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• (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): All right. Good morning, everybody.

[*Translation*]

I hope you had a good weekend.

We have two weeks left before the Christmas break. It's coming.

We are continuing our study on Canada's productivity.

[*English*]

This is our last scheduled meeting on productivity. We've had a really good set of discussions on this over the course of the past couple of months. We have two final witnesses appearing here today virtually.

[*Translation*]

The witnesses have completed the required sound tests in advance of the meeting.

[*English*]

Witnesses, to make sure that interpretation is working in both languages, could you give me a thumbs-up? Excellent.

You will each have up to five minutes to provide introductory remarks.

We will start with Protect Our Winters Canada, and Natalie Knowles, a researcher with the organization.

Ms. Knowles, we'll turn the floor over to you for up to five minutes.

Natalie Knowles (Researcher, Protect Our Winters Canada): Thank you so much for having me here today to speak on behalf of Protect Our Winters Canada. This is a non-profit representing Canada's outdoor recreation industry.

My name is Dr. Natalie Knowles. I'm POW's research and policy director, and I specialize in research related to outdoor recreation economies.

I'm the co-author of a report released in 2024 that, for the first time, analyzed Canada's outdoor recreation economy. This sector is an underappreciated economic powerhouse, representing \$101.6 billion in annual economic activity and over one million full-time jobs.

The outdoor recreation sector stands above or at par with other major industries, including forestry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and oil and gas. However, this report underestimates the size of outdoor recreation to Canadians, because it was based on existing outdoor recreation sector reporting and doesn't include many key sub-sectors that millions of Canadians participate in due to the diversity of the outdoor recreation industry and the lack of coordinated economic impact assessments at the regional, provincial and national levels.

Our outdoor recreation economy report for Canada shows that outdoor recreation is a major industry across our country. It's the lifeblood of countless rural communities across Canada, especially some communities whose economies are naturally transitioning from traditional resource economies. Outdoor recreation is growing rapidly, but contributions to our national economy are not being reported.

For comparison, there was a similar situation in the U.S., but a few years ago, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis added an outdoor recreation satellite account, finding that outdoor recreation creates \$1.2 trillion in economic output and represents 2.3% of their overall GDP. This economic reporting has not only helped better understand the economic impact, but also led to direct policy and investment by both the public and private sectors.

In addition to our estimates on the economic impact, outdoor recreation is a labour and workplace productivity booster. Participation in outdoor recreation activities by Canadians, particularly in natural settings, has been proven to reduce stress, anxiety and depression; improve mental health; enhance cognitive functions like creativity, problem-solving, innovative thinking, focus and mental clarity; increase physical health, well-being, cardiovascular health and immune function; strengthen social well-being, team building, interpersonal relationships and supportive workplaces; assist in youth development and healthy aging; and lead to higher job satisfaction, a sense of purpose and fulfillment and less burnout in the workplace.

These benefits of outdoor recreation transcend the sector and can contribute to stronger workforces, more resilient businesses and greater productivity across all industries and regions across Canada. Investment in outdoor recreation assets, like trail networks, green spaces and bike shares, by the government and the private sector alike can help attract and retain workforce talent.

We're finding that millennials, high-income individuals and households with children are more likely to consider outdoor recreation and access to nature in their residential and employment decisions. Beyond the direct workforce, outdoor recreation provides a broad range of social benefits that strengthen our economy as well as the individual and community health of Canadians.

Healthy lifestyles associated with outdoor recreation are estimated to reduce public health care costs in Canada by between \$3.9 billion and \$23 billion annually. For rural communities, recreation means attracting new residents, having faster-growing economies, enhancing active citizenship and improving the sense of belonging among new immigrants to Canada. There's also been evidence that it can support truth and reconciliation, particularly call to action number 92 on building respectful relationships and ensuring that indigenous communities gain long-term economic benefits from activities taking place on their lands or from using their resources.

- (1105)

From skiing to mountain biking, canoeing rivers to hiking through the forests, our diverse outdoor recreation options and vast natural playgrounds are a key piece of Canadian culture, well-being and livelihoods that transcend political differences. As such, we believe that to boost Canadian productivity and competitiveness, we call upon the government and this committee to support the sustainable growth of the outdoor recreation sector by starting to report on Canada's outdoor recreation participation and economic impact, as has been done in the United States to much success, and by investing in and protecting natural outdoor recreation assets and infrastructure so we can continue providing productivity within the outdoor recreation sector and in other sectors across Canada.

The Chair: That's wonderful. Thank you very much, Ms. Knowles.

Mr. Meier, I have been accused of being partial to Manitobans in the past. I'll do my best to be as impartial as possible, but it's very nice to see you, sir.

For colleagues who don't know, Mr. Meier is the president and CEO of Red River College Polytech, which is located in my hometown of Winnipeg.

Mr. Meier, it's always a pleasure to see you. I turn the floor to you for up to five minutes.

Fred Meier (President and Chief Executive Officer, Red River College Polytech): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to appear today.

As the chair mentioned, my name is Fred Meier. I'm the president and CEO of RRC Polytech, which is Manitoba's only polytechnic institution. I'm joining you today from our Notre Dame campus in Winnipeg, which is located on Treaty 1 territory and the national homeland of the Red River Métis.

In March 2024, Carolyn Rogers, the senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, focused a spotlight on the productivity crisis in Canada. It's now widely recognized that our country is in trouble. As the president of a polytechnic institution, I want to share a perspective that doesn't get the attention it should.

Colleges and polytechnics provide the skills and credentials that drive productivity in virtually every economic sector in every region of our nation. Institutions similar to ours play a more significant role in countries around the world that are leading in productivity.

Our collaborative applied research activities with industry partners advance innovation through adoption and the dispersion of technology. We've built incredible trust with business partners and have proven that we can deliver what they need. Our partnerships are deep and our outputs help elevate Canada.

Polytechnics Canada's 13-member institutions alone accounted for 138,000 job-ready graduates in 2024–25. More than 18,000 of them worked on applied research projects while they studied.

Colleges and polytechnics have the ingredients to help grow productivity in Canada, yet funding, policy decisions and the general optics of colleges and polytechnics compared to universities continue to support a hierarchy and advance a systemic disadvantage. Colleges conduct the majority of Canada's SME-focused, industry-driven applied research, yet we receive less than 3% of the tri-council's total budget for research funding. This imbalance makes it difficult to scale the kind of productivity-enhancing innovation and technology adoption that keeps investment in Canada. It limits the growth of benefits we can provide to Canadian businesses.

More and more within post-secondary, we're seeing signs that our peers recognize how important colleges and polytechnics are in helping businesses turn innovation into productivity and profit. Last year, RRC Polytech became a partner and lead of Labs4, a national network of 38 colleges and universities helping researcher-entrepreneurs turn academic breakthroughs into real-world ventures, products and solutions. We received the largest ever tri-council grant to be awarded to a college—more than \$24 million—and recognition from Ottawa that applied research by polytechnics and colleges is a catalyst of productivity in Canada. It was a big win and a step in the right direction for research funding in post-secondary education and, equally important, for something I call parity of esteem.

Colleges and polytechnics need to be seen as different from but equal to universities as contributors to Canada's success. The current hierarchy in post-secondary education is counterproductive to what the sector can generate when we work together and when our unique strengths are advanced and equitably funded.

Canada's SMEs employ more than 16 million people and comprise 98% of all businesses in our country. They don't have massive R and D budgets. They need rapid access to graduates who have applied knowledge, work experience and the technical skills to implement and optimize technology quickly.

We fill that gap. We help them work with existing technologies so they can become digitally literate and competent, now. We do all of this in partnership with industry and through foundational industry support.

RRC Polytech's ability to support Manitoba SMEs in manufacturing transformed in 2023 with the launch of the Price Institute of Advanced Manufacturing and Mechatronics, which was possible in large part due to the vision and generosity of Dr. Gerry Price. The institute's Centre for Automation and Manufacturing Technology Transfer now connects SMEs with our research experts and students to rapidly explore new technologies and then adopt them into their operations. It's just one example of the mutually beneficial outcomes we provide for students, industry and community partners, and for Manitoba and Canada.

We drive productivity. We want what you want for Canada. We can do more, but that requires more—more funding for applied research, greater recognition as a viable post-secondary option for more Canadians and parity of esteem.

Thank you for your time this morning. I encourage you all to visit colleges and polytechnics and learn more about the impact they have on productivity across the country. I look forward to hosting you at RRC Polytech.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Meier.

Colleagues, we will now enter into our lines of questioning.

Witnesses, just so you're aware of the order of things, I'll let you know that there's a pre-allotted amount of time per recognized political party around the table, and we follow that pattern.

Madam Dancho, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their opening statements.

Mr. Meier, I have questions for you.

It's great to see you again. I appreciate the number of tours you've provided to me to get a better sense of what we're doing in Winnipeg. Overall, I took away from those tours that polytechnics are very much leading the way in bridging the gap of advanced manufacturing in Canada by working with private sectors to commercialize one of these incredible Canadian ideas.

I want to ask you a bit about that because we're studying productivity. Our biggest competitor and biggest trading partner, of course, is the United States. As you know, its productivity has gone leaps and bounds ahead of ours over the last decade. In fact, as you may know, real U.S. manufacturing and construction are up by over 300% since 2008, and ours have been really flat during that time. U.S. firms invest triple what Canadian firms do in productivity-re-

lated technologies—about \$12,800 annually per worker while we're at \$4,100 annually per worker—so they really have advantages over our Canadian workforce.

I'm wondering what role polytechnics play in innovation and advanced manufacturing. How critical is it that we support that as taxpayers and as government to ensure that we can close the productivity gap with the United States?

• (1115)

Fred Meier: Thank you very much for your question. It's a good one.

I touched on that briefly in my comments on applied research. For those who haven't spent a lot of time in the applied research area, I'll say that applied research is done in partnership with industry. It's not related to the discovery research. It's very much focused on a problem or an innovation that a business owner and industry are looking for. Polytechnics and colleges across Canada are the one of the only areas from which applied research can be delivered in Canada. It's also done in partnership or in conjunction with students who work very closely on those projects.

What's happening in that environment is that a company will come into a polytechnic or college that has applied research capabilities. It will work with researchers, who are our staff members with industry-level experience. They'll work on prototyping or developing a product that a company has—either an existing product that needs to be changed or one that needs to be modified using new technology. At the same time, we have students involved in that process. What you're getting is a company that's working in a public institution with available public funding and in conjunction with students and researchers. The other thing that's quite unique about applied research in our institutions is that intellectual property brought into that environment is retained by the company or the partner we're working with in that environment. That reduces the barriers to entry. That allows companies to enter, without risk, into that environment.

The other thing we've seen quite often is that the students who are involved in those projects end up having the skills and talent required for that company to move on and implement the technology they've just developed in our research facilities. It's an ability for them to access talent. It's an ability for us to develop talent, and it's an ability for us to help companies, especially companies that don't have the size for their own in-house expertise for research, to access facilities, equipment and researchers to do that.

Raquel Dancho: I believe it's the case that every dollar invested in applied research carried out by polytechnics generates a combined private and social return ranging from a low estimate of \$8.09 to a high estimate of \$18.49. It's one dollar in and up to almost \$19 out in economic activity.

You also mentioned in your opening remarks that with the tri-councils—the government research councils that distribute taxpayer funding for research and development—97% of funding goes to universities and only 3% goes to polytechnics. Is that correct? Also, was there any movement on that in the recent budget put forward by the federal government?

Fred Meier: Yes, that is a historical trend. I don't think we've ever seen colleges or polytechnics exceed the 3%. It's somewhere below 3% that we've seen. The biggest one is the college and community innovation program, which is a direct stream for polytechnics and colleges to access.

The one thing that we were looking for in the budget was an extension of a top-up received in 2023 to that program. That was an additional \$36 million to \$40 million for the program. We didn't see that in this budget, and we're seeking clarity on that right now. It expires in April 2026, which will reduce the capacity of the work we can do in polytechnics and colleges.

