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# Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

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Chair: Ben Carr





## Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

• (1750)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone. We decided that the rest of the meeting would be held in public. We therefore continue our meeting.

[English]

There are hands up.

I have Madam Dancho, Madam O'Rourke and Mr. Guglielmin.

Madam Dancho, go ahead.

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

Of course, I think Canada was quite shocked to see that we had another 1,000 job losses in the steel sector this week. Again, this is the industry committee for Canada, so I do believe it's incumbent on us to take this very seriously. This is now the second tranche of 1,000 job losses in the steel industry.

In order to deal with that, I do think the committee should be seized with this and should be looking into it promptly. I will move the following motion:

Given that:

Algoma Steel's CEO has publicly confirmed that the Liberal government knew in advance that the company's restructuring plan "always" included major layoffs and nonetheless approved a \$400-million federal loan days before 1,000 workers were told their jobs were gone.

Time and again, the Liberal government hands out massive taxpayer-funded subsidies without demanding job guarantees, letting corporations take the money and still lay off workers by the hundreds and thousands.

The committee:

Report to the House that it condemns the lack of job guarantees included in the Liberal government's financing agreement with Algoma Steel, and stands in solidarity with Canadian steelworkers.

Immediately invite the following witnesses to appear before the committee in relation to the funding agreement; prioritize their appearances above all other matters before the committee; and work with House of Commons administration to schedule additional meetings to accommodate their appearances as necessary: the Minister of Industry; the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Jobs and Families; the CEO of Algoma Steel; representatives of United Steelworkers; and any other relevant witnesses.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Dancho.

We have a motion that's been moved. I'm going to suspend very briefly to allow for the distribution of the motion in both languages. It had not previously been put on notice, so out of fairness to mem-

bers of the committee, I'm going to give them a few moments to review it.

We're going to suspend briefly.

• (1750)

(Pause)

• (1805)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, we've had an opportunity to circulate in both official languages the motion that was presented by Madam Dancho a few moments ago. I think an adequate amount of time has been given for consideration of this motion. We will now enter into debate on it.

Ms. Borrelli had her hand up. That's the only hand I have currently on my speaking list. I also have Madam O'Rourke.

**Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** I thought we were on the speaking list.

**The Chair:** You weren't because you were on the speaking list prior to the motion—

**Ted Falk:** Really?

**The Chair:** Yes, but we're all going to get to it.

**Hon. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** I want to hear from you, though.

**Ted Falk:** I'm sure you do and it's going to be riveting.

**The Chair:** Mr. Falk, I assure you there's plenty of time for everybody to speak, so we'll get to you.

I have Ms. Borrelli, Madam O'Rourke, Mr. Falk and Mr. Guglielmin.

**Raquel Dancho:** I'm covered, but my colleagues want to speak.

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** I raised my hand.

**The Chair:** Okay, Monsieur Ste-Marie.

Thank you, everyone.

Madam Borrelli, the floor is yours.

**Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC):** I'd like to speak in favour of the motion.

We've seen time and time again cases where the government has entered into contracts with companies and handed out billions of taxpayers' dollars in subsidies without securing guarantees for Canadian workers. Taxpayers are demanding transparency and workers deserve job guarantees. The government needs to answer for its incompetence with the contracts.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Borrelli.

Madam O'Rourke.

**Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair Carr.

We hear it in the House of Commons every day, and we have known that we are in a trade war. The Government of the United States is attacking our core industries with impunity, and attacking us particularly egregiously in the steel sector. Every independent sovereign country needs to have its own steel industry. That is what is egregious in this context.

It's clear—and I believe that some of the leaders in Sault Ste. Marie have said so—that the federal government investments are actually improving a situation that would have been far worse and allowing Algoma Steel to retain roughly two-thirds of the jobs. Federal government support is also helping Algoma Steel to transition to a new way of manufacturing, a way that is green.

