



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

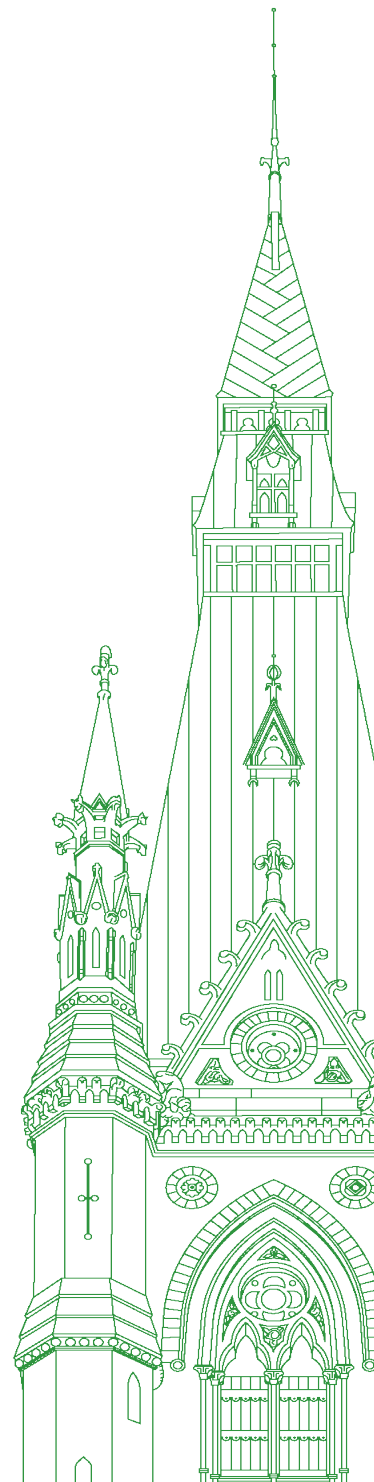
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House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 4, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if, in the opening prayer the next time, we could pray for a Governor General. At the moment, we do not actually have one, and maybe perhaps we could also offer prayers on behalf of our future Governor General.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for his input and will take that under consideration.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in relation to the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 2, regarding national human trafficking awareness day.

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-264, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (volunteer firefighting and search and rescue volunteer services).

He said: Mr. Speaker, volunteer firefighters account for 83% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responder calls. In addition, 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers respond to thousands of incidents every year. I am proud today to rise and present my private member's bill to extend tax credits currently available to volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers.

We know that many volunteer emergency responders already hold full-time jobs. They continue to volunteer and demonstrate enormous sacrifices within their communities to keep us safe. In many cases they put their lives at risk. They could be running into a

burning home to rescue someone or searching for a missing neighbour or friend they know personally.

Especially now, with an increasing number of first responder calls and the evergrowing opioid crisis, their critical role in society is even more important. This bill is the least we can do. Across the country, with the ever-increasing cost of living, local departments are struggling to recruit new volunteers to meet the needs of their communities. Extending tax credits would demonstrate that the federal government supports the work of local fire departments and search and rescue detachments and it would show appreciation for the future work of dedicated volunteers. When volunteers have our backs in times like these, it is essential that we have theirs.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine).

She said: Mr. Speaker, introducing this bill to amend the Employment Insurance Act with respect to illness, injury or quarantine on behalf of the Bloc Québécois is a poignant moment for me.

This bill will be known as the Émilie Sansfaçon act. Émilie was a young mother who left us much too soon at just 31 years of age, and this bill is the culmination of her political struggle to extend special EI benefits from 15 to 50 weeks, thereby enabling sick workers to fight with dignity.

This bill reiterates the Bloc Québécois motion calling for this change, which the House adopted last February.

All workers who are off work due to illness deserve better, and we are here for them.

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

Routine Proceedings

● (1010)

PETITIONS**GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS**

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, because transparency with respect to genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, is seriously lacking in Canada, because the government refuses to make the labelling of GMOs mandatory despite the strong consensus in Quebec and Canada, because Canada was the first country in the world to authorize the commercial production of a genetically modified animal, salmon, and Canadians were the first to consume it without their knowledge, I am pleased to present a petition today signed by 4,390 people from many groups, including Vigilance OGM, that want the government to step up and protect consumers and ecosystems.

The Speaker: Before we continue, given the long list of petitions, I would remind hon. members to be as concise as possible when presenting their petitions.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

[English]

OPIOIDS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present a petition on behalf of Christine Wingate in memory of her late son Shane.

The opioid crisis, the most deadly public health crisis of my lifetime, which claims a life every two hours in our country, has seen a significant increase as a result of COVID-19. Opioid use and other drug use that is affecting communities from coast to coast is a scourge and must be addressed by the government.

The signatories call on the government to declare the opioid crisis a national health emergency. They call on the government to develop a Canadian overdose action plan in collaboration with provinces and territories and to take the steps needed to prevent overdose deaths and injuries, particularly by looking at best practices and successful practices from other countries.

On behalf of Christine Wingate and her son Shane, it is an honour to present this petition.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be presenting a petition today highlighting the horrific persecution of Uighur Muslims in China. The petitioners call on the government to recognize that a genocide is taking place and impose Magnitsky sanctions on those involved in these horrific abuses.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition with over 5,000 names on behalf of travel advisers across Canada.

For the past year, life has not been easy for them. They have no revenue, as no one is travelling, yet they continue to spend countless hours on behalf of their clients, dealing with postponements,

re-bookings and cancellations. Now they are very concerned that an airline bailout package will force them to repay clawbacks with money they do not have.

This petition calls on the government to ensure that travel advisers' hard-earned commissions for services they have already provided will be protected from such clawbacks.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by dozens of Canadians calling on this House to formally recognize that the Uighurs in China have been subject to genocide and to use the Magnitsky act to sanction those responsible for those heinous crimes.

We know that the Chinese Communist Party is subjecting Uighur Muslims to atrocities that include birth suppression through forced sterilization, abortion, political and anti-religious indoctrination, arbitrary detention, separation of children from families, invasive surveillance, destruction of culture sites, forced labour and forced organ harvesting.

Canada's Conservatives are extremely concerned about the treatment of Uighurs and other minorities in China. We have seen the Chinese Communist Party's escalating disregard for human rights and international law, including in Hong Kong and with Tibetans, Falun Gong, Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities.

It is time for this House to join the growing international consensus and recognize that this is a genocide.

● (1015)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition I am presenting is on behalf of over 9,500 Canadians, and I want to thank Don't Forget Students for its advocacy. Post-secondary students are taking on unprecedented amounts of debt. Student debt in Canada exceeds \$36 billion, with \$18 billion owed federally, and is the cause of one in six bankruptcies.

Thirty-nine per cent of students are struggling with food insecurity as a result of the rising cost of food, housing and tuition, and during the pandemic, youth unemployment has reached an all-time high.

The petitioners are asking the government to implement a plan for pandemic relief and stimulus for Canada's post-secondary students and recent graduates, and they emphasize that the government must extend the moratorium on student loan payments.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents concerned about the Trans Mountain expansion project.

They highlight a number of important points. The cost of the project has more than doubled to \$12.6 billion, and given construction delays, will likely be much higher. Canadian tax dollars are at risk, but billions of dollars yet to be spent and could be reallocated toward ambitious investments in the clean economy, which would create much-needed jobs in sectors hard hit by the pandemic and by the downturn in the oil industry.

Petitioners are asking the government to delay further spending on Trans Mountain and to prioritize investments in clean energy now.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of petitioners who are concerned about a situation in Cameroon, a human rights and conflict situation in the anglophone areas of Cameroon. They call on Canada to pressure its allies to stop all weapon sales to Cameroon. They note that Canada is a welcome addition to the Arms Trade Treaty and ask we use our position as a party to that treaty to cease all weapon sales to Cameroon.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by approximately 1,000 people in support of a petition started by Stéphane Handfield.

We have learned from Mathieu Paiement's documentary, *Les poussières de Daech*, that there are children with a Canadian parent who are currently trapped in refugee camps in northeastern Syria. They are living in extremely poor and even inhumane conditions. These children could be brought back to Canada. There are families who are asking that it be done. In fact, a young girl was brought back to Canada last fall.

These children are innocent and have the right to a good life. Canada needs to meet its obligations under international conventions. These people are calling for the federal government to take action and bring Canadian children who are trapped in refugee camps in Syria back to Canada.

[English]

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege to table e-petition 2846, signed by over 2,655 Canadians. The petitioners cite that volunteer firefighters account for 83% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responders. In addition, 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers respond to thousands of incidents every year.

Currently, the tax code allows volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if 200 hours of volunteer hours are completed in a calendar year. This works out to a mere \$450 per year that we allow these essential volunteers to

Routine Proceedings

keep as their own income, which equates to about \$2.25 an hour. They not only put their lives on the line and give their time for training to protect Canadians, but they also allow cities and municipalities to keep property taxes low.

Petitioners cite that increasing this tax credit would allow these essential volunteers to keep more of their hard-earned money, likely to be spent in the communities in which they serve, and it would also help in retaining these volunteers in a time when volunteerism is decreasing. The petitioners are calling on the government to increase the tax exemption from \$3,000 to \$10,000. This was reflected in the bill I tabled this morning.

• (1020)

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of over 500 of my constituents who are gravely concerned about the operation of a racetrack that was set up last summer at the St. Andrews Airport.

The St. Andrews Airport used to be owned by the federal government and still falls under federal jurisdiction. The petitioners have complained multiple times to the Municipality of St. Andrews, but there has been no clarity or decision made by the Municipality, even though the Municipality is the owner of the airport, on whether this racetrack is permitted under municipal bylaws or whether the airport authority should allow it to exist.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to provide clarity, under the transport regulations, on whether a racetrack on an airport property fits into aerodrome regulations.

The petitioners ask that the House petition the Minister of Transport directly to provide the clarity required by my constituents so there can be an ultimate decision made on the legitimate operation of a drag strip on an airport runway.

OPIOID CRISIS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today organized by Katherine Steinhoff in memory of her son Simon. It calls on the government to declare an opioid crisis, which is one of the deadliest public health emergencies of our lifetime. One death is taking place on average every hour, and the death toll has been 15,400 in the last four years alone. Petitioners call on the government to declare this a national emergency and immediately collaborate with the provinces and territories to establish a pan-Canadian action plan to end overdose deaths and injuries.

RAIL WORKER SAFETY

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present the petition calling for an independent investigation into the killing of Dylan Paradis, Andrew Dockrell and Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer on CP Train 301 near Field, B.C., in 2019.

Business of Supply

Today is the second anniversary of their deaths and many of us share our thoughts with the three families. This petition, signed by thousands of Canadians, pushes for justice. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the families and Teamsters Canada, an independent investigation has begun. As CBC's *The Fifth Estate* made clear, many have said there must be answers.

The petition also makes clear that this tragedy pointed to the major concerns of the ongoing policing of rail forces. Through this petition, Canadians are saying Dylan, Andrew and Daniel, rail workers and working people in our country, deserve justice. No Canadian worker should die to make a living.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

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, if a revised response to Question No. 344, originally tabled on January 25, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 344—**Mr. Alex Ruff:**

With regard to applications received by the government for a new Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL) or a new Restricted Possession and Acquisition Licence (RPAL), during the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) what was the exact date when new applications for PALs and RPALs (i) stopped being processed during the pandemic, (ii) began being processed again; and (b) how many new (i) PAL, (ii) RPAL applications were processed between March 15, 2020, and December 1, 2020, broken down by week?

(Return tabled)

* * *

[English]

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 remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1030)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROPOSED SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CANADA-UNITED STATES ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC) moved:

That, given that trade between Canada and the United States of America exceeds \$1.5-billion per day, more than 300,000 people normally cross the common

border monthly, the two countries have enjoyed one of the world's largest open trading blocs for the free movement of goods, services and people since 1989, the economic challenges caused by COVID-19, and the need for a serious plan for the economic recovery that recognizes the integration of the North American economy, the House appoint a special committee with the mandate to conduct hearings to examine and review all aspects of the economic relationship between Canada and the United States, including, but not limited to

- (i) the expressed bilateral economic priorities of the governments of Canada and the United States,
- (ii) natural resources issues, including oil and gas exports and transportation, softwood lumber exports, and related jobs,
- (iii) "Buy America" procurement rules, requirements and policies,
- (iv) the government's efforts with the United States' administration to ensure a stable and predictable supply of COVID-19 vaccine doses for Canada as a major border and trading partner,

provided that:

- (a) the committee be composed of 12 members, of which six shall be from the government party, four shall be from the official opposition, one shall be from the Bloc Québécois, and one shall be from the New Democratic Party;
- (b) the members shall be named by their respective whip by depositing with the Clerk of the House the list of their members to serve on the committee no later than Thursday, February 18, 2021;
- (c) membership substitutions be permitted, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2);
- (d) changes to the membership of the committee shall be effective immediately after notification by the relevant whip has been filed with the Clerk of the House;
- (e) the Clerk of the House shall convene an organization meeting of the committee on Tuesday, February 23, 2021;
- (f) the committee be chaired by a member of the government party and, notwithstanding Standing Order 106(2), there shall be one vice-chair from each of the other recognized parties;
- (g) quorum of the committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118 and that the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government party;
- (h) the committee be granted all of the powers of a standing committee, as provided in the Standing Orders, provided that (i) the provisions of Standing Order 106(4) shall also extend to the committee, (ii) until Sunday, April 11, 2021, the committee shall not meet on a day when the House is sitting, except for (A) the meeting required by paragraph (e), (B) the committee's subcommittee on agenda, if one is appointed;
- (i) the committee have the power to authorize video and audio broadcasting of any or all of its proceedings;
- (j) the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, the Ambassador of Canada to the United States of America, and other ministers and senior officials be invited to appear as witnesses from time to time as the committee sees fit;

(k) the committee be instructed to present an interim report, concerning an analysis of the importance of the Enbridge Line 5 pipeline to both countries' economies and the consequences of its possible closure, including the labour market implications caused by layoffs of unionized and other workers, together with recommendations to address and safeguard Canadian interests, no later than Thursday, April 15, 2021;

(l) the committee be instructed to present a second interim report, concerning current and proposed "Buy America" procurement rules, requirements and policies, together with recommendations to address and safeguard Canadian interests, no later than Thursday, June 17, 2021; and

(m) the provisions of the order adopted on Monday, January 25, 2021, authorizing virtual and hybrid committee proceedings, shall continue to apply to the committee and any of its subcommittees until Sunday, September 19, 2021.

She said: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

I am proud today to speak on our official opposition day and bring forward a Conservative motion to create a special committee worthy of our focus, which is the economic relationship between Canada and the United States. It is long past the time when the government was being proactive rather than reactive in terms of our relationship with the United States, but the motion before the House today will allow us to do exactly that.

Trade between Canada and the U.S. exceeds \$1.5 billion per day. Our partnership with the United States is of critical importance. Our two countries share more than a just a border. We share common ideals, and many Canadians and Americans work and live across our borders and have family or friends who reside on the other side of the border. Their lives are integrated. Our business relationships provide countless jobs across the country with our two-way trade.

Since the ratification of NAFTA in 1994, and more recently with CUSMA, our two nations have enjoyed the benefits of the free movement of goods, services and people. It is a strong relationship that has become only stronger over time. However, like every relationship, it takes effort and work.

I know many of my colleagues today will speak on a wide range of challenges that affect different sectors across our country, some old and some new, which highlight the need for this committee.

We have had Keystone XL cancelled and other pipeline issues, such as Line 5, which may lead to immediate fuel shortages in Ontario and Quebec, higher fuel prices and the loss of thousands of jobs; tariff issues; disputes on softwood lumber, dairy, and aluminum; low-priced Washington apples being dumped into Canada; stricter buy American policies; and investigations on several of our fruit and vegetable exports to the U.S.

We need strategic focus. Most of us on this side of the House come from the private sector. We have been entrepreneurs. We have founded and operated companies. We have been in senior leadership roles. We have been involved in strategic planning and risk management, and we have been responsible for people's livelihoods. We have foregone pay cheques ourselves to make sure our workers, who often become our friends, get paid.

We take seriously people being able to keep their jobs and support their families. Leadership is acknowledging when there are areas that need focus. It is common practice and good governance to put extra effort into important topics.

Striking this committee would be comparable in the business environment to an ad hoc committee, which would have a specific goal or focus and exist for a set amount of time. At the international trade committee we already have several studies cued up. We are quite behind due to sitting only once between April and September 2020, partially due to the prorogation of Parliament. Other committees are in a similar position.

This Canada-U.S. committee would allow the freedom to focus on the important relationship with this partner. There is a new U.S.

Business of Supply

administration from which we have already seen some new policies that are affecting businesses and workers in Canada, and that are affecting everyday lives in important sectors.

Our economies and supply chains are integrated, and I will explain what that really means. We may have the raw materials in one country, let us say the U.S., which are shipped to the other country, Canada, where a product is made in a Canadian business, and then sent back to the U.S. and perhaps turned into another item. This is the integration of our supply chains. This happens every day across our border in multiple industries, likely in the ridings of almost every member of the House.

The Prime Minister's response to important Canada-U.S. economic issues has been concern or disappointment. Canadian businesses and workers deserve hope and plans. Concern and disappointment are not enough, and they are neither a strategy nor a plan.

One emerging issue is the new buy American executive order signed by President Biden, which has stronger language than we have seen before. This executive order creates a new made in America office within the President's office. It will substantially reduce the ability for Canadian businesses to participate in U.S. government procurement contracts.

We have already heard from business groups that are concerned, and there is a lot of uncertainty. A small manufacturing business in my riding explained to me that they sell through a distributor in the U.S., which sells to a department of the U.S. federal government. It is unclear if this new buy American policy will outright stop them being able to have these sales.

● (1035)

In 2019, Canadian companies had nearly 700 million dollars' worth of government contracts in the United States. I spoke with a representative of an industry association the other day who thought this might actually be higher due to the integration of our supply chains.

When buy America provisions were announced by the Obama administration a decade ago, the previous Conservative government got to work. They showed those on both sides of the border the importance of the integrated North American supply chain and that promoting and ensuring our mutual economic recoveries were important during the financial crisis of that time. The then Conservative government negotiated an agreement that allowed Canadian companies to be exempt from buy America policies and to continue participating in U.S. government procurement.

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We need our current government to work immediately to do the same to ensure stability for our local manufacturing businesses and workers, who depend on this cross-border supply chain. We are in a vulnerable position because, while the buy America policy is addressed in chapter 13 of CUSMA, Canada did not negotiate this and it only applies to the U.S. and Mexico.

The establishment of a special committee on Canada-U.S. economic relations would allow members of Parliament to do a comprehensive dive into the Biden administration's buy America rules. This motion before us specifically addresses instructing the committee to present an interim report on this matter.

Regarding another emerging issue in the past, 31 of my colleagues in the official opposition and I sent a letter to the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food urging immediate government attention. Last September, the United States International Trade Commission began an investigation on U.S. blueberry imports. Additional investigations began on strawberries and bell peppers. Canada was the fourth-largest producer of total U.S. blueberry imports in 2019 and, according to the BC Blueberry Council, was the largest supplier of frozen blueberries. These numbers represent \$750 million of our exports to the U.S., which support 8,300 farming families and thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

Our hard-working farmers play an integral role in the economy, and we urge the government for immediate action on this. Apple orchardists in my riding are selling below cost due to large quantities of low-priced apples coming in from the U.S., and many are near bankruptcy. The creation of this special committee would allow us to get ahead of these issues.

We also cannot forget that our forestry workers are still looking for stability and a resolution to the current softwood lumber dispute. The previous Conservative government successfully negotiated a softwood lumber agreement with the U.S. government providing this much-needed certainty. Unfortunately, the current government has yet to reach a similar agreement. While I welcome reduced duties on Canadian softwood lumber exports, which were announced last November, this would not have been an issue if we had been able to negotiate a new softwood lumber agreement with the United States.

When we were debating Bill C-4, the CUSMA implementation bill, around this same time last year, I recall the Conservatives raised the issue of the softwood lumber dispute not being addressed by the government then. This was a missed opportunity, as there were over 6,000 jobs lost in the second quarter of 2020 alone.

In my maiden speech of this House in 2019, I raised the issue of the only lumber mill in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, the Kelowna division of Tolko, announcing its decision to close at the beginning of 2020, creating hardship for all those families. This has been a trend in our resource sectors. It is important that we stand up for our responsible resource sectors, a backbone of our economy. We need to get the government to succeed in removing countervailing measures on softwood lumber exports and stand up for Canadian resources, agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

I know my colleagues in this House across all party lines will talk on a number of important issues. I will move this conversation forward. We are talking about food security, energy security and mutual economic recovery. With the establishment of this committee, we can strengthen our resolve when acting on the best interests of Canadians.

We must start planning to rebuild, reopen our economy and get Canadians back to work. We are focused on securing jobs, our economy and our future. I encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this motion, so we can get to work.

• (1040)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing forward her motion today to discuss what is indeed an extremely important topic. Two billion dollars' worth of trade happens on a daily basis between our country and the United States. Indeed, we do not have, and have not had, the benefit of such an important trading relationship with any other country in the world.

I would add that in the previous session this government negotiated very successfully the new version of NAFTA, despite the fact that the Conservative leader at the time was asking the government to capitulate at almost every turn.

Having said that, this is a great opportunity to get parliamentarians involved in the process. I, for one, hope that this committee can get formed so that we can get to work on behalf of Canadians.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it is really good to hear those words.

As I mentioned in my speech, this is a very important issue to Canadians across the country. In every riding, we have so many industries that consider our relationship with the United States to be very important, so it is great to hear that we have other members of the House who consider it important as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I particularly appreciated the part about the forestry industry.

As we know, the forestry industry has always been overlooked by the Canadian federation when it comes to both trade negotiations and financial support. In that regard, many forestry industry stakeholders are saying that they want to see the dispute with the United States before the trade tribunals through to the end but that the big problem is access to cash.

I have never heard my Conservative colleagues comment on that. Would they support implementing a real access to cash program for forestry producers?

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, when we look at the forestry sector, we can certainly see that it is across the country. We know that it has had a number of struggles over the years, and we know that there have been many layoffs.

We also know that it is a really responsible steward of the land. I spoke with some forestry groups recently in British Columbia, and they had planted over 300 million trees in the last year. This is definitely a renewable resource, and it is something that we need to focus on.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today. I am particularly thankful that my colleague brought up the issue of jobs and prosperity. Obviously, in my province of Alberta this is a very pressing issue. I also applaud her and her party for bringing forward this opposition day motion.

My questions concern why she feels this work cannot be accomplished within the Standing Committee on International Trade, why the motion explicitly directs this committee, and why we would not want the committee to have the ability to direct its own work.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, in a lot of the committees the workload is really heavy already. We have so many issues that we are dealing with. The international trade committee had only one meeting from April until September. We have a lot of studies already in the queue, and this motion is greater than this.

This would cover most sectors and most of our ridings. It is extremely important, and to have a number of very specific parameters in the motion means that we would be addressing the emerging issues we are dealing with today. The scope would be very clear, so we could hit the ground running on some of these very important issues, which are important to Canadians.

• (1045)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country for her excellent speech. I thank her, as well as the leader of the official opposition, for moving the motion we are debating this morning, which would create a special committee to examine the economic relationship between Canada and the United States.

For more than 200 years, our two relatively young countries have been very prosperous in large part because of shared resources representing trade estimated at \$1.5 billion per day. Until recently, 300,000 people crossed our common border monthly. We shared and traded not just raw materials but also manufactured goods and expertise in many specialized fields.

It is a symbiotic and reciprocal relationship in most cases. In 2019, the United States sold us \$360 billion in goods and services,

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and Canada sold the U.S. \$358 billion in goods and services. It is a two-way relationship that was going relatively well.

However, we cannot take anything for granted. Often there is a protectionist undercurrent, which hits Canada hard every time, after the elections that are held every two years in the country of Uncle Sam, and even after the election of a new president, as we saw this year. The good relationship that we have been relying on for so long is challenged and some sectors of the economy end up targeted by bans or new punitive tariffs whose only purpose is to look good with a small minority of the American electorate or a well-organized lobby. It is unfortunate, but it happens.

I believe the new special committee we are proposing would allow Canada to set the record straight on trade and ensure that our country is not the victim of punitive measures, most of which are absolutely not deserved.

The existing Standing Committee on International Trade is very important for the Canadian economy and I commend those of my colleagues who are members. However, contentious issues between Canada and the United States are starting to pile up and could jeopardize the economic recovery we are counting on once this taxing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us.

Allow me to name a few, starting with the softwood lumber tariffs, which affected the forestry industry across Quebec and Canada. Some companies in my riding were hit very hard. Lumber exports from Groupe Lebel in Rivière-du-Loup, Maibec and Matériaux Blanchet in Saint-Pamphile, and Bois Daaquam in Saint-Just-de-Bretenières were all unfairly slapped with a 20% U.S. customs tariff. Although these tariffs were ultimately lowered to 10%, they still cost companies like Groupe Lebel \$1.5 million a month.

We are a long way from the agreement the Harper government signed in 2006, which gave the forestry industry 10 years of stability and predictability. Canada's forestry industry did not present a threat to American producers; it helped them meet the ever-growing demand. Between 2001 and 2015, before the tariffs were imposed, the American forestry industry experienced a 10% increase in demand, and demand for softwood lumber increased by 21%.

Despite the pandemic, 841,000 new residential construction projects got off the ground in the United States in 2020, which caused the demand for wood and its price to skyrocket. The U.S. forestry sector is not in crisis and Canada is certainly not going to drive down the prices, since it is only responding to demand. However, the Liberal government is just washing its hands of the whole issue and allowing the tariffs dispute to drag on in the courts, causing further delays. We believe it is important for the government to step up and commit to settling this dispute quickly with the new Biden administration.

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There is also the whole Buy America issue when it comes to transportation and infrastructure, which I have raised in the past. According to U.S. rules, when a public transit network in the United States receives federal funding, it is required to buy equipment containing a minimum percentage of American content, sometimes even as much as 70%. Favouritism happens in the U.S., but not in Canada. In 2018, I raised this inequity, noting that the Liberal government, here in Canada, awarded a major contract to procure Via Rail cars from Siemens, cars that are built in California. This is in addition to Ottawa's light rail cars that were built in New York.

• (1050)

It is this government's duty to defend free access to the U.S. market especially for products we need, like vaccines. We also want the people of Maine and other U.S. states to have free access to the Canadian market.

Many Canadians welcomed the election of President Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris south of the border. Incidentally, she used to live in Montreal. After four years of "America First" and treaties constantly being disputed by the former president, we were hoping for a bit of calm and predictability.

Once again, however, the Prime Minister of Canada lacked the clout to get things done, and, in less time than it takes to say "Buy America", President Biden issued new executive orders disregarding the special relationship we supposedly have enjoyed as neighbours and allies for decades. Such failures threaten Canada's economic future, and we must act quickly to defend our interests.

Several of my colleagues will address the issue of the energy industry, but I want to say loud and clear how important it is.

Keystone XL was vital for maintaining and growing Canada's revenues for a resource that will remain essential for at least 50 years, no matter what anyone says. It is unacceptable that Canada is letting tens of billions of dollars go to other countries every year, when we need that money here to fund our health care system, old age pensions and all the other services. Although members of other parties keep crying out for those things, they continue to oppose any development that would actually help fund them.

Canadians should also be worried about Enbridge Line 5 through Michigan, since it serves not only to export our oil to the United States, but also to supply southern Ontario and regions as far as Montreal. Without this safe, efficient way to supply our refineries, we could see even more ships on the St. Lawrence River in the future, close to home, which would be catastrophic. Not only would this bring us our quest for energy self-sufficiency to a standstill, but it would mean a step backwards in terms of environmental risks.

A special committee on Canada-U.S. economic relations would allow us to study all pressing issues related to international trade. The Leader of the Opposition's motion calls for this committee to convene its first meeting very soon, on February 23, since the situation is urgent.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was transport minister at the time, responded that we had no choice because of our free trade agreements with the United States. If I understand his reasoning,

we cannot sell them our trains, but we will be required to purchase theirs.

The Conservative Party is not a protectionist party. We know that customs tariffs cause damage on both sides of the border because they inflate prices for everyone. We do not want to take work away from the United States. We want to join forces and share the knowledge we have acquired over the years in rail transportation.

Not only do we have the Bombardier Transport plant in La Pocatière, which was recently acquired by Alstom, but we also have a wide range of suppliers, such as Prelco, in Rivière-du-Loup; Technologies Lanka and Graphie 222, in La Pocatière; the LG Cloutier Group, in L'Islet; and Usines métallurgiques and Chabot Carrosserie, in Montmagny. Each of these businesses has spent years perfecting the parts that they supply. This is a topic I am quite familiar with.

I want to add that in light of what my colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country said earlier in response to a question from the member for Edmonton Strathcona, the existing committees are all running behind on their work. This committee must be created as quickly as possible so we can ensure good governance in our relations with the United States in the coming months and years.

• (1055)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, since my colleague had such a lot to say about the forestry industry, I would like to ask him two quick questions about it.

The first went unanswered earlier. My colleague mentioned a softwood lumber company in his riding. Does he agree that the government should create a good program to help such companies access cash, which is what all industry stakeholders want?

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources has now spent six meetings studying the forestry sector. Clearly, the solution involves creating a cluster of bioproducts to generate new market opportunities for the forestry industry. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be a priority for the Conservatives, because every time we raise the subject, they only want to talk about the clean fuel standard.

My second question is this: Does my colleague think his colleagues could benefit from gaining a better understanding of the forestry industry?

Mr. Bernard Gagné: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I agree with him on the matter of cash flow for forestry companies. We need to look at that from the perspective of our domestic relationship, the relationship that we have within Canada, in order to support our industry, and from the perspective of the relationship that we have with the United States. All of the penalties and taxation rights imposed by the United States in recent years were extremely harmful to the industry. I believe that things have evened out a little now because the price of wood has skyrocketed over the last few weeks and months. However, the fact remains that we need to tackle these problems domestically.

[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.): Madam Speaker, Canada and the United States enjoy one of the most unique relationships in the world. As has been pointed out, there is \$2 billion a day in cross-border trade. Our two countries enjoy the largest trading relationship likely in the world, so I can understand and appreciate the need to monitor it and be careful as we move forward with that very important relationship.

On the trade agreement the Conservative Party supported, does he believe there are any shortcomings that he would like to highlight at this time?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Gagnéux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I did not talk about the agricultural industry, for example, which is still extremely upset about the most recent agreement with the United States. That agreement contains provisions that are very biased, or at least very difficult for dairy producers to manage.

This is the type of issue that could be quickly examined so that we can lay the foundation for a future renegotiation with the United States on agricultural issues.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He mentioned the United States' Buy American Act. What does he think about the possibility of a "Buy Canadian Act"? For public transportation and aerospace projects in particular, the percentage of the labour that is done here in Quebec or in Canada is much lower than what other countries require.

Why should we not have similar measures to protect and maintain jobs here at home?

Mr. Bernard Gagnéux: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question.

The fact is that Canada is a small country. Internationally, it is a minor supplier, especially in the transportation industry. We should seek to have those percentages lowered in the United States and other countries, so we can be viable partners for them. For the last decade and a half, our region has really suffered because of the Buy American Act, and it has gotten worse in recent years.

Unfortunately, I do not think a new "Buy Canadian Act" would make things better or change our situation globally.

• (1100)

[English]

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the motion today. Canada and the United States have long enjoyed one of the most productive, collaborative and mutually beneficial bilateral relationships in the world. It is a partnership of neighbours forged by geography, ennobled by shared values, enriched by common interests, maintained through deep people-to-people connections and reflected in powerful economic and security ties.

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Our two countries enjoy the largest trading relationship in the world. We defend and protect North America. We are stewards of our shared environment. We stand on the world stage to respond to pressing global challenges together. This has been true over the course of history. It is true today and it will be true in the days and years to come.

These are not merely words or abstractions. This deep relationship between our two countries is reflected in the relationship between our leaders. Just two weeks ago, President Biden made Canada his choice as his first call to a foreign leader. Together, the Prime Minister and the President reaffirmed our shared values and interests both at home and on the global stage.

Just this past Monday, the Prime Minister spoke with Vice-President Kamala Harris, also her first call to a foreign leader. As many members of this chamber know, the Vice-President has a special relationship with Canada. She recalled her years spent in my hometown of Montreal with fondness. In fact, she went to school in my riding.

I spoke to my counterpart, Secretary Blinken, almost immediately after his appointment, when we reaffirmed the special relationship our countries shared and committed to working together on our shared priorities.

This personal connection is something I share. I spent many memorable years living in the United States, where I trained alongside American astronauts and where my children were born.

[Translation]

If I may begin by talking about COVID-19, the fundamental priority we share with the United States is to end the global pandemic. The spread of COVID-19 has caused upheaval in both Canada and the United States, and we have taken unprecedented action to combat the pandemic, support our citizens and stabilize both economies.

The pandemic has also highlighted how our important and unique bilateral relationship has shaped the way we have managed our co-operation in these uncertain times. Last March, Canada and the United States arrived at a far-reaching agreement to limit discretionary travel across the border, an understanding that has been extended several times by mutual agreement. The magnitude of this decision cannot be overstated. Ours is one of the busiest land borders in the world, with approximately 400,000 people crossing it on any given day.

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The smooth flow of people and goods across this border is vitally important to both economies and communities on both sides. In the face of such high stakes, our two countries collaborated in an orderly fashion and quickly arrived at an agreement aimed at limiting the spread of the virus. The agreement has resulted in a 90% reduction in the number of travellers crossing the border while maintaining the flow of essential goods and travellers.

This collaboration set the tone for subsequent co-operation in getting our citizens home, ensuring the continued operation of our supply chains or assisting each other in the production and procurement of medical supplies and other essential goods. A striking example has been our co-operation to procure personal protective equipment, or PPE. As in so many other countries, Canada-U.S. trade in PPE is bilateral and reciprocal. Our collaboration allowed for the smooth flow of PPE across the border and into the hands of health care workers in both countries.

Canadian and American partners are also working together and investing in research to fight the virus with collaboration on 15 different diagnostic and vaccine projects.

• (1105)

[English]

Let me say a few words about our trading relationship with the United States.

In 2019, bilateral trade of goods and services totalled \$997 billion. That is more than \$2.7 billion in trade every day. Our level of economic integration is unique. Approximately 77% of Canadian exports to the U.S. are inputs used to make goods in the U.S. In addition, what we sell to the U.S. contains, on average, roughly 21% American content. We make things together and add value together. Canada is the number one market for most U.S. states, 32 in fact in 2019, and over 74% of Canada's goods exports go to the U.S.

The U.S. is the single greatest investor in Canada. In 2019, U.S. stock investment in Canada was \$455 billion, representing nearly half of all investment in Canada.

The enduring trade relationship that has helped build this remarkable regional economic engine, starting with the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in 1989 and continuing with the NAFTA agreement in 1994, has been a model of success for the world. Over generations, Canada, the United States and Mexico have built the biggest economic region in the world, encompassing a \$32.2 trillion regional economic market, representing more than 492 million consumers.

We renewed our commitment to the trilateral commercial relationship with the entry into force of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, CUSMA. This new NAFTA addresses modern trade challenges, reduces red tape at the border and provides enhanced predictability and stability for workers and businesses across the integrated North American market. Crucially, the new agreement preserves virtually duty-free trade in North America and ensures the continued predictable and secure market access for Canadian exporters to the United States. These outcomes reinforce integrated North American supply chains and help enhance our competitiveness globally.

[Translation]

Of course, the government also recognizes the critical role energy plays in our trade relationship. Jobs, economic security and competitiveness on both sides of the border depend on our bilateral energy trade. Canada and the United States have a unique energy relationship. We know that the United States is Canada's most important market for energy. In turn, Canada is the largest and most secure foreign source of energy for the United States, including crude oil, natural gas, hydroelectricity and uranium.