Raquel Dancho: On the value for money that's going in from taxpayers, and to help make the argument, I would agree that polytechnics deserve a larger portion of funding, whether the overall funding envelope goes up, as yours does, or whatever it needs to be, but I think 97% and 3% are quite disproportionate. More than that, I believe polytechnics leverage \$2.24 from other sources for every dollar invested. It's not just taxpayers burgeoning publicly funded research. The private sector is also supporting that. I think that's important, and it's higher for polytechnics than it is for universities. Again, the economic output, as I mentioned, is quite high.

In our last minute, do you have one or two recommendations to government to ensure that we maximize polytechnics in advanced manufacturing? I'm almost out of time, so please be brief.

• (1120)

Fred Meier: If you look at countries that lead in productivity, the investment in applied research is higher as well. The other thing is that in order to drive productivity in our country right now, we need the skills and talent coming out of these institutions.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Madam Dancho.

Mr. Bardeesy, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I'll start with you, Mr. Meier. I want to pick up on the points about applied research.

Earlier in this committee, we heard that it's important not just to take a global perspective on productivity numbers but also to try to really drill down in sectors and regions. Could you share with us, from a Red River College perspective, the major areas that you think you have a role in advancing the productivity of in the region of Winnipeg and southern Manitoba?

Fred Meier: I would say it holds true for many of the institutions that we're very focused regionally in the types of programs we deliver. The legislation that established our institution says that we were established to focus on our labour market locally. That's the talent and programs we develop and, alongside that, the applied research we deliver. For us, in advanced manufacturing and mecha-

tronics, as I mentioned, we have not only a technical access centre but also a new institute that's focused on that. We've opened the doors on some new facilities as well to really drive it. For Manitoba specifically, that's one.

The other one I would mention is transportation. We were a very early adopter of emerging propulsion systems and energy systems for large and heavy vehicles. Our partnership with New Flyer Industries, a manufacturer of hydrogen and hybrid electric buses, is of long standing. We work very closely with them. We have developed facilities to help them test their equipment. We were their early-stage developer of some of the recharging technologies associated with that as well.

On the agricultural front, of course, in Manitoba and across the Prairies, ag is a driver of what we do. We have a very specific area, called our Prairie Research Kitchen, that works on applied research on food development products. It's unique. It not only has the lab strength and the applied aspects around food development; it also has a connection to our culinary program. It really brings chefs into the equation on applied research and product development to get it ready for market.

Those are some of the areas we focus on. Energy efficiency is also a very strong one for us. We have a building efficiency technical access centre that works on improving the efficiencies of structures in construction as well.

Karim Bardeesy: One of the features of what you've described is that Winnipeg has the quite unique position of not only being a major centre, but also being quite distant from other major centres. Where do you tend to attract your student population from? How does that speak to the productivity challenges you see in the region?

Fred Meier: The majority of our students are local students. They would be domestic to Winnipeg and Manitoba. A smaller proportion would be the international students we've attracted as well. We find that the retention of our graduates within Manitoba is very strong because of the high level of domestic students we have and the regional connections we have.

We also have a very strong work-integrated learning component. This component ensures that all of our students have an opportunity to have a work placement, a co-op or an internship, or to work on a capstone project specific to a company or an employer. That level of high retention allows people to stay within Manitoba. It also allows them to be prepared to enter the labour market much quicker and without barriers.

Karim Bardeesy: Thank you.

I now have a couple of questions for Ms. Knowles.

Ms. Knowles, you're in a sector where spending is more, I guess you could say, discretionary—it has more of a discretionary element.

First, could you share what you're expecting this coming winter—what the trends are you've heard from your members—and the analysis you've done?

• (1125)

Natalie Knowles: In terms of the trends this winter, we're seeing increased outdoor recreational participation and spending, which generally has been increasing rapidly. Since COVID, there's been a major increase in spending and participation in outdoor recreation. We are seeing impacts from climate change and other environmental and political factors that influence how and where people are participating and, therefore, spending their money on outdoor recreation.

The current relationship with the U.S. is leading to a greater increase in domestic, localized spending on outdoor recreation, which is a positive step for our outdoor recreation sectors in Canada. There are fewer people travelling across the border for things like skiing and the other activities they would potentially do. That's where we're seeing growth in the same sense that we saw during the period of COVID.

Karim Bardeesy: One of the conventional metrics for productivity that this committee has looked at is increased output per worker, but in your sector it's probably a bit harder to do that. Can you share with us your perspective on the question of productivity as it relates to a sector like yours?

Natalie Knowles: It's an interesting question, because when we look at productivity in the traditional sense of output per worker, what we see with outdoor recreation is the low requirement for resource input relative to labour. There's less resource input in terms of economic output. Outside of our specific sector, the increase in productivity or the effectiveness of workers in other sectors due to participation in outdoor recreation.... It's an interesting sector, and when we look at traditional economic impact metrics, it's much more difficult to assess and relate to other sectors. However, when we look at jobs and the economic impact, we see that we're at par with other sectors.

In the outdoor recreation sector, often we are much more interested in some of the more qualitative, difficult-to-measure economic impact assessment metrics. By that I mean looking beyond GDP and direct productivity metrics and at some of the more social and well-being aspects that outdoor recreation provides to those within the sector—to the small businesses in it. The sector is generally built out of small local businesses. We're looking at some of the contributions to local economies, regional and provincial economies, and then outward.

Karim Bardeesy: Thank you. That's very valuable for our work here.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Bardeesy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ste-Marie, go ahead for six minutes.

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Greetings, everyone.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us and for their testimony.

Mr. Meier, thank you for your presentation. I would like to come back to the issue of intellectual property and the innovations that are being made at colleges, universities and polytechnics. You talked about partnerships with businesses and the agricultural community. We often hear that, in the Canadian economy, there is a problem with properly protecting patents, intellectual property and innovations that are made in colleges and universities and that are transferred to businesses to increase their productivity. Can you tell us more about that from your perspective?

[*English*]

Fred Meier: IP is a critical aspect of the productivity equation as well. It usually comes from the feeling or the fact that IP is commercialized elsewhere. It's discovered in Canada and commercialized elsewhere. Within that is an ecosystem that, at certain points in time, can be quite leaky or can be difficult to operate inside of.

Maybe I'll speak about this from what we believe the advantages of working with polytechnic institutions are in an applied nature.

The first one I spoke about was reducing a barrier. We'll take, for example, lab research. There's a researcher or somebody who's discovered something and wants to look towards the commercialization of it. The first barrier that we think we reduce is.... By removing the sharing of IP by working inside of our institutions, it allows them to step into an environment where that threat isn't there. That's the first part of it.

The second part is the ability for us to connect with industry. We have a wide network of industry partners we work with on a regular basis. That connection allows us to provide that researcher, the person bringing the IP into our institution, to have a better sense of how that's connected.

The other thing is the ability for us to move rapidly and understand the marketplace and what's required on that front for us to put in the necessary advice for and development of a product, and then also provide the skills and talent for the next steps for commercialization. What are the business skills you need to move that forward? I would say that if we had a greater capacity within the polytechnic-college applied area, it would allow for more commercialization of research within facilities that have the researchers and the know-how to do that.

It's exactly what the Labs4 initiative was focused on: the ability to connect with universities and colleges together as part of a network. There's extremely valuable research that's done and discovered. We need to find a way to commercialize that, taking it from the lab to the market and having polytechnics and colleges involved in that process.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you very much. That's very enlightening.

Still with a view to increasing productivity, do you have any recommendations for the federal government to facilitate this networking—these partnerships and transfers?

[English]

Fred Meier: I'll go back to the research capacity. At 3% of the overall funding available, I think when you look at us compared to OECD countries that focus on applied research, our investment on the applied side is well below where others are that have very strong productivity.

The first thing I would say is that we need to find a way of increasing the investment in the applied research institutions going forward. We're going to learn a lot out of this initiative on Labs4 about the ability to work with universities and others to create a much cleaner pathway for researchers who have discovery research to move through a very supportive network. Part of that is about providing them funding in the early stage. If you're a recent graduate or a researcher, you have to think about getting by with day-to-day life as well, so it's about providing stipends and supports for them to cultivate research into something that's available.

It's about the strong network of supports—not only investing on the research side at the front end in applied research, but also investing in researchers as they're commercializing their products.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you very much. That's very helpful and very enlightening.

Ms. Knowles, thank you again for your presentation. In your last answer, you talked about indirect benefits, if I understood correctly. I'd like to know whether, in saying that, you've thought about indirect jobs in SMEs and communities or whether you've included health benefits, which are harder to capture financially, but are very present.

[English]

Natalie Knowles: It's both. The more qualitative aspects of the economic impact—the indirect economic factors, like the small local businesses, the resources staying within communities and the support for rural economies—are massive for our sector. We're predominantly seeing the benefits and the source of outdoor recreation economies in rural communities across Canada. It's about providing benefits in areas that are struggling in other sectors, especially with some of the transitions away from natural resource extraction industries.

At the same time, the productivity and indirect benefits—the social and health benefits—are massive for all Canadians, and that trickles down throughout our workforce and throughout our productivity across other sectors and our labour force in general. Having a healthy, strong, happy, mentally strong workforce is hugely beneficial to individual Canadians, to all of our communities and to all of our businesses. Our economy is built from all of those things.

It starts from the base of making sure that Canadians are healthy and happy, and outdoor recreation really provides that across the board. It's such a diverse thing. It transcends political backgrounds and all the dimensions of diversity.

It impacts all Canadians. About 80% of Canadians report participating in outdoor recreation. It's a key piece of our culture as well. The diversity means that there are opportunities for it to impact any Canadian, whether it's somebody walking on a trail or somebody mountain biking down a crazy mountain. It has an impact and is beneficial for everybody, so it can provide a uniting piece and can build productivity from the workforce level.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[English]

Mr. Guglielmin, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses for your testimony.

Mr. Meier, I'm going to start with you.

We're at the end of our productivity and capital flight study, and the theme we've been hearing over and over again is that we're in a productivity crisis in Canada. Could you provide the committee with your thoughts on the major contributors to our current state of productivity?

Fred Meier: I've touched on some of the aspects of applied research and of actually funding applied research so we can advance productivity, but I'm going to turn my attention a bit more to the skills mismatch that I think the country is faced with right now.

As the committee has likely heard, we're one of the leaders in the OECD when it comes to post-secondary attainment. What we're finding, though, and what I hear routinely from those looking for talent and skills, is that there is a mismatch. There's a mismatch between those applying for positions and their ability to actually be ready for work. By that I mean those who actually have the work skills and are able to plug right in and help industry.

Part of that is work-integrated learning, which we're hearing about a lot. We're hearing a lot about the need to have students with experience come through the system. It's a hallmark of what we do in polytechnics and colleges inside Canada. We've done this for a long time, through either work placements or internships, as I said before, or through capstone projects where students work on actual projects from industry. I don't think we're getting the number of people we need at the doors of polytechnics and colleges soon enough in their learning journey.

We're seeing that the average age of learners at our doors is mid-to-late twenties. That means, when we dig into it, they have some other post-secondary learning inside our country. They've gone somewhere else, to a university, for example, and then when they're looking for employment—a stronger employment outcome—they come to the doors of polytechnics and colleges.

Other countries have been quite successful at reducing the average age, finding a short-circuit. We could tell the story within Canada that if you go to a college or polytechnic, your education is going to connect you to employment. You're going to have the skills necessary to do that.

For too long, we have said there isn't parity of esteem between educational outcomes, that one type of education has a stronger outcome than another. They're both equally important, and we have to stand both up equally. We need policies to be developed based on the parity of esteem. We need investment to follow that as well so we can have people ready.

Statistics are showing that youth unemployment for people with bachelor's degrees is far exceeding that of those who graduate with a college or polytechnic education—vocational types of education—and that gap is widening. If we're thinking about doing things like nation-building projects, the people for those projects, the people we're going to need to advance that type of work, are exactly the types of people coming out of our institutions.

Michael Guglielmin: Polytechnics Canada reports that about 50% of industry partners that engage with institutions like yours see tangible benefits from the partnership.

I'm wondering if you could provide the committee with a clear example of an industry partnership with Red River where the company saw some benefit to its productivity or output.

• (1140)

Fred Meier: I'll use an example I didn't speak about earlier.

