor in Alberta. It is not only bad policy and bad economics; it is fuelling regional divisions that truly threaten to tear our country apart.

The government, unfortunately, seems to be ignorant to rural issues or is intentionally fuelling divisions in our country for political gain.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought we were going to be talking about Canada Post. The member wants to talk about gun control and things of that nature. I guess he does not understand why Canadians do not support the need to have military assault-type weapons in our communities, but that is for another debate.

I want to thank the member for at least suggesting we would be talking about Canada Post. Our government understands that the services that Canada Post provides to Canadians and businesses are essential for our country and we are committed to safeguarding this iconic institution.

Canada Post has been connecting Canadians for more than 250 years. Its network of thousands of post offices across Canada serves as a vital link for many rural, remote and isolated communities, especially in our northern regions. We know that the services of Canada Post in those communities across the country are of vital importance to the well-being of Canadians and the Canadian economy. Even though more and more people communicate via email and social media, Canadians across the country continue to have a strong connection to letters and parcels from loved ones now more than ever. Every day, Canadians receive letter mail and parcels from across the globe.

As the country responds to COVID-19, Canadians turn to Canada Post to provide an important service. With people at home and businesses closed, the corporation saw a dramatic shift in what it was asked to deliver. Online shopping drove unprecedented growth in volumes of parcels.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada Post employees have been providing services to businesses that have helped keep our country going during these difficult and trying times. As Canadians across our country have stayed at home to help suppress the spread of COVID-19, they have become more reliant on the online shopping. Every day since the start of the pandemic, Canada Post has stepped up and continues to deliver all sorts of items purchased online over these past few months.

Since its very earliest days, our country's postal service has invested and evolved in order to meet the changing needs and expectations of Canadians.

This government is committed to a renewed vision for Canada Post so Canadians can continue to benefit from high-quality services at a reasonable price no matter where they live in our vast

country. One could easily question the Conservatives on what they believe Canada Post's future would look like.

In opposition, I saw Stephen Harper, as prime minister, plant the seeds of doubt for the future of Canada Post. With this government, we have reaffirmed a commitment in the need for Canada Post. This pandemic over the last number of months has clearly demonstrated the critical role Canada Post plays for Canadians, not only pre-pandemic but especially during this pandemic.

I want to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to our Canada Post workers who have done an absolutely fabulous job.

● (1850)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's response emphasizes the ignorance that the government has toward rural Canada.

On January 21, we saw the cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline. The Prime Minister gave up. He told us to move on and, like his father did decades ago, he flipped the bird to the west, while still expecting us to keep writing the cheques.

The evidence is clear that the Prime Minister has left rural Alberta behind. It seems like the Liberals are willing to use divisive national policies to drive a wedge between Alberta and the rest of Canada.

Anyone who hears this and simply claims that it is political posturing, I challenge them to come visit. They can hear for themselves the rising sentiment that I am told about daily, which is Alberta would be better off without Canada. That is heartbreaking. While the Liberals plan to silence their opponents and reimagine the economy based on flimsy ideology, I am glad to be part of the government in waiting that is ready to lead our country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if he wants to talk about the province of Alberta, I am up to talking about it any day. In fact, when he talks about the whole issue of separation, the Conservative Party of Canada has to take its responsibility more seriously in its role with respect to a federation as opposed to the divisiveness it causes by giving so much misinformation to Albertans.

This government has committed all sorts of resources to support Alberta at this time of need. It continues to work with different levels of government to ensure that not only Alberta can be in a better position, but to ensure individuals who need the help receive the help. We have invested more in infrastructure and financial support. We have had more commitment to build a pipeline to the Pacific than Stephen Harper did in his full 10 years.

The Conservatives continue to spread misinformation about what the government has done in working with others for the province of Alberta. I am proud of that work.

• (1855)

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be talking about scandals.

In March 2020, Baylis Medical entered into an agreement to produce 10,000 ventilators under a subcontract. The company was owned by Frank Baylis, a former Liberal MP. The government awarded this multi-million dollar contract without a call for bids. The ventilators cost twice as much as any other model made elsewhere.

In June 2020, Ottawa announced that WE Charity would be developing a new \$900-million program to support students. Grants of up to \$5,000 would be offered in exchange for volunteer work with a non-profit organization. The value of the contract was \$19.5 million. However, departmental officials had warned the government in a memo that WE Charity could not provide services in Quebec, although Quebec already has a large, solid network of community organizations. It would be reasonable to conclude that WE Charity served little purpose, other than perhaps serving the interests of the Liberals.