In 2019, 91% of Canada's energy exports were destined for the U.S., totalling nearly \$125 billion in value. The reverse was also true. Canada is the second-largest market for U.S. energy exports, and these exports play an important role in ensuring Canada has a reliable and secure energy supply.

The truth is that Canada and the U.S. have a highly integrated energy infrastructure system, which allows for the optimization of current global competitiveness, benefiting both Canada and the U.S. We know that the energy sector provides thousands of well-paying, middle-class jobs on both sides of the border.

[English]

An essential element of this energy system is a cross-border energy infrastructure, including pipelines. As the Prime Minister said directly to President Biden during their call two weeks ago, "we are disappointed but acknowledge the President's decision to fulfill his election campaign promise on Keystone XL."

This said, the Canadian oil industry moves through over 70 pipelines, creating one of the most integrated energy systems between two countries. We will continue to make the case that to continue to deliver and enhance the benefits of Canadian oil and gas to the U.S. we need to build and maintain the necessary infrastructure to get products where they are needed.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention our ongoing legal challenges related to Line 5. Our government has been clear. This pipeline, including the tunnel project under the Straits of Mackinac, is crucial to economic and energy security on both sides of the border. There is no question of Line 5's importance. It supports thousands of jobs in Ontario, Quebec and western Canada. It is essential for keeping the lights and heat on for thousands of Canadians and Americans. It provides a critically important fuel source for farmers and industry.

• (1110)

Line 5 has been operating safely for 68 years. A comprehensive nine-month review concluded that it would not affect protected public uses of Michigan's water resources. Even Michigan state's own environmental body has said that the project is safe.

These are the arguments our government has been raising with American officials and we are using every tool at our disposal to see to it that Line 5 continues its operation. We continue to promote our other sources of energy as well.

On electricity, exports of Canadian hydroelectricity provide clean, renewable, firm 24/7 baseload to many U.S. states. Electricity crosses the U.S.-Canada border along more than 30 major transmission lines, unrestricted by physical barriers, as part of an effective, efficient and highly integrated North American energy grid.

This highly integrated system benefits both Canada and the United States. Operators consistently take advantage of spare energy capacity in neighbouring jurisdictions to optimize their own systems. Ratepayers benefit from a more reliable and resilient electrical system that spans the international border.

[Translation]

Canadian hydro also contributes to U.S. energy security and helps states meet critical greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and move to a low-carbon economy.

Canada is also a leader in nuclear energy. Canada supplies the U.S. with 33% of the fuel used for its reactors, which in turn generate one-fifth of U.S. electricity. Industry and government in both countries are also collaborating on developing advanced nuclear technology, including the next-generation small modular reactors.

In the current context of a global pandemic, it is clearly more important than ever that we work closely to ensure a secure, reliable, sustainable supply of energy sources for North America and the world.

Of course, energy security is only one important factor in our region's safety and overall security. Canada and the United States work closely together in the area of national and international defence.

Canadians and Americans have depended on each other for decades. From the Halifax explosion to the beaches of northern France in World War II, from the hours and days following the September 11, 2001, attacks to the wildfires that devastated California and Oregon last fall, Canadians and Americans have faced the great challenges of the continent and the world side by side.

Today, hundreds of members of the Canadian Armed Forces continue to serve alongside their U.S. allies across America and around the world. The job of protecting the North American homeland continues under the watchful eye of Canadian and American aviators, sailors, soldiers, police officers and firefighters.

[English]

A further element that unites us is our shared natural environment.

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For example, Canada and the U.S. share many waterways that mark or cross our shared border from the Great Lakes to rivers such as the mighty St. Lawrence. The shores of these lakes and rivers are home to tens of millions of Americans and Canadians, and decisions made within the basins of one country have consequences for the other. Hence, their joint stewardship is a cornerstone of Canada-U.S. relations.

Finally, despite so much progress together, we must acknowledge that our societies face similar difficulties and shameful legacies. Canadians continue to grieve alongside our American friends at the countless victims of police violence around the world. These are not isolated incidents or elsewhere problems.

Prejudice, discrimination and violence are a lived reality for too many people in Canada, just as they are elsewhere. In the face of these injustices we must be clear. We condemn anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination in all its forms. That is what thousands of principled Americans and Canadians have been doing throughout our two countries and we continue to admire and honour their work.

• (1115)

We hear the same calls for a more inclusive and just society here in Canada, where systemic racism is a problem every single day. Canada is not a bystander. As neighbours, this is a burden our two societies share, and we must do better together. Indeed, when the Prime Minister spoke with the vice-president this past Monday, he underscored the need to promote diversity, inclusion and mental health, as well as the importance of addressing online hate, firearms trafficking and gender-based violence. Just yesterday, we listed the white supremacist group the Proud Boys, and others, as a terrorist organization. Our fight against the forces of intolerance and racism is unequivocal.

It is clear that the Canada-U.S. relationship can withstand and even grow in the context of extraordinary challenges. After all, our relationship is a model for the world.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister and President Biden agreed to meet to further the important work of renewing the close and enduring friendship between Canada and the United States. Canada is pleased that this meeting will be taking place and is looking forward to future co-operation.

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It is crucial to find partners that we can trust and who will stand by us, even amid the world's relentless challenges. For Canada and the U.S., those partners are each other. We will remain partners, friends, allies and neighbours.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, can the minister update the House on the progress of negotiations with the U.S. administration on the buy American provisions? First of all, are those discussions ongoing, and has it been made clear to the United States administration that we are looking for an exemption for Canada under the buy American provisions?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Speaker, as with the very successful negotiations of CUSMA under the previous administration, Canada has always forcefully put forward its position with respect to the highly integrated supply chain architecture that exists between our two countries, and I gave some examples in my presentation.

We will continue to do that. We believe that open, transparent trade between the two countries is in both of our interests. We will continue to carry that message not only to the federal administration but also to governors and other American politicians to ensure that protectionism does not creep into the relationship between the two countries. Of course, that process has begun with the new administration.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech. He touched on a number of issues, but I want to come back to the executive order.

The president of the Manufacturiers et Exportateurs du Québec wants the government to review its public procurement policies and require that an American company have a foothold here to meet the conditions of calls for tenders.

Would the Liberal government be willing to make that kind of commitment?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As with any important relationship between two countries, we will work together to advance the values that are important to Canada and our interests. When it comes to trade, it is particularly important that the United States recognize how highly integrated our supply chains are. There are certain aspects that are more important to us, such as supply management. The Americans also have certain areas that they like to protect but, generally, it is in the interest of both countries to have open trade.

• (1120)

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is my first opportunity to speak to the new Minister of Foreign Affairs since he was named to that portfolio and left the transportation portfolio. I congratulate him.

My question relates to Line 5. I have not had a chance to speak to that issue. It is obviously not a climate issue that the Government of Michigan is concerned about. It is a water quality issue in the Strait of Mackinac and, of course, Canada shares responsibility for water quality in the Great Lakes. The local concerns are that the pipeline is quite old and could break and contaminate the Great Lakes. It is not a pipeline that carries bitumen for export; this is a pipeline that essentially crosses the United States to reach refineries in Canada.

Has the Government of Canada been working with Enbridge at all to assist in finding an alternative to the underwater pipeline in the Great Lakes such that it would address the water quality concerns?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her comments about my new appointment.

Of course, as the member knows, this pipeline has been in place for 68 years. It is regularly examined to ensure that it is safe, particularly the seven kilometres below the Mackinac Straits, and even the Michigan environmental assessment has deemed it to be safe. Having said that, Enbridge has undertaken to build a tunnel to make sure that an additional layer of safety is added to the portion of the pipeline that goes under the Mackinac Straits. We feel that this pipeline, which is so important for both Canada and the United States, should continue to operate.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the hon. minister on his new role as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am sure he will face many bullies around the globe, but being a fellow engineer, astronaut and a strong member of the Prime Minister's team, he will be able to stand up to those bullies. However, we are very lucky to have the new administration to our south, which will be very cordial.

In the previous 42nd Parliament, we were able to work together as a team with Conservative members, including the member for Prince Albert, and a former NDP member, Tracey Ramsey. We worked as a team for Canadians. As my riding is in a border town, how would this committee help Canadians?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the question and your initial comments as well.

Yes, you are right, that in our dealings with our closest neighbour—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. minister to address his questions and comments to the Chair and not to the hon. member.

Hon. Marc Garneau: I apologize, Madam Speaker.

In our dealings with the United States, we have traditionally taken an approach that involves not only a coordinated set of messages and approaches within the federal government itself and its ministries, but also with the provinces. We believe this is very important, and we will continue to do this together in advocating for our interests as a country in our dealings with the United States. We think this has worked very well in the past and will continue to use that approach in dealing with the United States.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his detailed speech. However, one thing I was trying to get sense of from his speech was whether he supports today's motion presented by our party.

Does the minister support today's motion?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Speaker, that is a good question.

As the member knows, we have a very efficient system of standing parliamentary committees, which cover a number of areas, such as foreign relations and foreign affairs, international trade and natural resources, and so there are existing committees. Having said that, the relationship between Canada and the United States is the most important between our two countries and, of course, we welcome further bodies where we can continue the discussion about that important relationship.

• (1125)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his candour in his speech and responses to questions.

Like the minister, I recognize that we are a country that enjoys a very close relationship with the United States, our closest friend, ally and trading partner. We do almost \$2 billion of cross-border exchanges every single day.

My question is very simple, and gives the minister another opportunity to answer the question. Does he support the motion before us today?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Speaker, in answer to my colleague's question, as I mentioned in my previous answer, we already have a number of standing committees. However, there is a very special relationship between Canada and the United States, and it is the most important relationship that Canada has with another country. The creation of the committee being proposed today would add another forum for discussion on the matters that concern us as Canadians in our dealings with the United States, and we are certainly open to that.

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, the minister commented on international trade between Canada and the United States and how important it is for both countries that we continue to have that positive dialogue on international trade.

Could he provide further thoughts on that issue?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): A brief answer from the minister, please.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Speaker, my colleague said it all: We need to continue to maintain a very close and continuous dialogue with our counterparts in the United States. That is what we did during the negotiations on CUSMA, and it worked out to our benefit. That is something we will continue to do to advance Canada's interests in the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that I will

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be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Beauport—Limoilou.

I am pleased to rise today as the Bloc Québécois critic for international trade. First, I would like to say that the Bloc Québécois supports the official opposition's proposal to create a special committee to take a close look at Canada-U.S. economic relations.

The text of the official opposition's motion lists certain topics that will be studied by the committee, but specifies that the committee will not be limited to these matters. That is fortunate, since there is no shortage of topics.

The government will have to answer for its various fiascos. In its negotiations with the United States, the government used farmers under supply management as a bargaining chip. The same government abandoned our aluminum industry, the cleanest in the world, and failed to settle our forestry file, namely the softwood lumber issue.

The government will also have to explain its dealings with the U.S. government with respect to the COVID-19 vaccines. The pace at which Canada is receiving the vaccines it procured, with no guarantee as to delivery date, is a cause for concern. Deliveries were delayed or postponed several times. Quebec even had to suspend its vaccination operations because it had no vaccines.

Unfortunately, we know that the Liberals do not like it when committee members ask questions. The government turned a deaf ear to a Bloc Québécois request to create a special committee tasked with reviewing all COVID-19 spending despite the clear need for that review.

The most recent protectionist measures implemented by the U.S. government are chilling. Illusions are being shattered and the Care Bears are gone. We are dismayed to have to face the truth we did not want to see: former President Donald Trump did not invent protectionism and trade wars; they existed before him, and they will continue to exist long after.

The most recent protectionist measures are a reminder that governments make policy based on their interests. No country, even a political ally, will give its neighbour a gift out of the goodness of its heart. The concept of "doux commerce" is a myth. The market is not, as was once held, a place where a buyer and a seller meet and all is well. That is an outdated romantic notion. The market is a competitive place where every tactic is fair.

Competition has reigned since the stone age. You could even call it economic warfare. Let us not mince words. People may say that world organizations are there to regulate all of that, but let us not be naive: they will never eliminate the impact of the balance of power. There are still some countries that are stronger than others.

Consider the World Bank. Decision-making power is based on a country's capital subscription. It is like a shareholder meeting where countries are represented by a board of governors. As in a shareholder meeting, the weight, the voting power, of each country is based on its economic value. At this time, the United States is the World Bank's principal shareholder.

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The United States is unabashedly committed to economic nationalism, hence the Buy American Act, which we are discussing today. We recognize that that is essentially a legitimate strategy. I would even go so far as to say that, like the United States, which promotes national production, Quebec should also reduce its dependence on external markets when it comes to the procurement of essential goods.

Economic nationalism is a principle that is completely foreign to Canada, except maybe when it comes to the banking, oil and auto sectors. In contrast, it is part of the DNA of Quebec, which has a number of Crown corporations that serve as strategic tools. Take, for example, Hydro-Québec, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec and the former Société générale de financement.

That is a fact of life for us. We understand why the Americans want to privilege their own markets and companies at a time when buying local is being promoted. Every nation makes policy based on its own interests. We are here to defend the interests of Quebec, and we know that the United States is our main trade partner. We are doing well by having access to U.S. markets. Nearly 12,000 Quebec companies do business with Uncle Sam.

I want to draw members' attention to a very specific and extremely important aspect of U.S. hyper-protectionism, and that is the fact that the country's law is often put to the service of its power.

• (1130)

That is something that the committee proposed today should pay attention to, because Washington implemented a very effective legal system targeting the extraterritoriality of American law. The U.S. Congress believes that the laws it passes in the United States apply to the entire planet. There are many such laws, particularly regarding the oversight of foreign investments, but there are two main aspects to this tentacular way of doing things: the fight against corruption and the fight against embargo violations.

The fight against corruption in the United States began after the Watergate scandal. A number of high-profile investigations revealed that U.S. companies abroad were using bribes to gain privileged market access. In 1977, the government of the day passed a law forcing those companies to declare bribes in their financial records. The fight against corruption is beneficial in and of itself, of course, but it is surprising that the U.S. is not a party to the International Criminal Court.

It is strategic. The fight against corruption does not stop there. Look at the U.S. Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which governs accounting rules for companies that are publicly traded in the U.S., whether they are American or not, and for their foreign subsidiaries. The act gives agencies access to the information they want, including a company's strategic secrets. Then there is the Bank Secrecy Act, which provides access to information about U.S. banks' foreign partners.

I will now turn to the issue of embargo violations. The United States believes that there are rogue states with which their companies must not do business. In 1996, they passed the Helms-Burton Act, whose stated objective is to dismantle the Cuban regime by targeting every business around the world. A few months later, the

U.S. D'Amato-Kennedy Act continued the process with Iran and Libya. These acts set a ceiling on businesses wanting to trade with these countries. They even refer to trade as trafficking, which shows how much these countries are seen as a plague. Note that trade with these countries is not in any way condemned by the UN or the WTO. It was because of a violation of a U.S. law imposing retaliatory sanctions against Iran that Canada arrested Meng Wanzhou, not because of an ordinary crime. Forcing other countries to abide by U.S. laws is therefore extremely important. In 1997, to resist the U.S. offensive, Canada amended its Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act. In reality, however, it continued discussions with the Americans to get exemptions for its businesses, thereby legitimizing the 1996 legislation.

In early 2002, the United States deployed an extremely powerful tool to combat terrorism, increasing sanctions in the name of national security and actively promoting the economic interests of the U.S. The American courts then have the power to summon a company, require that it co-operate and make their case by threatening to simply deny it access to the U.S. market. When lawyers get involved, the business runs the risk of having them siphon off highly sensitive information, internal strategies, and all the data, messages and internal communications that it cannot erase from its servers. The Department of Justice funnels data to intelligence services as set out in various U.S. laws. In practice, in the world of international trade, this results in agreements. In the U.S. justice system, the judge only makes an appearance at the end, which makes it entirely possible that the foreign company will be gutted.

In 1993, Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated before Congress that to face economic competition the U.S. needed to employ the same means used to win the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Make no mistake, Washington suspends the economic sovereignty of any nation that engages in practices deemed unacceptable by Uncle Sam. We must not be complacent and naïve about this. The U.S. is competing, at times fiercely, with Russia, China, Japan and Germany, but we must not accept everything and anything. We must study this matter, and I hope the committee will do so.

• (1135)

The United States is a powerful partner, but we must not lose sight of the nature of this power. We must not get caught up in wishful thinking only to possibly wind up disillusioned.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate speech.

Quebec and Canada have been losing good jobs since the United States dictated the neo-liberal free trade agenda. This has been going on for decades. Unfortunately, the Canadian federal government continues to stay the course, failing to protect the good jobs in our communities and our country.

Does my colleague think that we should adapt our vision of free trade to prioritize the interests of workers in Quebec and Canada?

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

The short answer is yes. Neo-liberalism is a poison. It is an unfair, ecocidal system that is not even effective. We must absolutely demolish it. We agree on that.

Free trade in itself is quite beneficial to Quebec. We had to reduce our dependence on the Canadian market. However, trade must not be confused with agreements largely favouring multinationals that are against democracy. In other words, we are in favour of free trade, but our support stops if that trade is detrimental to the environment, our workers, social justice or our ability to legislate.

Our answer is yes, any trade decisions must focus on workers.

• (1140)

[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.): Madam Speaker, I hear members of the Bloc consistently talk about supply management. Supply management is something the Liberals introduced many years ago. I am sure the member is aware that trade is a two-way street.

The member implied that the Liberals wanted to compromise on supply management. Is it the Bloc's position that we should not have a trade agreement if it impacts supply management in any way?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, since the member generally attends the debates in the House, I think he knows our position, but I can remind him of it.

Our position is this. Supply management should never again be used as a bargaining chip. The Liberals may have introduced supply management, but they have sacrificed it three times. Compensation is all well and good, and we will always fight for it because it is the least the government can do. However, compensation will never replace the breaches in a system that works and that should be promoted. We believe that supply management should simply be taken off the table. It should be non-negotiable.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question for the member is about two very important issues that were presented with respect to our relationship with the United States. One is Line 5 and the other is the buy American provisions.

Will the member confirm that he recognizes the importance of preserving critical infrastructure and making sure that our country enjoys an exemption from the potential buy American provisions?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, we agree with the idea of setting up a committee to take a close look at things and analyze them.

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However, we need to think about what the best strategy would be. That is the purpose of committees, to look into such matters.

Of course, our position on oil infrastructure is not the same as that of the official opposition. We understood the intentions behind that part of the motion when we read it. Nevertheless, it is a mandate and a suggestion for a theme. This observation mandate does not oblige us to embrace a particular position, which is why we support today's motion.

We cannot be opposed to the creation of committees that force the government to be accountable and that enable us to examine things more closely.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the motion before us today reflects what the public needs. People need answers and a vision for the future that brings hope. They do not need sound bites that make for great video clips and advertising.

One might ask how studying the economic relationship between the United States and Canada can bring hope. The United States is our largest trading partner. In fact, 70% of Quebec's exports are destined for the American market. Canadian exports to the United States are worth \$650 billion. Those figures represent normal times, but these are not normal times.

Today I will address some unanswered questions, namely, the importance of learning from the past, doing better and properly preparing for recovery.

Last week, exactly seven days ago to the minute, I made a speech in the House during which I asked a lot of questions. Those questions reflected the concerns of the people of Beauport—Limoilou, Quebec and all of Canada. Those questions reflected the suffering of people who no longer know what to think, who to believe or where we are going.

Will the vaccines arrive in time? Will everyone be vaccinated in 2021 or 2022? No one knows. There are targets, of course, but a target is not a plan. I will come back to that.

Why is there so much secrecy around vaccine contracts and agreements in Canada but not in the U.S., where the public has access to the information? How much does it cost to procure, transport and store the vaccines? Why are we not getting more vaccines and equipment from our closest neighbour and biggest partner? What consequences does the Buy American Act have on Canada? What are the diplomatic or local solutions to these consequences? What solutions could we come up with? What are our objectives and means to achieve them? When do we want to achieve them by?

In short, what is the plan?

It is not right that I, as an elected member, have so many questions unanswered. Imagine how the public feels right now. It is not right that Canada has slipped to 33rd in the world for its vaccination efforts and the government offers so little by way of answers to us and the public.

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It is not right for a G7 country to be on the COVAX list, a list that is meant to help disadvantaged countries get access to vaccines. Am I missing something? Since when is Canada a disadvantaged country? What is happening?

The committee will allow us to study these issues and work together on finding solutions and the means to implement them. I will use the example of equipment and vaccines to illustrate the usefulness of the committee.

The past is no indication of the future. This adage is true only if we learn from past mistakes. As I was saying, we were warned about the possibility of a pandemic. We had the SARS crisis in 2003 and the H1N1 crisis in 2009-10. A 2013 note in the journal *Études internationales*, made after these crises, revealed that not only did pharmaceutical companies line their pockets, but resources were wasted in both cases.

Can we talk about this, promptly analyze what has been done and what still needs to be done, and then make sure that we do not make the same mistakes? Taxpayers' money should never be wasted.

It is not too late to avoid the mistakes of the past, and it is our duty to ensure we do not repeat them. However, I sincerely believe that what was done in both of the earlier crises was done in an effort to meet Canadians' needs. That does not mean that mistakes were not made. It means that our intentions were good.

• (1145)

We are precisely in the same position now. If we do not take a realistic, non-partisan look at our decisions, we risk wasting more of our valuable resources once again. It is especially important to take a look at our economic relations with the United States in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

How does our relationship with the U.S. affect our supply capacity? Is what we have a true partnership? If so, all the better; is there a way of improving that partnership? If not, why is our relationship not a true partnership? Is someone getting fleeced? Is it us? Is it the United States? Is it a little of both depending on the situation? We have a duty to examine the true impact of our most important partnership.

Let me get back to the mistakes made in past crises. We also need to avoid what was done in the months following these crises: The Conservatives made cuts to university research, and the Liberals did not reinvest massively in this area.

I know that it is no fun to have our mistakes pointed out and be forced to admit them. I am aware of that, but the responsible and rational thing to do is to recognize our mistakes and work to correct them and to avoid repeating them.

I have more questions. The former U.S. administration nearly crushed our efforts to combat COVID-19 mainly by imposing restrictions on exports of 3M supplies. Was there a cost attached to negotiations for the unrestricted supply of these supplies? Are there restrictions on vaccines? What are these restrictions and why do they exist? I will reiterate that there is a Pfizer facility in Michigan. Why is that facility not supplying us with vaccines?

Our existing trade agreements are controlling the current situation and we must take the time to study whether or not they benefit both partners. We can do better and we now must do better for Canadians and for the future. A plan requires objectives and we have many of them: six million vaccine doses in March, 20 million more by June, for a total of 80 million in December. We have many objectives, but not the means to achieve them or a strict timeline. Everyone is calling for solutions.

A committee could study all this and ensure that we have an optimal recovery for Quebecers and Canadians, along with our most important partner, which we hopefully can depend on.

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a good morning here in Alberta.

I want to ask my hon. colleague if she is aware of the Line 5 pipeline that goes through Michigan right now and how it will affect Quebec and Ontario, bringing jet fuel and propane to her part of the country.

What does she think the Prime Minister should do to maintain the relationship we have with the United States?

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, Line 5 is an example of an issue we must think about in the current situation. Is Line 5 important? It would seem so.

Why does Michigan want to close down this line? The answers and solutions may be found by listening and understanding. That is what partnerships are all about.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's comments were very insightful and I enjoyed listening to her intervention.

My colleague spoke about an issue that is very close to my heart, and that is vaccine availability around the world. She spoke of the recent news that Canada has accessed the COVAX vaccines. Aside from this being a terrible global economic decision, we know that there will be increased morbidity of approximately 30% if the vaccine is not rolled out equitably around the world. It is an ethical and moral failure of the government, in my opinion.

Could my colleague speak more about Canada's accessing the COVAX vaccine, and maybe a bit about Canada's diminished ability to create its own vaccine and our diminished ability to respond to future pandemics?

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very interesting question.

Canada should not be on the recipient list. Canada should be on the donor list. Canada should be improving everyone's lives, here and around the world, because we have expertise.

Unfortunately there have been budget cuts over the years. Legislation has been passed that has had horrible consequences for our businesses and our manufacturing capacity. We need to turn things around. It is unacceptable to take vaccines meant for the poorest and worst off.

• (1155)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

My question is the following: Why is the House dealing with this particular motion right now?

We have had problems, in particular with the administration of former president Donald Trump. He decided to stop exporting N95 masks. He also took positions against our sectors, like the aluminum sector, and other industries that are very important to our country.

Why does my colleague think the Conservatives moved a motion now against the administration of President Biden, but never did so against former president Trump?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question that we could have asked. It almost needs to be a standing committee.

We should study our relationships on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are real partnerships.

Why did we not do so with the former administration? That is an excellent question that should be put to the members of the official opposition. Why do this now? Better to do it now than never and better now than when it is too late. We have to study problems together in order to find solutions. We must do so before we reach the point of saying that we should have done it before.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this motion today that highlights the importance of the relationship between Canada and the United States. It is something that I think all Canadians know very well, particularly Canadians in business and those many workers who either cross the border every day or work in industries that have goods crossing the border every day.

I want to start by recognizing the importance of this relationship to the well-being of the country, both economically and beyond, because those economic ties also create social and political ties that are important to keeping a productive peace and partnership within the North American context.

Over the last four years, we saw just how difficult life could get for Canadians when the administration in the United States was not of a view to respect, support and cultivate that long-standing relationship. A number of problems came up. I am thinking particularly of workers in the softwood lumber industry. It was not a new problem, but that administration put its stamp on the relationship, in the way the former president was wont to do. It caused a lot of hardship for Canadian companies and workers who really ought to have been able to sell their products according to the terms and conditions that so many other goods are sold under to the United States.

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We continue to look for a resolution to that issue. A number of governments of different stripes have turned some attention to that issue and come up short. I think of the Harper government that abandoned successful suits through various trade agreements, just on the cusp of victory. That was the feeling of many people in Canada at the time. Then we saw a new comprehensive trade agreement negotiated with the United States in the last Parliament, and an equal lack of success when it came to resolving some of the long-standing issues in the softwood lumber trade.

Focusing some of Parliament's attention on this issue again is always welcome in an attempt to come up with real and constructive ways forward that are not just about the politics of the issue, but are about how we can support Canadian workers in good jobs to be able to continue what they are doing.

I think about workers in the steel and aluminum industry who, notwithstanding progress towards a trade deal that was supposed to cover these things, seriously upset their industry. A lot of anxiety and damage was caused by tariffs that never should have been imposed in the first place, and were imposed for the most specious of reasons. The claim by the previous U.S. administration that Canada was somehow a national security threat was just ridiculous to anybody who knew anything about the issue and did not have a political agenda in the United States.

There are a lot of issues. It is an important relationship. It is something that we absolutely ought to be looking at.

I make note of the fact that we have a special committee right now on Canada-China. It bears mentioning, as many members in the House will know, that this has been an extraordinary time for Parliament, and has taxed its resources. Folks who have been around for a while and are used to sitting on committees that sometimes meet after hours or in the evenings know that has not been possible, in part because the House resources are extended by providing service to our normal committees, to the House itself and to a special committee of the House.

We know that it is not just about bandwidth, but also about the people who support that work, especially our interpreters. We have heard a lot of reports about the rate of injury among interpreters. There is a high vacancy rate now within our normal contingent of interpreters. There was a story at the beginning of the year, and we are not far into the year, about how the substitute roster for our interpreters was beginning to see attrition as interpreters were injured.

• (1200)

Part of that had to do with the amount of time they were spending on Zoom, so there are issues about members using headsets, but there are also issues about the amount of time they are spending doing their jobs in this way with equipment that is not meant for it.

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As members get excited about studying important issues, we ought to think about how we can use the existing time and resources of our standing committees. As the NDP's member on the Standing Committee on International Trade, I would be very happy to take this up as a study through the normal committee process. It is important that we study the issue. New Democrats are very open to a discussion about how best to do that, and we recognize that House resources come into play and that parliamentarians have a responsibility to think meaningfully about how we deploy our parliamentary resources to best effect.

I want to reiterate our openness to looking at different ways to ensure that we pursue the subject matter of the motion, but do it in a way that makes the most sense given the resources that are available.

This motion singles out a couple of topics for an interim report. I note that, when we had the debate on the Special Committee for Canada-China Relations, the House was not as prescriptive. It did not single out particular issues. I said earlier that previous debate in the House will reflect that the Canada-U.S. relationship has many dimensions. Even if we just look at the economic relationship, there are a lot of dimensions to it and many of them are important to Canadians who work in all sorts of industries.

While I appreciate the extent to which certain issues have come to the fore with the change in U.S. administration, I wonder at the wisdom of being so prescriptive. One of the virtues of establishing a study, whether at the standing committee or in some special forum, is to have parliamentarians get a handle on what some of the major issues are after hearing testimony from players in that economic relationship, and then giving them the latitude to decide when an interim report would be timely, and on what issues.

In the last Parliament, we saw how things could take a turn with a more hostile U.S. administration. We are all looking forward to a more constructive relationship with a new U.S. administration. It presents certain risks and opportunities. It is definitely a great moment to be looking at Canada's relationship with the United States because there are a lot of opportunities right now.

While some members want to focus on the negative side of those opportunities, particularly when it comes to the energy sector, and make hay from the fact that a U.S. president followed through on an election commitment that also reflects a long-standing policy of his party, the fact is other opportunities are opening up, particularly when it comes to clean energy. The U.S. administration has announced a desire to focus on the problem of climate change, and for many Canadians that is a welcome emphasis. A lot of Canadians would like to see their elected representatives giving serious thought to the kinds of economic opportunities that will open up. They are happy about the positive environmental consequences of having a U.S. administration focused on the problem of climate change, but also to ask what kinds of economic opportunities this will open up over the next four years and how Canada can position itself to take advantage of those economic opportunities and create meaningful employment for Canadians while we tackle the climate crisis here.

• (1205)

Of course, talking about buy America is very important at this time. The U.S. President's emphasis on buy America is not new, and has often been touted across political lines. However, the emphasis on it is rightly a worry to many Canadians who depend on access to the U.S. market in order to earn their livelihoods.

Regarding automobiles, New Flyer Industries here in Winnipeg is a bus manufacturer that sells the lion's share of its product into the United States. It has structured its business model knowing there is always an emphasis on buy America within the United States. We are hopeful the company's business plan will insulate it from that. However, it is by far not the only company that will be affected.

That is why it is important to talk about the opportunities the new administration presents in terms of clean energy and transitioning away from fossil fuels, and how we ensure Canadians become employed in it. We also want to talk about the effects of the buy America policy and the various industries it will impact, particularly the auto industry. As one example, if there is public procurement for buses in the United States as part of that clean energy program, we want to make sure that Canadian manufacturers are getting access to those opportunities.

When we talk about Canadian procurement through CUSMA, we have provided American companies access to that too, but one of the glaring omissions of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement was that Canadian companies do not get reciprocal access to American projects. That needs to be fixed.

When we get into buy America, what we really get into is a discussion. When we talk about CUSMA, we were willing to sign on to an agreement as a country that left a gap, as it were, between our access to American public procurement and its access to Canada.

Part of it is driven by a blind faith, by both Liberals and Conservatives over the last 30 years, in the globalized trade agenda. Globalized trade can have advantages, for sure, but it is not the be-all and end-all. When we look at the United States and buy America, one of the things we see is a country that talks about the benefits of globalized trade when it suits its interests, but does not put all its eggs in that basket. It has clearly been willing to defend its own economy and vital interests.

When we look at vaccine procurement we see this again, with the European Union moving to protect its vaccine supply. Europe produces vaccines, and we do not produce them here in Canada. We did not get on the exempt list for the countries that will not have these new European Union measures apply to them. Some other countries that did not are the U.S., Australia and the U.K. What sets them apart from Canada? They all have domestic vaccine production.

Only in Canada do we have two political parties so committed to the global free-trade agreement that they did not do the job, when they were in government, of having real industrial plans for Canada and asking the question, even in the context of free global trade, of how we ensure that the nuts and bolts are here in Canada. Canada privatized and sold off a lot of its domestic vaccine production capability.

There is some capability here but, tellingly, Canada has waited to access that domestic vaccine production capacity. It did not make the investments early in the pandemic, and it sounds like we are going to be waiting at least a year to begin producing vaccines here at all. That is the result of a blind faith in a globalized trading system that even our trading partners do not have.

I think of our government and how, instead of thinking about how to have a domestic plan for vaccine manufacturing, its first thought was to go to the drug companies themselves and ask how to pay more. That was reported earlier this year in *The Globe and Mail*. The government asked companies manufacturing vaccines in Europe how we could pay more for more vaccine doses and faster access. That was its first thought.

• (1210)

It is that kind of behaviour that may have given rise to the measures the European Union ultimately took to protect its own vaccine manufacturing. That is because the government first thinks of going to big corporations instead of thinking of its duty to regulate in the public interest and make investments at home.

Our airline industry is in serious distress. We have had no plan at all for the airline industry from the government. Rather, we have seen a total *laissez-faire* approach to let the market decide. It seems that the position of the government is that if our airline industry does not make it, so be it. It offered the Canadian wage subsidy and then was upset when some airline companies took that subsidy and then laid off a bunch of workers anyway. It does not have a plan for the industry. We are meeting with people who represent workers in the airline industry. They say that there really is no plan. This is a strategic sector.

While we trade with other countries, and the U.S. among them, that are interested in liberalizing trade, they do not do that at the expense of having a plan for key industries that are the backbone of their economies. They do not do that at the expense of being able to manufacture important things like vaccines.

Canada has been the sucker for 30 years now when it comes to international trade. The Liberals and Conservatives alike have bought this hook, line and sinker instead of realizing our trading partners are talking free trade when it suits their interests, but have a domestic plan on how to deliver good jobs to their people and how deliver on the public health needs of their populations.

Let us talk about all those things, but let us give the committee the real breadth it needs to decide those priorities as it hears from witnesses.

With all that in mind, including a willingness to not only talk about where the study takes place, but some of the ways we think it might be improved, let us put some emphasis on new opportunities

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and not just the risks presented by the new administration in the United States.

Therefore, I propose the following amendment to the motion: That the motion be amended: (a) in subparagraph (2) by replacing the words “softwood lumber exports and related jobs” with the words “clean energy, softwood lumber exports and related jobs within a context of the global climate crisis; (b) in subparagraph (3) by adding after the word “policies”, the words “and their impact on the Canadian economy, including the automobile industry”; and (c) by deleting paragraphs (k) and (l).

• (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country if she consents to this amendment being moved.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for all his work on the international trade committee.

Numerous committees could take on those suggestions for study. This special committee would be very focused. Therefore, I respectfully do not support the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 85 the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Thornhill.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear my colleague refer to our former Harper government. As a member representing a beef-exporting province, and although it was a bit before his time, I am sure he fondly recollects our successful World Trade Organization challenge against the Obama administration over the issue of country of origin labelling.

I wonder if my colleague believes the proposed committee would be the ideal spot to consider the remarks made just yesterday by the new U.S. agriculture secretary, who is the same agriculture secretary who imposed the COOL ruling against Canada by America. He has said that he is open to again imposing country of origin labelling against countries like Canada.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate why Canadian producers would be concerned about that. It does make sense to have their Parliament investigate those issues to try to come up with constructive solutions. It is an excellent point. It is another reason why it makes sense not to constrain the committee to provide interim reports with deadlines on particular issues now.

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As the committee begins to investigate the entirety of the economic relationship between Canada and the United States, we will find that issues like this will become priority items. We are still within the first 100 days of the administration in the United States. Although it has acted on some things already, it will be acting on many more in the days to come.