The aerospace industry is a large industry in Manitoba. We have a long history of that. Magellan Aerospace, a long-standing defence contractor and aerospace company, has worked quite closely with us. One of the projects we work closely with them on is advanced composite manufacturing. This is exactly the story I told you about.

The NRC developed some research around advanced composites. That was bench research. We've taken it into our facility and worked with Magellan Aerospace on advanced composite-forming products. That's now at the point where it will be implemented on one of their aircraft. It's going to increase their development of the product with fewer defects in it, and it's going to reduce their turnaround immensely. It will give them the ability to procure other types of contracts into that facility, including global contracts.

When we talk about how to increase productivity per unit of labour, that's an exact example of a company in Manitoba that has reduced amount of time and increased product quality based on working in our facility.

Michael Guglielmin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Guglielmin.

Mr. Bains, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Parm Bains (Richmond East—Steveston, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.

I'm going to begin with Ms. Knowles.

You spoke a lot about active living and how it can contribute to productivity. My hometown of Richmond, British Columbia, was recently the recipient of the most active city award from Participation. We also have the longest life expectancy in Canada.

In the budget, we announced the build communities strong fund, which amounts to about \$3 billion a year for the next 10 years. Where do you think those funds should be directed? Do you believe active living facilities should be a focus of those funds? Should applications for those funds coming from municipalities ensure there is, as you're saying, a direct correlation between active living and productivity?

Natalie Knowles: Absolutely.

It's a very exciting piece of funding that's come out. Active living and specifically access to nature have been proven to be really beneficial for productivity. PaRx, an initiative out of the BC Parks Foundation, driven by health care, is pushing for providing prescriptions for outdoor recreation, specifically in nature. It's about providing green space, access to trails and different sorts of low-impact outdoor recreation. It's a really low-capital-intensive way to provide equitable access to all Canadians to outdoor recreation.

We have incredible natural spaces. Something as simple as supporting trail networks, green spaces and areas that people can access without difficulty via public transit can do exactly that—provide productivity enhancements by creating a healthy, resilient workforce. Physical and mental health and social well-being are... Significant research exists on these points, and it's continuing to come out in health benefits. We're seeing integration among outdoor recreation, productivity and our health care systems. Health care providers increasingly integrate nature and outdoor recreation into their—

Parm Bains: Thank you.

I'm going to switch over to Mr. Meier.

I spent some time teaching as an instructor in applied communications at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Richmond, British Columbia. It offers several areas of research. The campus in Richmond offers the Applied Genomics Centre, the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, research services in proposal preparation and other areas as well.

Here is my question for you. We've seen a considerable drop in enrolment, of course, with some of the changes in the immigration levels for international students. How do we attract domestic students? Is there an opportunity to increase collaboration?

You may have noted that a piece in the budget talks about skills training and upgrading skills, with a partnership through unions. Maybe there are others in private industry I recently visited the BC-IT marine and machine campus on Annacis Island. There, we saw those in private industry, like Snap-on tools, contributing to classrooms by donating tools.

I want to talk about the collaboration from industry and how we attract the next generation of students to maybe re-establish a respect for trades or skilled trades. Can you talk a bit about that?

• (1145)

Fred Meier: I'll touch on recruitment first, which is always on our minds. It was, I would say, even before the international student changes.

I'll speak from our perspective. RRC Polytech has seen an increase in domestic enrolment over the last few years. Year over year, we're somewhere between 8% and 10%, depending on the last year we're at. It's been very strong, especially coming out of the pandemic.

I think the key to increasing recruitment is speaking more about the types of careers and type of education you can have in a college or polytechnic. I don't think we talk about that enough. I think there's a default way we think about polytechnics and colleges and the careers that come out of them. A lot of times people still look at them in the same way as their origins. They were trade schools and you would leave in a trade.

What we don't talk about right now is that we have machine learning and data science programs that are at the core of artificial intelligence. In Winnipeg, we have video game programming and a video game design program. That's at the heart of an industry that's growing rapidly. We have engineering technologists who work on robotics and automation.

In this country, in the way we think of our narrative, we're thinking about the education and careers that come out of these schools as not modern or digital.

I just went through an HVAC program the other day. A lot of people would be shocked by the number of digital sensors and amount of equipment they have to use and the high level of skill associated with that. These are digital skills. These are the future skills people are graduating with.

On industry investment, we have strong industry partners. They're in it because they want to attract more graduates, and they know there are fees associated with that, so they're moving forward and partnering on that front. We have deep partnerships with many.

It still is a heavy lift. There's still a significant gap. Also, we know that in colleges and polytechnics across the country, the change in international students has had a dramatic impact—for us as well. However, we have very strong partnerships, because they're attracting the talent directly out of our institutions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bains.

[Translation]

Mr. Ste-Marie, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Knowles, can you give us a little more detail on how outdoor recreation and tourism can be used as a lever for sustainable socio-economic development and provide some examples?

[English]

Natalie Knowles: The outdoor recreation sector in the U.S. was in the same state as ours—very disconnected. There were a lot of diverse subsectors that were not working together and didn't have a full understanding of the economic impact of the sector. They've come together in the same way that we are, organizing to bring the outdoor recreation sector together.

It's diverse in terms of activity and it's diverse across our nation rurally, in urban centres and across provinces. We're bringing this sector together and really accounting for the economic impact, as has been done in the U.S. with the support of their federal government through their Bureau of Economic Analysis, similar to Stats Canada. Our outdoor recreation sector includes aspects of tourism, but not completely. It's a sector that overlaps, but outdoor recreation, as I've mentioned before, has a greater impact for Canadians and Canadian businesses and for the Canadian workforce and economy.

The more we can account for what our outdoor recreation economy fully encapsulates, what the impacts are and where the impacts are across Canada, the better we can invest, create policies that support it, and direct funding, as our last questioner just mentioned, in ways that can support productivity across our entire workforce.

We can have a better, more detailed understanding of our outdoor recreation economy. What we've done is had a preliminary look, and what we see is really exciting. It's a massive sector. It's really comparable with other sectors that are facing political, economic or environmental challenges, and ours is seeing growth through all of that, and growth within our country. The more we can understand the sector, the more we can direct policy and funding to better support the sector itself, as well as support productivity, the workforce and Canadians and communities across our country.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[English]

Mr. Falk, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for your testimony here at the committee this morning.

Mr. Meier, I'd like to begin with some questions for you. It's good to see you again. Welcome to the committee.

You briefly alluded to the Technology Access Centre for Aerospace and Manufacturing in replying to my colleague's previous question. You have a couple of those centres of excellence.

Can you explain the positive benefits of that programming in contributing towards productivity and entrepreneurship in the industry by building a talent base in Canada? Can you also briefly talk about whether we're losing the talent pool of graduates to the United States or they're staying domestically?

Fred Meier: We have three technical access centres. I've mentioned the building efficiency one and the Prairie Research Kitchen, which is our food one. The other one is our technical access centre for advanced manufacturing and aerospace, which is one of our longer-standing ones. What that technical access centre does is provide funding for us to have researchers with industry experience inside of it who can work with our manufacturing sector or our aerospace sector.

I mentioned one of them earlier. Magellan Aerospace is accessing the facilities, the equipment and the researchers we have in that area, but there are many small manufacturers—and this is a piece that I want to focus on—that don't have the internal capacity or the funding to advance product development and that are looking for an ability to move that forward. In fact, when we did our Price Institute of Advanced Manufacturing and Mechatronics survey of industry, many of them were SMEs. There was one comment that really captured it for me. That one comment was, “We just need an easy button.” For an SME that has maybe 30 or 40 employees, it's, “We just need an easy button on research, innovation and prototyping. Deliver that for us.”

We're not an easy button, but we're a part of that, in my mind. We have the facilities. We have the equipment. We just don't have the necessary resources to meet all of the demand out there right now. The biggest fear we have is that the competition in the marketplace is very fierce and the disruption because of technologies right now is large as well, and we're not sure that SMEs actually have the capacity necessary to do that. That's one piece.

You've talked about the flight of talent. I would say that in our institutions, the flight of talent isn't as great. The reason for that is a point I mentioned earlier. We have deep integration with industry. The reason people leave, I would say, is mostly employment opportunities. Most of our students have multiple opportunities directly, before graduating.

We just recently had a career fair. Every large company was there looking for talent among our students. I would say that we don't have the flight risk of talent that perhaps others do because of our strong integration with industry and because of work experience very early on. Many of our students don't even hit the job market. They're scooped up by those working with them right now.

• (1155)

Ted Falk: Thank you very much, Mr. Meier. That pretty well brings my time to a close, but I want to acknowledge the tremendously good work you're doing through Red River. You have a facility and campus in my riding of Provencher. I know it's very well supported by the community, and you produce excellent graduates.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to cede the rest of my time to Ms. Dancho.

Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to move that we resume debate on the motion we put forward last Wednesday.

Mr. Chair, I have quite a bit to say about the Liberal amendment, but in the spirit of collaboration, I can pause my remarks and we can pick up with me after we're done with witnesses, or I can go into it now. I'll put the question to you before I cede the floor.

The Chair: I have a couple of things to say, colleagues.

The first is that the witnesses were, my gut tells me, about to embark on a few minutes' worth of discussions. Given that there was only five minutes of questioning left, it would probably be fair to the time they have left in their day to do productive things—no pun intended—to let them go now.

I want to thank you very much, Mr. Meier and Ms. Knowles, for appearing before us today. We appreciate your testimony and wish you a good rest of your day.

Colleagues, there's been a little confusion about where we go at this point, so I just want to clarify that.

Ms. Dancho, just so that I'm clear, is this the auto sector motion you're referring to? Okay.

We had a motion put forward related to the auto sector. An amendment by Monsieur Ste-Marie altering the original motion was adopted. Then there was an amendment proposed by Mr. Noormohamed, who was subbing in at the committee at that point.

We will now resume the motion and the proposed amendment put forward by Mr. Noormohamed. In other words, we will begin debate on this motion, but it is not on the original motion as amended by the Bloc. We are now on the amendment put forward by Mr. Noormohamed.

I just want to verify with the clerk that we have the language of it. I can't remember if it was circulated or not. The amendment wasn't.

Okay, colleagues, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to suspend briefly in a moment because we need to work off that language. It happened really quickly at the end...and if it hasn't been distributed yet, that's important for us, because I don't know the specific language we're working from. You have to give me a moment on that.

Madam Dancho has not ceded the floor. I'm seeing hands go up. Are these points of order or are they simply to get onto the speaking list? Okay. I have Mr. Bardeesy followed by Madam O'Rourke, and Madam Dancho will have the floor once we come back from the suspension.

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Ste-Marie, go ahead.

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Once you get the wording of the Liberal amendment, will you be able to tell us if you are ruling it in order or if you think it's straying too far from the original motion?

The Chair: Can you repeat the last part of your question?

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Once we have the wording of the amendment proposed by the Liberal Party, will you be able to tell us whether, as chair, you are ruling it in order given that it substantially changes the motion as already amended?

The Chair: To date, I have never been asked to make such a ruling. Is that what you're asking me to do?

• (1200)

Gabriel Ste-Marie: I'm not saying so; I'll leave that to other colleagues.

The Chair: So far, it is in order.

[English]

Colleagues, just to be really clear, I have Madam Dancho on the motion, followed by Mr. Bardeesy, Madam O'Rourke, Mr. Falk and Mr. Guglielmin.

I'm going to suspend briefly for the purpose of allowing the language to be—

[Translation]

Gabriel Ste-Marie: Can you add me to the list?

The Chair: I see your hand up, as well, Mr. Ste-Marie. Thank you.

[English]

Okay, I'm going to suspend briefly, colleagues.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1210)

The Chair: Colleagues, we are resuming debate.

Everyone should have been provided with a paper copy.

[Translation]

Mr. Ste-Marie, unfortunately, it is difficult to send you a paper copy because you are in your riding, but you have access to an electronic copy.

Ms. Borrelli, the same goes for you.

[English]

Colleagues, the floor belonged to Madame Dancho.

The floor is yours.

Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this opportunity. It is the first opportunity the Conservatives have had to speak to the Liberal amendment from last Wednesday, and I have a number of concerns.

