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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Ahmed Hussen (York South—Weston—Etobicoke, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Welcome to meeting number 32 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, February 3, the committee is meeting on the mandate of the ambassador of Canada to the United States.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[Translation]

I would like to welcome the witnesses who are with us today.

[English]

From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have Mark Wiseman, ambassador of Canada to the United States, and Glen Linder, assistant deputy minister, Americas branch.

I now invite Ambassador Wiseman to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

[Translation]

Mark Wiseman (Ambassador of Canada to the United States, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you.

Mr. Chair, honourable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. This is my first appearance before this committee since I began as ambassador of Canada to the United States on February 15, only 67 days ago.

I intend to serve Canadians with a clear focus on advancing our national interests during what is a defining period in the bilateral relationship.

I was born in Niagara Falls, close to the border. I studied at Queen's University and the University of Toronto. I did an internship at the École supérieure de commerce de Paris, and I also studied at Yale University.

Much of my career has been dedicated to strengthening the retirement security of Canadians, including at the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, at the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and as chair of the board of the Alberta Investment Management Corporation.

I also served at BlackRock, managing global equity portfolios. Those roles gave me a deep understanding of global markets and enabled me to develop strong networks across public and private sectors in both Canada and the United States. These relationships will be critical as we navigate the years ahead.

[English]

As ambassador, I represent Canada's political, economic and security interests in the United States. My core responsibility is to manage our bilateral relationship with the U.S. In this role, I am working to help safeguard Canada's economic and security interests, and to support the hundreds of thousands of Canadians in the United States on any given day. I am also leading Canada's largest diplomatic network abroad. Our embassy, 12 consulates general and three trade offices are supported by nearly 600 dedicated diplomats and professionals.

Our economic ties with the United States are deep and vast. We have the largest economy in the world at our doorstep, with a market of 340 million people comprising 25% of global GDP. This brings tremendous benefits to Canada. In 2025, about \$3.5 billion in goods and services crossed the border every day, and nearly \$1.3 trillion has crossed the border over the last year. This represents approximately two-thirds of Canada's global trade. Canada trades more with the United States in a single day than we trade with most countries in a year.

Our defence relationship with the United States—by far the largest military power in the world—is seamless, which is essential to Canada's security. NORAD remains the most integrated binational military command in the world. Close to 1,000 Canadian Armed Forces members serve in the United States, many directly supporting continental defence.

We also share extensive people-to-people ties. Almost 350,000 people cross our shared 9,000-kilometre border every day through 127 land ports, plus air and waterways.

• (1535)

However, as the Prime Minister has said, this relationship is changing. “America first” policies do not always align with Canada's sovereign interests or with the spirit of continental co-operation that has long defined our partnership. Nowhere has this been felt more acutely than on trade, where U.S. tariffs, especially the section 232 sectoral tariffs on steel, aluminum, autos and lumber, are impacting jobs and investment in Canada, creating unpredictability, threatening our integrated supply chains and raising costs for businesses and families.

The Prime Minister has been clear: Canada must build a new economic and security relationship with the United States, one that is principled, pragmatic and anchored in resilience and sovereignty. That will be central to my work as ambassador.

As we prepare for the CUSMA review, I'm working closely with Minister LeBlanc and chief negotiator Janice Charette. Our objectives are clear: first, to secure stable and preferential access to the entire North American market; second, to reinforce Canada's economic sovereignty; and third, to defend Canadian workers and businesses at every turn.

North American integration must continue to support shared prosperity, but not at the expense of Canada's autonomy. Canada's achievement of NATO's 2% defence spending target this year has been welcomed in Washington, D.C. We remain on track to reach our 5% target by 2035, with significant investments in the Arctic, an area where Canada and the U.S. must continue to work closely through NORAD as well as with NATO and our Nordic allies.

Both Canada and the United States will continue to deepen co-operation to address common threats, including organized crime, fentanyl and other illicit drugs, and firearms trafficking, as well as the challenge of irregular migration across our shared border. Through Canada's \$1.3-billion border plan, Canada has already made significant progress in strengthening its border through investments in personnel, technology, aerial surveillance and strong coordination with the United States. The passage of Bill C-12 last month will provide our border, law enforcement and immigration authorities with the tools they need to keep our shared border safe and secure.

Our deeper co-operation is also delivering results. Irregular border crossings from Canada to the U.S. have declined significantly, and efficiency is improving, including with the opening of a new U.S. pre-clearance facility last month at Billy Bishop airport in Toronto. In addition, the January 22 arrest of Ryan Wedding and recognition by the FBI of Canadian law enforcement efforts highlight the positive co-operation in our relationship.

The United States is an essential partner on global issues, from the Arctic to central and eastern Europe to Latin America and the Caribbean, but Canada will also work with other like-minded partners to advance shared priorities, not as a substitute to the United States but to strengthen our resilience in an increasingly complex world.