It makes sense to keep the mandate for this committee as open as possible, so as the administration announces new initiatives like the one the member just announced, the committee will be free to take up those issues as they arise and issue interim reports as it sees fit—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to allow others to ask questions.

The hon. member for the Yukon.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made a good point, but there are other exciting opportunities with the new administration. I want to mention three of them, which I do not know if anyone else will have time to speak to today, although I am sure the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands will support them.

We have management agreements with the United States on porcupine caribou, polar bears and migratory birds. In relation to the porcupine caribou, it protects the lands of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the calving ground of the Canada-U.S. porcupine caribou herd, which is so essential for the Gwich'in people.

Hopefully, the member will think these are also important Canada-U.S., exciting potential and positive opportunities for the new Biden administration. On its first day, it signed an executive order to protect the ANWR.

• (1220)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, it was exactly in that spirit that we proposed our amendment, which is to say we should not just focus on the risks that come with a new administration, and there always are risks with any new administration, but to also talk about some of the positive opportunities that are there, particularly in respect of the environment. This change in administration offers some really great opportunities. Whether it is about energy or other issues, we need to think about things with respect to an administration that is more environmentally friendly and focused on climate change. It would be good for this committee to ensure that an important part of its work is not just to concentrate on the risks but also on the opportunities.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona for his presentation.

He seems very concerned about the interpreters' quality of life, which is commendable.

Does he not believe that it is important to Quebeckers and Canadians who have many questions about the pandemic to set up a committee to examine these questions?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I think that the issues raised by the motion are very important. We just need to have a conversation so that we can determine the best way to examine these issues and look at the different options available to us. The decisions that we make in this regard will have administrative and even human consequences.

We are open to different solutions. I think it is important to raise these issues and to be aware of the consequences of our decisions in that regard. Under normal circumstances, this would not be such a big deal, but since working virtually poses additional challenges, it is important to address this issue.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about opportunities. As a former energy worker, I know the building trades has indicated that the clean energy industry in the United States will quadruple over the next decade. With the Biden administration, there is a whole host of opportunities for Canadian clean energy exports. I am a bit perplexed why the Conservatives would shove that aside and not want to have the committee investigate that important new export industry for clean energy.

I would like to know my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona's thoughts on what the building trades have said will be an incredible boom to the Canadian economy if we take advantage of it.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, for those members who are interested, a number of reports and studies have emphasized the potential for job creation when we make serious investments in fighting climate change. Sometimes that is in renewable energy construction, which can be wind turbines or solar farms.

However, it is not just that, and nobody is saying is just that. It is also the massive potential we can unlock when we get serious about retrofitting existing buildings that contribute a significant share of greenhouse gas emissions. When we get serious about doing residential and commercial retrofits, we do not wait on some technology of the future. We are talking about using the existing jobs of real tradespeople who are already trained in making our buildings more efficient.

Every dollar invested in that is a dollar invested in creating jobs right here at home. How does that work with respect to the United States? That is a great question for study, because there will be competing demands for the materials to affect all those retrofits if the United States is going that way as well. Canada should be—

• (1225)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give one more member the opportunity to ask a question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I certainly would have supported the amendments my colleague put forward.

It occurs to me that it is passing strange that the arrival of new President Joe Biden seems to have cast a pall over our Parliament. Almost every comment is negative. I totally agree with my friend from Yukon. Thank heavens Biden signed an executive order to protect the shared porcupine caribou herd and its shared habitat.

Why are we not celebrating that there is a President in the White House who actually is concerned about the climate crisis? That we could only have similar resolve from our own government, because the climate crisis threatens our economy and our very survival.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, to sum it up, it is by a lack of imagination. A lot of people in the country cannot fathom the enormous economic potential of making the investments we need to make in fighting climate change. For those of us who do appreciate that economic potential, it is mind-boggling that we have not gone further down that road a lot faster, because we can create a lot of jobs doing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Prince Albert.

For some 75 years, since the end of the Second World War, Canada and the United States have shared a strong relationship. As President John F. Kennedy famously said, “Geography has made us neighbours. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies.”

Seventy-five years after the pivot away from the end of one empire toward a new empire, it is clear America has changed. The rise of conspiracy theories like QAnon and white supremacy, the rise in extremism and polarization, and the events of January 6 last month are all evidence of that.

[Translation]

The U.S. administration has also changed. The previous administration, under Donald Trump, was unlike any other in modern American history. He renegotiated our free trade agreement, which, according to the C.D. Howe Institute, resulted in a 0.4% drop in our economic output relative to NAFTA.

[English]

The new Biden administration has made it clear that it is going to continue with many of the policies of the previous administration, policies such as “buy American” and increasing protectionism. In short, the Washington consensus that began with the end of the Cold War has evolved into the “America first” consensus. This trend of “America first” did not start with the previous Trump administration; it began well before that.

For example, under President Obama, the United States began a policy of withdrawing from global leadership, albeit in a more subtle style. Under President Obama, the United States decided its role in Libya would be “leading from behind” while encouraging allies to intervene. In 2013, President Obama pulled back from his threat

to strike Syria after it used chemical weapons, an action he said would cross a red line.

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Both President Obama and President Trump called on Canada to spend much more, double what we currently spend, on our military. In fact, I remember sitting in this very House of Commons in June of 2016 when President Obama called on us to double Canada's defence spending, something both sides of the aisle rose vigorously to applaud. Therefore we, as Canadians, need to be realistic and clear-eyed about these changes to our largest trading partner and ally.

While many Canadians breathed a sigh of relief at the inauguration of President Biden and Vice-President Harris, we should not fool ourselves and believe that all will return to the way it once was, even with a new U.S. president, who is a decent man with good intentions. The facts are right in front of us. On the very first day of the new Biden administration, it made a decision that damaged our economic recovery and threatens the very unity of this country by cancelling Keystone XL, a project that would have created some 15,000 direct and indirect jobs in Canada. It moved quickly to disadvantage Canadian companies and workers when President Biden signed an executive order mandating a “buy American” policy.

The co-chair of the President's inauguration, Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer, is threatening to shut down Line 5, which has safely transported oil and gas products to Sarnia, Ontario, since 1953. This pipeline transports some 300,000 barrels a day of energy products, providing jet fuel for Pearson airport, gasoline for millions of people who live in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor and propane for many people living in Ontario. If this pipeline shuts down, it would not only threaten the environment by increasing transport by truck, train and boat over our Great Lakes; it would also threaten to cut off much-needed propane for home heating in Ontario and increase the chance of gasoline and jet fuel shortages in southern Ontario.

There is no doubt that outside of the bilateral issues of trade and investment, the new administration and Canada will find much in common. We Conservatives are hopeful that Canada and the United States can work together on a joint alliance to counter China's threats and to seek the release of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor. We are also hopeful that both of our countries can work together to engage, strengthen and reform multilateral organizations like the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization. We are hopeful that Canada and the United States can work together during this pandemic to secure PPE, medical devices, medical supplies and vaccines.

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• (1230)

However, arguably the most important elements of the bilateral relationship are trade and investment, and on those it is clear that America has changed and that its actions are threatening Canadian jobs and livelihoods here at home, affecting millions of Canadians. As I mentioned earlier, the previous administration's actions on trade have cut Canadian economic growth by one-half of one per cent. The current administration's actions will no doubt contribute to a decline in Canadian economic growth and prosperity.

Our trade relationship with the United States has always been an asymmetrical one. We have always produced more beef, wheat, corn, cars, steel, aluminum and so many other products than we can consume, and so we have always needed to export these products to the United States.

The United States is our largest export market, and by a country mile. Our second-largest export market, China, is less than one-twentieth the size of the U.S. marketplace for Canadians. In fact, one out of five things we produce in this country is for export to the United States. That is one out of five jobs and one out of five dollars in economic output. However, the relationship is not symmetrical. We are not the largest U.S. export market. In fact, we buy the equivalent of less than 2% of America's economic output every year. In other words, they buy about 20% of our economic output, and we buy less than 2% of their economic output. In that context, the onus is on us to get their attention and to defend our interests, to defend our jobs and to defend Canadian workers. As former prime minister Brian Mulroney said, "an open door to the Oval Office opens many other doors for Canada." We need to understand that America has changed and that we need to change how we approach Canada-U.S. relations in response.

Budgets do not balance themselves, vaccines will not deliver themselves and our economy will not rebuild itself. The time to plan to secure our future is now.

[Translation]

That is why I support today's motion. It will make it possible to create a special committee founded on one of the most important pillars of our recovery, namely the economic relationship between Canada and the United States. At a time when our two countries have to focus on getting people back to work and returning to our normal way of life post-COVID-19, this committee will get answers for Canadians and fight to secure our future.

• (1235)

[English]

Canadians need to get back to work. We need a plan to create jobs in every sector in every region of this country. We cannot afford another failure to plan. We must begin to plan to reopen and rebuild our economy and to get Canadians back to work. This motion, if adopted, would create a committee that would help to provide ideas to the government on how that can be done.

We must work together to secure our economic future. We must start now to secure our future after COVID-19, and that is why I encourage all members of the House to support this motion.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think we all agree and know that this is our most important international relationship and our biggest trading partner, but with the new administration, there will be both challenges and some opportunities.

One of the big commitments of the new Biden administration is to have much stronger action on climate change, and I think this also presupposes some opportunities and challenges for us, as now both Canada and the U.S. are seeking to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. However, the U.S. administration has also proposed having harder border adjustment fees on imports.

As my question for the member opposite, how important does he think it is right now for Canada to take continued and stronger action on climate change, and what types of opportunities could that provide for our country in the U.S. market?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, there are huge opportunities for us to participate in the recovery from the pandemic. In particular, in both the private and the public sectors there will be huge opportunities for initiatives with respect to climate change.

The challenge is that we may very well be shut out of a lot of these opportunities because of the President's executive order concerning "buy American" policies. My hope is that this committee would provide ideas for the government on how to make our case for an exemption to these "buy American" policies. The previous government spent a year carving out an exemption to the "buy American" policies that had been implemented under the previous Obama administration. That agreement was executed in February of 2010 and allowed us to participate in exports to the United States, so—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give other members the opportunity to ask questions.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, one of my shortcomings is a long memory, but at least I do not hold a grudge.

I just want to remind my colleague about Barack Obama's Buy American Act. In 2013, one of our aluminum rolling companies, Novelis, was relocated to Oswego, New York. I was part of the revitalization committee, and we tried to get answers from the Conservative government of the day, which told us that we just had to accept the reality of competition. I got the sense that the Conservatives were never all that concerned about the fate of the aluminum industry. That was driven home when CUSMA was signed, because the Conservatives wasted no time voting with the government even though the deal utterly failed to protect aluminum.

I would like to ask my colleague if he is aware of that 2013 decision, when aluminum processors in Saguenay were told they would just have to live with the reality of competition. I would also like to know if he would do the same thing today.

• (1240)

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I said in my speech, our relationship with the United States is an asymmetrical one. It is a very difficult situation for Canada. We have a lot more aluminum here in Canada, and we should be working with the Americans to make sure we can export our Quebec aluminum. That is why we need to set up this committee: we need to look at issues around aluminum and other Canadian exports to the United States.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question is very straightforward. I am just looking to hear what kind of advocacy the member would look for from the government and from the special committee with respect to the energy needs of our country, and specifically with respect to Line 5 and its importance in protecting the environment in the area where it operates.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the issue of Line 5 is an urgent one. The government needs to do a better job of securing our energy needs in Canada. I remember that a year ago, we were seven days away from running out of home-heating propane for hundreds of thousands of residents in southern Ontario. We are at risk of something similar happening again as we head toward the May 12 shutdown of the Line 5—

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

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is such great debate following the CUSMA deal that was just finished. There are a lot of things we could learn from our negotiations and handling of that process.

I think back when we first heard that the Trump administration wanted to renegotiate NAFTA, and the fear that was in the eyes of Liberals, Canadian businesses and everybody else. I remember the first few times we went to the U.S. to talk to people in Congress and in Senate about the relationship with Canada, and how we talked about how important Canadian businesses were in each of their districts. We talked about things that were important to the U.S. and how Canada has an impact on those things.

I also remember, after having those meetings, sitting down with the member for Malpeque, former member Hon. Mark Eyking, and members of the trade committee and saying it is a relationship we take for granted, a relationship that just happens. Roughly \$2 billion and 300,000 people cross that border every day during normal times. It just happens and it is so simple.

When we see a threat, we start to ask if we have done the right things to nurture that relationship and if we have always been involved and working closely with our American friends in a way that we should be, making sure that each country understands the importance to the other.

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That is what I saw when we went to Washington during the CUSMA negotiations. The Prime Minister would make a gaffe, a comment that would blow up in the media. We would go down to talk to members of the Republican and Democratic parties to set the record straight, reminding them over and over again what we do together and how we are better together than apart.

That was one of the frustrations of the CUSMA agreement. It was an agreement that did not look at where we could gain strengths from all three different countries. It was an agreement that looked to protect what we had or what we could get from each other. That goes against the spirit of North America and the original NAFTA agreement.

That is why I think the committee could be really good. There would be opportunities to identify things that could work well for Canada and Canadian workers, and that could take advantage of the strengths that the U.S. has. It could also work well for the U.S. We need to look for those synergies. There are things we could do together in a variety of ways, not only in trade but also in foreign and military affairs, that would make us stronger together. Canada has a lot to contribute to that relationship. I will use a few examples.

Let us talk about regulations. We have always talked about having the same regulations. I find it interesting that when we travel to the U.S., we will find something that is safe to eat in the U.S. but when we come back to Canada we find that we cannot eat it here.

I will use the agriculture sector as an example. We look at things that at one time we either could not get or was hard to get in Canada, yet we could across over to Montana and get it. There were farmers who would actually hop in a van together and go down to buy it and come back. That difference does not make sense. Why would that regulation not be harmonized so that it would be consistent, whether in Montana or Saskatchewan, basically anywhere where beef is moving across the border all the time. Why would we have different rules and regulations?

We could really use the committee to identify some of those things that are becoming barriers that make us non-competitive in the world market. We could use the committee to look at solutions for things that make us uncompetitive and to remove those barriers while maintaining the safety of American and Canadian citizens. It could set the stage or standard around the world. We could be such a dominant player in so many areas.

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It is really important to look at new technologies and clean technologies, which some of the other members have talked about today. When we think about clean technologies, as these new regulations are being developed, why would we not do this in conjunction with the U.S., using their strengths and our strengths together, so that we would force the rest of the world to actually follow those regulations? It would give us a competitive advantage. It would be the right way to do things. We know that if we do it here at home, in conjunction with the U.S., it would be done properly and safely. The end-user and consumer would be front and foremost. We have those skill sets. We just have to have the desire to work together to accomplish that.

We have seen buy American surface and the cancellation of Keystone. These are disturbing things that just re-emphasize the fact that we need to be down there constantly talking to our American colleagues and explaining to them how it is important to us and impacts us.

We were very successful in the CUSMA agreement talking about the importance of that relationship and putting it in the perspective of what it meant to members in different districts and to the Canadian economy. Sometimes I wonder if we need to do the same thing in Canada, if we need to start going across the provinces to talk about how important it is to buy a truck from Ontario, to get propane out of Alberta, to get lobster out of Nova Scotia and to get softwood lumber out of B.C., and what that would mean to all of us to have access to all of those great things we make here in Canada.

We could show some pride in our country and brag about that. Sometimes I think we are so focused on doing everything outside Canada that we forget and take for granted all of the wonderful things that we have within our country. There is some work that needs to be done there. Outside of this committee, that would be something else that our governments should get together and move forward on.

• (1245)

Getting back to the idea of a committee, with buy American, we did secure a situation where we had preferential access to that market. We did that, but we had some problems at the state and municipal levels. However, since 2009, we have had 36 states, I believe, that have signed onto the WTO, which would basically remove that problem. When I look at the history of our Prime Minister and his relationship with the new President, I think that would be easier to do now than it would have been under former Prime Minister Harper and President Obama. While I think they worked very well together, they were not necessarily the best of friends. However, they looked at this from both country's perspectives and saw the advantage for both countries, and they managed to get it done. It was tougher at the state and municipal levels, and I think more work needs to be done there, but that work has to happen. It has to happen among all of our trade commissioners and a variety of people we have right across the U.S. who are promoting Canadian goods, and I trust that it is happening today.

Unfortunately, I cannot travel to the U.S. and, unfortunately, the member for Malpeque cannot travel to the U.S. Unfortunately, the Canada-U.S. friendship group cannot do the things it had been doing in the background, such as on CUSMA, as effectively as it

could back then. Members can see why this committee should be constructed.

I see so many ways this committee could focus on things that a trade committee or a natural resources committee just could not. We could actually give this the time it requires. We could give this relationship the effort it deserves, considering the importance of it to everybody in North America. I would not be surprised that if we went down this path, Americans would say, "What a great idea. This is our big trading partner. This is North America. Why do we not do the same thing and have that special committee?" We could start to see growth in understanding from talking back and forth, and the benefits for North America, for Canada and the U.S., that would definitely result from it.

There are many more things I could talk about in regards to this, but when I look at this committee, I just see opportunity, and I hope that is how all parties address it. Yes, there are problems and obstacles. It is no different from a family relationship between brothers and sisters, and there are times that are tough. The relationship with the U.S. is sometimes compared to a family relationship and sometimes to a relationship between an elephant and a mouse. Both of these are true. However, we have to work on this relationship and nurture it, and this committee could do that. This committee could have the ability and wisdom to look at things with a different perspective and take the time to talk to experts right across Canada and the U.S. on the best way to proceed.

A case in point is buy America. Why would we not bring in some Canadians, for example, our former ambassador, Mr. MacNaughton, who was there on tour during CUSMA, and listen to their wisdom to formulate a good policy moving forward? Why not bring in former members like Rona Ambrose, Stephen Harper or Ralph Goodale? The sky is the limit as far as the type of people we could bring into a committee like this to seek really good advice. When we have good advice, we make good decisions that are, in my view, to the benefit of all Canadians.

We talked a little about vaccinations, and this is something we should have been talking about five or six years ago when we first had SARS, such that, in North America, if we were to see an outbreak, a pandemic, how would we operate? How would we function? Do we have PPE in America? We could see how much PPE there was in Canada and the U.S. to see if we were covered. These are the types of things that should be talked about strategically.

When we talk about border infrastructure, whether it is the Gordie Howe International Bridge or things like that, these are the strategic investments that we should be making and talking with our American cousins or brothers and sisters about, however we want to call them, about what should be and what it should look like.

When we look at our competitiveness in Asia, we should be talking about that. When we look at China's influence in South America, Latin America or Africa, we should be talking about that and what it means to us. When we talk about rare earth elements, mining and natural resources, these are things we should be discussing amongst ourselves. For example, would we allow them to be purchased by Chinese companies? Are we going to allow these resources to have foreign ownership? Are we going to allow these resources to leave our continent? Do we have the requirements in this regard moving forward?

Again, these are the things we could discuss together in a committee and have good policy that would represent Canadians in the best way.

Members can see that I am very excited about this committee, because I see lots of positives and lots of things that could benefit all of Canada, the U.S. and North America altogether. It would actually—

• (1250)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his very thoughtful discussion of the motion before the House right now.

We will be very changed as we start coming out of this pandemic, and so I want to get the member's thoughts on the opportunities he might see coming out of this for both of our countries to better work together as a result of our being changed by the pandemic. I would love to hear his thoughts on that.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, there will be lots of changes. That is one thing we were doing previously at the trade committee. We were talking to people all summer about the post-COVID period. What would that look like? What new alliances are being formed? What will other countries' reactions be as they try to get their economies back and going? Will we be setting non-trade tariff barriers, and those types of things?

This is where we need each other even more. It is important to draw on each other's wisdom and strengths. Accordingly, this becomes more and more important. It is up to us to identify the strengths that we bring to the table and the strengths they bring to the table, which is what the proposed committee could really help us do.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to let my colleague from Prince Albert know that the Bloc Québécois agrees with the motion and will be voting to support it. However, we also want the committee to study the impacts of the fight against climate change on the energy sector and to include environmental and ecological criteria in its analysis of the opportunities presented by this economic and trade relationship between Quebec, Canada and the United States.

I would like to hear his thoughts on what the Bloc Québécois is suggesting for this committee study.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I am not 100% sure how to comment on the Bloc's suggestion other than to say that I think

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of the great recommendations that came out post-CUSMA as that trade deal was announced. One of the things suggested by the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord was the green, environmentally friendly aluminum made in Quebec, which has had such a better impact on the environment than any other aluminum in the world, and how that should be given preferential treatment.

It is ideas like that to come to the committee that can help with the environment because we have lots of technologies, whether carbon capture in Saskatchewan or the oil and gas sector in Alberta, compared with other countries around the world. We could share that information with the U.S. and show them how we are being responsible and taking the environment seriously. I know that some of our colleagues across Canada would understand that as well.

• (1255)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question stems in part from the poster behind my colleague and the obvious tribute to our former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker who was elected in the member's part of the country. While I would disagree with a number of positions that Mr. Diefenbaker took, many of us know that he was a prime minister who did prioritize Canadian jobs. That is something we have lost sight of. We know that the kind of approach we have seen to free trade in recent years has led to the loss of good, unionized, family and community-sustaining jobs in our communities.

Yes, today we are talking about a committee, but does the member not agree that we Canadians need an approach to trade that has as its priority the well-being of Canadian workers?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, when we look at the previous trade agreements and how they have evolved, when they were originally done, that is exactly what they were doing. They were looking at the best macroeconomic situation for the country of Canada as a whole. That always involves some economic transfers. Where we have failed is that when we have seen those economic transfers happen, when we have seen people left out, we did not do anything to address that.

That was the big issue that emerged in the Midwest during the election of Donald Trump, because the rust belt states had been left out and there was nothing there to assist them. That is the difference between new trade deals, such as CUSMA, and older deals. We actually addressed it to the conservative side, saying let us address aluminum and softwood lumber, let us talk about the people left out. We identified them for the government and now the government should take steps to help those people out. It does not do that, however, which is the unfortunate part.

We must have a whole, encompassing aspect to trade. When we realize that certain sectors are being left out or disadvantaged, we have to figure out how to help those people. One thing we have learned over the last five years is that it is different from before.

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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 a pleasure to address the chamber today on what is no doubt a very important issue. I was trying to think of what the Conservatives might have for their first opposition day of the new year. This motion would not have been my first choice. It might have been my second choice, but not my first.

I still think the biggest concern Canadians have today is the coronavirus pandemic. They want to hear what the government and parliamentarians have to say about it. We have a very solid plan with commitments that will provide assurances and hope for Canadians.

There is nothing wrong with having a different type of debate. Today's debate is important, so it is with pleasure that I add a few thoughts on the important bilateral relationship we have with the United States.

Let there be no doubt that it is the most important trading relationship. It has been suggested in the past, as it has been today, that one of the most important roles that any prime minister has is to ensure that the relationship between the United States and Canada is healthy and moving forward. It is in our best interest that there is a good relationship.

I heard some of the numbers earlier. I believe there is over \$2 billion a day in cross-border trade. That is very impressive. No other country comes even close to that.

If we look at the last five years, the Prime Minister has seen three presidents. One was former president Barack Obama, and it was quite a treat when he came to visit the House of Commons. He spoke on the floor of the chamber, as members will recall. There was also former president Donald Trump, and now President Biden.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs made reference to in his opening remarks, the first international foreign leader the current President of the United States talked to was our Prime Minister. The very first connection the Vice-President made internationally was in Canada. This underlines the importance of our relationship and that our current Prime Minister and administrations south of the border recognize just how special and unique this bilateral relationship is.

I listened to members talk about the issue of trade. Often when I talk about trade, I will talk about Manitoba's pork industry because I am very proud of it. It is very easy to explain so that people will understand the benefits. However, I want to focus on another industry in Manitoba: the bus industry. I wanted to cite New Flyer Industries, and if someone were to look it up, as I just did, they would see Wikipedia summarizes it quite nicely.

● (1300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have a point of order from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am sure my colleague was so excited to talk about this topic that he forgot to mention he wanted to share his time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge. Maybe we should give him an opportunity to clarify this.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I thought I had, but in case I did not, I would love to share my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

New Flyer Industries embodies why it is very important that people recognize the value of that relationship. New Flyer Industries, based in Winnipeg, is a manufacturer of transit buses and motor coaches. The company is the largest bus manufacturer in North America, with a 43% market share of all heavy-duty transit buses and a 45% market share of all motor coaches produced in 2018. The company employs 9,300 people across 50 facilities in the United States and Canada. We should remember that its home base is in Winnipeg. Canada manufactures world-class buses, second to no other.

I suspect if we looked at every province, whether it is Quebec, Ontario, B.C. or Nova Scotia, and up north in the territories, we would find there are direct links to trade with the United States. As I said, there is \$2 billion a day in cross-border trade, and a lot of that trade is not just widgets that go up for sale. Our economies are melded together in many ways, because something that is manufactured in the United States might come to Canada, or vice versa, as a part that ultimately turns into a final product.

A good example of that is our automobile industry. Our automotive industry is interconnected with that of the United States. Steel and parts go back and forth and final products come off of different assembly lines. These are absolutes. We need this.

The Government of Canada recognized that right from the get-go. When the Prime Minister was elected in 2015, it was not much longer until President Obama spoke to us on the floor of House of Commons. With reference to the current President, we do not need to be lectured in any fashion. I believe and hope we are not being lectured, because all parliamentarians have an understanding of that important relationship.

The CUSMA deal is something all of us should take pride in. Canada has an incredible group of individuals who have negotiated very important international agreements. Think of how many countries we have signed trade agreements with in the last five years. We are talking about dozens of countries. Not one prime minister has signed off on more trade agreements than the current Prime Minister, and that includes agreements with the United States and Mexico, our most important trading allies.

We have recognized the importance of trade agreements from the beginning. We understand and appreciate the true value of them and recognize why it is so important that we continue to have professionals negotiating on our behalf and working with the different ministries. It is important that we recognize the efforts they put in for all Canadians, because we all benefit. One of the ways we build Canada's middle class is to get strong jobs, and those jobs, in good part, are being created by international trade agreements.

• (1305)

I was very proud of the fact that ministers, the government and other members contributed to ultimately getting the CUSMA deal. We have a parliamentary friendship group that is fairly proactive. I only wish we would be equally proactive with our Philippines friendship group in terms of the number of connections and the amount of travel that occurred between the U.S. and Canada with the Canada-U.S. friendship group. There is such a strong relationship between our two nations, and I believe it is the personal contacts that often assist in negotiations.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that for just over 30 American states, Canada is their number-one trading partner. They are very much in need of Canadian consumers. Equally, we need American consumers to consume our products. It is a mutual benefit.

We can show this to the world. We should be very proud of our democracy, proud of the fact that we are in America and proud of the wonderful things that our democracy and sense of capitalism can accomplish.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for showing some passion.

I had the opportunity to tour New Flyer Industries in Winnipeg. It is a great organization. However, it has always had little problems dealing with the U.S., including with buy America and American content rules. This committee could deal with those problems and progressively or aggressively seek solutions.

Listening to the member's speech, it sounds like the Liberals are going to support this motion. What other things does the member think this committee could do that would be positive for Canada?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member went out to visit New Flyer. When the Prime Minister was leader of the third party, he came to Winnipeg and asked about things he could do. I said we could go to New Flyer. He had an opportunity to see it, so our Prime Minister has a good sense of the importance of the industry, in particular in my home city of Winnipeg.

Having said that, hopefully we can depoliticize the committee so that it is not partisan. It should not be used as a partisan tool to take nothing but shots at the government. The friendship group demonstrated very clearly how it can reach out and contribute very positively.

Obviously there is going to be a certain element of politics in regard to this particular committee, but it would be nice if there were not. I know the member who posed the question understands the importance of working party with party to—

• (1310)

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

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, this time last week, almost to the minute, the parliamentary secretary was talking about Bill C-18. He said that the Bloc Québécois members are always antagonistic, that we complain about not having this or

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that in trade agreements, and that we should understand that in order to reach an agreement, compromises have to be made.

Still, when I look at Canada's relationship with the United States, I have to ask, who is always making these compromises? In the supply management file, it is Quebec. It is Quebec that had to fight tooth and nail against the lack of protection for aluminum in CUSMA. Regarding the forestry industry, the chief negotiator who appeared before the Standing Committee on Natural Resources told us that that industry was not a priority. As for aerospace, we never hear anything about it.

When the parliamentary secretary tells us that we need to get on team Canada, my response is that Quebec is often the one to make compromises for team Canada.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have spoken on numerous occasions about the aerospace industry and the supply management industry, as have many of my colleagues. We understand the importance of supply management and have consistently made sure that we protect it. In fact, it was a Liberal administration that first brought in supply management. We are there to protect our industries.

The difference between us and the Bloc is that we recognize that, when sitting down at a trade agreement table, we have to negotiate. We cannot just say no and that everything has to be one way. That is not realistic.

I want and will always fight for supply management. I will always fight for Canada's aerospace industry, whether in Quebec or Manitoba. These industries are important to our country and we will fight for them.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague.

When we talk about trade agreements, we are obviously talking about trade or industry partners, but also sometimes competitors, as he pointed out. I want to focus on the aerospace sector, which has been seriously neglected by the Liberal government.

The United States has a national aerospace strategy. Canada does not. The United States uses the defence sector to support good American aerospace jobs. Canada does not do that. The United States signs agreements guaranteeing that a certain percentage of parts will be made in the United States by American workers. Canada does not do that.

When will the Liberal government support the tens of thousands of good aerospace jobs in Canada, and especially in Quebec, with a real strategy for this sector?

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is factually incorrect. To try to imply to Canadians that this government is not or has not been supportive of the aerospace industry is just wrong. We have pumped in tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars of direct support into the aerospace industry. Whether in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec or Ontario, this government has been there for our aerospace industry. We recognize the value—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will now resume debate. The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on this opposition motion from the member for Kelowna—Lake Country. I thank her for bringing this forward.

Trading and our relationship with the United States is for me, and for my riding and my constituents, very important. Canada is a trading nation. We have benefited greatly from both our north-south linkages and from those with other continents through CETA and the CPTPP.

In particular, however, our relationship with the United States has been so important to me. I have had the privilege of working the global financial markets for several years, both here in Canada and in New York City. I have many relatives, as do so many Canadians, that live and have been living in the United States for many years.

In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, here in the city of Vaughan, there are literally thousands of trade-dependent jobs. The distribution facility for Home Depot is located in my riding. The distribution facilities for all of eastern Canada for Home Depot and Costco are in my riding. The UPS distribution facility and the FedEx distribution logistics hub are here in the city of Vaughan. The busiest intermodal facility for Canadian Pacific, which is called their Chicago-Toronto line, their intermodal facility, is in the heart of my riding, and the CN's MacMillan Yard, the largest CN yard in the country, is located here in the city of Vaughan.

We are not only a trade-dependant country. My riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge is a trade-dependent entity in terms of economics and in terms of creating good middle-class jobs.

• (1315)

[Translation]

This motion addresses a number of important issues, and I am pleased to speak to it today. In the time allotted to me, I would like to focus on two aspects of the motion: the importance of Line 5, and energy trade between Canada and the United States.

With respect to Line 5, our government has been extremely clear. This project has our unequivocal support, and we are using every tool at our disposal to see it move forward. Line 5 is vital to the energy security of Canada and North America. Our government takes this issue very seriously, and any suggestion to the contrary from the opposition is not only misleading but also irresponsible, a political game that this side of the House has no interest in playing.

The importance of Line 5 unquestionably goes beyond partisan politics. It supports thousands of jobs in Ontario and Quebec, as well as in western Canada. It is essential for keeping the lights and heat on for millions of Canadians, and it provides a critically important fuel source for farmers and industry. Line 5 provides jet fuel for Pearson Airport, Canada's busiest airport.

[English]

Running from Wisconsin through Michigan across the Straits of Mackinac to the lower peninsula, Line 5 supplies Michigan and Ohio refineries with oil and natural gas liquids from Alberta and Saskatchewan, before it enters Ontario at Sarnia. From there, it is refined into gasoline, diesel, home-heating oil, aviation fuel and propane, supplying southern Ontario and Quebec. What is more, Line 5 provides a safer way to transport oil than rail or road. It has operated safely for over 65 years.

[Translation]

Enbridge is now proposing to dig a tunnel to replace the two oil pipelines that run along the lake bed under the Straits of Mackinac.

[English]

Enbridge is committed to making a safe line even safer through the tunnel project. It is committed to encasing the line in reinforced concrete to reduce the risk of an anchor strike and to ensure enhanced safety. Michigan, just a couple of days ago, provided permits for this project.

[Translation]

Michigan's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy approved the project a few days ago on January 29, after an extensive nine-month review involving the State Historic Preservation Office and a report by an independent civil engineering firm specializing in complex tunnelling projects, which concluded that the project would have minimal impact on water quality in the Great Lakes and would not affect protected public uses of Michigan's water resources.

[English]

The director of EGLE's water resources division, Ms. Teresa Seidel, said, "During our review of this proposed project, our top priority has been protecting the Straits of Mackinac and the surrounding wetlands, aquatic life, and other natural and cultural resources from adverse environmental impacts."

What would this impact be? According to EGLE, this project would result in minimal impact to wetlands. In fact, it would only affect an area roughly one-tenth the size of a football field. As a result, EGLE concluded that the proposed tunnel beneath the lakebed could be built in compliance with the state environmental laws.

• (1320)

[Translation]

Let me emphasize that Michigan's environmental agency has ruled that the project is completely safe. This is not Enbridge's opinion, nor is it Canada's opinion. It is the finding of the agency responsible for enforcing Michigan's environmental legislation. This is the point that our government raised with U.S. officials. However, their response is that they want to stop the project.

[English]

What we have heard this week from the Leader of the Opposition and others on the other side of this House is that we are not doing anything. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Government of Canada has supported Enbridge in this dispute for three years, at both diplomatic and political levels, and we will continue to do so.

Ambassador Hillman is making the case. Consul General Co-martin in Detroit is making the case. The Prime Minister raised the issue of North American energy security with Vice President Harris, and the Minister of Natural Resources will press this case with former Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm as soon as she is confirmed as the U.S. energy secretary.

I will say it again. This line is vital to Canada and to the United States. We will always defend it and protect Canada's energy and industrial infrastructure.

[Translation]

Let me now turn to the broader context of the energy relationship between Canada and the United States, a relationship worth more than \$100 billion in cross-border trade. In total, more than 70 pipelines and over 30 transmission lines already cross the Canada-U.S. border, creating the most integrated energy system in the world. As a result, Canadian oil accounts for more than half of all the crude oil that the United States imports each year. Alberta alone sends more than three million barrels a day south of the border, to the U.S. Midwest and Rocky Mountains region. Canadian crude represents roughly 70% of the feedstock used in local refineries. In Michigan, half of all homes are heated with propane from Canada.

[English]

It is the same with other energy sources of Canada. Canadian electricity powers close to seven million American homes, and Canadian uranium generates 6% of America's electricity, enough to power one in every 17 American homes. All of this energy integration benefits both countries by strengthening our energy security, lowering energy capital costs and enhancing reliability of supply.

It also creates good middle-class jobs on both sides of the border, including at the thousands of American companies that supply technology, machinery and other services to Canada's energy industry. I will be clear that any shutdown of Line 5 would have significant economic impacts, not just in Ontario and Quebec, but in Michigan and neighbouring states. In Houston four years ago—

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

The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am not surprised that you are fighting for Line 5 and will definitely not shut it down, because the economy depends on it. I am just concerned about the fact that you were not fighting as hard for Keystone XL or any of the other pipelines

My question to you is this: Why do we have to keep bringing up these committees to start dealing with international partners? That is my concern. How do you view that, as parliamentarians, we have to keep coming back to say that the Liberal Party is not supporting the Canadian people?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would like to remind the hon. member that he speaks through the Speaker, and I have no opinions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, in my capacity as vice-chair of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group, and in my capacity as a member of Parliament, I know our government and all parliamentarians, day in and day out, want a stronger and more robust relationship with the United States. We want jobs to be created, and our government has been at the forefront in strengthening and improving our trading relationships, not only with our southern neighbour, but also with all countries in the world.