We'll start with the positive. One thing I appreciate is that they brought in steel, aluminum and softwood lumber. As you know, Conservatives have been trying to secure debates in the House of Commons on these things. We successfully secured a take-note debate on softwood lumber. We would love a concurrence debate on that, which, as you know, is more formal. It involves voting and parties taking a position.

We tried to secure an emergency debate on steel and aluminum back on June 4 of this year and on autos on October 20 of this year. Those were both denied, unfortunately, by the Speaker. We really believe that these industries require a fulsome debate in the House of Commons and that members of Parliament from all of those regions should get to weigh in on the impacts the trade war is having, on the critical nature of it and on the need to get good deals on behalf of Canadians.

You would have seen, Mr. Chair, from the original form of our motion, that had it passed, it would have gone to the House and would have likely triggered a concurrence debate—a formal debate where positions need to be taken and a vote needs to be had. Three hours of debate would have been undertaken.

While we appreciate steel, aluminum and softwood lumber being added in, we have very much asked for and would ask for debates on those things, and we would support any motion put forward by the Liberals or ourselves to trigger any debates on that. Because the Liberal amendment fundamentally alters the purpose of our motion, which was to have a concurrence debate in the House, we feel as Conservatives that it is very much out of order and inadmissible.

I'd ask that you make a ruling on that, Mr. Chair.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Dancho. I've heard your request. Just provide me with one moment to confer on something with the clerk.

I don't see, in my estimation, that striking out the report to the House fundamentally changes the spirit of the motion. It's my ruling that it's admissible.

Raquel Dancho: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that. Respectfully, though, I'll have to formally challenge your ruling on that. Thank you.

The Chair: Colleagues, for those of you who might be new to this particular process, this is a dilatory motion. In other words, there's no debate; we move immediately.

The question is whether or not the chair's ruling is sustained. Just for clarity, sustained is in the positive, meaning that if you vote yes, you are supporting the chair's ruling, and if you vote no, you're voting to overturn the chair's ruling. That's just so you are aware.

This one's a bit more formal, so I am going to turn to the clerk to call the roll.

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: Colleagues, that's democracy in action. The chair's decision has been overturned. Therefore, the debate on the amendment as presented will not continue.

Madam Dancho, the floor is yours.

Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To clarify what happens next, we resume debate on the motion as amended by the Bloc. Is that correct? I just want to clarify where we're at.

The Chair: Wait just one moment again, Madam Dancho.

Raquel Dancho: Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, that is correct, Madam Dancho. We are now resuming debate on the motion as it was amended by the Bloc amendment last week.

Karim Bardeesy: Chair, I'm sorry. I don't know if this is a point of order, but could we get that motion distributed?

The Chair: That motion has been distributed, Mr. Bardeesy. Everybody should have it from last week. I'm happy to give members an opportunity to review it, if necessary.

I'll give you a minute.

• (1215) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1215)

The Chair: Colleagues, I think everybody has it.

Madam Dancho, was that everything? Okay.

Mr. Bardeesy, are you satisfied?

Karim Bardeesy: Yes.

The Chair: I saw a hand from Madame O'Rourke.

Is this on a point of order?

Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.): No. I just want to be on the speaking list when we get there.

The Chair: Did you have your hand up, Mr. Falk?

Ted Falk: I had it up right after that amendment was dropped, so a new speaking list—

• (1220)

The Chair: You did. That speaking list is now moot because we are no longer on that item. We are now debating the motion as amended last week.

I have Madame O'Rourke, Mr. Bardeesy and Mr. Bains.

Ted Falk: I was just before that. As soon as we agreed that the amendment was no longer in place and that we would be discussing the amended motion by the Bloc, my hand went up and you acknowledged it.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Falk. There are two things here. One, my understanding was that your hand was up to speak to the amendment as it had been presented. We can't add to the speaking list while we're not on a particular debate.

Your hand was up in relation to the amendment, so far as I understood it. Even if you meant to have your hand up in relation to the main—

Ted Falk: That was the previous one.

The Chair: That's right. However, we weren't on that, so we didn't have the ability to create a speaking list on it at that point.

Ted Falk: That's fine.

The Chair: I can add your name to this one.

Ted Falk: No.

The Chair: Okay.

I have Madame O'Rourke, Mr. Bardeesy and Mr. Bains. This is a conversation now, colleagues, on the motion as presented by Madam Dancho originally and then amended by the Bloc, as we agreed upon last meeting.

Are we all good? Okay.

Madame O'Rourke, the floor is yours.

Dominique O'Rourke: Speaking to the amendment, Mr. Chair, I think the sectors, while related, are fairly distinct, because you have—

Ted Falk: I have a point of order.

We're not speaking to the amendment anymore. We're speaking to the amended motion.

The Chair: That's right, Mr. Falk. What's the point of order in relation to?

Ted Falk: Madame O'Rourke says she's speaking to the amendment, but she should be speaking to the motion.

An hon. member: She's getting there.

The Chair: Madame O'Rourke, I suspect that when you said "amendment", you meant the motion as amended, not Mr. Noormohamed's amendment.

Dominique O'Rourke: I'm seeking clarification, Mr. Chair. I had to excuse myself at the end of the meeting last week to attend the December 6 commemoration, an all-party event, so I appreciated that Mr. Noormohamed was here.

My understanding is that we are talking about the Bloc amendment right now.

The Chair: No.

Colleagues, let me do my best to hit reset. I'm going to give you a very brief chronology of what happened.

Last meeting, Madam Dancho put forward a motion on the auto sector. As we were debating it, Monsieur Ste-Marie put forward an amendment. That amendment was adopted, so now the motion is being debated as amended. Then Mr. Noormohamed put forward an amendment. I ruled that amendment was in order. Madam Dancho challenged the chair's ruling. The chair's ruling was overturned. Therefore, pretend as though Mr. Noormohamed's amendment didn't happen at all. It's not admissible by virtue of the vote that overturned the chair's ruling. Now we are reverting back to debate on the motion, but remember that the motion was amended once with the Bloc addition.

Is that all right, colleagues? Did that make sense? Okay.

Madame O'Rourke, you have the floor in relation to the motion as amended by the Bloc.

Dominique O'Rourke: I appreciate the committee's indulgence to get me up to speed.

The Chair: I understand things can be difficult to keep track of.

Dominique O'Rourke: You all know this is an issue that is so dear to my heart. I chair the Liberal auto caucus. Over 16,500 jobs in my riding of Guelph are related to manufacturing, and at least 12,000 of them are directly related, so this is critically important.

The reason I upheld the chair's ruling on the original amendment is that what is before the House right now—

Raquel Dancho: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Dominique O'Rourke: I'm speaking to the motion.

The Chair: Madame O'Rourke, I have to address points of order as they come up, so I'll just ask you to hold off momentarily.

Go ahead, Madam Dancho.

Raquel Dancho: Please correct me, Mr. Chair, but there is no debate on the challenge. Ms. O'Rourke is trying to debate that vote, but there is no opportunity to do that. The vote has passed. She also can't speak to the amendment that no longer exists. I believe that's correct.

The Chair: I think we're about 30 seconds into Madame O'Rourke's testimony, and we've had three points of order, so Madame O'Rourke, I'm going to allow you to continue. I suspect you're getting to the motion as amended. We have to keep relevant to that.

Colleagues, relevance in this instance, I think, is quite broadly defined.

Madame O'Rourke, I will allow you to continue.

• (1225)

Dominique O'Rourke: I appreciate that. Had I been given 30 more seconds, I certainly would have concluded the point, which is that before the House of Commons right now, especially before the holiday recess, we are looking at the budget implementation act. It would implement a number of measures that will be beneficial to the auto sector. The time of the House is precious, and there is also a motion that will allow for this conversation to take place.

In the interest of using the time in the House wisely to help the auto sector and the workers in the auto sector, there are a number of things we need House time for, and those include the immediate expensing of manufacturing investments. The productivity superdeduction is going to be extremely helpful for the automotive sector and manufacturing writ large. It's going to allow business to write off the full cost of eligible investments in the first year, improving their cash flow and competitiveness, particularly compared to U.S. tax rules. Those provisions will be fully in place until 2030, with a gradual phase-out thereafter.

The reason it's so critical to pass this item is that it will allow businesses to make their decisions, for the coming year, to invest in productivity, which was the point of the study we just concluded.

It's really critical for their ongoing competitiveness and will be good for the auto sector.

Other things in the budget that are going to be very helpful for the auto sector are the scientific research and experimental development enhancements—we know them as SR and ED grants. We want to streamline the administration of science, research and experimental development; reduce red tape; and improve access for innovators. This is what's in budget 2025. This is what we should be talking about and passing as quickly as possible.

We talk in this committee about productivity, but now here we are trying to slow the implementation of these important measures that will support productivity for our automakers.

Guelph has a number of CNC machinists and auto parts manufacturers. They feed into the broader auto sector, increasing the expenditure limit for SR and ED tax incentives from \$4.5 million to \$6 million, and encouraging R and D in automotive technologies and advanced manufacturing. That's important. The auto sector, of course, is critically important, and there are measures on the table to support the sector. There is action being taken. There's also a concurrence debate, which we will get to.

The other piece that is directly related to the auto sector and is critical to pass before the holidays is a strategic response fund and tariff mitigation. There's \$5 billion over six years through the strategic response fund to help manufacturers respond to tariffs, adopt new technologies and modernize production lines. This is urgent for a number of small and medium-sized businesses in my riding.

The regional development agencies have over \$1 billion over three years via the regional tariff response initiative for automation, new equipment and production expansion. FedDev is working directly with these businesses to help them orient, possibly to other sectors, but this is also very important for the auto sector.

The clean technology manufacturing tax credits, which are in budget 2025, also need to be implemented as soon as possible. They will help manufacturers investing in clean technology and advanced production to access federal credits to cover a significant portion of capital expenditures for eligible equipment and solutions. Those incentives aim to reduce environmental impact while improving efficiency in auto manufacturing. That actually helps Canada. It helps Canada to reach our economic manufacturing goal and our protection and support of tariff-affected sectors, and to meet environmental commitments at the same time, so it is important to use the House time to pass these measures.

The climate competitiveness strategy—also in this budget—is part of that. How do we use our energy and resources? We've heard a number of witnesses tell us that polytechnics and universities want to work with our advanced manufacturers, including automakers and auto parts manufacturers. Let's give them the tools now to proceed with that.

● (1230)

There are other auto sector-specific actions. Earlier in 2025, the government announced a \$2-billion investment to strengthen auto manufacturing and support Canadian workers, focusing on job creation and skills development. The government also took steps to protect Canadian auto production by adjusting import remission quotas for automakers that failed to meet domestic production commitments.

This committee had three meetings where the Minister of Industry came to talk to us about the measures in place to fight for our automakers and every auto sector job. So, we are talking about that, but more importantly, especially in light of a discussion on productivity, there's action that can be taken, and we do need to use the House time to do that.

What is encouraging right now in the auto sector is that we are seeing NextStar in Windsor hiring for the battery plant—so, the EV and battery supply chain. There are also investments in that in budget 2025. What we want to be doing is supporting those industries so that they can continue to hire, retain and grow their workforce and their innovation.

Mr. Chair, I talk about the auto sector all the time in my community, in the auto caucus and in this committee. I think my colleagues aren't sure whether I can talk about many other things, but it is so critical right now. We need a team Canada approach on this. We need to be cautious in what we are saying in our legislature, lest it attract more ire, more counter tariffs, more negativity in the conversation. I'd like to see a team Canada approach to bring forward these supports by using the time in the House to support the industry and the workers directly.

The other piece that's in the budget, Mr. Chair, is the expansion of employment insurance. These things have to be anticipated and included in the budget so that when there are issues, there can be work sharing. It's so that we can enhance the supports for our workers and to speed up the time in which they receive those allowances. However, we need to pass the budget implementation act. These are supports for our workers. So is the training, the re-training, for people who are potentially displaced, not necessarily in the auto sector but in other sectors.