Since my arrival, the embassy has supported a broad range of parliamentary delegations to Washington, including the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group, parliamentary secretaries,

four committee chairs and bipartisan members from across the country, with more on the calendar in coming weeks—and it's only been 67 days. I've had the opportunity to brief and engage with Canadian delegates from across the political spectrum, who have undertaken more than 50 meetings with legislators, administration officials and U.S. public and private sector interlocutors on a wide range of issues, from the Great Lakes to energy to borders to defence.

I understand that Canadian parliamentarians will also travel across the United States this summer, to such places as Greenville, South Carolina; Salt Lake City, Utah; Saint Paul, Minnesota; and Chicago, Illinois. Like the embassy in Washington, our consulate network will support your interactions with American state legislators from across the country to advance our interests in the United States.

I want to let this committee know the value of parliamentary diplomacy cannot be overstated. Engaging Americans not only in the capital but across the U.S. helps to build bridges, mend fences and strengthen relationships at the constituent level.

• (1540)

In fact, I understand that some members of this committee will be in Washington, D.C., with me, in mid-May.

Speaking of that, on May 12, an invitation went out that was only in the English language. This was an error—an unacceptable error. That has now been corrected and the invitation has been resent, in both official languages.

In my view, that invitation going out in English only is unacceptable. I want to apologize on behalf of the embassy and personally. I want to be firm in my commitment for the need to promote bilingualism in Canada and as Canada faces the world, including the United States. The demonstration of bilingualism shows our commitment to multiculturalism, multilingualism and the type of Canada we all believe in.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador, for your statement.

I will now open the floor for questions, beginning with MP Michael Chong.

You have six minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador, for appearing in front of us today. I appreciate your opening statement.

I'd like to talk a little bit about what happened this past week with Mexico. Mexico issued a formal statement indicating that Mexican and U.S. officials were directed this week to talk about four different sets of issues. Those talks included the tariffs on aluminum, steel and autos. President Sheinbaum indicated she's eyeing a deal on aluminum, steel and autos, before the review of CUSMA is complete.

Can you tell us if Canada is coordinating with Mexico on getting tariff relief for those sectors?

Mark Wiseman: Thank you.

Canada believes strongly in the trilateral nature of the CUSMA arrangements.

It is my job, as ambassador, working with our chief negotiator and with Minister LeBlanc, to ensure that we are raising issues, including section 232, with our colleagues in the United States and Mexico. In fact, I understand that the Mexican delegation will be here in Ottawa, in the next few weeks, to meet with Minister LeBlanc and his team.

Hon. Michael Chong: My question is about Mexico having formal talks this week on these four sets of issues, including the tariffs. Is Canada going to have formal talks on the section 232 tariffs?

When is that going to happen?

Mark Wiseman: We recognize that the section 232 tariffs are having a very large and important negative impact on Canadian industry and Canadian workers. You can assume that we are having ongoing discussions with both the United States and Mexico.

Hon. Michael Chong: My question is about formal discussions. I understand the minister has had phone calls, but these are formal discussions that Mexico is undertaking this week.

Is Canada going to be having formal discussions on section 232 tariffs, and if so, when?

Mark Wiseman: As you know, there is a formal review process, under the terms of the CUSMA arrangement. We expect that formal review process will commence because it's required under the agreement.

Hon. Michael Chong: On that issue, Mexico also indicated, in its formal statement issued by their ministry, that the first formal, bilateral negotiating round between Mexico and the United States will take place the week of May 25.

When will Canada's first formal negotiating round take place?

• (1545)

Mark Wiseman: No date has been set for any formal negotiating round—

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

Mark Wiseman: —as it relates to the review.

Hon. Michael Chong: The review of CUSMA.... I understand.

The other question I have is about how, a year ago, the Canadian government made significant concessions. They rescinded the retaliatory tariffs, and several weeks later they suspended the implementation of the digital services tax—two major concessions to try to get negotiations going.

Negotiations have been stalled for some time now, unlike for Mexico, which seems to be moving along at a fairly steady clip. We're also getting reports that this go-slow approach is a deliberate strategy on the part of the government.

Can you tell us why the government has decided, in contrast to Mexico, that a go-slow approach is the right way to tackle not just the issues of the section 232 tariffs but also the commencement of the formal negotiations concerning the CUSMA review?

Mark Wiseman: Canada is ready and willing to commence any type of review process with the United States and also with Mexico. We are ready to do that and are prepared to do so. We will advance the interests of Canada through Minister LeBlanc and our chief negotiator, both formally and—I can ensure you—informally, at every turn, in the best interests of Canadians.

Hon. Michael Chong: That seems to conflict with what officials on the record and off the record are saying.

Premier Susan Holt of New Brunswick said that the free trade talks of the United States are “not at a place that I could write home about with a lot of optimism”. That's what she said after a meeting with Minister LeBlanc. Then we have Louise Blais, the former Canadian diplomat, saying that officials in Washington are telling her that the Canadian government is going slow in its approach deliberately on this.