We know that trade-dependent jobs tend to pay more than the average and tend to provide greater benefits, and I will always be at the forefront fighting for that. Yes, I was personally disappointed when Keystone XL's permit was revoked, but we have many pipelines crossing our borders. We are supportive of Line 3 and Line 5. We approved the Novagas transmission line in the province of Alberta.

Our government supports Canadian workers and will always help the middle class and those working hard to join the middle class.

• (1325)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, throughout the pandemic, the NDP has been fighting for protections for workers, and we feel that the Liberals have been incredibly opaque on this.

For example, in April former finance minister Morneau stated in a press conference that no workers would be asked to return to unsafe work environments. Finance Minister Freeland then stated the same in May. I, myself, wrote to Minister Qualtrough requesting written confirmation on worker protections, and the new President of the United States has implemented these protections—

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

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

If the new President can put in protections for workers who have quit unsafe workplaces during COVID-19 so that they can still claim benefits, why will the Liberal government not make the right to refuse unsafe work a real right with real protections during this pandemic? Could the member speak to that?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, it is always imperative to improve the working conditions of all Canadians. The pay equity legislation we introduced and the changes to the Labour Code that the minister for labour has brought in are all very concrete measures. With the three recovery benefits we brought in, including the two-week sick leave portion, the caregiving benefit and the recovery benefit, we are helping to ensure that Canadians go to work in safe conditions, free from harassment, and that if there is any impact from COVID, they can spend that time safely at home and be safe from that environment.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have a lot of arrangements with the United States, as has been said earlier. I want to bring one up another one that probably no one else will mention, the Alaska Highway, which goes from British Columbia through Yukon to Alaska. It is the only way Americans can get to Alaska, so for decades the U.S. has funded the Shakwak project to rebuild the highway, which we take care of, but it has run out of money. I hope the member, and all members in the House, will support me in trying to get the United States to reinstate funding for the Shakwak project to rebuild the Alaska Highway, which is important to Canadian tourism and is falling apart in some spots.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my dear colleague from Yukon. He has touched on a soft spot. I grew up in northern British Columbia and Prince Rupert, the southern terminus of the Alaska ferry system. The Alaska Highway goes up north, and I am very familiar with that area of the world. It is one of the most beautiful parts of North America. We are fully supportive of any initiatives my dear colleague and friend would like to take on that note.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate this opportunity to speak to this very important motion, but first I would like to say that I will split my time with the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

I want to begin with a story. The reason I am starting with a story is that this is possibility thinking. This is possibility thinking 101 about what can be done when we bring all parties together.

For about a month or so right before Christmas, our office worked tirelessly for a couple who were separated. The gentleman was in Michigan and the woman lived here in my riding. We worked very well with the minister's office and the land border controls on both sides. On Christmas Eve, our office was still working diligently on this problem. I spoke to a member of the minister's office, and he was working on Christmas Eve as well. On Christmas

Day at 2:37 p.m., we received a text that the woman and man were reunited.

Why do I bring that up? We are facing, if I can be so bold as to say so, World War III. What got those people back together were the efforts of all. It is absolutely vital that we keep that in the forefront and look at the possibilities as opposed to the negatives.

As always, it is an honour to speak to the importance of this motion to create a special committee to study the economic impact on Canada-U.S. relations. My riding of Essex neighbours the busiest international border in North America. Thus, I am well aware of the importance of getting this right. In fact, a new international bridge is currently being built to support this infrastructure.

As I previously had the honour of being the deputy shadow minister for Canada-U.S. relations, I understand the importance of being a strong partner in working with our close ally, friend and neighbour, the United States of America. Further, as a former committee member of the international trade committee and having been part of the passing of CUSMA, I know today's motion to create a committee is vital.

Solid relationships only work when there is strong communication and open, honest dialogue. So much is at stake, and now, more than ever, is when we need to work shoulder to shoulder with our neighbour and get this right. So much of what this House has been speaking about and will continue to speak about and study in committee and seek solutions for can be tied directly back to Canada-U.S. relations, including vaccines, Line 5, the Keystone XL pipeline, steel and aluminum tariffs, and softwood lumber agreements, or lack thereof. The list goes on.

This committee will provide for a win-win for both countries. This is not a one-side-takes-all. However, this committee will create a foundation and a plan for recovery for all Canadians in each province and territory from coast to coast to coast. The work of this committee will be an opportunity to not only save jobs but also create to jobs, good-paying union jobs that sustain our economy and put food on the table for Canadian families.

It has been stated that we are in World War III, and although we cannot physically see the enemy called COVID-19, we are nonetheless at war. Now is the time to work closely with our closest ally on every front.

Having worked in the United States for a number of years and having been part of an international company, I witnessed how integrated our economies are. Both economies rely heavily on each other. The automotive sector and the supply chains that go along with it are a solid example.

• (1330)

However, COVID-19 has brought many obstacles. One example would be local mould-makers. I have spoken with them on numerous occasions. The issue they are having now is that they are losing contracts to the United States, and the reason is that because of COVID-19, they cannot get their inspectors onto their shop floors to see their product. These types of discussions at committee we can find solutions for, but to lose contracts, millions and millions of dollars for Canadians, is not acceptable. We need to study this.

My riding of Essex has been called a microcosm of not only Canada but of North America. Basically, if we can find it in Essex, we can probably find it in Canada. Just as our relationship with the United States is unique on the world stage, so too are our economies uniquely aligned. Essex, like Canada and the United States, has so much to offer, but bringing these opportunities is only possible when all parties work together. Canada cannot afford to be a junior partner at the table and have our economy dictated by the stroke of a pen. We can no longer sit idle without a solid, well-executed plan and be blindsided at the 11th hour once again.

Creating this committee, with members from all parties collectively working for the common goal of a strong economy, secure jobs, a plan for recovery and a strong Canada, is what is needed most today. Studying the impacts of COVID-19 would give Canada the tools it needs to have solid negotiations with our U.S. counterparts. We can no longer afford to do nothing.

Budgets do not balance themselves, vaccines will not deliver themselves and our economy will not rebuild itself. The time to plan to secure our future is now. As has been stated on a number of occasions, there is trade of \$1.5 billion per day between these two fantastic countries. What is possible? How much higher could that be? How much more stake could Canada have in the game?

At a time when our countries need to be focused on getting people back to work and restoring our ways of life after COVID-19, this committee would get answers for Canadians and fight to secure everyone's future. We must begin planning now, today, to reopen and rebuild our economy and get all Canadians back to work. This is about the future. This is about a plan. This is about bringing the greatest minds of all colours and parties together to ensure once and for all that Canada is a strong partner with the United States of America and is the highest on the international stage.

I will leave members with this: I am sure that no member in this House would disagree that the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations would be more important than a special committee on Canada-U.S. relations. Canadians deserve nothing less.

• (1335)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reality is that the relationship between Canada and the United States, when it comes to trade, is worth over \$2 billion a day. Never have we had another partner in the world that we have relied on so much for trade. I think the Liberals and the Conservatives can see eye to eye on the need for this particular committee, notwithstanding the fact that some of the other committees could handle some of this work. This is a unique relationship, so it needs this committee.

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However, we have heard members of other parties suggest that the only way we can successfully have trade is if we get everything we want. Would the member agree that a successful trade agreement is one based on compromise, understanding that both sides overall will experience more trade, but that both sides will have to give some concessions in some places?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, a long time ago someone said to me that it is only a good deal if it is a good deal on both sides. That is business 101.

I agree that there need to be concessions on both sides. I totally agree that our countries need to be aligned every step of the way.

However, it is also vital that Canada gets its fair share and that Canada comes out as a leader at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

• (1340)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I have had lots of conversations over the last several months. As the member will know, of great importance to me is the protection of workers in Alberta. We know that Albertans have suffered disproportionately with job losses and are feeling incredible anxiety during the pandemic and as we come out of the pandemic. We know that we want to get help to workers. We need to support them. We need to support their families.

I am concerned about the subsidies that go to oil and gas companies, not toward jobs for workers but rather toward supporting the CEOs or shareholders. We know that the Biden administration has ordered all federal agencies to eliminate federal fossil fuel subsidies.

Would the member be in favour of making sure that no subsidies go to oil and gas companies in Canada, and that in fact those dollars go to support jobs and workers in Alberta?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, with regard to supporting workers, another thing I did not have time to speak to specifically was that through this committee, this turns the page on the negative. The quicker we can do that, the quicker, hopefully, we can deal with the mental health of not only our families but our workers.

It is absolutely vital that we get them back to work, that we get food on the tables of all Canadians, and ensure that we turn the page on mental health. I am always in support of workers on every level.

Business of Supply

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am a member of Parliament from British Columbia. The softwood lumber industry has really been heavily impacted. Thousands of jobs have been lost. Mills have been closed everywhere, including a 100-year-old mill that is actually high-tech, in my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

There has been barely a whimper from the Liberal government. It talks about having conversations. Conversations are good, but sometimes the government needs to fight for this country. It boasts about what a wonderful job it has done, but the facts on the ground are quite different. We are seeing jobs lost in softwood lumber, in the energy sector and in aluminum.

Does the member agree that this bipartisan committee could add some real value to our Canada-United States relations?

Mr. Chris Lewis: Madam Speaker, the answer is very simply yes.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here today to talk about the creation of a special House of Commons committee to look at all aspects of the U.S.-Canada economic relationship.

Why create a special committee? There are two key reasons. First, we need an integrated opportunity to look at all aspects of the economic relationship. Our House of Commons committees tend to focus on certain aspects such as finance, trade or foreign affairs. We need to be able to look at all of those things in one committee, and that is why we need this special economic relationship House of Commons committee. An economic relationship includes all those aspects.

Second, parliamentarians absolutely have a role in this conversation. We have seen increasing challenges, and a narrative from the government that says the House of Commons committees do not have a role; however, House of Commons committees work with Canadians to discuss, look at and research challenging issues so we can make recommendations to Canadians and governments.

Why do it now? We find ourselves at a tipping point. We have witnessed a fundamental shift in the global economic balance of power. We are seeing countries use trade as a weapon to gain political, economic and national strategic advantage. At the same time, in the last 20 years we have seen vast increases in consumer spending, GDP growth and stock prices. What we have not seen, in the United States and Canada, is significant economic benefit for individual Canadians or Americans, and that was before COVID.

Now we need to act with a sense of urgency. This rising tide has not raised all boats. We need to understand why that is, and we need to be proactive to determine how we are going to secure the future health and prosperity of Canadians. There is no question we will not be able to do that successfully without our most important trading partner, defence and security ally, and in many cases our greatest friend: the United States.

We have \$1.5 billion a day in trade. All kinds of people and goods go back and forth. We have integrated supply chains. We need this committee in order to understand where both our countries are economically, and to look at what the foundation of our economic relationship needs to be.

The world is not the same as it was in the 1980s, when we first put NAFTA in place. Both our economies have changed substantially. From 1999 to 2015, the U.S. lost over five million manufacturing jobs. Canada lost over 600,000, which was over 25% of our country's industrial workforce. Barely two workers in 10 in Canada are employed in making goods, and in the last 18 years, there has not been a single net increase in jobs in the goods sectors.

In both our economies, the middle class is drastically shrinking. In the United States in 1980, 60% of the national income was from the middle class. Unfortunately, today that number is 40%. Every four years, one in five people in the middle class falls into the ranks of the working poor, and it is increasingly difficult to move up. Wages are stagnating, the gig economy is making work more precarious, prices continue to rise and student debt is a greater burden than for any generation previously. From 1990 to 2015, 80% of Canadians saw few, if any, income gains, and that was before COVID.

● (1345)

We see a trend in the U.S. that started long before President Trump and may well continue under the new administration. We need to understand what that is and actively plan to address it, mitigate it and work mutually for a win-win situation between Canadians and Americans.

The narrative we have heard is that the global trading system is universally unfair to U.S. workers. There is a call in the United States to turn back the clock to a time when goods sold in the U.S. were made in the U.S. There is also a further push for globalization, which appears is neither inevitable nor desirable, and if actions speak louder than words, a number of examples highlight this trend.

For example, the renegotiated NAFTA, now called the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, is not a free-trade agreement but a managed trade agreement, with conditions that further restrict Canada's participation in the North American market. It gives American farmers increased access to Canada while also eliminating regulations and slanting the playing field in favour of the U.S. Also, it caps the growth of the Canadian auto sector and raises the cost of Canada's production, jeopardizing our competitiveness. It is an agreement that has caused Canada to lose sovereignty, because it is not a simple free-trade agreement: it is an agreement with clauses that put conditions on Canada's ability to enter into other trade agreements and limit our independence on monetary policy.

Furthermore, the U.S. has seen massive tax reform. U.S. corporate taxes have been slashed, and measures have been put in place to incentivize American companies to repatriate their manufacturing operations to the U.S. We have witnessed punishing steel and aluminum tariffs under the guise of national security, and new protocols have been put in place to make it easier to put further tariffs on in the future. We are also witnessing non-tariff trade barriers from the United States: The United States International Trade Commission is in the process of reviewing the safety and security of blueberries, strawberries and red peppers that Canada is exporting to the U.S. After 21 days of these investigations, the U.S. could impose tariffs on these products. This is a \$750 million export market that affects over 8,300 Canadian farmers and families, and thousands of jobs as well.

There is no question that economic relationships at their core are relationships and, like relationships between people, no aspect of an international relationship can be viewed in isolation. Canada's relationship with the U.S. is a defence and security one. It is a values and ideas one. It is a world view one, as well as an economic one. It is one that is rapidly changing and evolving. Canada cannot afford to be complacent and take for granted, or assume, that the conditions that have been in place for the last 20 years will remain the same going forward.

We must pivot. We must have the courage to look at ourselves and understand exactly what we need to do to position ourselves, and the United States, in a win-win situation for the future. We need a special House of Commons committee to understand our own economic situation, our own rules and regulatory frameworks, our own taxes and everything else so that we can also look at the security and prosperity that we depend on in this most important relationship.

Canada's security and prosperity depend on this relationship. The benefits that we can achieve, together with our friends and allies, will be unparalleled. I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting the motion before us, so that we can create the committee and get this work started as quickly and urgently as possible to position ourselves for a secure—

• (1350)

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked a lot about the middle class, the growing divide between the haves and the have-nots and, in particular, how important it was to support the middle class.

In December 2015, she voted in favour of reducing taxes on the middle class in order to add tax to the 1%. I wonder if she can comment as to whether she still supports the decision to vote that way.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, when looking at the economic relationship with the United States, we absolutely need to have a clear-eyed perspective on the strength and opportunities of our tax system as it relates to the regulatory environment and structure of the U.S. taxes. Therefore, I hope this committee would take the opportunity to look at those structures as much as it would look at trade and other aspects that we need to consider.

Business of Supply

• (1355)

[Translation]

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

I would like to hear her speak briefly about dairy farmers and supply management.

She mentioned that bilateral trade has had an impact on the blueberry and pepper sectors.

Compared to other sectors, dairy farmers are really getting battered by all this trade and are often forgotten. How does she feel about that?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, this is a very important issue.

We need to make sure that our industries that are in need and in critical condition are able to keep going.

[English]

What I mean by that is, particularly as we have seen in the challenges with COVID, where we have been unable to secure vaccines and we have been made vulnerable because we do not have the drugs and medical supplies, etc., we need to ask ourselves if our dairy producers and farmers are also critical to the safety, security and prosperity of our country and if they are, what will we do to ensure we have that critical self-sufficiency, so both in times of good and in emergency situations we have those basic abilities to protect Canadians.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question will build on the previous one. I would like to hear my hon. colleague's comments on the value of this committee in addressing important issues to our agriculture industry with the U.S., in particular the importance of Line 5 in providing essential propane to our farmers in Ontario and Quebec.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, there is no question that this is the critical value of this committee. It would allow us to look at the oil and gas situation, to talk about Canada's energy security as well as the ability to look at health considerations and health security as well as look at finance, tax and trade conditions. None of these things can be looked at in isolation. Our relationship with the United States is broad and comprehensive. Therefore, any plan that we put forward to ensure Canada's security and prosperity must take all those things into consideration.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on all aspects of this motion, and I hope that at the end of the day we form a committee. In this motion, there is a lot of interest for, I hope, all political parties and the regions of Canada having such a very important partner, the United States. Why is it very critical at this specific time to have this study, to have this motion and to have this committee?

Statements by Members

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, we saw the trends that were jeopardizing the relationship and putting Canadians in a slightly more disadvantaged economic position before COVID. Now, with the world and the United States facing significant challenges after COVID, there has to be a sense of urgency. We do not have the luxury of time. We are going to have to figure out what recovery looks like and this committee will be critical to dealing with our most important relationship and ensuring we are getting on with it as quickly as possible. Time is not a luxury we have and that is why we need this committee now more than ever.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[Translation]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, February is Black History Month, a time to highlight the resilience, many achievements and rich history of Black Canadians.

This month of celebration and learning has not always existed in Canada. The fact that Black people were forced into slavery on the land that would become our country is a little-known chapter of our history. The ensuing fight against slavery helped lay the foundations for the Canada we know today.

Black Canadians have made invaluable contributions to our society, and they continue to do so. If not for their innovative and revolutionary ideas, the world would have missed out on discoveries like refrigerated trucks, automatic elevator doors, mailboxes and pacemakers, to name just a few.

[English]

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity to salute Canada's post-secondary students. I am the father of two students who completed their university studies during this pandemic. I can see how our current times have affected studies, celebrations, mental health, careers and life plans.

Post-secondary students should take heart that this is a pause in what will be a big future for their generation. Canada needs their leadership in an increasingly uncertain world.

Let me also salute the student leaders who have soldiered through this unusual time, leaders like Spirit River Striped Wolf at Mount Royal University. The past academic year was not what anyone could have imagined, but his leadership during this difficult time and the adjustments he has made to advance the needs of the student body has been exemplary.

More than post-secondary students may know, the challenges they are overcoming at this time are the building blocks for our country's future, and we are going to need them. The great opportunity in front of them is being the architects of what the new normal will be.

CANADIAN SCHOOL COUNSELLING WEEK

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first week of February each year, Canadian School Counselling Week, recognizes the contributions of the school counselling profession to the mental health and well-being, and the personal, social, educational and career development of all students in Canada. This week is meant to increase awareness of the programs and services that characterize the school counselling profession.

[Translation]

This special week highlights the role school counsellors play in supporting student success. Their role is especially vital during these uncertain times amidst a global pandemic. With the implementation of remote learning and tele-counselling, school counsellors are key in the transition to a rapidly changing learning environment.

[English]

On behalf of my colleagues and all parents with school-age children, I would like to thank our school counsellors for the support they provide to ensure our children's success.

[Translation]

LÉO MAJOR

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, Quebec marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Léo Major, one of the greatest military heroes in Quebec and Canadian history.

On June 24, 1944, he lost his left eye but refused to leave the battlefield. He continued to serve as a scout and sniper, fighting with legendary courage. On October 30, during the Battle of the Scheldt in the southern Netherlands, Léo Major single-handedly captured 93 German soldiers and liberated an entire city.

Nothing could stop this man in the Second World War or the Korean War, where he served again, as did my uncle, Georges Desilets. Not enough people in Quebec and Canada know about this extraordinary man, and we have a duty to keep his memory and all of his acts of bravery alive, just as the Dutch people in the city of Zwolle do every year on April 14.

Sergeant Major, we thank you for your service.

UMBERTO BRUNI

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with their paints and brushes, artists make us see our community and our everyday lives through their eyes.

Statements by Members

Today, I pay tribute to a *grande maestro*, *signore* Umberto Bruni, who was born in Montreal in 1914. A painter, panellist, mural artist and sculptor, Mr. Bruni is universally recognized for his luminous pieces.

Umberto Bruni drew his inspiration from the beauty of our beautiful province and received numerous awards recognizing the excellence of his art. After 106 years, this incredible artist and unforgettable master has left this world, leaving the artistic community in mourning.

[Member spoke in Italian]

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

IT SUPPORT

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we live in a crazy world today, but fortunately we are still in a democratic country. Now we know that the Prime Minister is an admirer of benevolent dictatorships, and if he had his way, I am not sure that Parliament would be in session today. He likes to govern from the tent outside Rideau Cottage, but that is not what Canadians want. They want their government to be held accountable, and that is taking place today, thanks to the House of Commons IT's fabulous team. It is a little clunky at times, I must admit, like last night during a vote. I am a technological klutz, but every time I have had a technical issue, I have called our IT folks. The response has been swift, it has been cordial and it gets resolved every time.

The IT team at the House of Commons has brought Parliament into the living rooms of every Canadian, so today I would like to give a big shout-out and my thanks to all of the folks who are in a backroom somewhere, maybe even working from home. They are keeping democracy alive and well in Canada.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, bilingualism is such an important part of Canadian culture and identity. For anglophone MPs like me, this reality represents both a challenge and a golden opportunity to develop our full potential as Canadians. I have been working hard with my French teacher over the past year. Since this is Teacher Appreciation Week in Quebec, I want to take this opportunity today to thank all teachers.

I also want to thank the translators and interpreters who make it possible for us to always work in both of Canada's official languages in the House and across Canada.

Finally, since it is Black History Month, I want to recognize the outstanding and enormous contribution of French Canadians from the Black community.

[English]

SRI LANKA

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Sri Lanka marks its 73rd independence day, I rise to express my solidarity with those walking for justice from Pottuvil to Polikandi. Survivors and family members of the disappeared have been joined by civil society organizers and political leaders. Their purpose is to seek accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan state.

Impunity has prevailed on the island since its independence and the rule of law has broken down. In the last few months alone, Sri Lanka has desecrated the Mullivaikkal genocide memorial at Jaffna University, pardoned war criminals, forced discrimination on Muslim minorities, and the military has taken over many civilian-run bodies.

Last week, the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights concluded that Sri Lanka would be referred to the International Criminal Court, and cautioned that recurrence of past atrocities is likely if Sri Lanka goes unchecked. The world must, therefore, act with urgency to ensure that Tamils can live on the island with peace, justice and self-determination.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we missed in 2020 was the excitement of taking our kids and grandkids to rural community fairs and enjoying the Midway rides and amusements when carnivals visited towns. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has left these travelling amusement and carnival businesses without revenue since September 2019.

My constituent, Jennifer Mills, wrote extensively to Liberal ministers asking them for help to keep her business alive and to be able to provide services post-pandemic to our fairs and festivals when they reopen. To put it bluntly, the ministerial responses I have received about this industry have been pathetic at best and completely infuriating at worst. Some ministerial correspondence appears to be completely ignorant of the eligibility requirements for their own government programs.

The Liberal government has abandoned our small businesses, especially our local fairs and associated businesses. Canadian entrepreneurs like Jennifer deserve so much better. Indeed, all of us deserve better.

Statements by Members

● (1410)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, planting trees is a natural climate solution. For years, groups such as Trees for Woolwich, here in Kitchener—Conestoga, have taken up the cause to increase tree coverage locally. To help such groups, our government announced a plan that will see two billion trees planted over the next 10 years.

Today I am proud to share with Canadians from coast to coast to coast, *One Million Trees*, a debut documentary directed by Kitchener—Conestoga constituent, Mr. Everett Bumstead. The film follows veteran tree planters and is a timely, informative look at the culture of tree planting and the people who do this important work. On behalf of Canadians, including our children and generations to come, my thanks to Mr. Bumstead for highlighting this important work.

To all Canadians planting trees, my thanks for their efforts that improve our quality of life and add to our Canadian culture and identity.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, almost a year after the government began pumping out billions of dollars to properly support the pandemic unemployed and struggling businesses, many of the emergency funding programs remain inequitable and unfair. Many thousands of Canadians in need are still denied access.

For example, in May last year, the Prime Minister promised to make COVID support funding available to new businesses, the legitimate start-ups stuck in limbo because of the lockdown. To date, there has been nothing for worthy companies in Thornhill and across the country.

Another of many examples is the thousands of pregnant women or new mothers laid off because of COVID closures who are now stranded without support because whereas CERB protected women's insurable hours, the new CRB-EI does not.

Given that emergency support programs will be necessary for many more months because of the Liberals' vaccine shortfall, it is time the government fixes the flawed program to ensure that all Canadians in need have equal access.

* * *

HERO AWARD

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while we have all heard of superheroes like Batman and Spider Man, I want to bring attention to a superhero who people may not have met or heard of. His name is Devon Olafson. Devon works at the Portage Transport truck yard in Portage la Prairie in my riding. While Devon might not wear a cape, mask or a special suit of armour, his actions on October 22 were nothing short of heroic because, on that day, Devon found his co-worker, Warren Steppan, laying on the ground lifeless and close to death.

Devon did not have formal life-saving training, but he kept his cool. He followed a 911 operator's instructions over the phone and repeated chest compressions as he waited for paramedics to arrive. Three days later, Warren woke up alive in the hospital. Devon's efforts saved Warren's life and the two of them continue to be valued employees at Portage Transport.

While he does not like to be called a hero, Devon recently won the first ever Bridgestone Canada/MTA Trucking Hero award for 2020 in Manitoba. We congratulate Devon on behalf of the people of Portage—Lisgar for winning this award and, most of all, our thanks for saving a life and being a true hero.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now one year into the worst medical catastrophe in our nation's history. This past week, the Prime Minister announced that Canada would finally be ready to start producing vaccines, hopefully for the beginning of next year. In the meantime, many more people have died and countless businesses will go under.

How did it come to this point that Canada does not have the capacity to keep its own people safe? Over a century ago we established the Connaught Labs to be vaccine self-sufficient and we were a world leader. Then Brian Mulroney sold it off. It was Canadian public research that created the Ebola vaccine and Stephen Harper gave it away to the Americans.

The Prime Minister has spent this last year trusting that the market and other countries will keep us safe. Where was the sense of urgency? That is the lesson we need to learn from this, to mobilize manufacturing to be ready, to bring the best Canadian minds to the table and to ensure that Canada will never, ever again be left hoping that some foreign corporation or country will look after us when we have the skill to do it here in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL GERMAIN

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you are aware of my unconditional devotion to Rimouski's Océanic hockey club. I tend to highlight the brilliant achievements of NHL stars who got their start with our club, but today I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to Michel Germain, a living legend who proudly hails from the Lower St. Lawrence.

On live radio Tuesday evening, he called his 2000th game, a match featuring our Quebec Major Junior Hockey League team. A fervent fan since the team's inception, Michel Germain radiates passion with his thrilling accounts of our Nics' on-ice exploits. Without him, hockey would be a non-event on our local airwaves. He is the voice of an entire region, and he electrifies us every time. He knew all the big stars well: Lecavalier, Richards, Crosby and Lafrenière. Thanks to his memory and his exceptional talent, Michel Germain delivers an exhilarating play-by-play that puts us right there in the thick of the action.

Long live the Océanic.

Bravo, Michel.

Go, Nics, go!

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Canadian union workers and their jobs depend upon the strong economic relationship that exists between Canada and the United States. As such, we need to make sure that our two countries continue working together on the many shared interests we hold on matters such as energy, trade, industry, travel and tourism and the environment. When we do, both nations benefit.

For much of our recent history, our Canada-U.S. economic relationship has been strong, not weak. In fact, it only began to unravel since the current Prime Minister and Liberal government came to power in 2015. After five years of this Prime Minister on the job, Canadian workers have watched their jobs flee, their economic opportunities diminish, their industries crash and their prosperity decline as our country's important economic relationship with the United States falters.

Canadian workers need the government to do better. While the Liberal government fails to defend union workers, Conservatives are focused on securing union jobs and securing the future for Canadian workers.

* * *

[Translation]

YEAR OF THE OX

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 12 marks the first day of the Year of the Ox. This year, because of the pandemic, we will not be able to celebrate with the traditional festivities.

However, in the same spirit of resilience and creativity we saw in the Year of the Rat, I think we will all find inclusive and festive ways to celebrate this important date.

[English]

After one of the most most difficult and challenging years the world has lived through since 1945, I would especially like to wish all a healthy and safe new year.

Oral Questions

The Year of the Ox will hopefully provide us all with the positivity, good health and the hard work we all need after the hardships the pandemic has meant for all of us.

[Translation]

I wish everyone a happy new year. As this year comes to a close, I thank Canadians for being models of resiliency, solidarity and compassion.

From the bottom of my heart: *Xiè xie. Gong Xi Fa Cai. Gong Hey Fat Choy.*

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to get back to work. We need to see jobs in every region and in every sector in this country. We know the United States is our close ally and friend, and trade between us exceeds \$1.5 billion per day. However, several U.S. policies are hurting our economy and the Prime Minister is doing nothing to address it. The Conservative motion today would create a special committee to ensure our ongoing co-operation with the U.S., with a goal to find solutions.

Will the government support this motion?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows how to defend Canada, as we showed in our successful NAFTA negotiations and in the 232 tariff fight. By contrast, when the going got tough, the Conservatives lost their nerves.

The leader of the official opposition actually said, “I...believe that many of the Canadian retaliatory tariffs should be dropped as they...are not worth their symbolic nature.” The Conservatives wanted to wave the white flag, but Canadians can trust our government to fight for them.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the Deputy Prime Minister not realize that Canadians have already suffered tens of thousands of job losses because of the pandemic? Now with Biden's cancelling of Keystone, the threat to Line 5 and his buy American policy, tens of thousands of more jobs are at risk.

Canada's unemployment is already the third highest in the G7. Up to 30,000 jobs alone are at risk if Line 5 is cancelled. Do the Liberals not realize the seriousness of this situation? These are good-paying jobs, many of them unionized.

Oral Questions

Again, when will the Prime Minister do his job and protect Canadian jobs now and in the future?

● (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely appreciates the importance of the Canada-U.S. trading relationship, and we have shown that we are able to work with a team Canada approach to maintain that relationship. When the going gets tough, we are willing to stand and fight to defend the national interest.

When it comes to jobs, I am pleased to report that Canada has already had a robust recovery from the depths of the COVID recession, much stronger than the one we are seeing in the United States.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, if the Liberals believe in a team Canada approach, they will support our motion and support establishing the special committee.

Everyone knows there will be no economic recovery until Canadians can start to open up their businesses and lives and can get back to work. However, that will not happen until we get vaccines.

The Prime Minister has failed miserably to deliver vaccines or even be clear and honest on how his September deadline will happen. We are now 34th in the world in the vaccination of our population. Let that sink in. We are 34th and dropping—

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely appreciates the urgency of getting vaccines to Canada. That is why Canada has secured 10 doses of vaccine per Canadian. We have the most comprehensive and most diverse vaccine portfolio in the world. We have already received more than 1.1 million doses. We will receive six million doses by the end of the first quarter, and every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be by the end of September.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all Canadians and we are all proud of our country, but today my pride in my country has been shaken, all because the government did not lock down the infamous vaccine agreements.

Now, Canada is having to use COVAX, and we are the only G7 country to do so. This is humiliating and Canadians deserve better. How did the government manage to fail so hard?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will never apologize for doing everything in our power to get Canadians vaccinated as quickly as possible. COVAX has always been part of the Government of Canada's procurement strategy, and the mechanism is working precisely as designed. We have been clear from the start: No one will be safe until everyone is vaccinated. We are focused on getting Canadians vaccinated while making sure the rest of the world is vaccinated too.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all want the economy to get off on the right foot once COVID-19 is behind us. The fastest way to make that happen is vaccination.

The government goes on and on about all its vaccine agreements, but now it is turning to a mechanism designed to help the lowest-income countries even as it says the doses are coming. It is a disgrace.

The Deputy Prime Minister has the nerve to say she will never apologize, but will she apologize to Canadians for breaking her promise to provide Canadians with vaccines through regular channels?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with all members of the House that the vaccine issue is urgent, and that is why we have secured 10 doses per Canadian. We have the most comprehensive and diverse vaccine portfolio in the world. Canada will get more than six doses by the end of the first quarter, and all Canadians who want the vaccine will get it by the end of September. COVAX has been part of our plan from the start.

● (1425)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bad news about vaccine supplies just keeps coming. In total, we will receive 70% fewer doses from Pfizer and 20% fewer from Moderna, and this will only get worse. Things are so bad that Canada is dipping into the COVAX program, which is intended for the poorest countries. We are the only G7 country doing this, and that is extremely embarrassing.

The Prime Minister has clearly not shown himself to be worthy of blind trust. On the contrary, now more than ever, he must be transparent. Will he release the vaccine contracts and supply schedule?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to COVAX, the government will never apologize for doing everything in its power to vaccinate Canadians as quickly as possible. COVAX has always been part of the Government of Canada's procurement strategy, as it has for other partners such as New Zealand and Singapore, and the mechanism is working. We are on track to deliver at least two billion vaccine doses globally by the end of 2021.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that everyone will be vaccinated by September. Experts from *The Economist* say it will not happen until the summer of 2022. Personally, I have a lot more confidence in foreign experts because they have no reason to lie. Obviously, these are projections, because the government is still hiding the information. All we are getting is endless bad news. Canada currently ranks 33rd in the world per capita, a trend that is only getting worse. The Liberals are not doing anything.

When will the Prime Minister present his plan and his contracts?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member from the Bloc, for whom I have a great deal of respect, that our government shares his urgent concern over the vaccines. That is why Major-General Dany Fortin is sharing information with the provinces and territories and with all Canadians.

I want to note, once again, that vaccines will be available to every Canadian who wants one by the end of September.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I remember the vaccine announcements. People were encouraged. They had a bit of hope during a tough time.

The delays announced by the government mean that more people will get sick and more people will lose their lives. Now we do not know how many vaccines we will receive from Moderna next week or the following weeks.

Why did the government let people down?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has secured 10 vaccine doses per Canadian, and ours is the most comprehensive and diverse portfolio in the world.

Health Canada has approved the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. In addition, because of our advance purchase agreements, our regulators now have access to three vaccine candidates from AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and Novavax and are currently reviewing them. That will enable us to vaccinate all Canadians who want to be vaccinated by the end of September.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I remember, when the COVID-19 vaccines were announced, that people were encouraged. It was a little hope in a difficult time. Then the delays were announced by the government, which means more people will get sick and more people will lose their lives. On top of the delays, we are also learning that Canada is the only country in the G7 that is going to access COVAX, which is a vaccine supply meant for developing countries.

How did the Liberal government let things get so bad?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will never apologize for doing everything in our power to get Canadians vaccinated as quickly as possible.

COVAX has always been part of Canada's procurement strategy, and the COVAX mechanism is working precisely as designed. We

have been clear from the start: No one will be safe until everyone is. We are focused on getting Canadians vaccinated while making sure the rest of world is vaccinated too.

• (1430)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister just said that the Liberals did everything in their power to get Canadians vaccines, but this morning the minister said that the Liberals failed to secure the right to produce Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines in Canada because they did not have the capacity to produce them here.

The U.K. was in the same boat we were in 10 months ago, but it has managed to secure domestic production capacity. If the Liberals did everything in their power to secure Canadians vaccines, why did they not do what the U.K. did instead of leaving us entirely dependent on other countries to produce vaccines for us?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada pursued a strategy of pursuing the earliest possible vaccines that we could secure from among all of the vaccine candidates in the world.

That is why we have reached agreements with seven vaccine manufacturers, five of which we have of course received encouraging clinical data from, and two of which have already been approved and are being deployed on Canadian soil. Every Canadian who wishes to receive a vaccine from among those two approved vaccines will have access to one by the end of September.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member just said it: the Liberals pursued a strategy to get us the earliest vaccine possible, but it was behind every other country in the world. Was this as early as possible? We do not have any right now.