We know that the opposition has already voted against all of these measures to support the auto sector, and I think that's unfortunate. I'd be happy to have a debate about that, Mr. Chair. However, I think that what we really need to be doing is moving forward the supports for industry. We've had countless witnesses come to tell us what they need for productivity. Guess what? It is accelerated depreciation. It's more skilled workers. It's improved SR and ED credits that have faster processes. However, we need to pass the budget in order to make that a reality. That's the whole point of the productivity study.

Speaking of productivity—I'm just going to pull it up here; I'm sorry, Mr. Chair—there is a motion that went through the international trade committee, and I believe it reads, “That the committee report to the House that it condemns the unjustified American tariffs”. We all agree on that. The tariffs are completely unjustified. They are damaging to our economy.

Notwithstanding that, our sectors are holding their own—thank God—because our workers are the best in the world. We've heard Linda Hasenfratz here at committee. She's on record in the news talking about how we have the best labour force in the world and that she's keeping her operations here.

So, we can agree on condemning the unjustified American tariffs. I think we want to be cautious also, though, to not be provoking any additional actions.

Let's go back to the international trade motion:

That the committee report to the House that it condemns the unjustified American tariffs on the Canadian steel, aluminum, automotive, and softwood lumber industries, and that it calls upon the government to live up to the promise it made in the election to “negotiate a win” and that all parties wish to see the government succeed in getting a good deal for Canada and its workers—

I also fully agree.

—as well as the deployment of aid programs for affected sectors.

● (1235)

There's already going to be a discussion in the House of Commons on all of these sectors. There's already going to be condemnation of unjustified American tariffs. We already agree that we would like to negotiate a win. Those negotiations are ongoing, and they could be jeopardized if we're not cautious about what we're saying.

I think we need to be supporting our automakers and our auto workers. Really, the part that is interesting in this motion is where it says, “as well as the deployment of aid programs for affected sectors.” That's in the budget.

Of course we want to do that, but guess what: We have a limited amount of time in the House to approve the budget, to approve the deployment of aid programs for affected sectors, and that would be a better use of our time.

[*Translation*]

Simply put, time is a very precious resource. In the context of a study on productivity, it's important to be responsible about the use of this time and the use of House of Commons resources.

Canadians are waiting for this bill to pass so that we can support workers and businesses and implement the 1% tax cut. The budget contains a thousand and one measures that will be very useful for Canadians.

We've already moved a motion in the House about the challenges we are facing. I will be pleased to defend Canada's automotive sector, its workers, innovation and the entire supply chain all day long, and to do so in the context of the debate sent to the House by the Standing Committee on International Trade. It is not necessary to do it twice. We will have to be careful about what we say in the context of this debate. Our responsibility will be to support workers and industries, and to finally pass the bill so that we can implement the measures in the 2025 budget.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame O'Rourke.

Mr. Bardeesy, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

Karim Bardeesy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I want to thank my colleague Ms. O'Rourke for her intervention, which I support. I also want to say that I'm going to be speaking about this motion and some considerations on this motion that I think are in the spirit of the work this committee has already done.

I'm going to make my remarks in a few parts. First, I'm going to talk about what this committee has achieved, because I think it's important to lift that out, to point that out and to put a bit of a spotlight on it. My colleague Ms. O'Rourke started with some of that.

I want to share my appreciation for the members in the Conservative and Bloc caucuses who brought together this request for the emergency study we did. I'll quote from their letter: "This request follows the announcement that Stellantis will move production of the Jeep Compass from its Brampton facility to Illinois, putting 3,000 Canadian jobs at risk." On this side, we felt that this was worthy of further examination.

We committed three meetings to that study. We had the opportunity in those three meetings to hear from a variety of important stakeholders. We heard from the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, the Global Automakers of Canada and the Auto Parts Manufacturers' Association. We heard from the auto dealers. We heard directly from Stellantis. We also heard from Unifor and Minister Joly.

That was not so long ago, but let's just remember the context of those meetings. Those meetings were in relation to the Stellantis announcement, but they were also in the context of GM's announcement about the future of the Ingersoll plant and the planned product—the BrightDrop vehicle that was planned for production there.

They were also in the context of ongoing trade negotiations and the concerns raised by the other side about a deal that had not been reached. In debate, including in this committee, we asserted that we didn't want to make just any deal; we thought it was important to have a deal that was in the best interest of Canada. Our government was supported, in fact, by Ms. Payne at this committee, who said, "No deal is better than a bad deal".

That was some of that context of just over a month ago.

If people recall what happened at the committee, there was quite an important set of moments. What happened was that we got some testimony. We heard from officials at Industry Canada about the specific investments that were made. We know there were some questions from the opposition side about those investments.

What happened at this committee? The further context I should add is Minister Joly's letter to Antonio Filosa, chief executive officer of Stellantis, dated October 15. I think the committee's action was also in the context of some very clear government action. Her letter begins as follows:

I am writing following calls yesterday with the Government of Canada and Stellantis to express my extreme concern with Stellantis' investment plans in Canada and to demand that the company respect its obligations flowing from billions of dollars of financial support extended to you over the decades.

While the current U.S. tariff environment is creating complex challenges, Stellantis has made important commitments to Canada and to its workforce. Canadians expect that Stellantis will respect and honour these commitments. Anything short of this is unacceptable. Should Stellantis choose not to respect its obligations, we will act in the interests of all Canadians and hold the company to full account, and exercise all options, including legal.

I'll end the quote there for a moment to say I'll get to some of the results of this committee's work in a bit. In the meantime, let me continue quoting from Minister Joly's letter of October 15. She wrote:

Over decades, Stellantis and the Government of Canada have built a strong and enduring partnership. We were there for the company in 2009 to pull it back from the brink of bankruptcy, and now we expect you to be there for Canadians.

We have worked diligently for the long-term viability of Stellantis' Canadian operations, with millions of vehicles having been produced at Brampton and Windsor. Your new joint venture with LG Energy Solutions represents an important investment in the future of electrification. Our work together served to anchor your investments in Canada—a market where you continue to sell over 150,000 vehicles annually—and to deliver meaningful economic benefits to workers and communities alike.

I want to pause there in my quoting of the letter and note that the facility Minister Joly is referring to is a fairly newly constructed facility. I know it's one that members on this side have visited. I know the facility is presumably of specific interest to Ms. Borrelli, who is on this committee.

● (1240)

I'll continue to quote from the letter.

[Translation]

I will now speak in French. The minister's letter to Stellantis was drafted in both official languages and has been made public.

In her letter, she says:

The business decision to move the mandate of the Jeep Compass is unacceptable. It jeopardizes the future of Brampton and its unionized workforce. It is critical that you quickly identify new mandates for Brampton that ensure the facility remains central to your manufacturing footprint, and that contracts with Canadian suppliers be honoured.

It is imperative that you extend the worker's transition program, agreed to with Unifor, until at least 2027. Stellantis agreed with the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario to maintain its full Canadian footprint, including Brampton, in exchange for substantial financial support. Anything short of fulfilling that commitment will be considered as default under our agreements. In particular, the legally binding commitments that Stellantis made by accepting support through both the Strategic Innovation Fund and through the Special Contribution Agreement with NextStar Energy must be respected.

We are ready and at the table to work with you, all levels of government and union leaders to ensure a positive future for our workers, and all those in the supply chain for parts and other accessories.

We value our strategic partnership and believe that fulfilling these commitments is essential to demonstrating Stellantis' continued dedication to Canada. We expect to see a plan to ensure the long-term success of Stellantis, Ontario, and all of Canada.

● (1245)

[English]

That was the context of this committee's deliberations. We were fortunate to have this letter in the public record when we heard from Stellantis and Stellantis' then Canadian president, who appeared before this committee virtually.

I know Hansard sometimes takes a bit of time to catch up, so I'm not sure if we have the Hansard of that committee hearing available yet, but I recall that all members of this committee were fairly unified in the concern shared with Stellantis about its choice, a choice that we later learned was made with almost no notice to any government player. We expressed our deep concern that this action was unacceptable, echoing and supporting what Minister Joly had said in her letter. This was before Minister Joly came to the committee, of course.

I believe this committee's work in helping hold Stellantis to account for its commitments had an effect. It had an effect in that it increased public pressure and also created the context for Minister Joly's appearance at this committee, an appearance that, if we recall, resulted in her announcing publicly that she was initiating the 30-day process for mediation under the terms of the agreements.

I'll say parenthetically, with respect to those agreements, that my colleague Madam O'Rourke referred to them as items that are... The strategic response fund, which is the evolution of the strategic innovation fund, is part of this government's budget. The budget motion has now passed, and now we have the budget implementation act, which is before the House, for which we want the House's full attention. That is part of the legislative framework being considered by the House now and that was referred to in this letter. In other words, this strategic response fund, formerly the strategic innovation fund, includes funds that anchor the commitment not just of Stellantis but of a number of automakers in southern Ontario.

The minister made the announcement at this committee that she would be initiating that process. We also had Lana Payne from Unifor here, who was in strong support of what the government was doing in that time. That had the result, I think, of increasing the pressure on the company, and we know that process continues.

That's the work of this committee, but there are other committees that are involved in this work and that have been doing work that is similar in theme, in spirit or in content to the motion before us.

Ms. O'Rourke referred earlier to the work of the committee on international trade. There's another committee, the OGGO committee, on which I substituted last week, that attempted to hear from Stellantis in relation to the production of documents related to items that are very much conjured up or referred to in this motion.

There were some unfortunate technical difficulties, we gather. None of the committee members at OGGO were very pleased with Stellantis when we learned that they were scheduled to make an appearance and did not, but I understand that those issues have apparently been sorted out and that the committee will be hearing from Stellantis at a time in the not-too-distant future, before the end of this fall sitting. Other committees are also involved in this work.

Parliament has also been involved in this work in those places where it's, I think, most appropriate for Parliament to be engaged. For instance, we've done some research on whether this issue requires a special parliamentary session or a special sitting to take precedence over government business. Is this because we have not been attending to this in the House of Commons, in Parliament?

This is just the House of Commons. We haven't done the research on the Senate. However, we know that Parliament has been very engaged on this question of the unjustified American tariffs on the Canadian auto sector, and that, indeed, the requests from the Conservative caucus, to quote the motion again, calling "upon the government to live up to its promise made during the election to negotiate a win for the workers whose livelihoods depend on a good deal for Canada" have been discussed at great length over many months in Parliament.

In fact, by our estimation, there have been 445 mentions of the automotive sector in some mention during debate since Parliament convened in late May. There have been 67 allusions or questions related to the auto sector in question period. I've answered some of them. In fact—I see my colleague, Ms. Acan—Ms. Acan put a question to me in my capacity as parliamentary secretary in relation to Oakville.

We've had eight mentions in adjournment debates. We've had one statement by member, and also, I believe, one by Ms. Acan or Ms. O'Rourke. I'm sure more statements are to come because this is such an important issue. Again, there have been 67 mentions in question period, and I have answered a number of those questions.

That's the parliamentary context of what's happening.

We've looked at the press in the last few weeks and months, but I think at this point it's important to take a more historical perspective on this question. I'm fortunate to have in my riding one of Canada's premier auto sector historians, Dimitry Anastakis. He's written a number of books on the Canadian auto sector. He just won a Business Book of the Year award for his book on the Bricklin, which, although not a subject of this motion, is a fascinating piece of Canadian history that I recommend to folks because it's a story of, in part, a province going its own way on industrial policy and unfortunately not succeeding.

Mr. Anastakis' work—and he's an economic historian at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto—traces over a number of books the history of Canada's involvement in the sector, how deep and how long-lasting it runs, and how integrated it is with government policy-making. One book is *Autonomous State*, and I'll quote from the book jacket:

Autonomous State is the first study covering the Canadian automobile industry since 1970 in any depth, and it makes a major contribution to our understanding of Canadian automotive and industrial history. Thoroughly researched and well-written, it will appeal to readers interested in the Canadian automobile industry, Canadian industry more generally, and Canadian public policy.

That's a quote from Charles K. Hyde, emeritus professor of history at Wayne State University, which is, as people would probably be aware, in the Detroit area. It's an indication of the connectedness among Detroit and southern Ontario, Michigan and southern Ontario, and our auto sectors.