Then there was an official, a Quebec source reported in CBC/Radio-Canada, who said that when the Prime Minister talked to the Quebec premier, “Carney told him explicitly that this slow approach was part of Ottawa's strategy”.

What is the strategy? Is it to go slow, or is it to do what the Mexicans are doing and expeditiously deal with this?

Mark Wiseman: I'm not going to discuss the details of the Government of Canada's strategy as it relates to the CUSMA review or the 232 issues here, but I will say that Canada is ready to go in our discussions. We are prepared. We have done our homework, and we are ready to proceed with each of Mexico and the United States forthwith.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guilbeault, you have the floor for six minutes.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador, for being with us today. Thank you as well for acknowledging, in your opening remarks, the mistake made regarding the invitation that was extended to members in English only. Thank you for correcting that. I think you heard, as I did, the Prime Minister acknowledge that this was unacceptable. I think we can take you at your word to make sure that doesn't happen again.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to give notice of the following motion. My office will send it to the clerk in a few minutes. In the meantime, I'll read it out to you:

That the committee affirm its commitment to official bilingualism and express its concerns regarding the English only invitation sent to members of the committee by the Embassy of Canada to the United States; and that it invite Arun Thangaraj, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to brief the committee on Global Affairs Canada's Official Languages policy and its implementation across Canada's embassies worldwide.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will now move on and ask my questions.

Mr. Ambassador, if I remember correctly, you said earlier that you have been in your position for 67 days. My question has two parts.

Could you tell us what you have done so far in terms of diplomatic efforts, both regarding the negotiations to renegotiate the free trade agreement, as well as more broadly in our diplomatic relations with the United States?

What is your game plan? For example, what are your goals for your first year in Washington?

• (1550)

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: Thank you for the question.

First of all, as it relates to negotiations on trade, one of the great benefits we have is that I am the ambassador, and we also have chief negotiator Janice Charette working in tandem with me, of course, under the direction of Minister LeBlanc.

Obviously the negotiations on trade and helping to support them is an important part of my role, but it's not my entire role. My role includes supporting Canadian interests in the United States and supporting Canadians in relation to the United States writ large.

To the second part of the question, a big part of that is building relationships with stakeholders across the United States. In my first 67 days, I have primarily been in Washington, D.C., meeting members of Congress, senior members of the U.S. administration and executive branch and both Canadian and U.S. leaders from the business and labour communities and various industry associations, etc., in order to both tell the Canadian story of the importance of the relationship more clearly, and receive feedback and information from them.

Although I have been to Houston, I will be going to New York and I'll be going to Colorado in the coming weeks, but in my early days, the focus has been inside the so-called Beltway.

Going forward, however, my focus as ambassador—importantly, in conjunction with parliamentarians and with the support of our 12 consulates across the U.S.—is to tell the Canadian story regionally as well. The United States is a big country. We must engage with business leaders, legislators, community leaders and labour across the country. That will be a big part of my job in my first year in the role.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you.

I think I have a bit of time left, Mr. Chair.

I have one last question for you, Mr. Ambassador.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, there is time.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ambassador, you talked about the meetings you have already had, mainly in Washington.

Can you give us a summary of the lessons you have learned from those initial meetings with members of the U.S. cabinet or with representatives of Congress?

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: I will say very clearly that my reception as the representative of Canada has been, without exception, incredibly warm. That started with the presentation of my credentials on February 17 to the President of the United States and to Secretary Rubio.

Americans understand the importance of the alliance and economic relationship with Canada. Do they wake up and think about us every day the way that we wake up and think about them every day? No, that's not the case, and we have to continually remind them of the importance of the economic relationship, the personal ties and the defence alignment we have.

Every meeting I have had has been respectful, open and receptive, and I have to say I wasn't necessarily expecting that.

I think at times we have to look below the bluster the same as we do here in Canada—politics, I assume, is politics—and get down to business. My sense, based on my reasonably large sample in the first couple of months, is that people in the United States also want to get down to business not just on trade but on all the aspects of the complex relationship between our two countries.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next, we go to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

You have six minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ambassador, thank you for being with us today. I'd also like to highlight the fact that you said the error that was made was unacceptable. You had no choice, but you did it anyway, so thank you for that.

You're going to be called upon to be the voice of Canada—and therefore of Quebec—in Washington. You're going to be called upon to promote and defend Quebec's economic, linguistic and cultural interests in Washington.

You actually cast a very wide net in your opening remarks. Unfortunately, there wasn't a word about supply management, even though that's systematically and even publicly targeted by President Trump when it comes to the renegotiation of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement. That struck me, because your opening remarks were quite long and, in the past, in a 2024 column, you described supply management as a system that secures the market for a protected group of established players that hinder innovation and keep prices artificially high for Canadian consumers.