I think about the United States. It turned a convention centre into a hospital in a week. China built an entirely new hospital in 12 days. The United Kingdom built its vaccine capacity in 10 months.

The Liberals were sitting around talking with CanSino at a time when they should have been building our capacity. They admitted that this affected our right to produce vaccines at home.

Why the fail?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while other countries were acting, Canada was also acting. We were securing PPE for our front-line medical workers and our provinces, working carefully on securing vaccine agreements with seven leading manufacturers around the world, working on building up our domestic ability to produce long-term vaccines, and working to get those vaccines into Canada and into Canadian arms at the earliest possible date.

That means that every Canadian who wishes to receive a vaccine will have access to one by the end of September.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, the federal government's plan to vaccinate all Canadians who want the vaccine against COVID-19 by September is unrealistic. That will probably not happen before 2022.

Moreover, we found out yesterday that Canada is the only G7 country to have accessed COVAX vaccines.

When will the Prime Minister stop being dishonest with Canadians and tell the truth?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously Canada acted quickly to get enough doses to vaccinate all Canadians multiple times. By the end of September, we will have enough approved doses so that every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated can be.

As for COVAX, Canada can be proud of its participation in that program, which seeks to provide vaccines to developing countries. COVAX's very purpose is to ensure that Canada gets vaccines through the program. That is what makes the program work.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not proud to be forced to put my hand in the COVAX cookie jar to solve Canada's problems.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been approved, but every week, we are told that fewer doses are going to be delivered and that is why we are dipping into COVAX. It is not right.

Can the Prime Minister cut the rhetoric and tell us the truth. If there is a problem with the vaccines and we will not be getting them for six months, then we need to know.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, COVAX's goal is to ensure that everyone has access to the vaccine at the same time, whether it be richer countries that can buy doses or poorer countries that need donations.

Canada was one of the first countries to make a donation to COVAX. We can be proud of what we have done and of what we are doing to ensure that everyone receives the vaccine.

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*[English]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is seeking an exemption agreement to protect Canadian jobs from the Biden administration's buy American policy. As the government pointed out the other day, Canada is the number one customer of 32 American states.

Has the government reached out to any of these 32 state governors to seek their support to oppose these buy American policies? Has the government asked Canada's premiers to reach out to their gubernatorial counterparts?

• (1435)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking a

team Canada approach, as we have done over the last five years. The Prime Minister has spoken to the President. He has also spoken to the Vice President. Our terrific ambassador in the U.S. is having discussions at all levels. I am looking forward to speaking to my counterpart, once that confirmation process has taken place.

Members can be assured that this is absolutely a team Canada approach, as we work with businesses, exporters, officials and colleagues—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2009, when faced with the buy American policies of the Obama administration, the previous government worked with the 10 provincial premiers to present a united front to secure an exemption agreement.

Is the current government going to do the same thing? Is it going to convene a first ministers' meeting on this issue?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to work with my provincial and territorial colleagues. It was just very recently that we had a very good meeting at the provincial, territorial and federal level to talk about trade, that road to recovery, and indeed, how we will work together with provinces and territories on this road to recovery to ensure that Canadian businesses and our workers have the full support of all of us, working as team Canada.

The Speaker: Before continuing, I would like to make sure it is clear for all the members who are joining us virtually to please think, almost as a paranoid way of looking at things, that their microphone is always on. If they are going to speak, whether to the microphone or to someone else, they can just check to see if the mute signal is on, and it will be much better for everyone involved.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

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HEALTH

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite the bad news that keeps piling up, the government keeps insisting that we will receive six million doses by the end of March. I hope so, but the government needs to share whatever information it has to support that claim. At this point, halfway through, we have received just over one million doses. We know that Moderna is going to announce a reduction in shipments for the week of February 22. The shortage will therefore continue for most of February. To reach the six million doses promised by the end of March, the Prime Minister will have to find at least one million doses per week.

Could he share his detailed plan?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has entered into seven vaccine procurement agreements including five vaccine candidates that offer encouraging news. Of the two already approved, we will receive six million doses by the end of March, as the member just mentioned. Canada will continue to increase its vaccine supply so that every Canadian who wants one will have access to it by the end of September.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the people need to be able to have confidence in this government, but this is difficult, since the government is not transparent and everything we do find out is worrisome. The people are not reassured to hear that the government is taking vaccines from the COVAX program.

It is not reassuring to see that courteous Canada has to dip into the reserve of vaccines set aside for developing countries in an attempt to make up for its own delays. The public deserves to know the truth about this situation.

When will the government disclose its contracts and its vaccine procurement schedule?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we regularly disclose the number of vaccines we expect to receive. We are experiencing temporary delays with the two approved vaccines, but we will receive six million doses by the end of the first quarter.

COVAX was specifically designed so that Canada and other developed countries would receive vaccines during the first phase of the program, and then developing countries would receive vaccines in the second phase. Canada can be proud of its participation in COVAX.

• (1440)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are the only G7 country to take what is meant for the least fortunate and then eventually give it back to the least fortunate. We are the only ones.

The government needs to be transparent. On December 7, the Prime Minister said that we would get a head start on vaccination. Now we are behind. We are ranking last among all countries. The Prime Minister has not proven trustworthy, as much as we would hope otherwise.

Why does he not table his entire procurement plan? He should table the plan and not just the objectives.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we regularly inform our partners, the provinces and territories, of the number of doses they can expect. We have published the number of vaccine doses that we expect to receive in the next quarters.

Canada has one of the most advanced and diversified vaccine procurement strategies in the world. Canadians can be proud and rest assured that vaccines will be available to every Canadian who wants one by the end of September.

Oral Questions

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces has launched an investigation into the serious allegations of sexual misconduct by former chief of the defence staff, General Vance. We know from news reports that the defence minister was made aware of these allegations back in 2018 by the defence ombudsman and that he then referred it to the Privy Council Office.

When did the defence minister first brief the Prime Minister? Was it when he first learned of these allegations, or just this week when the story broke?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have no tolerance for any form of sexual misconduct. This is something that I take very seriously. I also want to acknowledge the courage of the survivors who have come forward.

I have always ensured that any allegations that were brought to my attention were reported to the appropriate authorities to begin an investigation, regardless of rank or position. I have always followed all of the appropriate processes in pursuing issues related to workplace harassment whenever allegations have arisen.

We will ensure that a full, thorough and independent investigation is conducted.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are serious complaints against General Vance. They were brought directly to the defence minister's attention by the defence ombudsman, and he had a responsibility to follow up after he reported it.

The minister has a duty to every serving member in uniform. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said that all investigations are taken seriously regardless of rank or position. Now, did the defence minister ensure that the Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister's Office were aware of these allegations in May 2019, before they gave General Vance a salary increase?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, I have always ensured that any allegations that were brought to my attention were reported to the appropriate authorities to begin an investigation, regardless of rank or position. I have followed all of the appropriate processes in pursuing issues related to workplace harassment whenever allegations have arisen.

We will always take a policy of no tolerance when it comes sexual misconduct.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, far too many uniformed members have been victims of sexual harassment in a culture where their voices are not heard. This government promised to change things so every investigation is taken seriously, no matter the rank of the person involved. However, Canada's former top military commander stands accused of the same behaviour he was tasked with stamping out. The Minister of Defence knew it and did nothing for three years. This minister broke a sacred trust to protect armed forces members from harm.

How will the Prime Minister restore that trust?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, we have no tolerance for any form of sexual misconduct. This is something that I take very seriously. I have always ensured that any allegations that were brought to my attention were reported to the appropriate authorities to begin an investigation, regardless of rank or position.

I have always followed all the appropriate processes in pursuing issues related to workplace harassment whenever allegations have arisen and, in this case, we will ensure that a very thorough, full and independent investigation is conducted.

* * *

• (1445)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is going on at Veterans Affairs?

The union of Veterans Affairs employees recently found that one in three staff had experienced harassment in the workplace. Harassment and discrimination have no place at work, especially not in a government department. No wonder staff turnover is so high and backlogs are continuing to grow.

Veterans are tired of excuses. Will this minister finally stand up for workers and for veterans to create a safer work environment, so our veterans get the help they deserve?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take reports of workplace harassment very seriously and we have made it absolutely clear that everybody deserves to work in a safe and healthy environment.

My department has received the survey from the union and has met with it to discuss it. We will continue to work closely with the union to address these issues.

Employees of Veterans Affairs Canada do exceptional work on behalf of veterans every single day and they deserve a safe workplace, just like everyone else.

*[Translation]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals believe they are handling the climate crisis better than the United States, but the opposite is true. The Biden administration has halted the Keystone XL pipeline project, whereas the Liberal government is promoting it and spending billions of dollars buying TransMountain.

President Biden is showing leadership by eliminating subsidies for fossil fuel companies, whereas the Liberals are putting hundreds of millions of dollars in oil companies' pockets. They still dare to call themselves champions of the environment. That is Liberal hypocrisy, and it has gone on long enough.

Will the Prime Minister promise to end subsidies for oil companies, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me speak quickly to the single biggest relationship we have, the single largest customer for Canadian crude, for instance, which is our biggest export. It is not just an issue for Alberta or Saskatchewan; it is an issue for all of Canada.

Cross-border energy trade between Canada and the U.S. is over \$100 billion each year. We will not find two countries in the world that have their energy sectors linked as closely as we do. Over 70 pipelines and three dozen transmission lines are crossing our border.

We will co-operate with the new U.S. administration on areas of common interest: improving continental energy security and protecting our workers.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, B.C. is the western maritime province with strong links to the Asia-Pacific. We also have a unique, diverse and vibrant economy. Therefore, I welcome our government's proposal to create the specific B.C. regional development agency.

Could the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages tell the House more about our plan to implement this new B.C. regional development agency?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver Centre for her strong advocacy.

Our government understands that British Columbia has specific needs. That is why, for the first time in history, we will be creating a B.C. regional development agency to create and protect jobs in the beautiful province of British Columbia.

My colleagues and I have been connecting with entrepreneurs and workers all across the province and we look forward to establishing this new B.C. regional development agency for B.C. people by B.C. people.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Enbridge is spending \$8 billion modernizing Line 3, Canada's main oil transportation link to the U.S. since it was approved by President Obama in 2016. The final section to be upgraded is being challenged by the same activists that moved the new U.S. President to cancel Keystone XL.

The Prime Minister recently spoke with the U.S. administration about energy security without any specifics. Before more environmentally destructive policies are decided in a void of real information, will the Prime Minister commit to getting specific on pipelines with the U.S. administration?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we approved the Line 3 replacement project and we did that in order to create good, middle-class jobs. Line 3 is a mixed service line. It carries heavy, sweet, light and high sour blends of crude from Hardisty in Alberta to Superior, Wisconsin. Construction on the project is complete. It is operational on the Canadian side. Ambassador Hillman has underscored the importance of this line to both state and federal level officials in the U.S.

We support our oil and gas workers. We will continue to advocate for projects that support North American energy security.

• (1450)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are verbal assurances and verbal assurances leading to no results are not worth the salaries of the storytellers hired to write them.

What Canada needs is action, not stories. Canadian energy workers are receiving an ongoing legacy of failure from the government: northern gateway, energy east, Trans Mountain, Teck Frontier, Keystone XL and now Enbridge Line 3 and Line 5.

When will the government stand up for the people it claims to represent and take action to protect their jobs?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me go through another list, one based on facts.

We approved TMX. We are building it and there are more than 7,000 jobs created so far. We approved Line 3, another 7,000 jobs created. We approved NGTL, with thousands of jobs to be created. We are building LNG Canada and providing thousands of jobs. On Orphan and inactive wells, we will spend \$1.7 billion and thousands of jobs will be created. The wage subsidy kept more than 500,000 workers in their jobs in a pandemic in Alberta alone. That is our record.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps sidestepping the question about what he will personally do to support Line 5. We know of efforts by others in the government to keep Line 5 open, but we need the Prime Minister to show direct leadership here. Does he not understand the im-

Oral Questions

pact this will for jobs in Sarnia—Lambton, Ontario, Quebec and Alberta?

When will the Prime Minister pick up the phone and call his American counterparts about Line 5?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take this issue very seriously. Line 5 is vital to our energy security. It is a line that is a critical economic and energy security link between Canada and the United States and it has safely operated for over 65 years. It provides good paying, middle-class jobs for thousands of workers at refineries in the member's riding in Sarnia and also in Montreal and Lévis, Quebec.

I can assure the House that we are looking at all our options. Line 5 is a vital pipeline for Canada's energy security. We will continue to advocate for it.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the natural resources minister supports Line 5, but the Prime Minister is abdicating his responsibility here. He is not answering questions. He is not taking personal accountability.

When will the Prime Minister pick up the phone and ask President Biden to intervene to keep Line 5 open?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working every day on this issue. Line 5 is vital for Canada's energy security. Ambassador Hillman is making the case in Washington. Consul General Comartin is making the case in Detroit and in Lansing. The Minister of Transport raised it with the transport secretary, Pete Buttigieg, yesterday. The Prime Minister raised the importance of North American energy security with Vice-President Harris. I will be raising this issue with the incoming U.S. energy secretary as soon as she is confirmed.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the only real way to stop the spread of COVID-19 variants is to vaccinate everyone. However, we cannot vaccinate everyone because the government is failing to procure vaccine doses. This means that it is more important than ever to secure the Canadian border. Even now, vacationers who want to travel during the break can still buy tickets from a U.S. airline rather than a Canadian one. Not only are tickets available, but they are discounted.

Why is the government letting this situation drag on instead of prohibiting all non-essential flights?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleague to join me in calling on all Canadians to avoid vacation travel or non-essential travel. We have called on Canadians since last year to do so. We have added quarantine measures. We have enhanced those measures by asking all travellers to be tested before arriving. Now we have added extra measures.

Let there be no confusion. Any Canadian who is travelling on a non-essential trip will have the strictest measures in the world, and we are doing so because we want to protect the health of Canadians.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government keeps telling us that it is strict, but if that were true, it would no longer be possible to book trips down south a month and a half after the holidays. If the federal government were so strict, airlines would have refunded customers who chose not to travel rather than offering cheaper flights. If the federal government were so strict, Quebec would not have had to ask for a delegation of authority to monitor quarantines. There are holes in the government's net.

When will Ottawa take action on this?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what my Bloc Québécois colleague refuses to admit is that Canada has some of the strictest rules in the world. We now know that all of the big Canadian airlines are no longer flying to Mexico and the Caribbean. We are also in discussions with other airlines. Another measure we have taken to discourage people from travelling is requiring them to follow stricter rules when they return. They need to be tested before they come back, pay \$2,000, quarantine for three days in a location approved by the federal government, and then complete the quarantine period at home.

These are extremely strict rules, and my colleague should at least have the decency to recognize that.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a few weeks, a year will have passed since Canada's worst mass murder occurred in Portapique, Nova Scotia. After severe public pressure from family and opposition intervention, the government finally did the right thing and called for a public inquiry. However, the families of the victims are still in the dark and are still battling with the Liberal government for answers.

Federal institutions must respect the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, which includes the right to information. When will the minister provide families with the information for which they have been calling?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that in direct response to the concerns raised by the victims, their families and the people of Nova Scotia we initiated a public inquiry. We have three commissioners, who are now engaged in the important work of getting the answers people need.

The independence and integrity of that public inquiry needs to be honoured and recognized. It has an important job to do. I am very confident that upon completion of its important work, it will be able to provide the families of those victims and all Nova Scotians with the answers they most certainly need and deserve.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many residents in my riding are frustrated and fed up. Many medicinal marijuana growers are growing much more than their licences permit them to and have much more than a few plants, which is causing big problems within our neighbourhoods. All of this is happening without any proper supervision and enforcement by Health Canada.

When residents have asked for help, it is a revolving door. The RCMP say it that is Health Canada's responsibility and Health Canada does nothing. This practice might help the minister deflect responsibility, but it is doing absolutely nothing for my constituents and Canadians.

When will the Liberal government clean up this mess?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that when we introduced legislation to strictly regulate the production, distribution and consumption of cannabis, we left in place strong criminal sanctions against those who grow and distribute marijuana outside of the regulated regime. We are aware of concerns, and have listened to Canadians with concerns, about those who would abuse the provisions of the medical marijuana scheme that is in place.

When people grow that marijuana and sell it outside of medical authorizations, they are committing a crime. It is the responsibility of the police jurisdiction to investigate those crimes and bring charges where appropriate. Strong penalties exist for those activities and the tools are available to law enforcement to control those behaviours.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is about time the Prime Minister closed the borders. He should have done so long ago, but he is once again causing confusion. Which hotels will be authorized, and when? Will people who have received both vaccine doses be exempt? Plus, he is still offloading the work onto the provinces.

Canadian citizens abroad need to make plans and decide what to do to come back, so when will we get a clear plan detailing restrictions complete with clear instructions and precise dates?

● (1500)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the person trying to confuse Canadians is my colleague himself. We have been very clear from the start. Everyone who is abroad should follow these rules: make the reservation, pay the \$2,000, take a test before boarding the plane, take another test upon arrival, and quarantine for three days. I do not see what is so complicated about that. If my colleague spent just 10% of the time he spends criticizing us telling Canadians not to travel, that would be helpful for everyone.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the Secretary General of the United Nations expressed serious concerns about the crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray region. The UN estimates that about 3.2 million people, more than half of Tigray's population, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. This was echoed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who said that if nothing is done, the situation will only get worse.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs share Canada's views on the situation? What are we doing to address the humanitarian crisis?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Canada is extremely concerned about reports of sexual violence and allegations of serious human rights violations in Tigray. We call on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians, to work to de-escalate the situation and to allow immediate humanitarian access. Canada is providing \$3 million for humanitarian operations in Ethiopia and Sudan in response to the impact of growing conflict.

Oral Questions

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Prime Minister made the outrageous claim that his government has demonstrated its ability to stand up for Canadian steel and aluminum workers. This comment is so out of touch with the reality of steelworkers across our country, especially here in Regina, where my friends Rod, Mike, Courtland, plus 600 others, are now out of work.

Will the Prime Minister apologize to the thousands of Canadian steelworkers he and his government have failed to support over the past five years? The natural resources minister's speaking notes will not help these people get jobs.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the hon. member that our government has stood up for steel and aluminum workers across the country. When the illegal 232 tariffs were imposed, our government imposed dollar-for-dollar retaliatory tariffs, and thanks to that strong response we had those tariffs lifted.

If anyone owes steel and aluminum workers an apology, it is the leader of the official opposition, who called on us to lift those tariffs.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cross-border Peace Arch Park in my riding is a U.S.-Canada border loophole. For Mike, Charla and their neighbours, who live next to the park, this is intolerable. Since Washington State reopened its side in May, visitors from across Canada and the U.S. are constantly meeting in the park and returning home, with no tracing, no quarantines. We saw many picnics and counted 60 pitched tents last Sunday.

Does the minister not see this as a public health issue?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course I do. We have, as explained several times, implemented some of the strongest measures in the world.

Last March, we essentially closed the border between Canada and the United States for all non-essential travel. We have continued to maintain those provisions while allowing for the movement of essential workers and essential goods across the border.

The measures we put in place require all people returning from the U.S. to enter into quarantine. Those measures are enforceable, with significant fines and consequences for those who break them. We will continue to do all of the things that are necessary to help keep Canadians safe.

Oral Questions

• (1505)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is an essential part of Canada's energy supply chain, providing half the oil needs of Ontario and Quebec. It is currently under threat of being cancelled, but the Prime Minister has not even lifted a finger. Canadians need to fill up their gas tanks, heat their homes and cook their food. Energy is, after all, the fuel of life.

Wait a second. Is that why the Prime Minister promised to plant two billion trees? Are we going back to wood-burning stoves?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, Line 5 has operated safely for over 65 years. Enbridge continues to monitor its operations around the clock. It is undertaking checks with remotely operated vehicles and has human divers at regular intervals. The tunnel project, which Michigan recently issued permits for, will make a safe line even safer. Over the past 10 years, Enbridge has transported more than 27 billion barrels of crude with a safety delivery record of 99.99%.

On this side of the House, we are working hard to support our oil and gas workers and protect Canada's energy and industrial infrastructure.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as vaccines continue to arrive in Canada, we know how important it is for all Canadians to get vaccinated when the time comes. I know that while our researchers are working hard to ensure that any vaccine is safe for Canadians, some may still have hesitation to get vaccinated.

Can the Minister of Health please update us on the work being done to make sure all Canadians have confidence in the COVID vaccines?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her hard work on the health committee.

We know that we need to do more to ensure that all Canadians have access to reliable, accurate and timely information about vaccines and the importance of vaccination. That is why we have announced the immunization partnership fund, which will provide over \$30 million for community organizations and leaders to develop tailored and targeted tools and resources that could increase vaccine confidence and address barriers to access and acceptance within their communities.

I encourage all organizations to apply and every Canadian to get vaccinated when their time comes.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week President Biden announced a freeze on U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Here in Canada, the Liberals continue to fuel the very war they condemn by exporting arms to a country with one of the worst human rights records in the world.

This is not right. If the U.S. can do it, so can we. We must protect Canadian workers and uphold human rights.

When will the Liberals stop selling deadly weapons to Saudi Arabia, fuelling one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to a stronger and more rigorous arms export system. That is why we acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty and human rights considerations are now at the centre of our export regime. I, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, will deny any permit application where there is a risk of human rights violation.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in question period, the Prime Minister said he was “pleased to see the U.S. follow our lead on banning fossil fuel subsidies.” The Liberals promised in 2015 to end fossil fuel subsidies and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. On the contrary, though, between 2014 and 2018, both went up. Greenhouse gas emissions were up and fossil fuel subsidies were up, even before adding the \$17 billion for Trans Mountain.

How is the vertigo my Liberal friends are now experiencing from no longer being able to discern up from down?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in November our government introduced a climate plan that demonstrates how Canada will exceed its Paris Agreement targets and will create jobs and economic prosperity for the future. As part of this, our government is committed to phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2025, and we are on track to do so.

We were pleased to see the Americans follow our lead in committing to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. Canada has already eliminated eight tax measures in that sector, and we are working with Argentina on a peer review of fossil fuel subsidies. Our government will continue working with Canadians to cut pollution and grow our economy.

• (1510)

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for today.

Before we go to the points of order, I want to remind the hon. members that headsets are supplied by the House. To ensure that staff are able to help if something goes wrong, maybe they can make sure they have one of those headsets at home or in their office when they are speaking in the House. This makes it that much easier for the IT ambassador to help out.

Also, although it is getting better, let us not forget to keep the boom down on the mikes. It should be about half an inch above or below the mouth so that members do not get a popping sound. We do not want to injure our interpreters. Let us make sure they remain healthy. They are very important for ensuring that we receive service in both languages.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising out of question period.

Earlier, the Deputy Prime Minister was crowing about how much better the Canadian job market was doing in recovery compared with our colleagues in the U.S. With the House's permission, I would like to table an OECD report that actually shows the U.S. has recovered 33% better.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: No.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: No.

Some hon. members: Debate.

The Speaker: We are getting into debate, but the hon. member does want to table a paper.

All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as per tradition, it being Thursday, we would like an update on the business of Parliament.

As we all know, we will spend next week in our ridings. That is a very good thing. I look forward to paying a visit to Coiffure au Masculin, located on Valcartier Boulevard in Loretteville. My visit is a few months overdue.

[English]

I would like to know what we are doing when the House resumes on February 15. I hope that the government will table the famous bill to cancel the famous \$1,000 to those who travel without necessity.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I am pleased to have the Thursday question. It allows me to talk to him, which is increasingly rare these days.

To answer his question directly, tomorrow we will resume debate at second reading of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act.

When we return from our constituency week on February 16, we will resume consideration of Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement. It is absolutely vital that we pass it quickly.

Wednesday, we will begin second reading of Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is also referred to as UNDRIP.

[English]

Thursday, February 18 shall be an allotted day.

On Friday, we will start second reading debate of Bill C-13 concerning single event sport betting, as well as Bill C-19, which would provide for temporary rules to ensure the safe administration of an election in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Translation]

I hope all our colleagues have an excellent week working in their ridings.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CANADA-UNITED STATES ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Don Valley West.

● (1515)

[English]

I am always pleased to discuss Canada's most important trading partner. As parliamentary secretary for international trade, I believe that our relationship with our neighbours to the south is of the utmost importance.

Let us start with the numbers. Make no mistake, these numbers tell a very compelling story. Our two countries do over \$2 billion in cross-border trade daily. Canada is the number one export market for the majority of American states. In fact, in 2019, Canada was the number one customer for 32 different U.S. states.

Business of Supply

Over 74% of Canada's exports are sold to the United States. The U.S. is the single greatest investor in Canada. In 2019, U.S. stock investment in Canada was \$455 billion, representing nearly half of all our foreign investment. However, when it comes to describing the importance of the relationship between Canada and the U.S., a purely economic analysis does not give the full picture.

Let me go back to September 11, 2001: the day that two planes crashed into the World Trade Center and another hit the Pentagon. Many other planes were in flight during that terrible attack, en route to the United States. Families returning from vacation, businessmen and women, students and other Americans were going home, but the Federal Aviation Administration closed U.S. airspace. In a phone call, former transportation secretary Norman Mineta ordered airlines to “get those goddamn planes down”, so those planes and their passengers bound for the United States needed a place to go.

They came to Canada. On September 11, 2001, 6,595 passengers and crew from 38 flights landed in the small town of Gander, Newfoundland. The story of the people of Gander opening their hearts and their homes to Americans is well known. It even spawned the highly successful Broadway musical *Come From Away*. It is, for me, the story of the Canada-U.S. relationship.

When Americans Clark and Roxanne Loper and their young adopted child were wandering through the local Lion's Club that was housing airline passengers, a Gander resident they had never met before asked if the couple needed a shower and a place to sleep. “There are no showers at the Lion's Club” the Americans said. “No, you can come over to my house and shower,” said the Canadian.

When Lisa Zale and her American business associate, Sara Wood, went to Canadian Tire for supplies and got to the cash to pay, the cashier asked if they were from one of the planes. When they nodded, the Canadian Tire employee said that anything the stranded passengers needed they could take, and the store was happy to provide it for free.

Local pharmacists supplied medicine to passengers who needed it. Canadian teenagers saw the many young children who were confused and scared, and organized a large party complete with games and cakes and costumes just to make them feel welcome and safe. I could go on and on. It is the story of Gander, Newfoundland. It is one of the many Canadian stories of 9/11 and for me it is the story of the Canada-U.S. relationship.

Before I go any further, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris on their historic victory. This is certainly a new chapter in our relationship, an exciting one full of promise and of hope.

Vice-President Harris spent her teenage years on the other side of the border from my riding here in Montreal. I met President Biden when he came to Ottawa for a state dinner as the vice-president in the Obama administration.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I will not hide the optimism I feel right now.

Let us be honest. The last four years were by no means a cakewalk. The unique relationship between our two countries was test-

ed, as the Americans imposed illegal and unfair tariffs, renounced international institutions, backtracked on environmental protections and lacked any predictability.

However, Canada and the United States have strong ties and relations. This government worked hard to maintain and protect this relationship and we were successful. We stood up for workers, for the aluminum and steel industries and for multilateralism, and we stood against protectionism.

● (1520)

[English]

All of this was at a time when the opposition was urging us to make compromises and make sure nobody got too upset. The current leader of the official opposition even suggested in 2008 that Canada should abandon its countermeasures in response to U.S. tariffs, because they were “not worth their symbolic nature.” There was nothing symbolic about our determination, and the U.S. lifting its tariffs proved it.

The motion before us today proposes the creation of a special committee tasked with studying all aspects of the economic relationship between Canada and the United States. While I am not convinced that a new committee is required to achieve that goal, I welcome any opportunity for parliamentarians to examine this important relationship. I had the privilege of studying the importance of our trade relationship with the U.S. at the international trade committee when it examined the new NAFTA, or the CUSMA agreement. The committee spent over 35 hours in intense study and heard testimony from witnesses from innumerable industries and sectors who explained how closely our two economies are bound together.

[Translation]

We have heard from automakers, dairy farmers, manufacturers, unions, first nations representatives, canola farmers, leaders from the chemical industry, cattle feeders, people from the music industry, chambers of commerce, the list goes on.

We have seen the direct impact of this relationship with the United States on all sectors and every region of our country. I am thinking about the mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, who, in his testimony before the committee, told us about the more than 8,000 inhabitants of his city who go to the United States every day to go to work. He said that the parts for a car made in Canada crossed the border an average of seven times before leaving the chain of production. What a great example of the interconnectedness of our economies.

CUSMA is a victory for our aluminum industry. We got the tariffs lifted and a new guarantee of a minimum of 70% North American aluminum in the production of cars compared to 0% before. The agreement is also a victory for our cultural industries, which generate more than \$53 billion annually. We succeeded in preserving the cultural exemption, protecting more than 75,000 jobs in Quebec alone. What is more, CUSMA includes a new chapter on the environment that will help ensure air quality and fight against pollution.

[English]

Canada and the United States enjoy one of the most productive, collaborative and mutually beneficial bilateral relationships in the world. It is not only our business community that feels this way, but all Canadians: those in Gander, Newfoundland, where so many literally opened their homes; those here in Montreal and the eastern townships in Quebec, where so many Americans vacation; those in Windsor, Ontario, where our respective auto industries intersect; and those across the country in Calgary, Alberta, and Vancouver, British Columbia, from which so many of our exports to the United States flow.

We are stronger together, and our two countries share so much more than the most deeply integrated economies. We share the values of democracy, freedom and human rights, and a deep and strong North American culture.

● (1525)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservative governments negotiated almost 50 free-trade agreements with countries including the U.S., but the current Prime Minister was a no-show with the initial trans-Pacific partnership, resulting in the U.S. dropping out of that agreement and eventually resulting in additional concessions being made by our supply-managed sectors. Dairy farmers in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap have continuously paid the price for the poor negotiations of the Liberal government, but this committee could look into these issues and hopefully provide better guidance to the future. I am hoping the parliamentary secretary would support this committee being formed.

Does the parliamentary secretary support the motion to create this committee?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I have had the privilege of speaking to dairy farmers very recently, in fact, when we were studying the impact of a potential United Kingdom-Canada transitional trade agreement at the international trade committee. I can tell the member that I have the utmost respect for our dairy farmers and that I know how important our trade agreements are to them. They were actually asking us to ensure continued access to the U.K. market and to many other markets. They are very pleased that Canada is the only country in the G7 to have trade agreements with each and every one of its G7 counterparts.

I think that the committee that is being proposed by the Conservatives is certainly an interesting idea. I am always prepared to study the Canada-U.S. relationship, whether it is in our international trade committee or in another committee. I certainly believe that it is a good idea.

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[Translation]

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is very interesting to be able to explore new avenues to improve and strengthen Quebec's and Canada's positions regarding our economic relationship with the United States. In the midst of a pandemic, we are experiencing a huge protectionist backlash from other countries. We have seen that from the United States in recent months.

I have had the opportunity to share various thoughts on free trade and other things with the House. I suggested invoking the national security clause several times. Other countries do that when the economic situation worsens in certain sectors.

Would my colleague like to look into that possibility, which does not seem to be in the nature of Canadian institutions?

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

Obviously, I think that is something that we should have a much more in-depth discussion about, and I would be pleased to participate in that discussion.

Having worked in international trade, I must say that it is important for all of us to respect the letter of our agreements, including our bilateral, multilateral and World Trade Organization agreements.

Canada is a world leader. Canada's voice was extremely useful and important during the pandemic so that we could be sure to keep our supply chains open, keep international trade intact and remain open to the world. Protectionism has no place in Canada or in our allied countries.

● (1530)

[English]

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to follow my colleague, the parliamentary secretary for international trade and small business. Today we have a good opportunity to discuss the very important relationship that Canada shares with the United States and the United States shares with Canada. Canada and the U.S. have long enjoyed one of the most productive, collaborative and mutually beneficial bilateral relationships in the world. No two nations depend more on each other for their prosperity and security than we do with the United States.

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Personally, I grew up on the border. I grew up in Sault Ste. Marie in northern Ontario, on the border with Michigan, and I grew up with a rather false understanding and notion that Canada was much bigger than the United States because Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, was three or four times the size of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, so I always had the sense as a small child that we were the larger and more important country. We may be bigger in land mass and we may be significant on the world stage for our many attributes that we have carried into the world, but I have since come to realize that the economic differences between our two countries are profound and that all through our history, Canada has had to seek ways to ensure that we are heard, that we are seen and that we have a mutually beneficial economic, cultural and social relationship. I think very much that we have done that.

It is a partnership of neighbours. We are forged by that same geography, with similar values and common interests, deep family and personal connections, and powerful multi-layered economic and security ties.

Much later, after growing up in Sault Ste. Marie, as an adult I did a doctorate at the Chicago campus of the University of Chicago. I was able to spend a considerable amount of time in the Windy City and understand some of the huge challenges in American society, and also the tremendous richness of that society. We continue to deepen those connections as we engage with the United States in so many aspects of our economic, cultural and social lives.

Our two countries enjoy the largest trading relationship in the world. We defend and protect North America together. We are stewards of a shared environment and we stand on the world stage to respond together to pressing global challenges. This is especially true in times of crisis.

These are not merely words. They are noting the extensive ties between our two countries that are reflected between our leaders. Just two weeks ago, the first foreign leader that inaugurated President Biden called was our Prime Minister. That was no coincidence. It speaks to the long-standing mutual respect and friendship that have been felt on both sides of the border. During the call, the Prime Minister and the President reaffirmed our strong commitment to shared values and interests, both at home and on the global stage. Together, our leaders discussed the fundamental priorities of both our countries, from ending the global COVID-19 pandemic to economic co-operation and free trade; from our security and defence partnerships to our shared commitment to diversity and inclusion. These are also many of the same priorities in the relationship I would like to address today.

Just this past Monday, the Prime Minister spoke with Vice President Kamala Harris, congratulating her on her historic election. As we all know in this chamber, the Vice President has a special relationship with our country, with Canada. During that call she fondly recalled her formative high school years spent in Montreal, just one way in which this relationship is unique, interesting and important. It is one way in which our relationship is rich. It demands both of us to be both respectful and to enjoy each other as people with common interests and common values. We will continue to talk and work things through even when we do not agree.

There are things that Canadians and Americans do not agree on. No matter who is in charge in Ottawa or in Washington, there are often times when we have to engage. We have to struggle and we have to come out the other side with what is mutually beneficial to both our peoples. It does not mean, as I said, that we are always on the same page. The Keystone XL pipeline is a vivid reminder of that, and the Prime Minister spoke frankly to President Biden about our disappointment on that decision.

We worked harder on our bilateral relationship over the last four years than ever before in history, and let us be honest: It has not been an easy four years. However, we worked at it and we have been successful in ensuring that Canada's interests have been well heard.

● (1535)

The fact that Canadians and Americans are able to speak frankly and be honest with each other is at the core of our relationship, and that is why, in spite of our differences, we have been able to accomplish many great things by working together. I think, in looking back over the last few years, that the largest and most important example is our renewed commitment to the trilateral commercial relationship which has come into force, the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement, known as CUSMA or the new NAFTA. The new NAFTA addresses modern trade challenges, reduces red tape at the border and provides enhanced predictability and stability for workers and businesses across the integrated North American market. I think we need to give kudos to our now Deputy Prime Minister, the former foreign affairs minister, who shepherded that very difficult negotiation, and also to our current foreign affairs minister, who, in his role as the chair of the cabinet committee on Canada-U.S. relations, has been integral in forming that relationship and keeping it strong. I also want to nod my hat to my predecessor in this position, the former member for Orleans, Andrew Leslie, who, as parliamentary secretary, made countless trips to the United States to defend Canadian interests with a depth of understanding about the way our two countries work.