• (1250)

With its subtitle included, the book is *Autonomous State: The Struggle for a Canadian Car Industry from OPEC to Free Trade*. I think that's a strong indication of some of the themes in this motion. I'm going to quote from some of his material in the conclusion of this book, because I think it's very important to have this context as we consider this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Bardeesy, I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Colleagues, I can't help but get the sense that maybe some discussions would be useful among the parties to see if we can get somewhere.

We're also approaching the hour. You'll be reminded that we have extra resources today, which bring us to two o'clock. Typically, at this point in a meeting, we would suspend briefly to allow people the ability to go to the washroom, check in with their staff or get a bite to eat.

I am going to exercise that thoughtfulness at this point and suspend.

• (1250)

(Pause)

• (1305)

The Chair: Colleagues, we are going to resume where we were.

The floor belonged to Mr. Bardeesy.

I have to offer an apology to one of our colleagues, off the top. Mr. Guglielmin has informed me that for the last five months, I've been pronouncing his name incorrectly.

Mr. Guglielmin, thank you very much for the lesson in the pronunciation of your name and for the lesson in what turned out to be some shared Italian roots that our families have. Just before resuming debate, I wanted to recognize the proper pronunciation. You brought it to my attention now, and I accept any future responsibility for getting it wrong. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Bardeesy, the floor is yours.

Karim Bardeesy: Thank you, Chair.

Before we broke, I was sharing some information about this book with the committee. It's by Dimitry Anastakis, a constituent of mine and an auto sector historian at the University of Toronto. If we had the chance for our special study to be more than three sessions, I think we would very much welcome the opportunity to hear from him because of his historical connection and his knowledge on this file.

The history here is important. In southern Ontario, the footprint of the auto sector is evident. If you're driving down the QEW towards Halton or driving east through the Durham Region on the 401, the plants are right there. Some communities in southern Ontario have their identities very much tied to those plants and these companies—the parts manufacturers or the major parts suppliers—including in Ms. O'Rourke's riding, in Ms. Borrelli's riding and in Ms. Acan's riding.

The footprint of the industry, though, is in some ways hidden. If you go into more urban areas or if you go to other parts of Canada where you don't have those plants visible right in front of you, you might not have as much appreciation for their economic impact. The export revenues and the impacts of the purchases we make of those vehicles might not be as evident.

I think each of us has probably heard people in our communities ask why we should support the auto sector. Some questioning happens, and I think it's our job, each one of us in this committee, to push back a bit on that. We need to bring the historical perspective that this has been happening in Canada for over 100 years. It's been an important part of the connectedness between Canada and the United States, through thick and thin. It's been part of the capital accumulation buildup, in southern Ontario in particular and in Quebec to some extent.

We're also seeing the broadening of that capital accumulation as this sector diversifies and becomes more connected with information technology, in particular with electrification. We're seeing not only that this sector is concentrated in southern Ontario, but also that it has a footprint across Canada. It goes from the inputs and the assembly work to things like software, charging infrastructure and the inputs of the materials themselves, where we have a comparative advantage in many aspects of the supply chain.

We have a capital endowment buildup, and one of the strong arguments for continued support is the capital endowment buildup combined with the expertise we have among Canadian workers, both unionized and not, in this sector. Those are the real advantages that we have built up through billions of dollars of private and public investments.

There are whole college and university programs and whole union locals dedicated to this work. There's also real pride of ownership. We heard Mr. Volpe, in his committee testimony, talk about the Dodge Charger lineup that he buys from. Our first family car was a 2000 Chevrolet Impala.

• (1310)

Ted Falk: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Falk, go ahead on a point of order.

Ted Falk: Mr. Bardeesy said that Mr. Volpe spoke about the Dodge Charger line that he was buying from. It was actually the Dodge Challenger. In particular, he bought the Demon 170.

The Chair: It's always useful to have facts correctly presented at committee.

Ted Falk: It would be very important to Mr. Volpe that he be properly represented.

The Chair: That's fair enough, Mr. Falk. Your intervention provides a refreshing break from some of the testimony we're receiving, so I certainly don't fault you for that. I appreciate your intervention.

Mr. Bardeesy, should you choose to correct the record or not, that is up to you.

Karim Bardeesy: Indeed. I will not only correct the record; I will refer back to the Hansard.

I will confirm with Mr. Volpe. I just saw him this morning, which is why he was on my mind. He's doing, I think, good, hard work on behalf of his members in Ottawa as well as with his membership. I will make sure I am correct.

I appreciate the correction, because I was so enamoured sharing the story of our family Impala, which had a front bench that could seat three. It's a feature of a vehicle that's gone away now. I know that it's missed by my family, even though we're a family of four. You always need that sixth middle-bench seat in some fashion. It's one of the little things we lament as this sector changes.

I'll go back to the history of this file. I want to share a bit about the context of why this is so important. I won't make a specific editorial commentary on it just yet, but that is coming. This comes from Mr. Anastakis's book entitled *Autonomous State*. I think it helps us understand why we are so focused on this as a committee.

This is from the conclusion of his book:

Half a century ago, a very simple idea about the Canadian auto sector started to take hold in the political and public imagination. The auto industry's importance to the Canadian economy and body politic could be summarized by a basic equation, an easy-to-remember ratio that varied only slightly in the decades to follow. Whether accurate or not, the notion that such a sprawling and complex industrial sector could be boiled down to a simple rubric made it very appealing. It gave politicians and policy makers a convenient rhetorical hammer by which to drive home the industry's importance and, perhaps more significant, justify their actions in the automotive field. It is not that the ratio wasn't true, because it essentially was; then, as today, the production of automobiles remains without question the largest and most important economic sector in North America.

This book is a bit dated, but I think a lot of these facts continue to hold. This book is from 2013.

I'll continue:

It began innocuously enough. In a 1960 CBC television report on the problems in the industry, journalist Norman DePoe claimed that "one business in seven" in Canada was automotive or auto-related. A few years later, a young economics student at the University of Windsor ran an input-output analysis of employment in Ontario and came up with the startling result that one in six jobs in the province was connected in some way to the automotive sector. That student, Dennis DesRosiers, was hired by the provincial government as an auto analyst in the early 1970s, and his figure was used in a 1974 budget statement.

I think Mr. DesRosiers' advice is one that has been useful to many governments of many political stripes over the decades since.

I'll go back to Mr. Anastakis:

By the mid-1970s, "one in six" had become a mantra repeated almost as often as "fair share." Ontario Treasurer Darcy McKeough stated in the legislature in 1976 that the auto industry supported either "directly or indirectly, one in every six jobs in this province." In a 1976 Canadian Business article, journalist Mark Witten wrote that "the auto industry is Ontario's largest employer. Directly or indirectly it accounts for one out of six jobs in the province." In 1978 Ontario NDP leader Michael Cassidy also cited the figure, which had been prominently mentioned in the Ontario government report, Canada's Share of the North American Auto Industry: An Ontario Perspective. Similarly, a 1979 Saturday Night article noted that "the auto industry is directly or indirectly responsible for one out of every six jobs in Ontario; it's the one indispensable industry."

Again, let me remark on how central this sector has been historically and how from the very beginning or from very early on, and definitely in the reckoning of this book, which goes from the 1970s to the 2000s, job connectedness has been key. These jobs have been created over decades, and the supply chain, with its set of professional and training capacities, has been built up over decades as a result.

I'll go back to Mr. Anastakis:

By 1985, Ontario Premier David Peterson was telling reporters that "one in five" people in Ontario were in some way employed by the auto industry. During the 1987 Ontario provincial election and in the midst of the free-trade debate, one of Peterson's Windsor candidates ran radio ads declaring that "one in six jobs in Ontario depends on the auto industry." The figure has persisted, even after decades of change....

I'll stop there and skip ahead a bit:

• (1315)

The long-standing use of the one-in-six ratio is important because it reflects, in a very representative way, the central and underlying argument of this book. The sheer number of jobs and the relative importance of the auto industry within the Canadian economy became the driving paradigm that explains Canadian state action in the auto sector. More than any other "fact," the level of automotive employment, itself a consequence of the level of production and investment in the Canadian sector and the health of the trade balance and the auto pact, pushed politicians, policy makers, and workers to initiate and engage in a host of creative and aggressive policies and actions to ensure that Canada and its workers received what was seen as their fair share of the sector's bounty. One in six was, and remains, the corollary of the fair-share mantra.

I'll just close the quote there for a moment and try to shine a light on the spirit of the motion, which is condemning the unjustified American tariffs on the Canadian auto sector and, with Monsieur Ste-Marie's amendment addition, that of heavy vehicles.

It is very much focused on real people: people who earned livelihoods and people who had a job that paid the bills and who took care of their families. It was part of not only a local supply chain, but an international market. There was pride of manufacturing and often pride of ownership in those same vehicles. That's the context that makes these unjustified American tariffs sting the way they do. It's this context of an employment construct and a set of cross-border investments.

I find it striking that Mr. Kingston, who was a witness here earlier, represents the CVMA, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association. They are American automakers, but such is the pride of ownership in these vehicles, such is the pride in manufacturing these vehicles and such is the extent and the length of the footprint of these companies that they feel in a very real way to be Canadian.

I'll go back to Mr. Anastakis:

But Canadians were not just looking for a fair share—they were looking for even more than that. By the 1980s, Canadian auto factories were producing nearly two million cars a year, while Canadians were buying only three-quarters that many. In other words, Canadians were enjoying a share of automotive production far greater than they “deserved.” More than anything else, this disproportionate production-to-sales ratio demonstrates the success of Canadian policy makers in pushing the fair-share mantra to its limits, especially given that the Canadian market and industry was integrated into that of the world's largest market and largest car-producing nation, the United States. Indeed, the connectedness of the North American auto industry was both Canada's greatest strength and its most daunting threat in this period.

I'll just close the quote there. It shows how history echoes in our present time. Clearly, our connectedness is both our greatest strength and our greatest threat in this particular moment.

I'll go back to Mr. Anastakis:

Integration allowed Canadians a certain leeway that was not possible in a solely national market. Whether through investment incentives, regulatory variations, or union break-ups, integration provided Canadians with opportunities that would not normally have appeared within a normal national or non-continentalized industry. At the same time, what were initially threats that emerged because Canada's industry was continentally integrated, such as the Chrysler crisis or the issue of Japanese investment, became, in time, strengths.

Again, the context is the presence, the footprint, of the sector that is so aptly captured in the initial parts of this motion around negotiating a win to support “the workers whose livelihoods depend on a good deal for Canada”. It is not only the footprint we had over decades but the new footprint we've been able to amass. I'm perhaps just drawing a perspective on Mr. Anastakis's work.

I'll go back to Mr. Anastakis:

All of this hinged upon the integration introduced by the auto pact. The agreement legitimized Canadians' claims for a fair share of the industry and created opportunities for Canadian policy making that were not present in other areas of trade or diplomacy. Achieving that fair share brought out ingenious and sometimes daring public policies and political manoeuvres, such as the Ford incentive, Lumley's Yokohama Squeeze—

These are items that are referred to earlier in the book.

—or the duty-remission orders, all of which were designed to accrue a greater share of the industry for Canadians. In the short term these measures undoubtedly worked in bringing investment or production to the Canadian sector, and in the long-term they established Canada as a legitimate North American and global force in automotive production, though most of the policies themselves were ultimately dismantled.

Let's close the quote there for a moment.

• (1320)

I've referred to, and we've all referred to, the relative unanimity we have, perhaps, on this committee—and definitely across different governments of different stripes—around support for the sector, support that was, I think, qualified for a moment in the immediate financial crisis when it sounded like the federal government of the day would not be as present for the sector as was needed. However, then saner heads prevailed, and there was a very artful federal, provincial and U.S. federal tripartite engagement in saving many of the plants in Canada.

Mr. Anastakis kind of refers to that, and I'll quote again from the book:

It helped, too, that Canadians could count on a close-knit bureaucracy in Ottawa, a willingness to cooperate with provinces in most instances, and a laser-like focus when it came to negotiating with other states, firms, associations, and especially the United States. Bargaining with a hegemon is a daunting task, yet Canadian politicians and policy makers were extremely capable in this regard. In numerous instances, from the auto pact to the stillborn efforts to prohibit incentives and the free-trade negotiations, Canadian diplomats and civil servants exhibited preparedness, daring, and a willingness to stand dangerously close to the twitching and grunting elephant that was the United States.