I won't hide the fact that your appointment is raising a lot of concerns in Quebec. I think you're aware of that.

Is your personal position still the same as it was two years ago?

How can you reconcile your public position from two years ago with the fact that you now find yourself defending and promoting supply management in Washington?

• (1555)

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: First of all, on supply management, my instructions are very clear and my role is very clear. My role is to support and implement the policies of the Government of Canada. The Prime Minister has been clear, as has Parliament through Bill C-202, that supply management is not on the table.

Whatever my views may have been or may be today, it is completely irrelevant to the job I have to carry out. I will carry out that job faithfully in protecting supply management insofar as I have a role in that, because that is the policy of the Government of Canada and that is my job.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: What you're telling me is that your position on supply management is the same today as it was in 2024, but that's okay, because it's the government's policies that you're going to defend in Washington. That's my understanding.

What we're saying is that it isn't normal for someone who doesn't think like the government to go promote and defend something they don't believe in. You have just told us that you don't believe in the supply management system. You just now told us that. You're also telling us that we can still trust you to defend and promote supply management. That's still quite worrying for producers and farmers in Quebec.

I say that in good faith. You understand that the fact that you don't believe in the supply management system raises serious doubts about your ability to defend it.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I think Mr. Guilbeault has a point of order because he's unhappy with my question, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Guilbeault.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I heard the same testimony from the ambassador as Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe did, and what the ambassador said—we can

look at the evidence—is that, regardless of his personal position, he's going to defend the position of the Government of Canada. He didn't say his personal position on the issue of supply management, a system that I also support and that I worked on for a long time when I worked at Équiterre. What he said was that he was there to—

[*English*]

The Chair: I think—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I think the member is putting words in the ambassador's mouth. He's claiming he said things he never did. I think that with issues like this, it's important that we stick to what is clearly said.

If the member wants to ask more questions about this, he can, but that isn't what the ambassador said.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I want to speak to the same point of order. I imagine my clock has been stopped.

Mr. Guilbeault, what I understand is that the ambassador said he didn't want to tell us what his position is. Since he was against supply management the last time he spoke about it, I assume that must still be the case. That's what he implied indirectly and very diplomatically. In fact, that's his new role. He's pretty good with diplomatic language. That's what we understood.

[*English*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): I have a point of order on the point of order.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I think I can continue my remarks on—

[*English*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I believe we're into debate. As a point of order, I would like to hear from the witness.

The Chair: I was going to say the same thing. I think we can all have our own views and opinions about answers, but I think the ambassador has made it very clear that he represents the government's and Parliament's position, which has been reflected in his answers.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's fine.

May I continue my remarks?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, of course.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Ambassador, if I understand correctly, you're telling me that, for example, Mr. Carney could have appointed a Quebec separatist as Canada's ambassador to France, because, given that this isn't the government's vision, it's no big deal if a Quebec separatist is appointed to such a position. That's sort of what you're telling me, but for supply management, it raises a lot of doubts.

Another one of your positions has raised a lot of doubts. You're the co-founder of the Century Initiative, and despite the upcoming mandate on which we will remain focused, you posted a message on the social media platform X that was hostile toward Quebec. The message indicated that the goal of a Canada with 100 million inhabitants had to be achieved, even if it made Quebec howl.

Do you know how shocked Quebecers were by you sharing that publication?

Did you know what that sentence was referring to when you shared it?

• (1600)

[English]

Mark Wiseman: In the past, I was involved—as I'm sure many members of the committee are aware—in an organization called the Century Initiative. I'd encourage anyone who is interested to contact that organization and read the information. I am no longer affiliated with that organization. I've resigned from all of my outside positions to take on the role of ambassador.

Again, my job is to promote the policies of the Government of Canada, and I will continue to do so. I should also say that my role as ambassador, as it relates to the United States, does not cover Canadian immigration policy.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: You're now the voice of Quebec in Washington, and you shared a publication that was hostile toward Quebec.

It's a simple question. It has to do with your mandate.

Do you sincerely and seriously think that people in Quebec are happy to see someone who shared a publication that was hostile toward Quebec become their voice and their representative in Washington? That's my first question.

The Chair: Mr. Duceppe.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I have a second question. In the Century Initiative, there is no mention of French—

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, I would have to—

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: —or the culture and the nation of Quebec in relation to the population of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, it seems like you're making a comment rather than asking a question. We agreed, as members, that the approach of today is to get a sense, as a committee, of the mandate of the ambassador. This is taking—

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: In fact, my question is the following: Does the ambassador understand that there are many doubts in Quebec about the fact that he's now the voice of Quebec? I just want to know whether he's aware of that. That's a genuine question. That isn't a comment. He can answer.