The Prime Minister's wife received over \$25,000 in fees from WE Charity, and the Prime Minister's mother and brother received \$250,000 and \$32,000 respectively for speaking at WE Charity events in 2016 and 2020. On July 22, 2020, the Minister of Finance told the committee that he had recently reimbursed WE Charity \$41,366 for trips it had paid for his family to take to Kenya and Ecuador in 2017. On August 17, 2020, the Minister of Finance announced his resignation. That was when red flags began to fly for the opposition parties, journalists and ordinary citizens. It was an absolute scandal.

We want a special committee. The Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party agreed that a special committee should be struck to shed light on these Liberal scandals. The committee would have been tasked with examining and reviewing WE Charity's actions, as well as the approval and purchase of ventilators from Baylis Medical. It is now January 28, and there is still no committee and definitely no accountability.

When there were calls for the creation of a special committee, the Liberals panicked. The government was so desperate not to shed light on the WE controversy that it was ready to fall over it. It took a vote on a special committee that would investigate the issue. All the grumbling made the Liberals wake up to the trouble they were in. When the scandal exploded in the Liberals' faces, they proposed creating a special committee to study COVID-19 spending. It is January 28, and there is still nothing. No committee was created, and there is no accountability. The grumbling did not stop. The Liberals' solution was to prorogue Parliament to avoid facing the storm.

It is January 28, and there is still no committee and certainly no accountability. We saw the end of WE Charity in September. The organization announced it was winding down operations in Canada, blaming financial troubles related to COVID-19 and the student

Adjournment Proceedings

service grant controversy. Amazingly, the entire scandal needed to be wiped off the face of the Earth.

Documents were censored. To justify the absence of the committee and the prorogation of Parliament, the Liberals claimed they had been transparent and released the documents to the opposition in committee. These documents were obviously redacted and censored, and the Liberals filibustered the committee.

I want to talk about a question that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons was asked on October 19 at 2:42 p.m. He responded:

Mr. Speaker, last night I sent a motion to my colleagues in the other parties. This morning I sent a letter talking about the creation of a committee to look at all of the expenses made by the government, because we have made a lot of effort to be there and support Canadians.

He thought that was a responsible approach.

We are here today because on November 20, 2020, at 11:52 a.m., I asked a question and pointed out that the government was blocking its own committee from studying COVID-19 spending. I said it was another blatant example of the government's lack of transparency.

Could the leader explain why he is not creating his own committee?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, right from the get-go, let me make it very clear that the Government of Canada, and particularly the Prime Minister, have been transparent since the very beginning. We have been accountable, and we have been delivering for Canadians in a very real and tangible way. We have had their backs, and we will continue to do just that.

In the spring of 2020, ministers and officials appeared numerous times at committees to give details and updates to members on the programs that were launched and the status of the effectiveness of those programs. As well, for the first time in I believe over 30 years, the House of Commons and chamber got together this past July and August for accountability. The House of Commons met. Now, the opposition will say that it was a committee, but for all intents and purposes, it was on the floor of the House of Commons in the chamber, and opposition members were provided with the opportunity to ask not only hundreds but thousands of questions with regard to the coronavirus: questions we were happy to provide answers for. That is accountability. That is not trying to hide.

Yes, committees also met, and the member talked about a filibuster. When opposition members do not like something that is happening in a committee, they talk endlessly. However, when the opposition in a minority situation brings something forward and we are not necessarily happy with it, then it is not an appropriate filibuster. They want to have it both ways.

At the end of the day, it is about accountability and transparency, and that is what we have seen from the Prime Minister of Canada. We have to put into perspective what has taken place in the past 12 months.

Adjournment Proceedings

The member made reference to a former Liberal MP getting a contract. Need I remind the House how much PPE was actually being produced in Canada at the time of the pandemic? It was a very small percentage, if any. Through supports from the government and private industry, we had a phenomenal transition, and today all sorts of things are being produced in Canada. Thousands of companies have come to the table. Some have been Liberal, some Conservative and I suspect there might even be some Bloc and New Democrat companies there. That is the reality of the situation.

Canadians have come together from coast to coast to coast and recognized that we needed a team Canada approach to deal with this pandemic, and that has not stopped the Government of Canada ensuring that there is a high sense of transparency and accountability. That is why, for the first time in 30 years, we actually had sitting days in July and August.

We continue to see the Prime Minister take Wednesdays as a full day in questions. There are all forms of other opposition days and so forth that have been brought forward to deal with the pandemic and other issues. As opposition parties collectively and individually have focused on smear tactics, we, as a government, have focused on being there for Canadians in fighting the pandemic, and working with others to make sure that we have Canadians' backs seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

● (1900)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, a lot is getting blamed on the COVID-19 pandemic and the way it was managed.

However, I think the Liberals admitted their guilt through the resignation of the finance minister, as well as the filibuster in committee and the prorogation of Parliament, which are violent, dangerous and undemocratic actions.