Nonetheless, it's awful for 1,000 families to receive layoff notices just a couple of weeks before the holidays. I don't think there's a Canadian who doesn't feel for them. I'm more interested in looking at how we can provide supports immediately. In fact, a report to the House at this point would take up some of the time remaining before the holiday break. In that time, what we need to do is pass the budget, which has a number of measures that will actually help these families immediately. These include several new employment insurance provisions that combine permanent enhancements and temporary measures that respond to economic uncertainty, sadly, for these exact situations.

The federal budget also has a number of measures to support tariff-affected industries so that they can sustain if not all of their workers then some of their workers. It creates a path. We are ramping up on major projects in this country that will require steel, aluminum, lumber and workers. What we need to do is support people. The Government of Canada and all of the parties in the House of Commons need to be supporting these workers and these industries through what is a really difficult time.

Some of the things we find in budget 2025 that we should pass before the holidays, that we should make use of House time for, and the members could speak to these challenges in the context of the debate on Bill C-15, which is the budget implementation act... One of these things is faster access to EI benefits. The one-week waiting period for EI claims has been waived for claims that will be filed to allow workers to receive their benefits immediately. How critical is this for these families who want to know how they're going to pay their rent, their mortgage and their groceries? This improvement and the faster access to EI benefits are really important.

Also, there are changes wherein severance or vacation pay will no longer delay EI, and that is important as well. I don't begin to

understand what the union agreements are or what the severance payments will look like. I hope they are generous, and I hope that Algoma is thoughtful in how it cares for these families and these workers, who have been loyal to them and who are highly skilled and are, hopefully, ready to go back to work should there be an increase in production.

There is also an increase in EI. Those EI benefits will increase. Those benefits will rise from 55% to 60% of insurable earnings for regular benefits. The maximum weekly benefit will increase from \$650 to \$720. There will be expanded eligibility for part-time and self-employed workers. I don't know what the mix is for the workers at Algoma Steel, and whether there are part-time workers there as well.

There is also workforce support in budget 2025. This is so important not only for the steel workers but also for all Canadians who are in sectors that are currently being displaced by these American tariffs. The Conservatives want to point at the Liberal government. The assault here is coming from the United States. We should be unified in supporting the workers who are affected.

• (1810)

That labour market development is \$70 million over three years to retrain and upskill up to 10,000 steelworkers, plus income support for displaced workers, and also work-sharing programs. I know that the Minister of Industry is working with Algoma Steel and with the leadership in Sault Ste. Marie to try to find supports immediately for those workers and also for the sector.

A number of things in the budget will not only support the workers immediately; they will also strengthen our steel sector in the coming years. We heard just last week—it was very well received in Hamilton from the steel sector—about new changes around tariff rate quotas and around anti-dumping, which has been a challenge in this country for a long time. We will end the temporary tariff remission.

The buy Canadian policy will be helpful. Infrastructure and housing activities and freight rate reductions are really important in terms of getting that steel across the country. The strategic innovation fund has over \$1 billion committed to help steel producers modernize their facilities, expand their capacity and diversify product lines. There's also the large enterprise tariff loan facility, which was the \$400 million that was received by Algoma Steel. We're looking for the long-term competitiveness of the sector.

Mr. Chair, I think we could get more information. We could potentially have a future conversation. In this urgent moment, I think it's more important for the House of Commons to be focused on how we help these workers and affected sectors.

• (1815)

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

Mr. Falk, the floor is yours.

**Ted Falk:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to speak briefly in favour of the motion. I think it's imperative that this committee undergo this study, at the moment, with the ministers and with the CEO of Algoma Steel and then report to the House. There are 1,000 workers, 1,000 families, who don't have income right before Christmas.

The things that the Liberal member across the way just mentioned are just subsidies from the government again. I think we need to find out why this Liberal government keeps giving away hundreds of millions of dollars without job guarantees. The assault may be coming from south of the border, but the incompetence is right here, across the aisle. It's for those things that we need to find out where the problem really is. We have incompetency here.

We know that the Minister of Industry lied previously, when it came to Stellantis, about the redacted documents. When the Stellantis CEO—

**Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Falk, one moment. I have several points of order.

Mr. Bardeesy.