In that way, this government was successful in ensuring that Canadian businesses, Canadian workers and Canadian consumers were protected. In fact, not only were they protected, but we also came out the other side of that deal with an enhanced trade agreement. It supports inclusive trade and it has outcomes that advance interests of gender equality, indigenous peoples and the environment. These outcomes will strengthen our commercial relationship, promote new opportunities for Canadians and Canadian businesses, and support our collective economic prosperity. It will also provide the bedrock on which we will build back our economies after this pandemic.

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance and the uniqueness of our relationship with the United States. We know the spread of COVID-19 has caused upheaval in both Canada and the U.S., and we have had to take unprecedented action to combat the pandemic, support our citizens and stabilize our economies. Last March, Canada and the United States arrived at a far-reaching agreement to limit discretionary and recreational travel across the border to try to keep both Americans and Canadians healthier and safer, an understanding that has been extended by mutual agreement every month since then.

The magnitude of this decision cannot be overstated. Ours is one of the busiest land borders in the world, with approximately 400,000 people crossing it every day, and the stakes are high. We want to defeat this virus so that we can return to normal back-and-forth trade agreements in recognition of the way we have done business so well over many decades. We have depended upon each other, whether it was right after the Halifax explosion or on the beaches of northern France. After the World Trade Center and the 9/11 attacks, as the previous speaker mentioned, *Come From Away* memorialized that tremendous relationship. In the devastating forest fires in California and Oregon, Canadians were there when the United States needed us, and Americans know that. Time after time, when I have those conversations with my American friends, they remind me of how important it is. It is about protecting ourselves, protecting our world and ensuring that all of us are able to move into a world that is safer, more free, more democratic, more respectful of human rights, more honouring of civil rights and better for men and women in both our countries and around the world.

Our societies have faced difficulties, and we have difficult legacies as well. We have come together to talk about an inclusive society, to combat racism and to ensure that indigenous peoples have their rightful place in both our countries, and we will continue to do that. We will do it together.

When it comes to this committee, if Parliament decides that we indeed should have or need to have such a committee, of course we will support it as an opportunity to further the relationship. Should Parliament decide otherwise, we will continue to work with Americans for Canadians' best interests in whatever way we can, at every opportunity, and do that in the way that Canadians have always done everything: with courage, with respect and with fortitude.

• (1540)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's display of the importance of Canada-U.S. relations.

In light of the discussions, the oil and gas industry comes to mind for Alberta and the rest of Canada.

Today, there is a report about Democrat Senator Manchin, saying that he has split with President Biden on the XL pipeline decision. He states that he would rather buy Canadian oil than Venezuelan oil.

Has our government and the Prime Minister emphasized the same point that there should be no dispute whatsoever regarding our ethically responsible oil from Alberta and Canada when it comes to shipping it to United States and that the pipeline is very important for both countries? Have the Liberals emphasized that point, yes or no? I hope to get an answer on that.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I did not hear that news of Senator Manchin's comments, but I agree that I would sooner be buying Canadian natural resources, including Canadian oil and gas, than any other country's oil and gas or natural resources.

I would also want to be exporting our oil and gas, and not just because I have a sister who lives in Edmonton who reminds me regularly of the importance of the oil and gas industry to Alberta. That industry is not only important to Alberta, but also to all Cana-

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dians. Every Canadian values the importance of our energy sector. We may have disagreements in some parts of the country about how that will work out with environmental considerations, but we all share the view that Alberta's economy is important, and we will continue to do that. We need to find—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will allow time for other questions.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we keep hearing about young people, especially students, who are struggling right now. There is a new campaign called “knock out interest”, led by 39 student unions across the country, representing 725,000 students. They say that charging interest on student loans forces those who need those loans to pay more for their education than those who can afford to pay tuition up front. Clearly, this is essentially a tax on lower and middle-income students and their families.

President Biden issued an executive order on his first day, extending the student-loan repayment freeze for eight months. Will the current Liberal government do the right thing and eliminate all interest charges on student-loan debt moving forward? This would be the right thing to do as a recovery plan for those students who are struggling right now.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I was waiting for the hon. member to make that right-hand turn to bring that into the discussion of Canada-United States relations. We can learn things from the Americans and they can learn things from us.

Let me say very clearly that student debt concerns me personally, and I know it concerns the government. We should be looking for every way during and after this pandemic to ensure that students have the best way to move forward in their life. I have been on that file since I was a university student, and I will continue to push to find ways to ensure that post-secondary education is accessible and available to every Canadian. As a former leader of mine said, if people have the grades, they should get to go to school. There should be no financial impediments to post-secondary education. I will continue to work on that and to listen to advice from people like President Biden, who often has some very good things to tell us.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Brandon—Souris and look forward to his comments.

In relation to the motion on the table today, when I look at the Canada-U.S. relationship I think it is important for us to look at what has happened along the way that has led us to where we are today. I go back to a time years ago when we first structured the initial Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement. It was a historic agreement at that time, but it took some significant doing to get it over the line. That was back in 1988 and it was initially instituted at the beginning of 1989.

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There were two leaders of two countries who worked in goodwill at that point in time, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who recognized we had joint issues here in North America on which we could move forward on better together than apart. Trade was one of those issues. There were other issues as well, including continental defence, that were all part of the mix we needed to be addressed in that whole arrangement.

I want to bring members back to a time before the FTA, the free trade agreement of 1988, and look at what eastern Ontario looked like then. I remember being in Ottawa, because I was working in Ottawa then, and the Lord Elgin Hotel, a majestic hotel on Elgin Street, was shut down and ready to be demolished. There were several buildings around Ottawa that were half torn down.

This country had undergone an economic demise after the years of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, when economic sense had left this country, and we had damaged relationships with our most important trading partner. Our economy had suffered so badly that our dollar was plunging. We were in severe deficits and were accumulating mounting debt that we could not get out of. That is where free trade came to be so important.

I remember the election that happened in that year as well, in 1988, and the virtue signalling from the other side, who were saying that this was the end of Canada as we knew it and the complete demise of the nation we had built over the last 120 years. In fact, after the success that the free trade agreement enjoyed, it was refreshing to what the other opposition parties say that it was a great period for our country and one of the best moves forward we have ever made.

However, that is the start of it. It became an election issue, so Canadians got to vote on whether we should have free trade with the United States or continue to have separate arrangements and lots of tariffs between our two countries and a branch plant economy in Canada, which was not serving us well. Canadians decided to look ahead and move forward on a trade relationship.

That led to much of the prosperity this nation has enjoyed ever since. It has not Canada that has enjoyed that prosperity, but all of our trading partners with the United States have enjoyed that prosperity as well. Companies and individuals have enjoyed it. Think about our lifestyle here in Canada versus what they were pre-1988. The free trade agreement was the single defining event that moved us forward as a country and to what was, for a long time, world-leading prosperity among the G7 nations. Now we have come down significantly, but we need to get back there, and this relationship of course is the most important part of that.

One of the important but little-known parts of that free trade agreement is called the energy sharing agreement, whereunder if there were any disruption in the flow of energy between the two countries, we would have to jointly share the reductions that were happening. That would be for both countries, because we actually produce a lot of resources in Canada, ship them to the United States and flow them back across the border as finished products. Therefore, any shortage would affect our consumers on each side of the border, depending where that shortage was or how it happened.

We were facing world security issues at that time. That was an important part of this arrangement, and for the U.S. it was the linchpin of why it needed Canada in this agreement and why it wanted to do this deal. It surprised me in this last round of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico agreement when the then minister of international trade described this as something she was happy to get on the page. I say this because that was our main card in 1988, which was apparently not deemed so by this administration. I am bewildered by that, but I am certain that there must be some reasoning behind it and I would like to explore it further.

● (1545)

There is another agreement called the transit pipelines agreement, signed in 1977 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. It ensured that the pipeline transit between our countries, our borders, particularly through the Great Lakes, would continue no matter what. However, we now see an interruption of that. A state governor wants to interrupt the pipeline, thinking that it might be environmentally unfriendly, although it has never had an accident. It is just pure politics at this point in time and we need the U.S. government to step in. We need our Prime Minister to step forward and enforce that transit pipeline treaty with the U.S. President. There is some seniority with the federal government here, and that is going to be our main relation. The irony of the situation is that if we get this pipeline interrupted, Imperial Oil has already said that it is going to have to ship its oil at Superior, Wisconsin on two tankers to get it to market. It is the same water of body, but we have a pipeline that has never had an accident, and there is more CO₂ in tankers than there is in pipelines.

These strains in the relationship between our countries have existed with previous administrations. I would say that between the Chrétien and Clinton administrations, there was some strain. There was more strain under Prime Minister Chrétien and President George W. Bush, but it levelled out for a decade. President Obama strained it some more under two Canadian prime ministers, including by cancelling the initial Keystone XL project, which was then brought forward under a subsequent president and now reversed by the current president. So there is ongoing friction between our countries, which is becoming more and more frequent. However, it is not just one event but a series of events as we look through history.

The main point is that this relationship between our countries is often exemplified by the relationship between our two leaders, and not just a relationship to have dinner together but a relationship where they actually show up and solve common issues together with the facts on the table, but that is not happening any more. What we need are some serious people to sit down and get this job done.

While a lot of what I have said so far has dealt with energy, I am going to discuss it further because we have a great energy trade between our two countries. We ship a lot of product, a lot of raw natural resource from western Canada, into the United States, and a lot of it is processed there. Some of it is used in the United States, but a good portion of that energy comes back into Canadian markets. That is the result of the free trading relationship between our two countries. That is the way we built it, and that is the way we prospered. However, to suggest that Canada by itself is energy secure in petroleum products is not looking at the entire situation. If our supply of hydrocarbon resources from the United States were cut off in eastern Canada, we would suffer. We are an energy-rich country that suffers at some ends of the country. We need to integrate that and make sure that we continue to prosper together with the United States, and make sure that no parts of our country get cut off.

Let us look at the growth in our energy trade and think about how much energy we export from Canada. In oil alone, we export four million barrels a day out of our production of about five million barrels a day in round numbers. Thus, 80% of our oil is exported primarily to the United States. This is what we have built a lot of our prosperity upon, but it is our balance of trade, which represents \$100 billion per year in trade, that matters to us a country as far as our economy is concerned and how we enjoy our lifestyle. However, U.S. energy production has grown as well, from five million barrels a day at the beginning of President Obama's administration to 13 million barrels per day now. Therefore, oil production has grown progressively in both countries as far as the energy supply is concerned. Why? It is because it is a very good resource for our countries.

To conclude, I would love to talk more about how we need to move forward together with an environmental arrangement between our two countries, and how our current environmental arrangements are not doing that well, but effectively we are looking at value between our two countries here. Democracy, respect for human rights, support for universal education, health care and respect for the environment are things that we share, and free markets are the root of all of that. We need to see the issues that divide us abate and the values joining us succeed. I am looking forward this committee's work.

• (1550)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in a lot of these discussions this last week, I have heard a number of members go on and on about the Conservative Party back in the day, and free trade and everything that it stood for back then. Well, yes, the Progressive Conservative Party of Brian Mulroney brought in free trade. I do not know what they want us to say. I was 11 years old at the time. Did the former Liberals from decades ago perhaps have it wrong? Sure. Do they want us to admit that? I would be the first to say that maybe they did not have it right then, but I certainly cannot accept responsibility given that we are talking about three or four decades ago.

Does the member not at least recognize, given the number of free trade deals this government has signed, that the Liberal Party today is a supporter of free trade?

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• (1555)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I agree that we have progressed. I was 11 years old when that free trade agreement was signed, and the university I went to was paid for by the prosperity brought in by free trade. The health care we have enjoyed to this point in time has been purchased through the prosperity of free trade. These are linchpin moments in the country.

I really appreciate that your party now embraces what we had to bring forward. I look forward to you embracing some of the economic policies we are bringing forward now to make sure our two countries advance further on the environmental front and the economic front.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member to address his questions and comments through the chair.

[Translation]

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I feel bad for my colleague. I was really looking forward to his speech, because I really appreciate his work. Unfortunately, he ran out of time and was cut off right when he was about to talk about energy trade as it relates to the environment, I think.

I would very much like to hear how he reconciles those two aspects. I would also like him to draw a parallel with Bill C-215, which we tried to get passed this week, but unfortunately his colleagues voted against it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): He has one minute, not a few minutes. Other members also have questions.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

The environmental arrangements between our two countries are going to lead to what is called carbon leakage. If we proceed in a direction in which have pressing environmental issues, but we have one standard, and the U.S. has another, we are going to bleed jobs to the United States. One of the things we need to do in our relationship with the United States is come to a common environmental standard on how to reduce emissions jointly.

We are in North America, and we have a common energy environment here. We have pipeline, supply and energy that the world envies. We are not Europe. We do not have conflicts with our neighbours. If we were to pursue this jointly, we would together enjoy some prosperity and a reduction in the environmental effects, without conflict.

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That should be one of the main things the government brings forward. I am hoping that with this committee, we can come to a common environmental understanding with our major trading partner.

[Translation]

Once again I thank my colleague.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, President Biden's decision recognizes that subsidizing big oil and gas companies will not save workers' jobs. An energy transition plan with a focus on job protection is what workers need. Maintaining subsidies to big business does not do the job.

Does the member believe that he is helping shareholders, rather than protecting jobs, if we continue providing subsidies to big oil?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, what people call subsidies these days is anything we offer at the end of the day. The oil and gas industry, the industry alone and not the employees, has contributed \$600 billion over the last 18 years toward Canadian taxes. That is not a subsidy. If they whittle it down and say here is an incentive to drill in certain areas versus others, they are still contributing a significant base to Canadian taxes, the most of any industry in Canada.

Therefore, this is not subsidizing an industry. This is motivating an industry to provide more Canadian jobs and prosperity to Canada. I hope that correction of what is spelled out as a subsidy is clear to my colleagues.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be able to speak to the opposition day motion put forward today. I want to thank my colleague, the member for Calgary Centre, for his excellent presentation and for sharing his time with me today.

When we look at the nations Canada trades with, we see there is nothing more important than our relationship with the United States. As with all relationships, though, we cannot take this one for granted. As a farm leader, an MLA and now a member of Parliament, I have had a front row seat to some of the ups and downs of the politics of that trade relationship.

Throughout the years, I have attended many Midwestern legislative conferences in the U.S., as well as some in Manitoba when I was there, which provide an opportunity for elected Canadian representatives across the Prairies to meet with their American counterparts from the Great Plains and Midwest industrial states.

At those conferences, there was an opportunity to meet countless people, and I quickly learned that they are facing many of the same challenges we are. I mentioned the Midwestern legislative forums. I attended them in Michigan; Kansas; Des Moines, Iowa; and one in the Pacific Northwest, out in Whitefish, Montana, as well.

At these conferences, we learned a lot about the interchange of the relationship that we have with our American counterparts. As I said earlier, many of the issues are very common, particularly on the trade side. When the U.S. put its first farm bill in place in 1986, I was in Kansas.

Whether it is logistical or regulatory barriers, or just plain old politics, we get a better understanding of what is at the root of some of the trade disputes that still linger to this day. We do not have to look far for those examples, such as with softwood lumber or the country-of-origin labelling that we had for beef.

Trade disruptions over the years have negatively impacted numerous Canadian exports. More recently, NAFTA was renegotiated, and we witnessed the former U.S. administration impose a 25% tariff on imports of Canadian steel, and a 10% tariff on imports of Canadian aluminum.

Regardless of who occupies the White House or controls Congress, we must always be cognizant that with the stroke of a pen many of our industries and people's jobs could be severely impacted. I applaud our Leader of the Opposition for taking the proactive step of putting forward this motion to create this new special committee.

When I was first elected to the House of Commons in 2013, the now Leader of the Opposition was the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of International Trade. At that time, the Canada-Europe trade agreement was still being negotiated. The member for Durham visited my constituency to meet with agricultural and business leaders about this new opportunity, and what an opportunity it was.

Trade is at the heart of our region's economy. Western Manitoba's exports are based primarily on agriculture, livestock and natural resources, alongside manufacturers, such as Behlen Industries, which are major employers in our region. To put a number on it, the latest data from the Government of Manitoba on agricultural exports stated that the American domestic market is worth over \$2.6 billion per year for the province of Manitoba.

Let us never forget, there are almost as many people living in the National Capital Region as in the entire province of Manitoba. By far, Americans are Manitoba's largest foreign customer, with the second-largest being Japan. Trade with Japan amounts to roughly \$896 million a year.

Manitoba's canola exports alone to the United States are worth over half a billion dollars, followed by processed potatoes, oilseed cakes, hogs and cattle. The economic prosperity of almost every community in my region is directly tied to the success of exporting many of these agricultural products.

Due to the importance of this trade relationship, coupled with the new U.S. administration, it is imperative we have an ability to work on this issue, in conjunction with whatever our committees decide to study.

• (1600)

As with many issues, there is a lot of crossover between the various parliamentary committees and stakeholders. The agriculture, industry, natural resources and transport sectors want to be heard and will want to know the government's strategy moving forward.

Just this week in Congress, Tom Vilsack, who was nominated by President Biden to be his agricultural secretary, received a unanimous vote from the Senate agriculture committee and is expected to be confirmed by the overall Senate in the days ahead. Secretary Vilsack even joked that it felt like Groundhog Day during his Senate confirmation hearing, as he was President Obama's agriculture secretary during his entire eight years in office.

The United States and Canada enjoy the world's largest bilateral agricultural trade relationship, with almost 120 million dollars' worth of food and farm products crossing the border every day. In the last couple of years, the United States Department of Agriculture has created an undersecretary of trade position within the Department of Agriculture itself to work solely on trade policies directly related to agriculture. I say this just to emphasize the importance of that trade arrangement.

As is to be expected, the U.S. is on the offence. It is looking to expand its market opportunities not only here in Canada but also around the world. Americans might be our friends and allies, but I have always stated they are also our competition.

In the spirit of collaboration, I truly hope we can pass this motion and immediately get this new committee up and running, because I think the Liberal government could benefit from the insights and experience of many of our Conservative caucus members. While I am not lamenting this, there is not a Liberal MP from Winnipeg to the greater Vancouver area, and between those two points there are thousands of farmers and agri-food industries. As a member who represents a lot of farmers, I have grave concerns about the government's track record on agriculture.

As an example, we saw how long it took the government to respond to the Chinese government blocking Canadian canola shipments. In fact, we had to call emergency committee meetings to even discuss the issue. I remember the procedural manoeuvres the government took to ensure we could not even request an emergency debate in the House. My point is not to rehash these issues, but to learn from them. We must be proactive on potential trade disruptions. I believe this new special committee will provide an appropriate avenue to do so.

We know there are going to be issues in the coming months relating to pipelines, as has been mentioned by many of my colleagues today, and the buy America procurement rules. Our Canadian economy cannot afford any more trade disruptions. We need to get all our sectors back up and running, and we cannot afford to be caught asleep at the wheel. Our constituents are counting on us to get this right.

As a believer in free trade and free markets, I want to create the right conditions for entrepreneurs, business people and farmers to flourish. It is part of the reason I brought forward Bill C-208 yesterday in the House. I thank my colleagues for their support on that. Canada must be a place where no ambition is too big and no federal

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government will stand in the way of people working hard to get ahead.

A dynamic economy where businesses are forming and hiring is what is needed. A free market economy is a social institution that harnesses human creativity and ingenuity for the benefit of everyone. There is not enough money in all the government coffers in Ottawa to replicate what entrepreneurs and risk-takers do every single day. Let us work together to make sure our farmers, businesses and manufacturers have a stable and predictable American market they can sell into.

• (1605)

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 nice to hear from my colleague from Manitoba. We have served together both in the Manitoba legislature and now in the House of Commons representing some wonderful people.

The member made reference to taking a proactive approach when it comes to trade. One of the things we need to recognize is that over the years we have had excellent people negotiating on behalf of governments. They worked to make sure we could get the trade agreements necessary to advance Canada in a very proactive way.

One of the examples I would cite is Maple Leaf in the member's own riding. I am not sure of the number of hogs it produces. Perhaps the member would know, but I believe it is 10,000 hogs a day. Could the member provide a tangible example of why trade is so important?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North for the recognition of our time together in the Manitoba legislature. That is where we allowed him the debating opportunity to make the wonderful speeches he does in the House today.

It is true that we export a lot of products and not only to the United States. A large part of our hog processing goes to China and Japan, but mainly into Japan. It is tremendously important for the hundreds of thousands of jobs that are created not just in Manitoba but across the whole country. Being the nation we are, we depend on exports.

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• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, when I listen to the debates between the Liberals and the Conservatives, I often think that they are debates about the how, and while they may be intense, they are rarely about the why or the substance. One could almost say the two parties are one and the same, and call them the Liberal-Conservative party. The two words could be put together, although I would not call it the liberating party, because that is not the case.

Nevertheless, I would like to raise the issue of economic nationalism, which is part of Quebec's DNA. Quebec finds much comfort in the notion of economic nationalism and the idea of having its own institutions that are able to intervene.

How do you perceive this? Is it a purchasing policy or a public contracting policy that gives priority to local companies?

That said, it was a great speech and I thank you.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, we have a situation today where our enterprises in the free trade and open markets do an excellent job of finding those markets. That is not the issue. We have a tendering process through government for construction jobs that are on an international basis, with priorities to Canadians, and companies can apply for those as well.

With respect to the trade agreement that was put in place in 1988, my colleague from Calgary Centre pointed out how that significantly changed and improved the standard of living in Canada. If we could get to that position in the world, we would be able to improve the bottom line of every Canadian and improve their lives as well.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to serve with my hon. colleague on the health committee, and I appreciate his wise words in that committee.

We have heard the same evidence that shows that Canada was caught without a domestic ability to produce essential medical equipment and supplies like PPE. We were reliant on countries like China and the United States.

Given his interest in buy America, does he agree that Canada, and other countries, should have the ability to at least produce essential supplies and services in our country to ensure our own population is not left hanging in a time of emergency? How would he square these two concepts?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague on the health committee for his concern for Canadians. I have the same concern he has. Anytime we can develop something for use in our own country, in this case, vaccines, we should have the opportunity to do so. Right now we have no idea what the contracts were from the present government. Therefore, we are in a state of limbo with respect to moving forward in that area.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sudbury.

I want to take the opportunity to once again thank the incredible staff and people who have made Parliament work in the last 10

months. A year ago, if I were told we would be in this situation where there would only be a small handful of us in the House and the vast majority would be participating virtually, I would never have believed it. The way the staff have incorporated and made this seamlessly work so everyone can participate while staying safe is truly remarkable. I want to thank them for the incredible work they have done to make this a reality.

I am glad this opposition day motion was brought forward today. We are discussing a very important topic. I always get annoyed by those opposition day motions that tend to attack a person or the individual character attacks that we have seen in the past. However, this is one that has really brought forward an important issue to discuss, and it is that relationship between Canada and the United States and our trade with it.

I personally do not have any issue with this committee being formed. At the end of the day, this committee and the work that it would do by interviewing various witnesses and bringing very different people forward to examine that relationship will probably paint a very good picture of what has transpired over the last couple of years with respect to that relationship.

We have to remember where we were after Donald Trump was elected. He had an interventionist approach on how the United States would work and its relationship with other countries, in particular Canada. Everyone was quite worried about what that meant. Back then I picked 20 businesses in my riding to speak to about their relationship with the U.S. I knew they had close economic ties with the U.S. I wanted to understand what their anxieties and fears were about what a new deal with the United States could look like.

When we were going through the negotiations, as the teams were discussing back and forth, tariffs were put in place by the U.S. and as a reactive measure, retaliatory tariffs were brought in by Canada. We saw that Canada actually had a very good leverage point when it came to dealing with the United States and talking trade with it. We might be one-tenth the size of its population, but we are a major economic resource for the Americans. We are their number one trading partner, bigger than China, Japan and the U.K. combined. The United States depends on Canada a lot for exports.

We saw how those retaliatory tariffs put pressure on Donald Trump through Congress and through the individual congressional districts affected by them. They pressured him to work out the USMCA. When the USMCA came forward, we saw a deal that, in my opinion, corrected a lot of inaccuracies or differences that may have occurred over the last 20 or 30 years since the trade agreement came into place. It allowed opportunities to bring new issues to light, focusing on the environment more and looking at things through various different lenses that perhaps we did not do 30 years ago. The deal between the two countries gave us opportunities.

Every day \$2 billion goes back and forth between Canada and the United States because of that trading relationship. It is no small amount of money. Indeed, I would argue that we are in a very good negotiating point with the United States because of that. Of course, we do not want to fall into the trap of being incredibly reliant on one country, and for quite a while we were. We want to ensure we look at our trading relationships throughout the world so we can become diversified with respect to where our trade occurs.

● (1615)

With respect to the committee discussed in the opposition motion, if the motion passes and a committee is formed, there is great opportunity to start to re-examine that relationship from a parliamentary level and dig into the details of how negotiations can be done better, how we can look at other things such as our impact on climate and how we can ensure that the best interests of Canadians are taken into account.

I agree strongly that good trade deals give us better quality of life. I do not disagree with my Conservative colleague who talked about the increased quality of life that has come from trade relationships. I studied economics. I am a strong supporter of trade. I apologize if Liberals from 40 years ago were less so, but I certainly see the benefit in it. A trade relationship when done properly can be a win for both sides. A Conservative colleague said earlier that there was no good deal unless it was good for both sides, or something to that effect. I agree completely. With trade and the concept and practical implications of trade, quality of life can increase on both sides of the trading relationship. That is the whole point. That is why we strive to look for new opportunities for trade throughout the world.

However, it is important to remember that when we are talking about trade, we are talking about a negotiation and about concessions, but concessions that are at the expense of even greater gains. This is where I find the arguments from the Bloc and the NDP to be very difficult to accept. Quite often we hear about wanting to have it both ways, not wanting to give up anything and still getting the gains from trade. They have to understand and accept the fact that there will be concessions, but at the expense of having an even greater gain realized from those concessions. A trade relationship is all about that.

I am really looking forward to this committee, if the motion is adopted. It is an opportunity to look inward at how we do trade, look at that relationship with the U.S., fight for other issues that are connected to trade, such as security, climate change and how our environment is impacted, and look for commonalities. If any two countries in the world can make a trade relationship even better, they are Canada and the United States for all the reasons that have been given today.

I am happy that we have had this wholesome discussion today on such an important topic. The relationship we have with the United States and our trading ability with it has improved the quality of life in Canada over the last several decades. Indeed, if it is done properly and done right, it can continue to see us prospering well into the future.

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● (1620)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have some questions regarding my colleague's comments, one of which was the previous U.S. president creating fears and anxieties in his riding, which were leading to trade disputes.

I wonder if the member can extrapolate that feeling and think about what happened with Keystone XL when, in the first day of the new President's tenancy in the office, he cancelled an agreement that would have brought \$30 billion to government coffers over the lifetime of this pipeline. In addition, it would have solved \$16 billion annually of wealth transfer from Canada to the United States because of the differential we receive on our product due to the fact that we do not have enough infrastructure.

I have heard the member's comments before, and they seem to be antagonistic to the oil and gas industry. I would like him to please square that with me.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, when the aluminum and steel tariffs came in from the U.S., I started talking to 20 different businesses that do trade with the U.S. With the anxieties and fears they had about what was going to happen, all of them understood and realized that what the government was doing was absolutely necessary and in the best interests of Canada as a whole. Whether I talked to Invista, the former DuPont plant or a small operation like Tri-Art Manufacturing, a small family business in Kingston, everybody understood why the government was doing what it had to do. They understood the need for taking the actions we did to protect the interests of Canadians.

● (1625)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have to say that I am a little concerned. The Conservatives' motion on our relationship with the United States provides for discussions on natural resources, but focuses only on pipelines. However, I see it rather as an opportunity to talk about the energy potential of Quebec, which produces hydroelectricity and wind energy.

I know that the Liberals are not keen on creating special committees because they do not really like it when we examine how they are doing things. Does my colleague also believe that this would be a great opportunity to study ways to engage with the United States on clean energy?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, unless I took the motion wrong, I do not think this is a committee to look at the way the Liberals are doing things. I think this is a committee to look at how Canada can better its trade relationship with the U.S. I took the motion in good faith, and I apologize if I should not have.

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To address the issue the member raised, I would love to look at how we can better wind production and hydro production. This is the future. This is the way we are going. We will need to put more electricity into vehicles. We will need to electrify the road networks throughout Canada. Any way we can do that, and look at how to do it through this committee, would be to the benefit of not only us today, but future generations.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about our close economic ties with the U.S. and the opportunity to dig into the impact on climate. The Biden administration issued executive orders on climate policies, and one in particular was to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. When I asked the Prime Minister why Canada will not immediately end all fossil fuel subsidies, he said that Canada was eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, that the U.S. was following Canada's lead and that we are on schedule to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.

All three of these statements, to put it generously, are not backed up by facts. We are still giving away billions to big oil and gas companies. These subsidies have increased over the past year, so we are not leading. We are not even learning from our American neighbours.

President Biden is eliminating fossil fuel subsidies. Why will the Liberal government not do the same?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I think the member indicated in a previous speech that she just found out she is expecting. I hope I do not have that wrong, because I would be really embarrassed, but I want to congratulate her on that. I think it is absolutely incredible.

I personally support eliminating subsidies on fossil fuels.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this motion addresses a number of important issues, and I am very pleased to speak to it today. In the time that I have, I would like to focus on two aspects of the motion: the importance of Line 5, and energy trade between Canada and the United States.

Our government has been extremely clear about Line 5. It has our unequivocal support and we are using every tool at our disposal to advance the file. Line 5 is vital to Canada's and North America's energy security. Our government takes this issue very seriously and for the opposition to suggest otherwise is not only misleading but irresponsible. The opposition is playing a political game that members on this side of the House have no interest in playing. Line 5 is vitally important and is bigger than partisan politics. Line 5 supports thousands of jobs in Ontario, Quebec and western Canada. It is essential in providing lighting and heating to thousands of Canadians. It represents an important source of fuel for farmers and the industry and it provides jet fuel for the Pearson airport, Canada's busiest airport.

• (1630)

[English]

Running from Wisconsin through Michigan and across the Straits of Mackinac to the lower peninsula, Line 5 supplies Michigan and Ohio refineries with oil and natural gas liquids from Alber-

ta and Saskatchewan before entering Ontario at Sarnia. From there it is refined into gasoline, diesel, home heating oil, aviation fuel and propane, supplying southern Ontario and Quebec. What is more, Line 5 provides a safer way to transport oil than rail or road and has operated safely for over 65 years.

[Translation]

Now Enbridge wants to dig a tunnel to replace the two pipelines running along the lakebed under the Straits of Mackinac.

[English]

Enbridge is committed to making a safe line even safer through its tunnel project. It has committed to encasing the line in reinforced concrete to reduce the risk of an anchor strike and enhance its safety, and Michigan, just a couple of days ago, provided permits for this project.

[Translation]

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy approved these proposals a few days ago on January 29.

It did so after a nine-month-long comprehensive review that included input from the State Historic Preservation Office and a report from an independent civil engineering firm specializing in complex tunnelling projects.

The review concluded that the project would have minimal impact on water quality in the Great Lakes and would not affect protected public uses of Michigan's water resources.

[English]

Let me quote what the director of EGLE's water resources division, Ms. Teresa Seidel, had to say. "During our review of this proposed project, our top priority has been protecting the Straits of Mackinac and the surrounding wetlands, aquatic life, and other natural and cultural resources from adverse environmental impacts."

What would the impact be? According to EGLE, the project would result in minimal impact to wetlands and, in fact, would only affect an area roughly one-tenth the size of a football field. As a result, EGLE concluded that the proposed tunnel beneath the lakebed could be built in compliance with state environmental laws.

[Translation]

I would like to add that the State of Michigan's environmental agency has stated this project is completely safe. That is not according to Enbridge or to Canada. That is the finding of the organization responsible for enforcing Michigan's environmental laws. That is the argument our government has raised with American officials. That is our answer to those who want to stop the project.

[English]

What we have heard this week from the Leader of the Opposition and others on the other side of the House is that we are not doing anything. However, that could not be further from the truth.

The Government of Canada has supported Enbridge in this dispute for three years, at both the diplomatic and political levels, and will continue to do so. Ambassador Hillman is making the case and Consul General Comartin in Detroit is making the case. The Prime Minister raised the issue of North American energy security with Vice-President Harris, and the Minister of Natural Resources will press this case with the former Michigan governor, Jennifer Granholm, as soon as she is confirmed as the new U.S. energy secretary.

I will say it again. This line is vital to Canada and to the United States. We will always defend it and protect Canada's energy and industrial infrastructure.

[Translation]

I would like to address the broader context of the energy relationship between Canada and the United States.

Our relationship is worth over \$500 billion in cross-border trade. In all, a little more than 70 pipelines and more than 30 transmission lines already cross the Canada-U.S. border, creating the most integrated energy system in the world.

As a result, Canada supplies more than half of all the crude oil that the U.S. imports annually. Alberta alone sends more than three million barrels a day south of the border. Canadian crude represents roughly 70% of the feed stock to refineries in the U.S. Midwest and Rocky Mountain regions. In Michigan, half of all homes are heated with Canadian propane.

[English]

It is the same with other sources of energy. Canadian electricity powers close to seven million American homes, and Canadian uranium generates 6% of America's electricity, enough to power one in every 17 American homes. All of this energy integration benefits both countries by strengthening our energy security, lowering energy and capital costs and enhancing reliability of supply. It also creates good, middle-class jobs on both sides of the border, including at the thousands of American companies that supply technology, machinery and other services to Canada's energy industry.

Any shutdown of Line 5 would have significant economic impacts, not just on Ontario and Quebec, but in Michigan and neighbouring states. Four years ago in Houston, the Prime Minister said, "Nothing is more essential to the U.S. economy than access to a secure, reliable source of energy, and Canada is that source." It was true then and remains true today.

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Why disrupt our relationship by stopping a project that the United States' own environmental body says is safe? It is a project that can continue to supply good jobs and essential resources to both countries, a project that will ensure that low-cost, safe and reliable energy keeps flowing to Michigan, its neighbouring states, Ontario and Quebec.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Our government understands how important Line 5 is to Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Canada. That is why we strongly support this project. We will continue to defend this cause at all levels and at every opportunity as part of a broader and more mutually beneficial energy relationship between Canada and the United States.

[English]

We look forward to working with all members of the House to ensure that this critical pipeline continues to operate safely for the benefit of Canadians and our neighbours to the south.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to take the parliamentary secretary back to the member for Don Valley West. In his intervention, he stated that he supports Canadians using Canadian oil and supports the export of Canadian oil. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, I would hope he supports those comments and takes them, along with the member for Don Valley West, to the Prime Minister and gets behind our Canadian energy sector.

To the point of this debate today, the formation of a committee, does the member support this motion moving forward so the committee can be formed to discuss the issues around trade between the two countries and Canadian resources?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, the answer very clearly is yes, I support this committee. It is important that we have a discussion on the importance of the relationship and on energy security between Canada and the United States.

I will correct the member, though. Certainly, the member for Don Valley West mentioned that he is supportive of using Canadian oil and gas. I was parliamentary secretary in the last Parliament when we approved and fought for TMX to make sure that our oil got to markets and we had the best deal for our Canadian resources. I am still of the same mindset and will continue defending that, as well as Line 3. Everyone just heard me talk about Line 5, NOVA Gas and LNG. Those projects are all important not only for western Canada, but for all of Canada in our energy security.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, as we have heard today, both the Liberals and the Conservatives are intent on spending their time arguing over who has built more pipelines. However, the New Democrats are focused on saving people.

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I would like to bring to the hon. member's attention the fact that at least 75% of all deaths related to COVID are attached to long-term care facilities. The new President of the United States has implemented protection for workers who quit unsafe workplaces during the pandemic so they can still claim their benefits. Why will the Liberal government not make the right to refuse unsafe work a live right, with real quit protections during the pandemic?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, long-term care and the supports he is advocating for are in the provincial jurisdiction in Canada. If he wants to bring that forward, that is fine, but the New Democrats like to get involved in provincial issues quite often, I find.