[English]

The Chair: You're asking about immigration and other things. The ambassador has clarified what his role is.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: No, I'm talking about his mandate. When he was appointed, there was an outcry in Quebec, and many doubts were raised. I think the ambassador needs to be aware of that. I'd like to know whether he's aware of that. That's my question.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Wiseman, in the short time left, I'll leave it to you to make any response or comment regarding Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe's comments and questions.

Mark Wiseman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I read the newspapers in both languages. I am the ambassador in the United States for all Canadians, including Quebecers. That is my job. That is my mandate. I shall faithfully carry that out for all Canadians, and this includes Quebecers.

I should also say that I have the great benefit of working with provincial leadership as part of my role, including the three provinces that are represented physically in the embassy. Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario each has a physical presence, and there is a very strong and collaborative office from the Province of Quebec also in Washington, D.C. We are in regular communication so I can have the information I need to represent all Canadians, including Quebecers, in Washington. I will continue to do that faithfully.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, we'll go to MP Ziad Aboultaif.

You have five minutes.

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, Ambassador, to committee.

The Business Council of Canada's survey of CEOs found that “Trade uncertainty, rising protectionism, and geopolitical flash-points are making it harder for companies to plan, invest, and grow,” and that 38% now cite uncertainty surrounding NAFTA/USMCA as “the leading factor affecting investment planning”.

Also, Statistics Canada showed that business investment pulled back as businesses navigated uncertainty and trade tensions over the past year. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce said, "Trade-exposed firms are shifting into 'wait-and-see' mode. Most firms, especially smaller ones, have not taken meaningful action beyond price adjustments...investment decisions may still be delayed until policy clarity improves."

Uncertainty, Mr. Ambassador, is hurting the Canadian economy. Maybe you can offer some clarification.

• (1605)

Mark Wiseman: As an investor, I know that uncertainty is terrible. It increases the cost of capital, and as stated in the question, it leads to people not making important decisions, particularly around capital allocation.

I want to be clear from the point of view of the embassy in Washington. This unpredictability and uncertainty are caused by the actions of the United States of America. The section 232 tariffs, for example, on autos, steel, aluminum, lumber and pharmaceuticals, and the changing nature of those tariffs are creating unpredictability. I agree that they are bad for business and investment on both sides of the border.

Ziad Aboultaif: Ambassador, the Prime Minister's apparent desire to delay the CUSMA negotiations is basically against what you said. Can you clarify that?

Mark Wiseman: As I've stated, the Canadian government is ready, willing and able to negotiate in a detailed way with our partners in the United States and Mexico, as part of the review process of CUSMA, which is a 16-year agreement. We're at year six of a 16-year agreement.

We are willing to commence that review process. We are having discussions around the section 232 tariffs. We wish to reduce the uncertainty the best we can, but we will not reduce it at any cost. That is, in my view and in the view of the government, not in the best interests of Canadians and Canadian businesses.

Ziad Aboultaif: The cost is to every Canadian business and every Canadian consumer. It seems now that the delay is a Canadian tactic around this negotiation. That is what we see in front of us. Those are the words the Prime Minister has said to a former Quebec premier. There is a basis to what I'm saying or what's out there, and that has to be clarified to Canadians. I'm expecting that you'll be able to clarify that one more time.

Mark Wiseman: Canada is ready, willing and able to commence the review of CUSMA. We are involved in regular discussions, specifically around the section 232 tariffs and beyond, to try to reduce the uncertainty created by the actions of the United States of America.

Ziad Aboultaif: How long do Canadian businesses and consumers have to bear the heavy weight and the cost before you say, "Enough with the negotiation tactics. We have to call the shots. We have to do something. We have to be clear and up front with Canadians and tell them what is going on?"

Mark Wiseman: I can't speculate on the views of Canadian business. I can only reiterate that we are ready, willing and able to commence the review process. We are in active dialogue to reduce

the section 232 tariffs imposed on Canadian industry by the United States of America.

Ziad Aboultaif: How long are you going to continue negotiating? Give me a time.

Mark Wiseman: I can't answer that question.

Ziad Aboultaif: You're at the negotiating table. You are our representative in the U.S. You represent Canada, and we expect better answers from you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next, we go to MP Rob Oliphant.

You have five minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wiseman, thank you for sharing your time with us.

This is not a confirmation hearing. This is a chance for us to further our relationship with the United States through your office.

I want to thank you for offering yourself for public service again. I know I don't look like it, but shortly, I will be able to get my Canada pension. It's shocking to the viewers at home, I know. Thank you for your work on such things as making sure that our Canadian pension plan is fully funded and that it was successful in your time there. I really wish you well as you continue to stand up and work for Canadians and for the Government of Canada.

I want to talk about your role as a representative of Canada. I'm an MP, so I represent the people of my riding, but I'm also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I often represent Canada abroad. I don't always agree with my government. There have been positions in the past that I haven't always agreed with. When I'm representing Canada, I agree with my government.