Those are his words, not mine.

We'll go back to Mr. Anastakis:

Canadians had to focus in a way that the United States did not, given how high the stakes were for the former. And in most instances, the Canadians proved effective negotiators.

He goes on:

Differing governmental structures also played a role in determining the outcomes of the auto trade, usually in Canada's favour. The parliamentary system, with its fused executive and legislative, the high level of cooperation between its core agencies, and the closeness between senior bureaucrats and elected officials, made strategy development and tactical execution far less difficult than in Washington. In the American capital, the division of powers, jurisdictional competition, and the sprawling nature of the giant U.S. bureaucracy slowed American responses and hindered aggressive bargaining. Moreover, Canada remained low on Washington's list of priorities, a position that undoubtedly helped Canadians at some points though it hindered them at others.

I'll share how important I think this historical element is to our current context. We've had to develop a capacity in government, over years and decades and across different political parties, of being able to work to the maximum advantage of the Canadian sector. Even when there's good-natured debate, even if those 445 interventions in the House are not always complementary to any one party or any one government, we have, broadly, a policy alignment in this moment and in decades past around the kinds of things we need to do to support the sector.

That exists in the parliamentary circumstance. It exists between parliamentarians. You can even see it, I think, in the former government's Canada-U.S. trade committee, which was multipartisan and had many ways of reaching out to the American administration of the day to ensure that Canadian best interests were met during the renegotiation of NAFTA at that time.

I think this quote also shows the benefits we have from being perhaps not as much on the Americans' radar with respect to this specific sector as the Americans are in Canada. We know that we're now facing a few of the consequences of the new administration's focus on this sector and of some very specific statements they've made.

Indeed, Mr. Anastakis gets into that in his history as well. Let's get back to his book:

But, eventually, American policy makers saw the immense leeway Canadians exhibited in the auto trade—and particularly under the auto pact—as simply too much. The agreement itself had always been viewed as an intractable problem by elements of the U.S. government, and by the mid-1980s its staunchest American defenders—the auto companies themselves—realized that Canadian auto-policy efforts were in fact benefiting offshore producers to their detriment. When it became a subject for negotiation during the FTA talks, the Big Three saw no reason to further defend the auto agreement beyond maintaining it as a shadow of its former self. Indeed, the success of the auto pact for Canadians in part helps to explain its demise and the subsequent emergence of the free-trade agreement. By the time the idea of free trade was being negotiated, the industry was in its best shape. Most of the investment promises that the Canadian Big Three had made to Herb Gray—

He's a former Windsor MP and minister in the Trudeau government.

—in 1981 were being fulfilled. AMC had committed \$8 million to convert its Brampton plant from Jeep production to cars, and eventually in 1984 it announced a new plant worth nearly \$800 million in Brampton to build new cars. As promised, Ford's St Thomas plant was converted at a cost of \$73 million to produce EXP and LN7 front-wheel vehicles, Oakville had added a second shift to produce only cars, and the \$40 million Essex Aluminum plant had opened, not to mention the booming success of the Essex Engine plant. GM Canada spent \$3 billion to upgrade its facilities in Windsor, Oshawa, and St Catharines. By mid-decade, the Japanese were coming on strong, too, with Honda doubling its plant size, Toyota adding to its facility, and GM's Suzuki plant rounding out the “foreign” transplants operating in Canada to a tune of nearly \$1 billion in new investments.

• (1325)

Those investments were in the dollars of the day, so those dollars have now increased in amounts. This paragraph is a very important reminder of how, through change, conflict and intention, including with our chief trading partners, really good things can result. This paragraph very well encapsulates a new series of investments that happened in a moment of real challenge and change for Canada. There was, to some extent, some deindustrialization happening, as there was in many western economies, yet look at all the investments being referred to in this paragraph. They are either still going strong or are the subject of this committee today.

I'll continue with Mr. Anastakis:

The greatest fears of the Canadian industry—that it would be left behind as the Big Three retooled for the next generation of vehicles, and that offshore producers would not establish plants in Canada—had been avoided. The state had played an indispensable role in this achievement. In 1981 the chairman of the federal government's automotive task force, Campbell Stuart, triumphantly enumerated the different forms of “Government Assistance to the Automotive Industry” to his minister, Herb Gray. The long list included [\$200 million in] loan guarantees for Chrysler, a \$10-million grant from the Ontario government to Chrysler for an R&D centre, the \$68-million federal-provincial grant for the Ford Essex Engine plant, “flexibility” under the auto pact, and two duty-remission programs (the general order and the expanded order) that had provided “a major incentive to foreign vehicle producers to source parts in Canada,” resulting in exports of over \$88 million under these programs in 1980. By mid-decade, Canadian policy makers could add to this list voluntary export restraints, port slowdowns, and additional production based on duty-remission orders, all of which had helped convince the Japanese to come to Canada. It was an impres-

sive record, one that reflected an aggressive state interventionism and a willingness to push the limits of public policy. In a 1984 speech Bob White summed up perfectly Canadian state attitudes towards the industry: “The importance of this industry,” he told his union brothers, “meant that we couldn't simply leave its survival to the dictates of the market.”

That's a really important quote from Bob White. This is not part of the history, but as we know, he was instrumental in the creation of the CAW, which became one of the co-founding unions of Unifor. It was a key auto negotiation in the 1980s, which is actually the subject of a fascinating National Film Board documentary, *Final Offer*. I recommend it to all members here who want a deepening of their knowledge of the auto sector. Bob White led the exit of Canadian auto workers from the UAW to the CAW. This quote is really important: “The importance of this industry meant that we couldn't simply leave its survival to the dictates of the market”.

I think in this part of the history, we're seeing the results of policy-making and moves made by governments of different political stripes, which really highlight the importance, as the motion refers to, of “the workers whose livelihoods depend on a good deal for Canada” and how these tariffs are, indeed, unjustified.

I think a number of us experience this, during our own work in our own ridings, with the drives down the 401, the 403 and the QEW, as I mentioned. I'll go back to Mr. Anastakis on the sense of connectedness:

On looking closely at a political map of North America, one is struck by just how prominently southern Ontario juts into the Midwestern U.S. automotive heartland on one side and into one of its greatest regional markets, the northeast, on the other.... Briefly, however, it is important to note that southern Ontario became Canada's automotive heartland through its good fortune to be located near the burgeoning Midwestern carriage trade (with its southern Ontario counterpart), just across the river in Detroit. Risk, as exhibited by earlier entrepreneurs such as Ford Canada's Gordon M. McGregor, played a role, as did, of course the protectionist policies of John A. Macdonald, which created Canada's original branch-plant industry.

• (1330)

He goes on to write:

First, the success of the industry, and the ability of Canadian policy makers to utilize the wide range of approaches they did, was in part a consequence of the concentration of the sector in the great automotive-producing cluster that stretched northeastward from Windsor. Cluster theory has played a prominent role in explaining the success of some regional industries in Canada and beyond, and the Canadian automotive sector has been the focus of a number of these assessments.

I'll pause here to note there's an important crosswalk with our productivity study, which is about where concentrations of industries can exist, where further investment then follows and where workers can be developed. We heard a bit of that with Mr. Meier earlier today.

I'll go back to Mr. Anastakis:

The concentration of automotive assembly and parts production in southwestern Ontario focused policy makers, both at Ottawa and at Queen's Park, in terms of creating a coherent industrial policy for the region, and certainly in keeping elected officials attuned to the political power that this populous region represented. Yet the influence of the Ontario cluster did not mean that other regions were abandoned when it came to support for automotive industrial development. Federal efforts to stretch the auto sector outward from Ontario, often in the name of regional development, proliferated in the 1970s and 1980s. When Honda announced in 1985 that its Canadian plant would be located in southern Ontario, British Columbia NDP MP Ian Waddell complained that "while we welcome the Honda plant...for Ontario workers, the Minister must appreciate that western Canadians would like some of that, too." Waddell's argument was partially inspired by the logic that Toyota already had a wheel plant in British Columbia. Moreover, British Columbia was not far from California, the world's largest car market, where the GM-Toyota joint venture NUMMI had recently been announced. In response to these demands, IT&C Minister Ed Lumley replied that the nature of the industry, focused as it was on a just-in-time model, called "for suppliers to be within a 75-mile radius of an assembly facility." In any event, Lumley argued, the federal government had provided "almost one-half of the financial assistance to get that Toyota plant" to locate in British Columbia—while it had given no direct cash for Honda's Ontario facility.

I'll close the quote there and remind us of the effects and benefits of this sector. Yes, it's for their workers, and yes, it's for the supply chain, but there are also other downstream investments and benefits that I think are alluded to in this paragraph, most notably the opening of trade routes more generally through the Detroit-Windsor crossing, through Buffalo and through the multiple crossings in the southwest and in the Niagara Region. They are very important endowments we have because we have such important trade in a key sector. The trade in that key sector and the trucks that go down Highway 401, Highway 403, the QEW, Highway 420 and other major highways create demand for the kind of transportation infrastructure and connectivity infrastructure that benefits not only the auto sector but a variety of other goods-producing sectors.

When we think about the geographic concentration of this sector in southern Ontario, I think to the commendation of all members of this committee, we are focused on its impact in southern Ontario and we appreciate that, even though it might not benefit our specific ridings as much as other ridings, it has downstream effects that reach beyond those agglomeration economies in the 75-mile radius.

That's a bit of the background from Mr. Anastakis around the concentration here.

Elsewhere in his book, I think he positions the overall thesis as follows. Again, I will quote Mr. Anastakis:

The auto industry is the largest, most complex, most competitive, and most challenging industrial sector in North America. There is an immense amount of information on the automobile and its industry, and the flow is unstoppable: a century of dailies, weeklies, magazines, and reams of raw data from governments and consumer groups, not to mention auto enthusiasts, amateur auto historians, and professional firms whose raison d'être is to analyze the industry. There are whole government departments working on the automotive sector, and the size and scope of the companies involved add a dimension that is not found in most industries. There is also the fact that, although the auto industry is a topic of historical interest, its key entities—the auto and parts-making firms—are ongoing business concerns, some more than a century old, that are not keen to share their corporate knowledge. Nor, sometimes, are governments, given the political and economic sensitivity of the automotive sector. In short, there is an automotive data fog, one complicated by inaccessibility to some of its most important sources of information.

• (1335)

In his book, he says:

It is quite impossible to examine every issue, even within the focused period and themes I have chosen. By necessity, I have left out a number of issues, elements, and actors out of this book. There is, for instance, little discussion of the retail side of the industry, or the aftermarket, not to mention design, financing, advertising, and marketing... Nor does the book dwell on automobiles themselves, or deal in any way with specialty manufacturers of heavy trucks, city buses, motor homes, or motorcycles. Snowmobiles, which became very popular and an issue in Canada-U.S. trade in the late 1960s and early 1970s, also do not receive attention.

I want to pick out each of those sectors in turn and describe how each of them has a real, important impact on this debate.

For instance, there is the design, financing, advertising and marketing side. We know that this sector creates a number of jobs and has a number of pieces of connectivity to it. There may be the image we have in our minds, and again, I recommend watching the *Final Offer* movie to see what manufacturing looked like in the GM plant in Oshawa in the 1980s. It looks, I gather, quite different now. You had people using machine tools—mostly men in the factories at the time—doing the assembly work, the upholstery work and a variety of pieces of work.

This sector is historically one of the biggest spenders of advertising dollars in Canada. In fact, one of the key parts of this sector is that it helped to sustain the newspaper industry in the seventies, eighties and nineties with large commercial advertising—whole sections dedicated to automobiles. The Toronto Star had its own auto insurance columnist, who was so dedicated.

There are all kinds of spillovers in the sector. I don't need to remind members of this committee that auto insurance is a mandatory product for purchase in Ontario and, I think, in all provinces. If you have an auto sector, it means you have an auto retail sector, which means you have auto users and have the downstream effects of auto insurance purchasing, of detailing and obviously of mechanics and shops, with a variety of kinds.