That being said, the safety and security of front-line workers is certainly top of mind. That is why we introduced the Canada sickness benefit to make sure that if people on the front lines need to take time off because they are sick or a loved one they live with is sick, they have access to a benefit. We would like all of the provinces to continue the supports we are providing, as this is very important to us, but we also need to get the provinces involved.

• (1640)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, one of the ongoing issues we have had with the United States is the softwood lumber dispute. We have seen mills close across British Columbia as we export raw logs to American states. They are happy to take our raw logs, including those from the last of the old-growth forests that are being cut down, as the B.C. government continues to talk about protection but allows for the continued logging of these ancient forests.

I would like to know what the parliamentary secretary thinks we should be doing about the softwood lumber dispute and what the government's plan is to finally get this dispute settled.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I am the MP for Sudbury, which is a mining town, but I am from a small town called Kapuskasing, where my father and grandfather worked in the pulp and paper business back in the 20s and 60s.

The U.S. trade relationship on softwood lumber is key for us. That is why we will certainly be taking it up with this new administration. The former administration did not even want to entertain any discussions, but we will certainly press the issue further and more strongly with this new administration.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City, Health; the hon. member for Oshawa, International Trade.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the good member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*English*]

While Canada has a long history with the United States of America, I also have a long relationship with the United States of America. I grew up in Alberta, and have been very fortunate to vacation

in the U.S. many times like so many other Canadians, although not recently, of course.

More importantly, I was fortunate to live for five years in the United States. The first two were when I did my masters of business administration at Rutgers University while living in Manhattan, in New York City. Those were certainly incredible years. That was when my love for the United Nations developed, which eventually led to my diplomatic career.

The other three years I spent serving as Canadian consul to Dallas, Texas. I came to love Texas and the people of Texas. They have many similarities with Alberta, including good barbecue and rodeo. I certainly loved those things and had my son Edward there. I am the mother of an American. I am very proud of that.

I also did important work there. Keystone XL was the main issue and file that I worked on during my time there. This was in a different context, when Barack Obama was president of the United States. It was during the Harper years, yet with the Obama administration, so it was very challenging to get that policy and that project through.

As I attended different hearings throughout my jurisdiction in the southwestern United States, it became very clear that Canada and the U.S. had different positions relative to the Keystone XL file. However, I recognized at the time that the project was in the best interests of Canada, so I continued to fight for it until my time as consul to Dallas concluded in 2013.

Prior to that, I was chargé d'affaires for Canada to El Salvador. At that time, the CA4 free-trade agreement was going on, and there were very competitive words and positions on things such as pork and sugar. I remember being involved in those negotiations, especially throughout the time that my ambassador had to be out of the country.

Diplomacy and negotiation with other nations is not foreign to me. As I look upon my experience and the potential between two nations, I have some basic rules I would like to share. The first is that we need to respect ourselves. This means always thinking ahead to what can be expected or anticipated. Most importantly, we need to consider what we want and need, and what we want to come out of something with. We need to evaluate our priorities and take an inventory of what we have. The second rule is that we must respect our partner. We must think of what they want, look for mutual areas of co-operation and create options. This is very important for diplomacy. The third rule is that we must respect the process. We must recognize that everyone will always put their own interests first, but they are for the hope of mutual collaboration for beneficial outcomes.

I want to talk about what I saw with the Harper administration relative to the Trudeau government, and the fundamental problems that have manifested between Canada and the U.S.

Looking back to the Harper administration, I spent one year as a political adviser to the member for Thornhill, who at the time was minister of state for the Americas. We worked alongside titans of politics including John Baird, Jason Kenney and the former prime minister himself, Stephen Harper.

They were different from the current administration in that they were undying in their values. They had a set of core values based on democracy, justice and prosperity for Canada. Those were unwavering. They did not consider third-party opinions, like those of the World Economic Forum or what people thought at Davos, and they did not bow down to bullies. They always stood for our principles.

I compare that with what I see here today with the Trudeau government and the history that we have seen in the past five years. Its foreign policy is—

• (1645)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I did not call it out the first time, but the member has done it twice now. She has referred to the Prime Minister by his surname.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that she is not to use the first or last name of parliamentarians in the House. I would just remind her not to do that again.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore can continue her speech.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, my sincere apologies.

Looking at the approach of the current Prime Minister's administration, we see a foreign policy approach that is based in selfies and tweets, like the current Deputy Prime Minister's tweet regarding Saudi Arabia. We do not see it based on a set of core values, as we saw with the previous administration. As Canadians, we have suffered for this, with terrorists ending up in Canadian organizations and citizens being arbitrarily detained abroad. I genuinely believe this is a result of not having core values rooted in our foreign policy.

I am going to apply that now to the Canada-U.S. relationship. In fact, I am seeing the same thing. I see four years that were wasted by the current Prime Minister's administration because it could not get past the head of state with our neighbour to the south. The inability to do that resulted in a number of shortfalls for all Canadians.

Instead of focusing on the individual positions, and what we could have achieved with the previous administration, the current Liberal government instead chose to make it about political positioning back here at home. It was a waste of four years.

Now we see that the tables have turned in the United States. There is a new administration under President Biden. We see the current Prime Minister and his government flipping the switch: they say they were against the previous American administration, but will not fight for Canadians with the current one.

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Based on that, we need a Canada-first approach grounded in strong values. That is what has been missing for the last five years, as we have seen a foreign policy based on selfies and tweets, and not rooted in values like those of the Prime Minister's predecessor.

We have seen this in all different sectors and in a number of different issues all across government, including Keystone XL and the Line 5 project. Really, we need to consider what our values are, because the current government has not done that. As a result, it has taken a reactive position time and again to the detriment of Canadians.

What could we do if we had a Canada-first approach grounded in strong values? It would allow us to go to the table with confidence, respecting our partners. When we can do that, we can be empowered to fight for jobs here in Canada and to fight for the Canadian economy, especially at this time as we are coming out of a pandemic with \$1.1 trillion in debt and \$400 billion in deficit. When we have those strong values and a Canada-first approach, we can do that. This is not what we have seen from the current administration.

What we need going forward is to have the foresight and confidence to begin this committee. We have seen great success with the Canada-China committee. Let us look to the future with positivity and co-operation. Our relationship with our best friend to the south deserves it, and Canadians deserve it.

• (1650)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I noted that the member spoke at great length on numerous occasions about the former leader of the Conservative Party, when she said that he did not bow down to bullies.

The member did not mention the former leader, or even the current one, who are both on record regarding the USMCA and the tariff problems we had with the United States as encouraging Canada to capitulate and, indeed, back down from the retaliatory tariffs we put into place.

The member cannot say that the current leadership of the Conservative Party would not bow down to bullies, as that is exactly what they encouraged the current Liberal government to do while she was a member of Parliament in the last session.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, our current official leader of the opposition has a proud history with this nation, putting his life before others with respect to serving this great country. I know with certainty that he said this morning at his press conference that he would continue to put himself before Canadians, leading this nation forward as we come out of this pandemic. He is the only individual, the only leader, who has the experience, the wisdom and the heart to lead us out of the place we are in currently with this pandemic to a greater economy.

Never mind the vaccines and the horrific rollout that we have seen, the lack of foresight with procurement—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I have to allow for other questions as well.

Business of Supply

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague questions about the file she is very engrossed in right now, which is air travel between our two nations.

We know air travel does not happen on one side of the border only and that we are interconnected in our transportation networks. As this motion is actually about how our two nations interact, could she comment on the failings we are currently seeing on travel between our two nations and how one industry on one side of the border is being treated much differently from the industry on our side of the border?

• (1655)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that the airline sector in Canada has been treated the worst by far among all G7 and G20 nations. The U.S. has been far more flexible and has made better use of tools in an effort to allow its economy, including the airline sector, to remain open.

The result is that we are seeing the Canadian economy suffer greatly. Frankly, the Prime Minister is not contributing to this situation by any means when he forces Canadian carriers to travel their routes to sun destinations, yet allows American carriers to take Canadians to these destinations.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for her wonderful speech. It speaks to her experience working and serving in the United States for Canada.

The question I have is this. We lack clarity on Line 5. It is as important to the United States as it is to Canada. When can we, as representatives of Canadians and the Canadian public, expect the government to clarify this situation? Why do we not know the true story? Why is this happening?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I hope that as the United States considers its decision on Line 5, it will remember the rich history we have, and as the current government fights for Line 5, will remember the high price Canadians will pay for not being successful in maintaining it.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I have a correction to make.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver East, Health; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, Health; the hon. member for Victoria, Small Business.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to be back in the House speaking to Canadians, especially Canadians in Mégantic—L'Érable, during this very difficult time.

Members of Parliament are always proud to represent and speak on behalf of our constituents, especially on a day like today when the topic is one that unites us all: our most important trade relationship with our biggest trading partner, the United States.

Anyone living in Thetford Mines, in Lac-Mégantic, in Plessisville or around Beauce does not have to look far to find a business that depends on that trade relationship with the United States, be it in metals processing, plastics, wood or aluminum. Businesses in Mégantic—L'Érable, businesses in Beauce, businesses in central Quebec and businesses in the Eastern Townships depend in large part on our wonderful long-standing relationship with our neighbours to the south, a relationship that has become even more expansive since the advent of free trade agreements.

Canada is the United States' largest customer. This works both ways; it is not a one-way street. It is not only we who need the United States, but the United States needs us too. Canada buys more American goods than China, Japan and the United Kingdom combined. Canada is the top trading partner in most U.S. states, more than 30 states. Canadian companies operating in the United States directly employ 825,000 Americans.

We therefore have a win-win relationship with the United States. I would even argue that it is particularly important for the United States because Canadian exports are worth \$446 billion and Canadian imports are worth \$305 billion. Those are enormous amounts of money.

We cannot take this relationship for granted. We cannot take our trade relationship with our neighbours for granted. We have experienced times in the past when things were not going well in the U.S. There is an old adage in Quebec that when the U.S. sneezes, we catch a cold. That is quite true. A number of signals have been sent in recent years to indicate that we need to pay more attention to this relationship with our neighbours to the south, the special economic relationship we have with our American neighbours.

Today's motion states that "trade between Canada and the United States of America exceeds \$1.5-billion per day, more than 300,000 people normally cross the common border monthly, the two countries have enjoyed one of the world's largest open trading blocs for the free movement of goods, services and people since 1989".

It calls for the creation of a "special committee with the mandate to conduct hearings to examine and review all aspects of the economic relationship between Canada and the United States, including, but not limited to (i) the expressed bilateral economic priorities of the governments of Canada and the United States".

This is what that means to businesses back home. A. Lacroix Granit, in Saint-Sébastien, provided the granite for the 9/11 memorial in New York City. That is a business back home in the Eastern Townships. Across the United States, especially in the Boston area, there are courtrooms in many courthouses, as beautiful as this chamber, whose millwork was done by Polybois, a company in Thetford Mines. There is CVTech, Série-Act Peinture, CBR Laser, and Tafisa, a Portuguese company that was seeking a foothold in North America and decided to set up shop in Lac-Mégantic so it could export to the United States.

That is the reality. Hundreds and hundreds of jobs depend on the unique trade relationship that we have with the United States.

• (1700)

That is why it is important to take the time to think about it, sit down and figure out what parliamentarians can do to make this relationship better, not worse.

The relationship has deteriorated over the past few years. This was evident with the signing of the last agreement between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Unfortunately, Canada ceded part of its sovereignty to the U.S. because the agreement was negotiated at the expense of Quebec's dairy farmers. We agreed to cap exports of Canadian non-fat dairy solids, and we decided to let the United States set our pricing structure and eliminate a milk class. This was done because the negotiators were not aware that dairy farmers also need some protection in these agreements. That has always been accepted.

Contrary to what we were being told, the Americans did not want to abolish supply management. They did not even want to negotiate with Canada at first. They wanted to negotiate with Mexico. It was Canada that raised its hand and said that it did not want to be forgotten. They did not forget about us, and they really hurt dairy farmers.

I also want to talk about electricity exports, which play a key role in Canada's and especially in Quebec's relationship with the United States. Quebec produces a form of renewable energy that is highly sought out by the United States. For example, Hydro-Québec's own website talks about exports to New York state. Quebec has been supplying clean, renewable energy to New York state for over 100 years, starting with the construction of the 200-megawatt Les Cèdres-Dennison intertie in 1914. This relationship continued throughout the evolution of power pooling arrangements and wholesale electricity markets. We can contribute to a long-term renewable energy vision for New York state. This is what is important, and we need to talk about it. We need to focus on exporting renewable energy.

There are also energy exports to New England. Hydro-Québec has been selling electricity to New England since the 1980s. This U.S. region accounts for about half of Quebec's electricity exports. That is a lot. We are talking about jobs and revenue that help boost Canada's economy and support Canadians and Canadian businesses. These are things we absolutely must talk about when the time comes.

Business of Supply

There are interconnection projects going on right now. Certain hydroelectric projects are currently facing opposition in some U.S. states that are opposed to purchasing electricity from Quebec.

This committee needs to look at this important sector of Quebec's economy so that we can talk about it and anticipate potential problems. Parliament has a role to play in helping Hydro-Québec with its exports.

Today's motion to create the committee talks about something that we find very worrisome, and that is the new rules related to the Buy American Act. It seems the new U.S. administration intends to put those rules forward again.

The last time that happened, all of our companies rallied together. All of our companies worked hard. What happened? Almost all of our big companies had to open a plant in the U.S. to be able to continue doing business there. It is not right that it has to come to that when we are neighbours and want to maintain a good economic relationship.

I hope that all of the parties in the House will support the creation of this committee for the good of businesses in my riding, businesses in Quebec, Quebec's hydroelectricity, and the Canadian economy as a whole.

• (1705)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his speech.

He mentioned supply management. I know that he often spends time on the Facebook page, "Les amis de la gestion de l'offre", or friends of supply management. I know that the Bloc Québécois completely agrees with supply management. I know that the NDP does as well. I know that members of the Liberal Party, on this side of the House, do.

We have done everything we can to defend supply management in trade agreements. However, I am not sure that members of the Conservative Party all see eye to eye when it comes to defending supply management. Even today, they have a motion to dismantle supply management, which they are set to debate at their convention. Before even contacting the United States, they want to dismantle supply management.

Can the hon. member guarantee that he will defend supply management within his party?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, we will continue to defend supply management. Our people are having these debates and, fortunately, we are winning them.

If there is one thing dairy producers will remember for a long time, it is that they were promised full, fair compensation following the agreement with the U.S. They have not yet seen a penny of that compensation or even a hint of a plan for it.

Business of Supply

Compensation should have been paid for the free trade agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico because, once again, market share was given up. The U.S. now gets 3% more. The government told us it would keep its promises, pay full and fair compensation, and so on. Dairy, egg and poultry farmers have not yet seen a penny or a plan.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I really enjoyed hearing him talk about what Quebec businesses and businesses in his area are contributing to the Canadian economy and to our relationship with the United States. He also talked about hydroelectricity and Hydro-Québec's contribution to the Canadian economy.

Considering the current state of the government's diplomatic relationships and how it does business, does my colleague think the government is doing enough to make renewable energy a priority in our relationship with our neighbours to the south?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I think we can never do too much to promote Quebec's renewable energy.

Canada and the various provinces should make greater use of the green energy produced in Quebec. More should be exported to Ontario and elsewhere. It is important to have this channel to export Quebec's energy to other provinces and especially to the United States. As for exporting to the United States, we already have the power transmission lines. We are ready. All that remains is to champion them and ensure that everyone works together to get more of Quebec's renewable energy exported.

That should be the goal of all parliamentarians of all political stripes. That is why a committee is so important: so that we can talk about it and agree on how to move forward to promote this renewable energy.

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the topic of energy, yesterday in response to the death of Keystone XL, Art Price, the former CEO of Husky Energy, stated that “Pipelines today...make no sense.... [T]here's a surplus in the market.... Stop trying to focus the Alberta economy on growing oil production. Drop it. The industry has.”

President Biden's decision recognizes that big oil and gas companies will not save workers' jobs and that energy transition with a plan to focus on job protection is what workers need.

Does the member believe that by maintaining subsidies to big business, the Liberal government is helping shareholders rather than protecting workers' jobs?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I recall a propane crisis that affected our farmers, health care facilities and businesses in 2019. We almost ran out of propane because there was a rail strike. We could not get propane from Sarnia to Quebec and across Ontario.

Unfortunately, we are not reassured by the intentions being delineated. Propane might not even make it to Sarnia because Line 5 could be blocked.

This is important. It affects the daily lives of Canadians and Quebecers, of our farmers and our business people just about everywhere. We need these pipelines to make our economy work. Any other rhetoric is utopian.

Now is not the time to have these discussions and, more importantly, it is not at all the subject of today's motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia has about two and a half minutes for her speech.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy because I did not think I would get the chance to speak. I am very pleased to be speaking today.

Any motion to create a special committee is very important, and I thank the Conservatives for moving this one. I think there are many topics to be studied in connection with the pandemic, the new U.S. administration and the Liberal government's repeated diplomatic failures.

As my Bloc Québécois colleagues have said, we support creating such a committee and going through this process. I must, however, be honest and remind members, as I mentioned earlier in some questions, that I am a little concerned about point (ii) in the motion, regarding natural resources. I was worried that the Conservatives were simply using it as a way to promote the pipeline. As we saw with Keystone XL, the U.S. government is prepared to focus on energy transition, combat climate change and give up on environmentally destructive oil projects.

Instead of worrying about this point, I instead view it as an opportunity to promote hydroelectricity and renewable energy and to highlight Quebec's example to our southern neighbour. I believe parliamentarians on this committee would do well to look to Quebec and learn from it.

Let me remind you that in 2017, Quebec's energy sector emitted 0.4% of Canada's greenhouse gases, which is very little given that it is the largest producer of electricity in the country. That is remarkable and I believe that we should really be inspired by it. Quebec's energy model is a green model that is financially viable and it must be on the table as we engage with the United States.

As I also mentioned a little earlier, it seems that the Liberals are never very keen on creating special committees. The Bloc Québécois proposed creating a committee to study COVID-19 spending given that there had been several scandals. Our proposal was rejected, but I truly hope that this time the opposition parties and the Liberals will get behind this special committee because it is very important.

• (1715)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party who is present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to now rise and indicate so to the Chair.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, February 16 at the expiry of time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from November 6, 2020 consideration of the motion that Bill C-220, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (compassionate care leave), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: We will now go to resuming debate. When the House last took up debate on the question, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader had four minutes remaining in his time, so we will go to him now.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

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, the essence of Bill C-220 is to extend compassionate care leave by up to three weeks after the death of a loved one. That is very admirable. I have had an opportunity to have some discussions on this and to think about the legislation, and there are a couple of things that come to mind right away.

One is that over the last number of years in statements by the Prime Minister or other members of the House, there has been a desire to see ways that we can improve our employment insurance program and how we might continue to assist workers.

Throughout the whole coronavirus pandemic, we have heard a lot about getting a better understanding of what works well. One of the things that came up is the idea that when we start getting toward

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the end of the pandemic and can see that light, we should look at ways we can build back better. That is something that Bill C-220 could contribute to. I like the idea.

If the bill were allowed to go to committee, I believe that we would see some other ideas generated as a result of Bill C-220. Therefore, I am hoping that colleagues on all sides of the House would see this bill as a way we can improve the system, recognizing that compassionate care and the need to have that leave is absolutely critical. More and more family members provide care at a person's end of life, when people will spend days, weeks, and often months on the additional care necessary for a family member or loved one.

• (1720)

That is what I like about the bill: It wants to address the employment issue, which is very difficult. We get different types of relationships. I have always argued that life is about relationships, and some of those relationships are intense, particularly between family members. When a person passes away and their brother, sister, daughter or son goes back to work the following day, it can be fairly traumatic, so providing this sort of compassionate care leave is long overdue.

As for looking at ways to extend it, yes, there are things in place today, but we can do better. That is why I started my comments the way I did. We have been making gains over the last number of years in recognizing the need for reforming employment insurance and looking at ways we can support employees. This is one of the ways to do just that, so I look forward to the bill going to committee.

As a last thought, the pandemic has had such a profound impact on funerals and the passing of people we know. As parliamentarians we get to know a lot of people in our communities, and it is always sad when they pass. We look forward to a time when we can start to see people participate in funerals, families in particular, in a more wholesome way and not have to rely on the internet.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, I will speak to Bill C-220, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, and more specifically compassionate care leave.

As the Bloc Qu b cois critic for status of women and seniors, this is a subject that people come to me about on a regular basis. I will therefore talk about three aspects of it. First, I will talk about our party's position on this issue. Second, I will talk about the reason why seniors talk to me about this so much, and third, I will say a few words about the problems this creates for women.

I want to begin by saying that we agree with the principle of this bill. The Bloc Qu b cois has always felt it was important for workers to be able to maintain a healthy employment relationship and to not have to choose between two bad situations.

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Taking care of a sick family member is already extremely hard. When that person dies, one can only imagine how the caregiver must have many mixed emotions, including guilt and sadness. Being forced to choose between one's job and providing end-of-life care for a loved one should never be an acceptable situation in Quebec, Canada or the provinces.

This bill, therefore, would give caregivers more leave before returning to work after the death of a loved one. This bill is actually very simple. It amends the Canada Labour Code such that people who take compassionate care leave can delay their return to work for a few days following the death of the loved one they were caring for. The bill is written to take into account the maximum number of weeks in the code for compassionate care leave, but it provides for additional days off based on the period between the beginning of the leave and the loved one's death.

Compassionate care leave enables people to take time off work and protect their jobs while caring for a loved one. The Canada Labour Code dictates how leave is granted and legal eligibility with respect to workers' rights. It is important to note that this leave is paid in accordance with the Employment Insurance Act.

That means an employer does not have to pay an employee who is not eligible for compassionate care leave special benefits but wants to take leave for that reason. In other words, there is no compassion.

Under subsection 206.3(2), "every employee is entitled to and shall be granted a leave of absence from employment of up to 28 weeks to provide care or support to a family member of the employee if a health care practitioner issues a certificate stating that the family member has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks" from the day the certificate is issued or the day the leave was commenced.

There is currently no provision in the code for paid compassionate care leave. In other words, someone who is not eligible for employment insurance may take 28 weeks of compassionate care leave, but at their own expense.

Let us talk about EI special benefits for compassionate care leave. Workers can take the 28 weeks of unpaid compassionate care leave under the Canada Labour Code, but the code also allows workers to take leave under the Employment Insurance Act. EI benefits have different criteria than EI regular benefits and refer to very specific situations, namely parental leave, maternity leave, sick leave, caregiver leave and compassionate care leave.

The difference between the EI caregiving benefit and the compassionate care leave benefit is that for the latter, the person being cared for has a medical certificate stating that he or she is likely to die within the next six months.

To get the employment insurance compassionate care benefit in 2020, a worker has to have 600 hours of work to receive benefits totally 55% of their average weekly salary for a maximum of \$573 a week. A family member of someone who is seriously sick or injured, or a person at the end of life, sees their regular weekly salary reduced by more than 40% for a least a week because they have to be away from work to care for or support the person. A doctor or

nurse practitioner has to attest that the person being cared for is seriously sick or injured or needs end-of-life care.

COVID-19 changes things. On August 20, 2020, the federal government decided to relax the criteria for the EI program, including special benefits for caregivers that include compassionate leave. For a one-year period, the government has reduced the number of hours workers need to 120, regardless of the employment insurance region or the employment insurance program where they apply. It is therefore providing a 480-hour credit to workers who wish to receive a special benefit. In this case it is for a compassionate leave. However, effective September 27, 2020, new EI claimants will need only 120 hours of insurable employment to receive at least \$400 a week, if that amount is higher than their benefits. The benefits will vary between \$400 and \$573, but the Canada Labour Code allows workers to take these 28 weeks at their own expense.

● (1725)

Workers who are eligible for compassionate care benefits can receive them for a maximum of 26 weeks. If they have to be away for 28 weeks, they will receive benefits for only 26 weeks, and the other two weeks must be taken at their own expense.

The bill introduced by the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup increases the leave taken under the Canada Labour Code by only a few days and therefore does not increase the duration of the EI caregiving benefits. This is all very technical. The important thing to remember is that caregivers need additional time to grieve. It is a matter of dignity.

The bill is directed at family caregivers who provide end-of-life care for a loved one. The Bloc Québécois has always believed that family caregivers play a crucial and central role both in the lives of the people they support and for society as a whole.

Many groups are calling on the government to finally recognize the importance of their role. One of those groups is Quebec's Ap-pui, which advocates for better access to resources and improved quality of life. The pandemic has taken a toll on caregivers' finances. In Quebec, more than a quarter of caregivers, 26%, work and are therefore especially vulnerable because they have to make sure they bring in at least some income while caring for their loved one.

According to a CIBC survey, Canadians who help care for a loved one spend an average of \$430 per month to do so. Three-quarters say they have had to make financial sacrifices. According to other sources, such as the Regroupement des aidants naturels du Québec, an association of caregivers in Quebec, caregivers spend more like \$7,600 per year per loved one, regardless of their initial income level. As a result, 20% of caregivers experience financial insecurity.

According to Appui's 2016 survey of caregivers for seniors in Quebec, 1.5 million people reported providing at least one hour of care a week, and 2.2 million people provided care or emotional support for a loved one or helped them go to appointments, shop for groceries or fill out paperwork.

One of the main problems is that about one-third of caregivers, around 500,000 adults, who provide at least one hour of care a week do not recognize themselves as caregivers. The same is true for the one-fifth of caregivers who provide more than 10 hours of care a week. According to that same survey, 65% of caregivers cited a lack of knowledge of existing resources as the main reason for not accessing services. According to the Regroupement des aidants naturels du Québec and Quebec's department of health and social services, 85% of senior care is provided by caregivers. For example, for someone who requires 22 hours of care, 16.5 of those hours are provided by a caregiver and just 45 minutes are provided by local community service centres.

Caregivers are faced with a lack of resources regarding home care, wait times for long-term care beds, wait times for specialized resources for children with disabilities, wait times for palliative care, and fragmented care.

In 2012, 26.6% of family caregivers provided care, most of them at least once a week, according to Quebec's statistics institute. It would cost between \$4 billion and \$10 billion and would require the hiring of 1.2 million full-time professionals to cover the hours worked by caregivers.

Caregivers are mostly women, as was confirmed by such groups as the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale and FADOQ. Last summer, these groups appeared before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its study on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women.

In closing, I will say this. The Bloc Québécois no longer wants the tax credit to be fully non-refundable. In a previous life, I was a project manager responsible for raising awareness of elder abuse and bullying. I spoke with groups of caregivers, and I could sense their exhaustion. I was told that after giving so much time and energy to help a person, it was difficult to get over their death. Caregivers live through trying circumstances, and they need time off. A few additional days is not much, but it could make a difference to them. The question is not whether we will become caregivers, but when.

For all these reasons, we must take action. The bill is a small step, but it means a lot to caregivers. It is a matter of dignity.

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour and privilege to rise on Bill C-220, sponsored by the member for Edmonton Riverbend, which would amend the Labour Code regarding compassionate care leave.

I want to thank the member for Edmonton Riverbend for his long-standing fight for bereavement leave in his home province of Alberta. I have worked with him on issues relating to men's mental health, and it is nice to be able to get up on issues that can be non-

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partisan to look after those who have been struggling the most. I also want to thank my colleague for Banff—Airdrie, with whom I shared the stage at the first-ever grief convention this year.

The context of the bill before us is really important, and I am speaking in support of it. The legislation would amend the Canada Labour Code to extend the period of an employee's compassionate care leave.

Why is this legislation so important? It is because it would allow employees to take time following the death of a family member to grieve and to make funeral preparations and family arrangements. It is important that Canadians be able to take care of their loved ones. Family is most important to all of us, and people need to be able to grieve and take care of their family affairs as needed without having to worry about losing their jobs.

We know that women still perform a lot of care work at home within families, and this disproportionately affects them to a higher degree. We also know that women tend to have lower earnings than men. The difference is even more pronounced in the case of racialized women. They are the ones who are most likely to need this leave and the least likely to be able to afford it. Making parallel changes to EI is even more important when it comes to this legislation.

I am glad to see that the bill seeks to extend the length of compassionate care leave to include time after the passing of a loved one. Right now, when a loved one passes away, their caregivers' leave ends and they are expected to return to work immediately, within a couple of days. We support the bill, but it would be nice to see the good work that it would do to extend leave for all families experiencing the loss of a loved one. As members know, death can occur suddenly or over an extended period of time, and grief is experienced in different ways for everyone.

While supporting the extended leave provisions, New Democrats would like to take the time to point out that there is a blind spot in the bill that the Conservatives have left out, and we propose that it be closed. It is that people have to be able to afford to take this time off, but the bill would not change EI benefits to reflect the additional leave provisions that we would like to see.

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The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities did a report on supporting a family after the sudden loss of a child, and I think that there are some important lessons we can learn there. They include following up on the recommendations in the report, including expanding job protection for parents on bereavement leave, creating a pan-Canadian resource centre to support grieving parents and individuals going through the loss of a loved one, and making sure that employees in the federal government help with things like EI applications for grieving parents with compassion and understanding. There is a lot of work that needs to surround this type of bill.

I want to take a few minutes to relate some information that was shared with me from Camp Kerry BC, which is one of the few not-for-profit organizations that provide bereavement services to hospices right across Canada. I think of the hospices in my riding in Comox Valley, Oceanside, Alberni Valley and the west coast of Vancouver Island. Their support is so important for families during their grieving period.

It is estimated that between five and seven people are impacted significantly for every death, and each person who is affected will likely experience some or all of the following lifelong symptoms as the effects of complicated and unresolved grief: anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, addiction and other disorders, suicide, homelessness, the loss of education, the loss of work and more.

Many people who are homeless and many who are incarcerated suffer from unresolved and complicated grief, yet most institutions and counsellors in Canada are just not equipped or trained to screen and to provide trauma-informed bereavement counselling. Unlike other developed nations, such as the U.K., the U.S., Ireland, New Zealand and many others, Canada still does not even have a national bereavement strategy

• (1735)

We also fail to acknowledge grief as a natural response to loss. We do not have any legislation that adequately addresses that. The limited time off for bereavement leave is only five days, three paid, unless a child has disappeared or died as a result of a probable crime. There is virtually no funding specifically designated toward bereavement care or toward organizations that provide bereavement services. We have been advocating for better supports for those groups. We would like to see organizations like Camp Kerry and hospices get more federal funding, especially now that we are in a pandemic, which has had an incredible impact on the experience of death and loneliness of people here in Canada.

The need for extending bereavement leave, and for our government to designate funding specifically toward these organizations that have a proven record of providing grief services, is long overdue. The average overall number of deaths in Canada was predicted to increase substantially as a result of the pandemic. It has not, but the mental health implications associated with the distancing restrictions and funerals is overwhelming Canadians, and this will likely increase during the pandemic's duration, as well as the number of symptomatic cases that bereavement and mental health services will see in the future.

We know that it is very important. The pandemic has caused a dramatic increase in isolation, anxiety and mental health challenges in Canada and around the world. We know these unfortunate circumstances are creating the perfect storm for long-term complicated grief.

I want to read a quote from the Camp Kerry Society:

For those in our community who lost a loved one just before or during the pandemic, the impacts of increased physical and social isolation are even more significant. Imagine facing the challenges of learning to be a single parent in the midst of home schooling, losing your job or perhaps working more hours in a now dangerous job? Or consider what it would feel like to grieve the loss of your child without the hugs, help and shared tears of your extended family? These are the emotional, social and financial challenges of the children and families we are trying to reach this year through our services.

It is heartbreaking. We also know the impact is even more complex in indigenous communities, stemming from the depths of the multi-generational legacy of colonialism, forced impoverishment, violence, residential school trauma, the sixties scoop of indigenous children and the legacy of previous pandemics. This history compounds grief and increases the risk for negative outcomes such as suicide, homelessness, addiction, crime and victimization. A large portion of first nations communities across Canada feel overwhelmed and triggered by the current pandemic. I see, with the Nuu-chah-nulth people in the territories where I live, how this has impacted them culturally, especially around the grieving process when they have lost a loved one. We have lost many people in our communities since the pandemic started, and there are not enough supports for them. Right now we can see that. The Canada Labour Code gives employees the right to request changes to their work hours and whatnot, but right now people need more than that.

Provisions in the Employment Insurance Act allow up to 15 weeks of paid benefits to eligible applicants with a note signed by a medical practitioner. It currently states that one must request a note from an approved family practitioner in order to access medical leave that is payable for up to 15 weeks, but the issue with this arrangement is that the laws do not acknowledge or define bereavement as a natural response to death. Groups like Camp Kerry believe that bereavement leave ought to reflect just that. In fact, the current laws require people to get a DSM-5 diagnosis that indicates they have a disorder. It forces practitioners to inappropriately diagnose their patients, simply so they can take time off of work.

A lot of work needs to be done on this. There needs to be more funding and support for local hospices, for local groups like Camp Kerry, and for education and training for professionals. We also want to see those extended supports, and not just for people in the public service, but well beyond that. We would like to see that legislated. We would like to see it go farther, and we need a national bereavement strategy: one that is supported by the federal government.

Again, I want to thank my good friend and colleague from Edmonton Riverbend for his important work, and all of the members in the House who will hopefully support this bill.

• (1740)

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise here today in support of the positive words and well-deserved comments made so far on Bill C-220. I congratulate my colleague from Edmonton Riverbend for his work on this and for garnering support. Hopefully, if we go by the optimism and tone tonight, we can get it to committee to get more feedback and work together on how we can support caregivers and people in their time of need.

I am proud to be one of the members to have seconded this bill. It was good to get bipartisan support for the idea it puts forth in the first hour of debate we had on this bill last fall.

We have had a pretty good week when it comes to votes on private members' bills. There was Bill C-208, a Conservative bill, on the transfer of family farms. It got good bipartisan support. It is a very good common-sense piece of legislation that is moving forward. There was also Bill C-204, which takes real action on environmental protections by banning the export of plastic waste. When we get back from the break week, if we have a vote on this, I hope we will have another Conservative private member's bill that is making good progress and helping people.

For those who are not as familiar with it, the bill before us deals with compassionate care leave. We have that in our country for up to 28 weeks through the EI system to help those who need to provide care to loved ones in their final days. One of the challenges we have is as an NDP member said in the first hour of debate in noting that there is a bit of a rough edge when it comes to the end of compassionate care leave. When caregivers lose their loved ones, they are expected to go back to work quickly. We need to address that. This bill certainly makes progress in doing that.

I want to give context and clarification to my constituents in Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry who are watching this and Canadians who are interested in supporting this bill.

Due to a technicality in the private members' bills process, my colleague from Edmonton Riverbend cannot propose the spending of dollars without a royal recommendation and technical process. We cannot force the government to spend dollars through the regular EI program; that would have to be proposed by the government. I think getting this bill further, making that progress and passing this bill would build momentum to encourage the government to act on this.

What we are able to do as a Parliament through the private members' bills process is to amend the Canada Labour Code covering federally regulated workplaces, such as air transportation, banks, radio and television communications, railways, Crown corporations like Canada Post, and telecommunications. I think of our family trucking business, which would fall under this because of our cross-country work. Many trucking businesses would fall under this. Therefore, through this private member's bill we are able to address it in the Canada Labour Code.

Private Members' Business

The bill addresses a gap in compassionate care leave with respect to bereavement. The statistics show that about one in every four workers is a caregiver to someone in need. Currently, we have the EI process that has seen a lot of positive modernizations by governments. I am proud of our Conservative record when we were in government of expanding EI for maternity leave, looking at compassionate care leave, and making enhancements over the years. This is something that can build on that next layer, that next level of support that we need to do.