From the previous line of questioning, I'll give you a chance to affirm that it is a position you enjoy. From your experience, what will help you represent Canada and Canadians well in Washington? What is most interesting for you in this very challenging time?

• (1610)

Mark Wiseman: Thank you.

This is an incredibly important job. I am honoured that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada asked me to take it on. It is at times a heavy task because of its importance, but it is a task that I'm proud and honoured to have. I've told several people that this is the best job I've ever had, and I'm sure it will be the best job I'd ever had when I'm done.

Representing one's country, as members of Parliament also do, is just about the highest calling, in my view, that one can have, and I take the job very seriously at every turn.

While I am not a diplomat and I've not served in government, I do bring skills to the table, I think, and I think the Prime Minister believed this when he asked me to take on the role. Whether they be business, negotiation or my legal background, to me, given the times that we are in in the United States and in our relationship with the United States, those skills come to the fore in building relationships, finding win-win solutions and building bridges. I will say that I feel, in my short time in the role, very supported by the government but also by all sides of the political aisle here in Canada, from the business community and from the premiers.

While I have a hard task, I have to say that, in the early days, in spite of some of the tough questions here, which I think are good to ask, I do feel that I'm supported by just about everyone in making Canada a success.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: You mentioned that some provinces have offices in our mission in Washington, and Quebec has one nearby. Do you plan to engage with the provinces and territories and with the premiers and governments of those jurisdictions because of the interconnected nature of the economies that we need to have ready to go? Is that part of your mandate in these next six months?

Mark Wiseman: First of all, I have regular communication with all the provinces as required to carry out my duties, not just on trade but more broadly. That can happen in the hallway with those provinces that are resident in Washington, D.C., but, if not, others are a phone call away. I've met with most of the provincial premiers in my first two months and, of course, I am there to support the Prime Minister and Minister LeBlanc, our chief negotiator, in their more formal interaction with provincial and territorial leaders.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I urge you to keep the territories in mind as well. Having lived in Yukon, I know it's an important thing.

You have many bosses. You have the Prime Minister. You have several ministers: Minister LeBlanc, Minister Anand and Minister Sidhu.

What kind of guidance have you been given from the Prime Minister in this initial phase of your work?

Mark Wiseman: I'll repeat what I said. I feel very supported, including by the various ministers who have an interest in our relationship with the United States and in my role. There is regular communication, as you would imagine, with many of those ministers and with the office of the Prime Minister, and that is so that I can do my job as effectively as possible as Canada's representative in the United States. It's also so that I can give them information that I am picking up and that the team of almost 600 people is picking up, so that information can be fed in on an almost immediate

basis to allow the Government of Canada and its leadership to make the best decisions they can.

• (1615)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: One piece of advice would be to keep that ADM beside you. He gives good advice regularly, so you're well supported.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go next to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just like to clarify something, because being for or against the supply management system isn't like being for or against the new wallpaper in the kitchen.

Mr. Wiseman, do you renounce today the comments you made in 2024 on supply management?

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: I think I published remarks at that time. I don't deny publishing that article, but I don't think that it is relevant to my role.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: It's important for the people in Quebec.

Do you renounce your 2024 position, yes or no? It's not a very complicated question.

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: I don't think my position then or my position now, personally, is relevant. I would say that I am meeting regularly with leaders of critical Canadian industries, including the dairy industry, the poultry industry, the cattle industry and many other industries and many other representatives from Quebec and beyond. I am listening and I am learning about their roles and what's important to them. I am feeding that information back, including to our chief negotiator.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

You don't think your position on supply management matters, then, but you say it anyway. That's terrific.

As part of your mandate, how do you think you will be able to defend Quebec's cultural exception, for example—because it will be part of the negotiations—knowing that you are the co-author of a report that aims to triple the population of Canada and that never mentions Quebec's language or culture and the Quebec nation?

Do you understand that the complete omission of this linguistic and cultural concept from a fairly detailed report on how to reach a population of 100 million people by 2100 shocked many people in Quebec?

Do you understand that this may show your lack of interest, or even your complete ignorance, of what's happening in Quebec in terms of language and culture?

[English]

The Chair: Ambassador, before you answer, I have to say something to Mr. Duceppe.

We had agreed as members that this would not be a confirmation hearing. This is a hearing about the ambassador's mandate.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm talking about the cultural exception.

[English]

The Chair: Let's try to stick to that. You're going back and you're talking about writings.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, but—

[English]

The Chair: It's about his mandate as an ambassador of Canada to the United States. Let's try to keep to that topic, please.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I fail to see how the matter of the cultural exception in the negotiation of the Canada—United States—Mexico Agreement isn't related to his mandate.

[English]

The Chair: I will turn to the ambassador to respond.

Mark Wiseman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, my job—

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Is the cavalry coming to the rescue, Mr. Guilbeault?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: No, not at all. I just want to remind everyone listening in that the cultural exception isn't just for Quebec. Francophonie exists from one end of the country to the other. Francophone culture is obviously extremely important, not only in Quebec, but also throughout the Canadian federation.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: You're quite right.