The government House leader himself proposed a special anti-corruption committee on October 19 at 2:44 p.m. He said:

...if [the Conservatives] want to have a committee and ask all the questions they want, we have a solution for them. I sent a note to their House leader last night

and a letter in more detail this morning. There is an option for all of us to work together.

Now, in January, nothing is happening but the threat of an election. Once again, the government wants to muzzle the opposition. Personally, I call that a dictatorship.

When will the committee finally be created to do a full investigation?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the only ones who talk about an election on the floor of the House of Commons are members from the opposition. The Conservatives and the members of the Bloc constantly want to talk about an election. They can continue to do that all they want. At the end of the day, this government, headed by this Prime Minister, will continue to focus on the pandemic and on taking the measures that are necessary in order to ensure that we have the vaccines. We have talked for weeks about that first quarter of six million vaccines, and we are on target. We will get those six million doses of vaccines.

If the opposition members want to continue talking about elections, that is their choice. We, on the other hand, will continue to focus our attention on what is important to Canadians, and I can tell the members opposite that it is the coronavirus and it is concerns about the vaccinations. We want to be there in a very real and tangible way and we are committed to building back better. That is what we have continued to say for many months now as a government, and we are committed to doing just that.

● (1905)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:06 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, January 28, 2021

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Petitions

Opioids

Mr. Scarpaleggia 3675

Sex Selection

Mrs. Wagantall 3675

Sixties Scoop

Mr. Johns 3675

Terry Fox

Ms. Damoff 3675

Human Rights

Mrs. Wagantall 3676

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. May (Saanic—Gulf Islands) 3676