I'll give a quick side comment to remind all members of the committee to get their winter tires ready, because they are necessary.

It's a sign of the ongoing demand of the sector that we can have a strong future for all of these different sectors even if the particulars change.

Mr. Anastakis also refers to the retail side. We heard earlier from the Global Automakers of Canada, which is somewhat represented in manufacturing. Also, definitely, the very large footprint of Toyota and Honda in southern Ontario is a very important part of that.

Global Automakers of Canada has a number of members that are not manufacturing currently in Canada but are doing retailing, and we know that the Canadian appetite for vehicles is broad and includes European vehicles, Asian vehicles and a variety of kinds. We also know that, thanks to some of the investments that have been referred to and the history, we are now starting to attract our first European automakers to Canada with the plant in St. Thomas and the associated activities there.

I referred to design, financing, advertising and marketing. Those are what might be typically considered white-collar jobs, jobs with a proud history here, and there are also marketing firms. There are all kinds of communications outfits. There are all kinds of creative professionals who work in the sector and are involved in some of this work.

Mr. Anastakis says, “Nor does the book dwell on automobiles themselves”. We know that automobile culture in Canada is very strong. As you know, Mr. Volpe referred to the vehicle he drives with a certain degree of pride. For me, it's the family vehicle: the Impala with the front bench. Others will have other vehicles that they have a real fondness for. There is a great automotive history, and we have collectors in Ontario and across Canada who take pride of ownership in their work and in the history of their vehicles. That also extends, I think, into other related sectors.

The automobile racing sector, for instance, is one that I think has an unusually large footprint in Canada compared to other places. With my family, I have gone regularly to the Merrittville raceway and have seen the different ways in which people soup up their vehicles. I haven't been there for the school bus race yet, but that is available.

● (1340)

We know that school bus manufacturing has its own unique history in Canada, which is referred to in the quote on the specialty manufacturers of heavy trucks, city buses, motorhomes or motorcycles and snowmobiles. Snowmobile manufacturing is very important to the culture of this country and is one of the founding stories of one of our major companies, Bombardier.

Also, as we've seen specialty manufacturing come and go, we've experienced the stress of that. I think the motion, including the amendment by Monsieur Ste-Marie, is in the spirit of heavy vehicles and particularly what's happening to Paccar. We know that these different elements of the sector are really important.

This motion, which calls on the government to live up to its promise made during the election and condemning the unjustified American tariffs on the sector, is in a spirit where the automobile has a real sense of connection to the real lived experience of Canadians every day.

Mr. Anastakis goes on to say, “Some actors are dealt with only from particular angles. For instance, consumers' views are taken into account when these have an impact on the politics, policy, and profitability of the sector.” I'll just close the quote there.

I think we've had quite a robust debate already on this committee about the attractiveness of and Canadians' desire to purchase lower-emitting vehicles. There seem to be global market trends in the di-

rection of more electrification, and there may be global market trends, despite Mr. Volpe's choices, that are going slightly against the direction of some of the muscle car trends.

We know, in turn, that consumer views are the result of policy—as referred to in this quote—not only in Canada but in the United States. We know that the California vehicle emissions standards are a real influence on how capital is deployed in Canada and that the unhooking—or the apparent unhooking—from the rest of the United States, and therefore from Canada, that seems to be coming from California emissions standards is going to affect consumer preferences.

Mr. Anastakis goes on to say, “The auto workers' union is covered extensively, but less so are the workers themselves—time and space make this unavoidable.” I think all of us on this committee and in the House of Commons probably approach the 445 interventions I referred to fundamentally on behalf, first and foremost, of the workers. I have the pleasure of meeting workers in my riding, as I think we all do.

A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of meeting Mitacs, which is an important connector among companies, academic research and learning. One of Mitacs award winners was in fact someone doing work on automotive sector enhancements and innovations, something that benefited companies in southern Ontario. This is someone who wouldn't have necessarily seen himself as an auto sector worker, yet he came out of research and did an innovation that has now been benefiting the sector.

I just want to double down on how important the exit of Canadian auto sector workers from the UAW in the eighties was for driving confidence and inspiration towards an entire union movement in Canada, one that said Canadian union workers could stand proudly themselves and form their own union. Of course, there's no comment or disrespect towards the many Canadian union members who are part of larger internationals. We have a number of those, including some involved in the sector.

I think another important part of our story of sovereignty is that we were able to have the benefit of what is now Unifor coming out of a pretty important Canadian-led negotiation with U.S. auto sector workers. Mr. Anastakis goes on:

Even a few significant manufacturers play only a minor role in the book. As the focus is on the Big Three, who controlled over 90 per cent of the industry until the 1980s, companies like the American Motors Corporation (AMC) and International Harvester, though bona fide manufacturers under the auto pact, are not examined in detail.

As we know, AMC then became part of the big three, retaining their brand Jeep. He continues, “Nor is Hyundai, which was very successful as an importer into Canada in the 1980s and subsequently opened a manufacturing facility in Quebec in 1989.”

• (1345)

We know that Hyundai is an object of interest. It's a growing company with lots of different jurisdictions interested in attracting Hyundai investment. We know that Minister Joly was there recently. We know that they're a very innovative automaker that has a lot of potential and is obviously selling lots of vehicles here in Canada at the moment. On the theme of electrification, I believe that the Kona is a Hyundai vehicle, and they have a very successful, popular plug-in hybrid model.

I'll return to Mr. Anastakis:

Ultimately, this book does not describe some sort of golden age of statism or interventionist utopia, but it does illuminate a period of active and creative policy making in a highly competitive continental and global economic sector. Indeed, it is undoubtedly true that the Canadian state(s) played a central and positive role in creating and sustaining industrial policies in the auto sector that lasted for two decades, policies that brought great prosperity to Canada, and especially to Ontario. And, although the auto industry was centred in Ontario, the sector's success emanated outwards, and this prosperity was shared by all Canadians through tax revenues, equalization, and employment opportunities. These industrial policies also helped to maintain a cluster of innovation that provided further opportunity in the form of the emerging Canadian-owned parts industry, which generated its own entrepreneurial, research-and-development (R&D), and spin-off opportunities. By the early 2000s, Ontario produced more vehicles than any other jurisdiction in North America including Michigan, and the auto industry today remains its single most important economic driver and the largest value-added Canadian export sector.

Again, those are Mr. Anastakis's words from 2013.

I think it's important to underline the broad, shared prosperity that comes from the sector, one that we're seeing echoes of with the move towards electrification. I know that electrification is a concern of some members of this committee. We've had motions and have had statements in the House and at this committee that have seemed to imply, at least to members on this side, that electrification is not something to be desired or that we should just leave it entirely to others without a recognition of the real benefits that electrification can bring not only in helping to meet our climate objectives, but also in appealing to the tastes of consumers by appealing to the abilities and built-up infrastructure we are now doing in the next generation of auto investments, therefore really being the next export sector that has so much potential.

If anything, the comments from Mr. Anastakis that I've read into the record show that nimble, inventive and aggressive policy-making has always been a feature of the Canadian auto sector and has had quite a bit of bipartisan or federal-provincial co-operation. I think all members of the House wish we could see more of that in other policy areas where there may be greater differences.

The move towards electrification, which I think my colleague Ms. O'Rourke has shared on in past meetings, is more distributed and results in more shared prosperity because of the supply chain and because the benefits that come from this work stretch out more broadly. We can have electrification, including electric subsidiaries provided by major oil and gas-related companies like Parkland. Parkland has an electrification subsidiary, which, we understand, employs about 250 people and is bringing electric vehicle infrastructure to different parts of Canada.

Electrification obviously also involves a broader set of inputs with the battery components and critical minerals, something that our government has been very focused on with the critical minerals

strategy. There's a real focus on the sovereignty of critical minerals, making sure that we are doing deals with other countries and that, through initiatives like our Major Projects Office, critical minerals can indeed be brought out and into the manufacturing supply chain for auto. Then, as the motion says, we can live up to the promise made during the election to honour "the workers whose livelihoods depend on a good deal for Canada" and can condemn the unjustified American tariffs on the auto sector.

Those are just a couple of the benefits of electrification.

• (1350)

I think broader shared prosperity comes from this policy move. Mr. Anastakis's context and the history that he's provided really help us see that we have to be constantly innovating on policy to ensure that we continue to get the benefits of this fast-moving sector, one with substantial capital buildup.

Mr. Anastakis, though, isn't just a historian. He's been writing more recently as well. I want to quote from a Globe and Mail op-ed that he wrote before the election but after the U.S. announcements on tariffs in March and April. He writes:

It's often said that this or that particular moment represents a paradigm shift in history. In the 1910s, Henry Ford ushered in the second industrial revolution of mass production and consumption with his use of the moving assembly line, new production techniques, vertical and horizontal integration, and economies of scale. The result was "Fordism" and all of its immense consequences; as Ford arrogantly put it, "I invented the modern age."

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Eiji Toyoda's Toyota Production System, or TPS, improved upon Fordism by utilizing just-in-time, continuous self-improvement, and lean production techniques. Combined with new labour approaches and advancing computerization, the auto industry—and much of society—was reshaped once again.

Since the 2000s, we are in the midst of another pivotal shift: Industry 4.0, the fourth industrial revolution, is the embrace of robotics and advanced production processes, digitization, computerization, AI, and new materials and propulsion systems. But the electric vehicle (EV) revolution is not just a technological leap forward that represents the future of the auto sector and mobility, it is a strategic imperative in the competition with China, and an essential part of the response to the challenge of climate change.

I really appreciate the comments from Mr. Anastakis in this op-ed, because again, he contextualizes some of the things the government is doing. This shows how important it is—as we agree, in the motion—to condemn the unjustified American tariffs on the sector to support "the workers whose livelihoods depend on a good deal for Canada", but it really goes to show what broader shared prosperity can look like. In fact, it's something this committee will be looking at in the future in its forthcoming study on artificial intelligence. In the spirit of this motion, I would commend to this committee the value of having some specific witnesses who can speak to the role of AI and computerization in the auto sector.

You occasionally hear that some concerning things are happening in the in-vehicle experience with AI chatbots, but we know that the broader role of AI computerization and digitization, which are already here, is going to be of potential benefit to Canada. Again, I'm contextualizing the auto sector beyond just the people on the factory floor, who are very important and anchor this work. I'm reaching beyond them towards the innovators who are creating new companies and new technologies; the people in the mines and the mining companies extracting the critical minerals we need for this sector; and the builders that are building the new plants that we're seeing built. One in Windsor is already built. Two are being built in and around St. Thomas.

In the broader context of the investments we see in the sector, with government policy-makers at the fore, with some fair degree of agreement across partisan lines, with very strong alignment between levels of government and with these different technologies...are very important features of the Canadian auto sector that are being referred to in this motion.

I think it's really important that the electrification we're moving towards, which all of the world is going to.... The question is at what pace and with what policy support. We have the strong view that the policy supports we have put in place to support some of the manufacturing and the critical minerals strategy, in particular, will have a much broader impact on and benefit for our constituents in every part of Canada. To really see that connectivity as important would also be in the spirit of the motion.

I know this motion does not refer to electrification, but it is a fact that electrification is a key feature of our automotive present and future, whether it's in consumer trends, the plants that are currently operating in Windsor and soon to operate in St. Thomas, or some of the lines we are trying to attract elsewhere. Really lifting that up and celebrating it is an important part of this.

• (1355)

Mr. Anastakis's history shares very compellingly that the continual evolution of policy-making in response to new threats, whether new trade threats, new technological threats or new threats of investment being withdrawn or not withdrawn, has been key to having a vibrant sector. Yes, we can and we should condemn the unjustified American tariffs on the Canadian auto sector, but we should also do the very important work in Parliament to pass the budget and do the very important work in Parliament to have debates on these issues, as I've referred to with the 445 interventions—

The Chair: Mr. Bardeesy, I hate to interrupt you, but I'm going to do that.

Colleagues, we've exhausted our resources for today's meeting. I very much appreciated the conversation.

I'm going to move to adjourn. We'll talk again.

Thank you, colleagues.

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