Here is why we need to do this. There are about three key points in this.

First, if the loved ones of family caregivers pass away, the family have to go back to work within a matter of a couple of days. We are lacking in that respect in our compassionate care policy in this country.

Second, there are a lot of things that family members need to attend to from a technical perspective, such as a funeral, insurance benefits and estate situations. In my constituency office we work with a lot of families on the CPP death benefit or other paperwork and things that need to be returned or closed on a file.

The third point is very relevant, but we have not talked about it as much during this whole debate, and that is the mental health of those caregivers as part of the bereavement process. It certainly has been tough during COVID-19, but that has always been the case when people have to return back to work quite quickly. I was proud to see many colleagues from all parties celebrate the amazing progress we have made with the Bell Let's Talk Day in raising awareness and reducing the stigma of mental health challenges.

• (1745)

This bill is a perfect example that we can go back to our constituents with and say that we are actually making things better, that we are doing things here in Ottawa that can help people in their time of need.

My colleague's bill, which I am proud to support, does that. It looks at where we are able to make these changes so that we can give up to three weeks of additional compassionate care leave in federally regulated workplaces to an employee to deal with grieving and bereavement after their loved one's life has ended.

Private Members' Business

What I like about this is our effort on this side of the aisle to show pragmatism and talk about a sliding scale, where someone could get up to three weeks of compassionate leave, depending on how much leave they had taken before their loved one's passing. I think it is pragmatic and reasonable, and it is exactly what we need to do to make a step in the right direction. If we can get this in place we could also encourage the government and Canadians to support enhancements to EI in how we do this.

I want to note the overwhelming support from stakeholders who deal with caregivers, bereavement and illness across this country. There is a great cross-section of people on board in support of this bill: the Canadian Grief Alliance, the Canadian Cancer Society, the MS Society of Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

• (1750)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am fully guilty. I did have my phone nearby. I apologize to those who are watching virtually, and I appreciate that they are paying attention. It is great to hear they are listening to my words. I was just ensuring they were on their toes and attentive to my words on this legislation.

As I was saying, there is a great cross-section of support from a wide variety of stakeholders, particularly people who deal with bereavement and illness. I want to go back and mention some others: the ALS Society of Canada and the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association. The reason I want to ensure they are on the record is to show the universal support we are hearing from Canadians wanting to address this expansion of compassionate care leave.

One other angle I want to address on the legislation is the business community. My father, Ed, owns a trucking business. As I mentioned, my family falls under the Canadian Labour Code in our work. In having conversations with some business owners on this, my message and my pitch to them is that it is not only in the best interests of the employee to have this compassionate care leave program in place; it is in the best interests of businesses as well. If an employee goes back to work mere days after the loss of a loved one, that person is probably not back to work at 100%.

In my pitch for support, I would say to those business owners that when they allowed that up to three weeks of bereavement or compassionate care leave, they would get back a better employee. They would get back somebody who would be ready to go back to work, maybe having struggled with grief and bereavement, the paper work we talked about, all that process. It may be a couple more weeks until they come back, but it would be a win for that person's mental health, for that business, the employee and the workplace.

As mentioned, this is not the end of the process; this is the next step on compassionate care leave. Many colleagues from different parties, including ours, have said that we need to go further and look at this when it comes to employment insurance and making this more universal across the country when it comes to all Canadians who pay into EI.

The support we have heard today for the bill demonstrates we are making progress and building support. We are hearing from a cross-

section of political parties and Canadians from all walks of life who are on board with the bill. It is a tangible thing that we could do for people's mental health. We need to give them the time they need to grieve, the time to wrap things up, the time to go back to work when they are ready.

I want to wrap up my comments by saying a big thanks to caregivers in our country for what they do, outside of COVID. It is an emotional, difficult balancing act that many of them face with their mental health, their financial perspective and a wide variety of factors. We owe them a great deal of gratitude.

My message today is that the Conservatives understand the importance of caregivers. We understand the strain bereavement has on mental health, not just during the final days, or weeks or maybe months with a love ones, but in the days and weeks after in giving them closure. It is a time to heal and reflect. This is a great bill that deserves wide support, not only in the chamber but across the country. I look forward to playing my role in seeing it cross the finish line.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to participate in today's debate on Bill C-220, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code for compassionate care leave. I want to thank the member for Edmonton Riverbend for putting this bill forward to allow caregivers to take additional days off when a loved one dies.

During the course of this pandemic, we have become even more sensitized to the important role of caregivers, whether they are family members or close friends. I have personally watched my mother, Myrna, be a caregiver for my dad, David.

I have seen first-hand the emotional and physical toll on caregivers. I have seen it all over my riding in drop-in centres, where caregivers drop their loved ones off to gain respite, and at long-term care centres. The love, tenderness and caring that is shown by those who take time off to play this role is commendable.

I first became very aware of caregivers when I was the mayor of Côte Saint-Luc and our local regional health board decided to close a drop-in centre that provided respite for caregivers. Along with members of my council, groups of stakeholders and the Cummings Centre in our riding, we managed to work together to put a drop-in centre at our aquatic and community centre. Then, as a member of Parliament, I was able to achieve financing for that centre from the government. Even today, that centre is open, providing drop-in care for people with dementia and their caregivers.

As my friend from Edmonton Riverbend points out, we need to take care of the mental health of caregivers as well. Ensuring them additional leave after the death of a loved one is completely in line with the government's commitment to providing mental health supports. As such, I am very pleased to say that the government supports Bill C-220, with some amendments, and I look forward to working with my friend from Edmonton Riverbend, and all members of the HUMA committee from all sides of the House. This is a bill in which I am confident we can achieve consensus.

● (1755)

[Translation]

Before I dive into the details of Bill C-220 and the proposed amendments, I would like to talk about some of the steps our government is taking to protect and support Canadian businesses and workers during the crisis.

In March, in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada took a number of extraordinary but necessary steps to help Canadians get through this incredibly difficult time. Nearly nine million Canadians received assistance through the Canada emergency response benefit, and more than 3.5 million jobs were funded through the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

These and many other measures were implemented to help workers affected by COVID-19 support themselves and their families, as well as to help businesses continue to pay their employees.

[English]

Additionally, the government introduced a new leave under the Canada Labour Code to ensure that employees in federally regulated workplaces would be able to take time off to deal with situations related to COVID-19. A number of other job-protected leaves are also available to employees covered under part III of the Canada Labour Code.

For example, the five-day personal leave can be used to address urgent matters concerning an employee or their family member, including treating an illness or injury. Another example is the compassionate care leave, which currently provides up to 28 weeks of job-protected leave for employees who need to provide care and support to a family member who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death.

In addition, the leave related to critical illness provides employees with up to 37 weeks of job-protected leave to provide care or support to a critically ill child, and up to 17 weeks of leave to provide care or support to a critically ill adult.

The government knows how important it is to ensure that workers do not return to work if they have COVID-19 or are showing symptoms. The new Canada recovery sickness benefit, introduced through Bill C-4, helps workers who are sick or need to comply with public health measures. It provides \$500 per week for up to two weeks for workers who are unable to work for at least 50% of the time they would have normally worked because they are sick or must self-isolate for reasons related to COVID-19, or have underlying conditions that would make them more susceptible to COVID-19.

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The Canada recovery caregiving benefit provides \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks per household for a worker who needs to take unpaid leave to care for their child under 12, or a family member who needs supervised care, who is unable to attend their school or regular care facility due to COVID-19.

[Translation]

Taken together, these benefits create a social safety net to help Canadians bridge the time between last spring's lockdown and the cautious reopening of our economy in future.

Bill C-4 also amended the Canada Labour Code so that federally regulated employees could continue to take leave with job protection if they were sick, had to self-isolate or care for someone due to COVID-19.

With these changes, federally regulated workers can access both the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit without fear of losing their jobs.

[English]

Let me get back to Bill C-220. Currently under federal labour standards, caregivers can take a total of 28 weeks off work within a year to provide care and support for a family member who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death. Through Bill C-220, the member for Edmonton Riverbend is seeking to amend the current federal compassionate care leave to allow extended time off following the death of a loved one.

Basically, the bill would provide employees on compassionate care leave with additional leave under the code in situations where the family member who is being cared for dies. The amount of additional leave would vary depending on how many weeks the employee has been on leave. An employee who has been away from work for a period of 27 weeks or more would not be provided with any additional weeks of leave.

● (1800)

[Translation]

I stated that the government supported Bill C-220 with amendments. I will now say a little bit more about this.

[English]

The goal of the amendments we would propose is to help ensure that all employees, including caregivers, who have suffered a loss have more time to grieve and focus on practical necessities such as funeral planning.

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We currently have, in the Labour Code, five days of bereavement leave. We are proposing to extend that bereavement leave by an additional five days, to 10 days, to ensure that employees who are taking care of a non-immediate family member, such as an aunt or nephew, while on compassionate care leave or leave related to critical illness are also covered. Not only would the existing people who are able to get bereavement leave because a close family member had died get the leave, but all of these caregivers would now be entitled to the 10 days of bereavement leave.

We believe that by doing this we would make Bill C-220 fairer and more consistent in how the government supports employees who experience the death of a family member. This would ensure that all federally regulated employees, including these caregivers, are provided with additional time off in the event they lose a loved one, regardless of what leave they are taking at the time or whether they are on leave at all.

[Translation]

We all agree that the death or possible death of a family member is one of the most difficult situations anyone can face. Our government believes that at such times Canadians should not have to choose between keeping their job or taking care of their family.

[English]

The Government of Canada is continuously improving policies, programs and services to meet the needs of Canadian workers and to better reflect the realities of the 21st century workplace. Our government agrees with the member for Edmonton Riverbend that we need to care for our caregivers. We made a commitment to improve the lives of caregivers and their families, and by joining with the member for Edmonton Riverbend in supporting Bill C-220 with these proposed amendments, we will be doing just that.

It is heartwarming to see that this is something we can all get behind, and I want to thank my friend from Edmonton Riverbend for putting the bill forward.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member for Manicouagan, I must inform her that she has approximately seven or eight minutes for her speech. Normally, she would have 10 minutes. However, I am going to have to interrupt her before she finishes her speech.

Resuming debate.

The member for Manicouagan.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today as a member of the Bloc Québécois and from Manicouagan, but also as my party's critic for families, children and social development.

Let me begin by thanking my colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend, for his work on Bill C-220 and for introducing it. It is a simple bill, but it is a good example of how we are unable to dissociate our personal life from our public life and, in our case, the work that we do in the House. I remember hearing my colleague talk in the House about what was behind his bill and I heard him speak with dignity, compassion and conviction.

I must say that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the principle, or the very essence, of the bill. Ideological positions aside, at the end of the day, we are all connected as human beings. Our party supports the principle of the bill because it has always been important, and, for our political party, necessary, to allow workers to maintain a good employment relationship. This is so that workers do not fall prey to what I will refer to as the false dilemma of having to choose between a tragic situation, such as caring for a loved one at the end of their life, or losing their job. There is a need there and this bill addresses it.

This reminds me of another bill that illustrates the Bloc Québécois's position. This morning, my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît introduced Bill C-265, referred to as the *Émilie Sans-façon* act, which would increase to 50 the number of weeks for which employment insurance may be paid in the event of a serious illness. This is about compassion and support for people who are ill, but it is also about supporting the caregivers and people who are supporting loved ones at the end of their lives. These values are important to the Bloc Québécois.

When we are going through a crisis in our life and we need to fight or to have all our strength, we do not want anything to undermine that strength or the help that we need. However, that could happen if the situation has made both us and the person who wants to help us vulnerable. At the risk of repeating myself, I think it is very important to say that this bill helps both those who are sick and their caregivers.

I will not get into the technical details of the bill because my colleagues, including the member for Shefford, did that earlier. Instead, I would like to come back to the very notion of caregiver. I was saying earlier that it is impossible to keep our public lives completely separate from our personal lives. I am the mother of three children, including a three-year-old boy who was born when I was here serving as an MP during the previous Parliament, although he was not born in the House. I am currently his caregiver.

Often we do not even realize that we are being caregivers. Most people do not know or believe that they are caregivers, even though they fit the description. They just think it is part of their role. As human beings, we take care of one another, but we do not realize at what point we go beyond what is considered “regular”, a word I do not really like, or “normal”, another word I do not like—in other words a kind of “average” of what we do and accomplish.

I will give a definition for caregiver, which is not my own but that of the Regroupement des aidants naturels du Québec. A caregiver is someone whose goal is to help a sick, injured or ageing person recover or to provide support at the end of life, if need be. The caregiver also seeks to maintain and improve the quality of life of the person under care whenever possible, and to help ensure a satisfactory end of life in accordance with the wishes of the person under care.

• (1805)

It is a very important role, and it covers so much. For example, when a person is at the end of life, we think about their physical needs, but they have other needs too. They have emotional needs. Caregivers support them. They provide health care, often in addition to what our health care systems do.

Caregivers support those who need care either occasionally or continuously, for varying periods of time, under changing circumstances they have no control over. Caregivers do not realize when it starts, and they do not know when it will end. They have a very important role to play. At home or in residences, caregivers are all around us; they are part of our families.

I think this kind of bill affects society as a whole. I shared my situation, and as I said, as parents, we are also caregivers to our own children.

I would like to share some statistics. I will go over them quickly, but it is important to mention them. These numbers are striking, and behind these numbers there are people. The Government of Canada's figures are not all up to date, but according to Quebec's statistics institute, in 2012, a quarter of the population over the age of 15 were caregivers. That is 25% of the population in 2012, and now it is 2021. In short, that is huge, and it is just the tip of the iceberg. As I said earlier, sometimes people do not even feel like they are a caregiver, so when they are responding to a survey, they might not even consider themselves part of this category. That means this would be just a glimpse of the proportion of the population of Quebec and Canada that are caregivers.

Mr. Speaker, do I have any time left?

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: To correct the time, there are two minutes remaining.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I broke the momentum.

I will stop there.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Seeing none, we will now invite the hon. member for Edmonton-Riverbend for his right of reply. The hon. member has up to five minutes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled by a lot of the comments made in the chamber today, but also during the first debate. I will get to my thanks in a minute, but I want to address what we have been hearing, which is an outpouring of support from people who are caregivers now, people who have been caregivers, people who think they will potentially be at the point of taking care of a loved one or people grieving after a loved one has passed away. I want to share two comments we received from two individuals in particular.

Before I get to that, I want to also recognize that today is World Cancer Day. I could not have done a lot of the work without the support of the Canadian Cancer Society. I remember the first meeting we had. Its representatives came on board and said that they could not wait to support my private member's bill. They have been

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there since day one. It is fitting on World Cancer Day to be able to finish the second hour of debate.

We spoke about some of those individuals who were taking care of their loved ones. Among the hundreds of emails we have received since first reading, I want to point out two.

One comes from Leslie Allen from Alberta. She took care of her husband Don, who battled colorectal cancer for six years. In June of 2018, he was told that he only had two to six months to live. Let us think about a spouse being told that he or she has only two to six months to live. Imagine the shock it must have been to Leslie.

A nurse advised Leslie to use compassionate leave. Leslie said that she had no idea compassionate leave existed. She said, "My greatest challenge with all of it was that I was emotionally, physically, spiritually and mentally drained. Having resources to tap into the support, for me, was essential."

The second email is from Elaine Klym from western Canada. She took leave to care for her sick father who lived across the country in Ontario. After he passed away in November 2014, she called her workplace back in Alberta to notify her manager of the death. Elaine wrote, "My manager sat on the phone and counted out the days I was allowed to have off, five. Yes, you get five because he's out of province."

Elaine went back to work less than two weeks after hearing the silence of her dad's heart. She kept reminding herself she had done the right thing, but she was mentally and physically exhausted. Elaine then wrote that she wanted all parliamentarians to know the need of having time to grieve after a loved one's death.

She finished her letter by saying, "I was grateful for a team and employer who understood, but returning to work so soon resulted in me taking more lost time later on due to the energy I put in caring for my dad. I would do it all over again and will probably seek a leave to provide the same care to my mom when it's her time, but my hope is I will have the benefit of bereavement period for compassionate care by the time that happens."

For Elaine and Leslie who took time like hundreds of others did to email us, the conversation we have had here today and a few months back is a win. It is a win in itself to be able to talk about the need for bereavement leave, the need for compassionate leave.

I want to close by thanking the Canadian Grief Alliance, the Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the MS Society, the Alzheimer Society of Canada, ALS Society of Canada, the Heart & Stroke Foundation, Parkinson Canada, Alberta Caregivers Association especially and the Canadian Lung Association.

Adjournment Proceedings

In particular, I really want to thank the minister and her staff. She has been incredibly open and thoughtful throughout this process of drafting the legislation. I do not have enough kind things to say about the parliamentary secretary or else I would be here for another 10 minutes. He has certainly been nothing but available to me at any time. We spoke at lengths about possible amendments. I look forward to bringing forward those amendments along with the parliamentary secretary. The conversations we continue to have about bereavement and grief are important for not only this chamber but Canadians across the country. I look forward to doing that in due course and I look forward this becoming law within Canada.

• (1815)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request either a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them now to rise and indicate so to the Chair.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 17, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Before moving to adjournment debate, members will know that we have an extremely excellent and wonderfully competent team that staffs us in the House, everything from our pages, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the procedure and verification officers and all those who support us, including the clerks at the table. Members will know that they rotate from time to time. In the last few months, a new clerk, Danielle Labonté, has joined us in the House. For the first time this evening, she had the chance to read the orders of the day for Private Members' Business. I want to thank her. It is great to have her in the House.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1820)

[*English*]

HEALTH

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is the only country in the world with a universal health care system that does not provide universal prescription drug coverage outside of hospitals. People in Canada pay among the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs due to our patchwork of 100 public and over 100,000 private drug plans. As a result, we lack purchasing power and many Canadians do not get access to drug coverage. The Liberals have promised universal pharmacare for Canadians decade after decade, and there is still no universal pharmacare.

The NDP tabled the Canada pharmacare act in February 2020. Immediately following the last election, the NDP began working to draft a legislative framework to enable the implementation of a universal, comprehensive and public pharmacare program. It is based

on the recommendations of the Hoskins Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare, and modelled on the Canada Health Act. The proposed Canada pharmacare act specifies the conditions and criteria that the provincial and territorial prescription drug insurance programs must meet to receive federal funding. This includes the core principles of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility. Universal public drug coverage has been recommended by commissions, committees and advisory councils dating as far back as the 1940s.

People across Canada are making impossible choices every day because they cannot afford their prescription medications. Millions of Canadians have inadequate prescription coverage or no coverage at all. Sixteen per cent of people in Canada have gone without medication for heart disease, cholesterol or hypertension because of the cost. Over the past year alone, one in four Canadians was forced to avoid filling or renewing a prescription drug due to its cost, or to take measures to extend a prescription because they could not afford to keep the recommended dosage schedule.

Even those with private coverage are seeing their employer-sponsored benefits shrink, a trend that has accelerated due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. In fact, Canadians are twice as likely to have lost prescription drug coverage as to have gained it over the past year. The amount of prescription drugs spending paid out of pocket in Canada in 2016 was \$7.4 billion. Universal public pharmacare would extend prescription drug coverage to every single Canadian while saving us billions of dollars every year. The final report of the Hoskins advisory council found that once fully implemented, universal public pharmacare would reduce annual system-wide spending on prescription drugs by \$5 billion. Businesses and employees would see a benefit to the tune of \$16.6 billion annually for businesses, and families would see their out-of-pocket drug costs reduced by \$6.4 billion per year, collectively.

I ask the members to support this bill. Over 13,000 academic experts in the health care and public policy community support this. It is time for us to act. It is time to put the needs of Canadians ahead of big pharma.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to thank the hon. member for the question. There are wonderful people on both sides of the House, and this is a member who, day in and day out, shows and proves how much she cares for Canadians and her constituents.

The government recognizes that Canadians should not have to choose between buying groceries and paying for medication. That is why the government is committed to implementing a national pharmacare program that will ensure that all Canadians have access to the prescription drugs they need.

As part of this commitment, budget 2019 proposed to invest up to \$1 billion over two years, with up to \$500 million per year ongoing, starting in 2022-23, to help Canadians with rare diseases access the drugs that they need.

We recognize that for many Canadians with rare diseases, the cost of these medications can be astronomically high. In collaboration with willing provinces, territories and other partners, we continue to work towards delivering a national strategy for high-cost drugs and rare diseases in 2022, starting with a comprehensive engagement process.

In December 2020, the Minister of Health and her provincial-territorial colleagues agreed to mandate senior officials to guide the development and implementation of the national strategy. A broad public and stakeholder engagement process was launched on January 21, 2021, and will run until March 26, 2021. Feedback gathered in this engagement will help inform the design of the national strategy.

Budget 2019 also announced \$35 million over four years to establish a transition office. This office is being established to provide dedicated capacity and leadership to advance work on pharmacare-related priorities. These commitments are important steps towards a national pharmacare program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us all of how critical it is that Canadians have access to the medicines that keep them healthy. This is particularly true of Canadians who have lost drug coverage or who are at risk of losing their coverage due to the pandemic.

In response, our government is ramping up efforts to implement a national pharmacare plan that gets Canadians the drug coverage they need. While we are now more committed than ever, it is important that we continue with our measured and considered approach to implementation. We need to get this right. We need a thoughtful conversation with provinces and territories and stakeholders about how best to meet this challenge together.

In partnership with the provinces and territories, the government is already taking key steps to improve the accessibility and affordability of prescription drugs. Most recently, the government modernized the way patented drug prices are regulated in Canada by amending the patented medicines regulations. These amendments will provide the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board with the tools and information it needs to protect Canadians from excessive prices for patented medicines.

To keep national pharmacare sustainable, we will also continue to look for opportunities to improve pharmaceutical management in partnership with provinces and territories. While we accelerate the implementation of national pharmacare, we must do so in a way that respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction and leverages their expertise.

Together we can build a more effective, efficient and equitable system for all Canadians.

• (1825)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, it has been decades, and it is still all talk and no action.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Prime Minister criticized Harper's health care cuts to the provinces, but then kept the cuts to the funding. No wonder the provinces do not trust that the federal government will keep any commitment on pharmacare.

The Liberals are running out of time and out of excuses. Later this month, every single MP will have an opportunity to vote on the NDP's Bill C-213, the Canada Pharmacare Act. They can either tell their constituents that they stand with everyday Canadians or they stand with big pharma. They can help realize savings of roughly \$4.2 billion annually, as indicated by the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. They can break the trend of the Liberals' broken promises to Canadians and support meaningful action to realize universal pharmacare once and for all.

The choice is theirs. I call on all members to support the NDP's Bill C-213.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I vehemently disagree with the member's comment of "all talk and no action". In the 2020 Speech from the Throne and the fall economic statement, our government reaffirmed its commitment to accelerating steps to achieve national pharmacare, including developing a high-cost drugs for rare diseases strategy and establishing a national formulary.

Canadians are counting on us to get this right. It is important that we continue, as I said, with our measured and considered approach to its implementation and collaboration with provinces and territories and other key health system partners. In Canada, provinces and territories are responsible for their respective health care design and delivery. Our government respects the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial governments in this space.

We are committed to working closely with jurisdictions that are ready and willing to advance the implementation of national pharmacare. Now is the time to sit down with provinces and territories and commit to working together to provide all Canadians with access to affordable medications.

HEALTH

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second wave of the pandemic has been brutal. We have now lost more than 20,000 Canadians to COVID-19. We have an obligation to those 20,000 Canadians who lost their lives and to the hundreds of thousands of others who survived COVID-19. We owe it to them to fix the problems in our country's biomedical research, development and manufacturing system. We cannot let this happen again.

Adjournment Proceedings

I want to be clear here: This is not a science problem. This is a government problem. Scientists across the world, including here in Canada, responded to this global crisis with remarkable efficiency. Think how quickly they identified the virus, its mechanism and its genome, and how quickly they were able to create multiple vaccines to protect against COVID-19. I think we can all agree that scientists have done their job.

The breakdown and the reason so few Canadians have been vaccinated to this point is not because of the science. It is because successive Conservative and Liberal governments, including this one, decided that biomedical research, development and manufacturing was not a priority in Canada.

Now the government has finally made a splashy announcement that it is going to support COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing through a deal with Novavax, an American company. The catch is that those vaccines will not be ready until the fall, meaning they will not be ready until after the date the Prime Minister has promised that every Canadian will receive a vaccine. The deal will only help Canadians if the contracts the government signed last year with vaccine manufacturers come up short.

It is February. The time to make this announcement was last year. It is really too late and really too little. I can appreciate the complexity of this. The government had to negotiate contracts with multiple pharmaceutical and biological developers and manufacturers. We did not know which of these companies would lead the way, so we had to hedge our bets. I get that.

This is a global pandemic so the demand for vaccines outreaches the supply. We all understand that. The question here is why is Canada so far behind other countries? The answer is really quite simple: Our government failed us. We were world leaders 50 years ago in vaccine development and manufacturing, a direct result of our exceptional post-secondary institutions. We developed vaccines for diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid, polio and smallpox, and we worked with the World Health Organization on global vaccination campaigns.

Now our universities are struggling to remain world leaders in biomedical research and our vaccine manufacturing capacity is gone. What happened? We lost out to privatization. Without adequate support, university spinoffs could not compete with global pharma and Canada's gem, our leader in vaccine production, a company owned by Canadians, Connaught Laboratories, was sold off to foreign interests.

In the 35 years since we had Connaught Labs sold out from under us, we have had 10 governments with six prime ministers, and not one of those governments or one of those prime ministers made restoring our biomedical capacity a priority. COVID-19 is not going to be the last pandemic. We should be preparing for the next health crisis now.

In November, New Democrats called on the government to put Canada back where it belongs: in the vaccine manufacturing business. We need a public company, a Canadian Crown corporation, to manufacture vaccines and critical medicines so we will never again have to face a crisis like this without our own vaccines.

Will the government commit to increasing the capacity of Canadians to create Canadian vaccines?

• (1830)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has been singularly focused on the COVID-19 crisis this year and last, and its impacts on Canadians and their families. We will continue to take steps that address all aspects and impacts of this pandemic. We will do so working closely with partners in the provinces and territories, indigenous organizations, municipal governments and a range of stakeholders.

The Government of Canada's response to COVID-19 recognizes that provinces and territories have the primary role in the delivery of health care in Canada, and as the situation on the ground can vary significantly across Canada, they remain best placed to determine how to respond.

The Government of Canada does, however, continue to undertake a number of important roles including procuring, distributing and approving key medical supplies. We have already provided significant support to provinces and territories in their efforts to combat the virus and its effects, including emergency surge support for testing, tracing and isolation, as well as outbreak management. We stand ready to provide additional support if and when necessary.

The government has further invested more than \$19 billion to support provinces and territories as they safely restart their economies, including funding to help ensure health care systems are ready for possible future waves of the virus. This includes support for vulnerable Canadians, such as those in long-term care who are at much greater risk from COVID-19.

It also supports provinces and territories in boosting their testing, contact tracing and data management capacity so that they can better detect and manage the spread of COVID-19.

We are also finding innovative ways to take pressure off of health care infrastructure through supporting virtual care services, for example. We continue to work hand in hand with provinces and territories to ensure that the distribution of rapid tests is responsive to jurisdictional needs and realities, and is equitable and timely.

The Government of Canada has signed agreements to purchase rapid tests from a number of providers. Rapid tests have been shipped to provinces and territories. Health Canada has also developed the COVID alert app, implemented by many provinces and territories, that serves to notify app users if they have been near someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Our government is continuously working to secure critical personal protective equipment as well as medical equipment and supplies. We have expedited the delivery of this equipment to our front-line health care workers. Canada is receiving a steady supply of PPE, with shipments arriving daily, and we rapidly allocate the inventory to the provinces and territories.

Finally, the Government of Canada has also established a COVID-19 federal rapid surge capacity initiative. This supports the needs of provinces and territories when they have exceeded their own capacity to respond to the virus. It can strengthen existing services in areas where needs are most pressing, including outbreak management testing and contact tracing.

The Government of Canada has also brought on additional capacity to aid in test processing in federal laboratories. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this capacity is finite and must be used strategically. It is not a replacement for necessary provincial and territorial action. While respecting the provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the Government of Canada will continue to support their efforts and to support Canadians impacted by COVID-19.

• (1835)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the production of vaccines is the jurisdiction of the Liberal government, and we have seen Liberal and Conservative governments fail on vaccine production.

Canadians have been waiting nearly 60 years to get prescription medications included in our health care system. It was 23 years ago that the Liberals first promised a Canadian national pharmacare program, and they have been repeating that promise ever since.

Earlier tonight, we heard the parliamentary secretary speak about the promise made in the 2020 throne speech. I would like to see, when we bring forward our private member's bill on pharmacare, that the Liberal government supports that and does the work to get pharmacare out to Canadians.

Will the parliamentary secretary be supporting our private member's bill calling for pharmacare?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, to wrap up on the question of the topic that we have been discussing, the Government of Canada recognizes that provinces and territories are best placed to address the spread and the impacts of COVID-19 based on the unique circumstances in their jurisdictions, and we will make every effort to support them in this respect.

The government has provided significant funding to support health care system capacity and other needs. We are working to procure and distribute tests, PPE and vaccines to help ensure their availability to provincial and territorial governments and Canadians across the country as we work to contain the pandemic, address its effects and work toward a long-term solution to COVID-19.

The Government of Canada remains committed to providing surge support capacity wherever possible for the provinces and territories that require and seek further assistance. The government urges provinces and territories to take the strongest possible approach to containing the virus and addressing its impacts to ensure

that these resources can be used strategically to benefit all Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are at the heart of our local economies. They create jobs and add value to our communities. They have been doing their part during the COVID-19 pandemic by closing their doors to support public health and adapting, and the NDP has pushed the government to give these small businesses the help they need by improving the commercial rent and wage subsidy programs. The problem is that we are 11 months into this pandemic and many small businesses are still falling through the cracks. Start-ups in particular have been completely left out of these programs, prevented from accessing much-needed government supports.

The last time I stood up to support small businesses in the House, I talked about Bear & Joey, a new restaurant in my riding. After years of planning and pouring his life savings into developing the business, the owner was finally ready to open it in May. It is facing the exact same challenges as other small businesses, but because it had the bad luck of opening during a global pandemic, it did not qualify for wage or rent subsidies.

Since then I have heard from many other businesses in Victoria that are also not getting the help they need to survive. I would like to share a few of their stories.

The Vicious Poodle, on Johnson Street in Victoria, is another small business that had the bad luck of opening during a global pandemic. It is a new LGBTQ2SAI+ pub and currently the only LGBTQ+ dedicated space on Vancouver Island.

After securing a location in September 2019, the owner began renovations with plans to open the first week of April, but the pandemic meant the completed space sat empty for two months before it was able to open at a reduced capacity. It created 20 local jobs in a welcoming environment for marginalized workers who often have difficulty finding respectable employment. It does not qualify for any government programs. As the pandemic has gone on, the owner has had to lay off more and more of his staff and is now in the position of having to close the doors for the next few months and hope he does not lose his business entirely.

Another business in Victoria, Hey Happy Coffee, first opened in 2014 and enjoyed five years of steady growth. In 2019, when the space next door became available, owner Rob Kettner took the opportunity to knock down the wall and expand the business. He put \$400,000 of his own savings and loans into the expansion.

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When it was finished in February 2020, there were lineups around the door and every seat was full. However, less than four weeks later it was forced to close its doors because of the pandemic. When it was able to reopen in May as a take-out window, Rob signed up for the wage subsidy program, which covered 75% of labour costs at first. However, once the wage subsidy formula was amended, he began receiving only the base minimum of 10%.

The new formula does not take into account that a year ago Hey Happy Coffee was a much smaller business, with much lower rent and costs. Before the pandemic, Hey Happy Coffee was financially successful, but today it is losing between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a month. Rob said the irony of the situation is that he expanded his business because of its success and popularity, but he may now lose everything. He could not have possibly foreseen the pandemic, but he told me that if Hey Happy Coffee could receive a fair wage subsidy based on its new business model, he believes his business can survive the pandemic. However, if it goes under, it will be because the government has let it fall through the cracks.

These small businesses and many across the country feel abandoned. After doing their part to support public health, why are small businesses and start-ups still not getting the help they need to survive the pandemic? Why are they being left to fail?

• (1840)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning of this pandemic, we have demonstrated that we were going to work in every way possible to be there for all Canadians and businesses. Every day since, we have done exactly that.

The government has rolled out the largest economic measures in Canadian history to support small businesses across this amazing country. This includes programs such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account, which were put in place to protect jobs through this crisis.

The government's COVID-19 support programs have worked to protect millions of jobs, but we know that the second wave of this virus continues to weigh on many workers and businesses. That is why the government is partnering with Canada's largest financial institutions to introduce the new highly affected sectors credit availability program or, as we like to call it, HASCAP.

Through HASCAP, Canadian-based businesses that have been hardest hit by this pandemic will be able to receive low-interest loans starting at \$25,000 and up to \$1 million. Hard-hit businesses, such as a chain of hotels or restaurants with multiple locations under one related entity, could be eligible for up to \$6.25 million. These loans are 100% backed by the Government of Canada, and they can be used for rent, utilities and help with payroll.

Let me assure everyone that the government has been listening to Canadians, and it will continue to do whatever it takes to support businesses. To continue supporting workers and businesses, the government has increased the maximum base wage subsidy to 75%. We have expanded the Canada emergency business account, and launched the Canada emergency rent subsidy and lockdown support for businesses, among many other measures.

Acknowledging that tourism businesses have been particularly hard hit, the government is helping even more businesses through a \$500-million investment to the \$1.5-billion regional relief and recovery fund. The government knows that it is absolutely critical to get Canadian businesses online so that they can sell to the billions of customers around the world. That is why we are revamping CanExport to help businesses expand their commercial presence and grow in international markets.

These supports are there to help businesses weather this storm and be ready for a robust recovery that will create jobs and strengthen the middle class. Together, we will be able to rebuild a stronger, more resilient economy where everyone has a chance to succeed.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, more loans and more debt is not the answer for these businesses. I am glad the government has made some changes, and I am proud of the work the NDP has done pushing for these much-needed improvements, but there are still too many small businesses, especially start-ups, falling through the cracks. We have been at this for over 11 months now and the government cannot blame the unprecedented nature of the situation anymore.

A made-in-Victoria solution, which the mayor of Victoria recently shared with the minister, is for new businesses to supply to the federal government whatever information they provided to a third party, whether a bank or private investor, that financed their businesses, as check and balance in place to demonstrate business viability. There are solutions. We are ready to work with the government to help these small businesses survive. The longer the pandemic goes on, the more urgently they need help.

Simply adding more debt is not sustainable. They are facing the same challenges that so many other small businesses across Canada are facing, but they are not getting the same support. They have invested in our communities and they are doing their part, so why is the government leaving them out in the cold?

• (1845)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate that since day one of the COVID-19 crisis, this government has been there to support Canada's businesses and the millions of Canadians that they employ. Our government acted quickly to introduce critical supports to ensure that small businesses are able to get through the worst of this pandemic, and we will continue to listen to businesses. The government is committed to doing whatever it takes to support businesses and entrepreneurs to create jobs and help rebuild Canada's economy.

Our COVID-19 support programs have worked to protect millions of jobs, but we know that the second wave of this virus continues to weigh on many workers and businesses. Again, that is why we launched the highly affected sectors credit availability program to help these businesses hit hardest by the pandemic with low-interest, government-backed loans. By investing in Canada's businesses, as well as workers and their families, we are investing in our shared recovery and a better future for all.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canadians will get through this crisis together, and together we will build a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable Canada.

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 6:47 p.m.)

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