Human Rights

Mr. Arnold 3676

Mr. Genuis 3676

Mrs. Gallant 3676

Mrs. Gray 3676

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 3676

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement Implementation Act

Ms. Ng 3676

Bill C-18. Second reading 3676

Ms. Alleslev 3678

Ms. Michaud 3678

Mr. Angus 3678

Ms. Bendayan 3679

Mr. Simard 3680

Mr. Blaikie 3680

Mr. Fraser 3681

Mrs. Gray 3681

Mr. Gerretsen 3683

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 3683

Ms. McPherson 3683

Mrs. Gallant 3683

Mr. Fast 3684

Ms. Bendayan 3685

Mr. Simard 3686

Mrs. Wagantall 3686

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 3686

Mrs. Wagantall 3689

Mr. Gerretsen 3689

Mr. Boulerville 3689

Mrs. Charbonneau 3690

Ms. Michaud 3690

Mr. Blaikie 3690

Mr. Lamoureux 3693

Mr. Carrie 3694

Mr. Simard 3694

Ms. McPherson 3694

Ms. Sgro 3695

Mrs. Vignola 3696

Mr. Gerretsen 3696

Mr. Sorbara 3696

Mrs. Charbonneau 3698

Ms. Ashton 3698

Mr. Maloney 3698

Mr. Aboultaif 3699

Mr. Gerretsen 3700

Ms. Pauzé 3700

Ms. McPherson 3701

Mr. Van Popta 3701

Mrs. Gray 3702

Mr. Angus 3702

Mrs. Charbonneau 3702

Mr. Lamoureux 3702

Mr. Fast 3704

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 3705

Mr. Duvall 3705

Mr. Manly 3706

Mr. Gerretsen 3706

Mr. Carrie 3706

Mr. Gerretsen 3708

Mr. Fast 3708

Mr. Manly 3708

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mental Health

Mr. Jowhari 3709

International Affairs

Mr. Morrison 3709

Emergency Services

Mr. Weiler 3709

Bell Let's Talk Day

Mr. Thériault 3709

Bell Let's Talk Day

Mr. Iacono 3709

Abbotsford Essential Workers

Mr. Fast 3710

Order of Canada

Mr. Blois 3710

Mental Health					Mr. Poilievre.....	3715
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South).....	3710				Ms. Freeland.....	3715
Agriculture					Health	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster).....	3710				Mr. Barsalou-Duval.....	3715
Tamil Heritage Month					Mr. Alghabra.....	3715
Mr. Fonseca.....	3710				Mr. Barsalou-Duval.....	3715
Religious Freedom					Mr. Fisher.....	3715
Mr. Reid.....	3711				Ms. Michaud.....	3716
Mental Health					Mr. Garneau.....	3716
Mr. Doherty.....	3711				Air Transportation	
Tu Bishvat					Mr. Steinley.....	3716
Ms. Collins.....	3711				Mr. Alghabra.....	3716
Raif Badawi					Government Programs	
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.....	3711				Mrs. Kusie.....	3716
Natural Resources					Ms. Freeland.....	3716
Mrs. Stubbs.....	3712				Public Services and Procurement	
Mental Health					Mrs. Kusie.....	3716
Ms. Dhillon.....	3712				Ms. Anand.....	3716
					Natural Resources	
					Ms. McPherson.....	3717
					Mr. O'Regan.....	3717
					Air Transportation	
					Mr. Masse.....	3717
					Mr. Alghabra.....	3717
					Public Safety	
					Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories).....	3717
					Mr. Blair.....	3717
					International Trade	
					Mr. Rayes.....	3717
					Ms. Ng.....	3717
					Mr. Rayes.....	3718
					Ms. Ng.....	3718
					Government Appointments	
					Mr. Berthold.....	3718
					Mr. Lamoureux.....	3718
					Mr. Berthold.....	3718
					Mr. Lamoureux.....	3718
					Health	
					Mrs. Vignola.....	3718
					Ms. Anand.....	3718
					Mrs. Vignola.....	3718
					Ms. Anand.....	3719
					Mr. Cumming.....	3719
					Ms. Anand.....	3719
					Mrs. Wagantall.....	3719
					Ms. Anand.....	3719
					COVID-19 Emergency Response	
					Ms. Koutrakis.....	3719
					Ms. Ng.....	3719
					Telecommunications	
					Mr. Melillo.....	3719
					Ms. Monsef.....	3720
ORAL QUESTIONS						
Natural Resources						
Mr. O'Toole.....	3712					
Ms. Freeland.....	3712					
Mr. O'Toole.....	3712					
Ms. Freeland.....	3712					
Health						
Mr. O'Toole.....	3713					
Ms. Freeland.....	3713					
Mr. O'Toole.....	3713					
Ms. Freeland.....	3713					
Mr. O'Toole.....	3713					
Ms. Freeland.....	3713					
Mr. Therrien.....	3713					
Ms. Freeland.....	3713					
Mr. Therrien.....	3713					
Ms. Freeland.....	3713					
Mr. Singh.....	3713					
Ms. Freeland.....	3714					
Mr. Singh.....	3714					
Ms. Freeland.....	3714					
Mr. Paul-Hus.....	3714					
Ms. Anand.....	3714					
Mr. Paul-Hus.....	3714					
Ms. Anand.....	3714					
Ms. Rempel Garner.....	3714					
Ms. Anand.....	3714					
Ms. Rempel Garner.....	3714					
Ms. Anand.....	3715					
The Economy						
Mr. Poilievre.....	3715					
Ms. Freeland.....	3715					

Mr. Soroka	3720
Ms. Monsef	3720
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Zimmer	3720
Mrs. Jordan	3720
Seniors	
Mr. Robillard	3720
Mrs. Schulte	3720
COVID-19 Emergency Response	
Mr. Johns	3720
Ms. Qualtrough	3721
Motorcoach Industry	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	3721
Mr. Alghabra	3721
Health	
Mrs. Wong	3721
Mr. Fisher	3721
Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Mr. G��n��reux	3721
Mr. O'Regan	3722
Business of the House	
Mr. Deltell	3722
Mr. Rodriguez	3722

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada—United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement Implementation Act	
Bill C-18. Second reading	3722
Mr. Lobb	3722
Ms. Bendayan	3724
Mr. Johns	3724
Mr. Fast	3724
Mr. Gerretsen	3725
Mr. Desilets	3726
Ms. Kwan	3726
Mr. Fast	3726
Ms. Vandenberg	3727
Mr. Trudel	3728
Mrs. Gallant	3729
Mr. Blaikie	3729
Mr. Hoback	3729

Ms. Bendayan	3731
Mr. Blaikie	3732
Mr. Lemire	3732
Ms. Alleslev	3732
Mr. Lamoureux	3733
Mr. Trudel	3734
Mr. Blaikie	3734
Mr. Dhaliwal	3734
Mr. Hoback	3735
Mr. Lemire	3736
Ms. Kwan	3736
Mr. Lefebvre	3736
Mr. Berthold	3737
Mr. Lemire	3738
Mr. Johns	3738
Mr. Lemire	3738
Ms. Alleslev	3740
Mr. Trudel	3740
Mr. Blaikie	3740

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999	
Bill C-204. Second reading	3741
Mr. Lamoureux	3741
Ms. Michaud	3741
Mr. Johns	3743
Mr. Aitchison	3745
Mr. Schiefke	3745
Mrs. Vignola	3747
Mr. Davidson	3748
Division on motion deferred	3749

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

COVID-19 Emergency Response	
Mr. Johns	3749
Ms. Bendayan	3750
Canada Post	
Mr. Kurek	3751
Mr. Lamoureux	3752
Ethics	
Mr. Lemire	3753
Mr. Lamoureux	3753

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