That's even better, Mr. Ambassador.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go back to the ambassador.

Mark Wiseman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will faithfully represent the policies of the Government of Canada, as instructed, in everything I do, including as it relates to cultural and language matters.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: How much time do I have left?

[English]

The Chair: You have 10 seconds left.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

In that case, I'll come back to you later, Mr. Ambassador. I have more questions for you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We go next to MP Rood for five minutes.

Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much, Ambassador, for being here with us today.

Ambassador Wiseman, do you believe that “The old relationship we had with the United States based on deepening integration of our economies and tight security and military co-operation is over”, that “It is clear that the United States is no longer a reliable partner” and that “Many of our former strengths, based on our close ties to America, have become weaknesses”?

Mark Wiseman: Our relationship with the United States is not over. We are adjacent to the United States. We are adjacent to the largest market in the world. That is a huge benefit for Canada and one that we have to nurture. However, it is clear that our relationship with the United States has changed under this administration due to the imposition of tariffs by the United States and a change in posture to an America-first posture by the United States.

• (1620)

Lianne Rood: Ambassador, are you aware that those quotes are directly from Prime Minister Mark Carney? He seems to be taking an obstructionist approach to our largest trading partner. Recently, media revealed that the Prime Minister explicitly told staff of the former Quebec premier that being slow was part of Ottawa's strategy.

Can this be interpreted as a show of bad faith in Washington? Is it, in your opinion, a deliberate attempt to stall negotiations of CUSMA?

Mark Wiseman: It's not for me to interpret the words of the Prime Minister, but I can tell you that we are ready, willing and able—

Lianne Rood: Ambassador, you could speak to the effect it would have, because in your role as ambassador, that would affect your job.

Mark Wiseman: I'm sorry. Can you repeat the question?

Lianne Rood: The words that the Prime Minister used directly affect the role that you have in your job as ambassador. Do you believe that this is a deliberate attempt to stall negotiations of CUSMA?

Mark Wiseman: Canada is ready, willing and able, as is our chief negotiator, as is Minister LeBlanc and as am I, in a supporting role, to commence the formal review process of CUSMA. We are in regular discussions with the United States as it relates to the section 232 tariffs.

Lianne Rood: Ambassador Hoekstra has said of CUSMA, “It’s not an intense negotiation. There really have been no serious negotiations since October of last year”.

Behind the scenes, U.S. officials are increasingly frustrated, saying that Canada “hasn’t played ball”, that the government has decided to run out the clock and that they “see right through the strategy”.

Is the lack of progress being made on order of the PMO?

Mark Wiseman: Under the CUSMA, there is a mandatory review that takes place under the four corners of the agreement at year six. It is a 16-year agreement. The CUSMA comes to an end in 2036.

The Government of Canada is ready to commence the formal review process with the United States and with Mexico. We are ready and prepared to do that review process—not a renegotiation. It is a review under the terms of the agreement. We are also—

Lianne Rood: Thank you.

Janice Charette, the top negotiator on CUSMA, said that she thought the government should get prior credit for concessions made 10 months ago on the digital services tax, countertariffs and legal challenges on softwood lumber. To her amazement, the President “pocketed” those promises and moved on. Meanwhile 2.6 million Canadians, including many businesses in southwestern Ontario and my riding of Middlesex—London, who depend on trade with the U.S. for their work, are very deeply worried.

Has the Prime Minister revealed to you why he made this strategic error of dragging this out, instead of using the leverage we had at the beginning of the talks to get the tariffs removed?

Mark Wiseman: Any specific conversations I may have had with the Prime Minister around trade strategy or otherwise as advice are privileged, and I’m not in a position to comment.

Lianne Rood: The Prime Minister said that Janice Charette is the chief trade negotiator and not you. Could you tell us what role you play in the negotiations? Can you detail the number of meetings and the substantive actions that have been taken by Canada to secure a deal thus far?

Mark Wiseman: My role is to support the chief negotiator, Minister LeBlanc and the Government of Canada writ large and to build relationships by being resident in Washington day in and day out. It’s to support those relationships with American legislators, business leaders and labour leaders in support of our chief negotiator. This team structure has proven to be very effective.

Lianne Rood: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go next to MP Charles Sousa.

You have five minutes.

Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador, for being here and for your service, yet again, to Canada in a different capacity.

You certainly have a strong rapport and tremendous experience in the United States with some of the work that you’ve done in the past. Now that you’re in this role, and given that you have tremendous experience making deals—in relative terms—in other aspects of business, as well as pension reforms and so forth, how do you see the common ground that Canada has with the United States? How do you see those priorities we share and that we can build upon?

• (1625)

Mark Wiseman: Thank you.