**Karim Bardeesy:** I think that's quite a serious allegation to raise in this context without any supporting evidence. I'm just wondering how this is relevant to debate on the motion at hand.

**The Chair:** Mr. Falk, we do treat the committee the way we would the chamber. We try to keep in line with what we would call parliamentary language. I'll offer you an opportunity, before we continue, to maybe consider rephrasing some of the words in reference to how you are contextualizing what occurred.

I'll give the mic back to you.

**Ted Falk:** Well, certainly the House and this committee are very well aware that the minister misled the House and this committee when she said that Stellantis had requested—

**Karim Bardeesy:** I have a point of order.

**Ted Falk:** When Stellantis had requested—

**The Chair:** Mr. Falk, I apologize. As you know, when I have a point of order, I have to tend to it immediately.

Mr. Bardeesy.

**Karim Bardeesy:** I'm hearing basically the same thing. I'm wondering if we can just stick to the motion.

**Ted Falk:** I find it is very pertinent to the motion—

**The Chair:** I have the floor. Give me one second, please.

Colleagues, we're on track to get where we want to get.

Mr. Falk, I know that you have strong feelings and strong language that you'd like to apply. I know that some colleagues across the way have some relatively legitimate concerns about the use of that language in terms of how we would apply rules and procedure to this committee and the chamber. If there's another way you could make the same point by using some different words, I'd encourage you to do so, and maybe we can move on.

Thank you.

**Ted Falk:** Mr. Chairman, I think it's imperative that the CEO of Algoma come here so that we can confirm that the information coming to us from the Minister of Industry and from the Liberal caucus is consistent with the information that he would provide to this committee. It's imperative that he come here to confirm whether or not the information is accurate.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Ted Falk:** With that, I'll wrap up. I just think we need to have these people here. We need to get to the bottom of what appears to be incompetence.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Falk.

Mr. Guglielmin.

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

It's my pleasure to speak in favour of this motion, as somebody who worked inside the steel industry. It's really a consequential time for the steel industry. The 25% tariff was manageable, but 50%, as we know, is impossible.

One of the key things that I find alarming and that I continue to find alarming here is the precedent that's being set. First, we have the contract with Stellantis, where there aren't any job guarantees. Now, we hear the new definition of success seems to be that, if we spend \$400 million, we only get 1,000 job losses.

We continue to hand out money without any jobs guarantees. We have workers being affected all across the country. When we look at the auto sector, some 600,000 jobs are associated with the auto sector. All these are up and down the steel supply chain as well.

This is a very consequential issue. We need the relevant parties here at committee to testify and to make sure that the Canadian people are getting the transparency they deserve.

Thank you.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Ste-Marie, I was going to give you the floor. However, since I think I know what you want to do and I see that another committee member has raised his hand, perhaps we could hear what he has to say first.

Also, Ms. Dancho just said she has a brief intervention as well.

If it is okay, we will go to Mr. Erskine-Smith first, followed by Ms. Dancho. Then it will be your turn.

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Great.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Erskine-Smith.

**Hon. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Thanks very much.

To start out, I think everyone in the House of Commons, and certainly everyone at this committee, is united in saying that we want to defend Canadian steelworkers. I think we're all on the same page there. I want to start there because I think there is a moment for unity that we are allowing to be frittered away, in some ways.

The threat comes from south of the border. You have volatility, instability and a menace in the White House when it comes to Canadian economic interests and our well-being, and we should all be united. There has been unity, and I worry about that unity fracturing. Just as a starting point, it's important to frame where we are and how we can work together to make sure we put the best interests of Canadian steelworkers first.

I have been to Sault Ste. Marie a number of times; it is devastating to Sault Ste. Marie. It is devastating to the community there and to families there. Everything we can do to stabilize the situation for Canadian workers and steelworkers is incredibly important.

We're talking about a \$400-million loan from the feds and a \$100-million loan from the provincial Conservative government via Doug Ford and his team. I just want to again be clear. The media reported the federal finance minister saying, "If it was not for the support, the situation at Algoma would be dire today." I heard the Prime Minister in the House quote the CEO of Algoma Steel, saying there would have been "an even darker day". The Prime Minister also said, "we had a choice: save two-thirds of the jobs or let the company go down." I read that Vic Fedeli said, "Everybody, including the unions, knew [the layoffs] were coming, but they're coming faster because of the Trump tariffs."

I don't want to be dismissive of the need to bring witnesses in. I absolutely agree that we need the CEO here, and I think ministers should attend. It would be very constructive to ask if this agreement was fashioned in the right way, in the best possible way. Could we have done a better job? Maybe, but I don't know.

Where I struggle with the motion is that I have no problem inviting witnesses to appear. I think we can constructively do this work. Let's play the accountability function that a committee should play and look at the government action federally and provincially. Let's look at what was or wasn't known as these agreements were being negotiated.

Could we have done better? Could we think of better ways to have job guarantees and protect workers? Was it possible in the circumstances of this particular case? Let's hear the testimony and come to some conclusions.

I struggle because Mr. Falk rightly said that we should study and then report to the House. This motion reports to the House and then studies. Personally, with the way it is drafted, as is, it doesn't make a ton of sense. I know we're going to run out of time tonight, but if we can come to a place where we're focused on studying the core substance of the issue and then subsequently report our findings to the House, that's a place that I think would be constructive and helpful.

**The Chair:** I have Madam Dancho.

**Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the comments thus far, and I think they do make the point that this motion was crafted in a way to, yes, have a study at committee and so that we would have a debate in the House of Commons.

Unfortunately, I'm getting increasingly concerned that we are having a lot of push-back on having concurrence debates, which carry weight, which carry votes. Often ministers will come comment on them. I do appreciate that there's been some movement for some evening debates. I appreciate that, but again, I think the gravity of the situation we're facing seems to not be being recognized—by not allowing serious debates of concurrence in the House. I say that because I think there have been valid points made. The purpose of opposition is to hold government ministers, government parliamentary secretaries, and MPs speaking on behalf of government accountable for their policies.

Given that thousands of people are losing their jobs in the steel industry, surely the House of Commons of Canada should have a fulsome, binding debate on the policies best suited to deal with thousands of people losing their jobs, with no end in sight. There's been no guarantee that a trade agreement, a trade deal, is forthcoming, imminent or near on the horizon. To not allow a fulsome concurrence debate with a binding vote I think does a disservice to these job losses.

It deserves to be debated. We deserve to be able to ask ministers fulsome questions in the House of Commons. That is why we're very keen to have it reported to the House, Mr. Chair. I just want to drive home that point, and we will continue to drive home that point for all industries impacted by this trade war.

Thank you.

• (1825)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Dancho.

[Translation]

Mr. Ste-Marie, go ahead, please.

**Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Mr. Chair, I very much appreciated the debates and exchanges. I think that, at the outset, if it were not for the American President's erratic protectionist policies, we would not be discussing all these problems. We really need to condemn the often even illegal policies, under American law, that his government is proposing and that have major repercussions here.

We all stand in solidarity with steel and aluminum workers at Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie.

I, for one, am in favour of this motion. I agree with the whole text, line by line. I agree that the committee should look into the matter with the witnesses on the list and that the committee should report to the House. Obviously, with the points that were raised by Mr. Erskine-Smith, we could have slightly reworded the motion to specify that the committee will report after the witnesses have been heard. However, given the urgency of the situation, I am in favour of the motion as it stands.

Recently, we studied another motion on the automotive industry and heavy-duty vehicles, which we debated at length. In addition, the House is currently having a take-note debate on this subject, which also concerns us a great deal.

If we were all ready to vote on the motion now, I would be prepared to do so and I would vote in favour. However, I understand that this is not the case for all committee members and that the debates could drag on as long as there are still resources available for this committee.

In my opinion, that would be less productive than following the debates currently taking place in the House on the automotive issue. That is why I am moving to adjourn the meeting.

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

Colleagues, we know what is going to happen now.

[*English*]

We know what happens when there's a motion for us to adjourn. It's a dilatory motion; there's no debate. I'm looking around the room, and I think we'll probably take a formal roll call on this one.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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