There is a lot of common ground between Canada and the United States. It’s easy to forget that when we’re having tough discussions, or when those discussions are political in nature. As I said in my opening remarks, the amount of trade that travels across our shared border is the greatest between any two countries in the world. We are the number one export market for close to 30 U.S. states. We are the top three export market for almost every state in the United States of America. There are approximately one and a half million Canadians in the United States on any given day. Our Canadian tourists help to support the U.S. economy, from east to west and north to south.

Our two countries work together incredibly well. It’s very easy to forget that. We have much more in common than what separates us. We have many more common interests than what separates us. I’m quite optimistic about our relationship with the United States. Neither of us is moving out of the neighbourhood. While we have to, as the Prime Minister has said, diversify Canadian interests so that we are less dependent on the United States, having the United States next door is a huge advantage for Canada in many respects.

I would say, we still have—although we’re not happy about the 232 tariffs—the lowest tariff burden of any other country in the world as it relates to the United States. We have many more things in common than differences. In my career, my job has been to find common ground and build bridges. I’m confident that with our neighbour to the south, who has been our neighbour since the beginning and will be our neighbour forever, we will also work out our issues.

Charles Sousa: I've seen first-hand your ability to deal and cooperate with corporate Canada. I witnessed that with what you've been doing in Washington with corporate America. Your recent visit to the White House when you got your credentials was also very interesting.

I wonder how you are managing all of these interests. Sometimes what corporate America is saying isn't necessarily what is being said by the White House. I'm wondering about these shifting political dynamics and the timelines. How are you managing that?

Mark Wiseman: I have a fantastic team, including here in Ottawa with Assistant Deputy Linder. They are supporting me, and frankly training and helping me along in my role.

We have a tremendous team with the embassy in Washington, our 12 consulates, plus three additional trade missions in the United States. They are working day in and day out to advance our interests in the United States. That's not to mention the team we have supporting us in Global Affairs Canada.

I feel very fortunate. I don't feel this is a job—nor could it ever possibly be a job—that one person could do. It is very much a team effort. We need to be coordinated across the United States. My role is in the United States. We need to be coordinated with our message to Americans. We have to collect information from all Canadians and be able to translate that to influential Americans in business, government, labour and other interest groups.

We are doing that, and we're going to double down on those efforts.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go next to MP Adam Chambers.

You have five minutes.

• (1630)

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. Wiseman. Congratulations on your appointment. I suspect you might be wishing you'd booked a dentist appointment at this time, but we appreciate your presence here today.

Are you familiar with Robert Lighthizer's book?

Mark Wiseman: Yes, I am.

Adam Chambers: Okay, so you would be aware that, in the book, Mr. Lighthizer uses an anecdote about how, during the 2019 negotiations, the U.S. and Mexico were hunkered down for weeks, making a deal and negotiating, while Canada was conspicuously absent. Do you recall this anecdote from his book?

Mark Wiseman: Yes, I do.

Adam Chambers: Based on your observations so far in your role, and given that Mexico is having ongoing formal and active discussions, do you believe that we are going down a similar path?

Mark Wiseman: I was obviously not part of the discussions that Canada had in putting CUSMA in place in 2019 and 2020, so I can't comment about whether we're going down a similar path. I think that Canada, as I said before, is ready, willing and able to commence the review process.

Adam Chambers: Thank you very much.

Are you briefed on the strategy of the government? Is that something that comes up in your regular conversations?

Mark Wiseman: You can assume that since my job as ambassador is to represent Canada in the U.S., it requires me to be briefed on the strategies and policies of the Government of Canada.

Adam Chambers: Right, so your choice here today is not that you don't know the strategy but that you won't confirm it for us. Is that correct?

Mark Wiseman: I'm not in a position to get into the details of Canada's strategy, as that is ministerial advice.

Adam Chambers: However, you can understand how a dispassionate observer would perhaps conclude, based on stories in the media, that there is a go-slow strategy being implemented?

Mark Wiseman: As I've said very clearly, we are ready, willing and able to commence the review of CUSMA.

Adam Chambers: Thank you very much.

There was a recent poll. Are you concerned that 55% of Canadians believe that getting rid of CUSMA would have a neutral impact or even be beneficial to Canada?

Mark Wiseman: The Government of Canada believes in the value of the CUSMA. We believe in the value that it brings to Canada. We believe in the value that it brings to North America. It is our view that the economic benefits of CUSMA are substantial to all Canadians.

Adam Chambers: Do you think there's a responsibility for parliamentarians, public leaders and business leaders in this country to make the case that this is an important relationship that ought to be maintained?

Mark Wiseman: You would have seen the announcement by the Government of Canada, by the Prime Minister's Office, of the appointment of the new advisory committee on Canada-U.S. economic relations. I think part of that council's mandate is to get information from Canadians and Canadian business, labour and other leaders, and also to transmit—

Adam Chambers: Then yes, you think it's an important relationship to maintain.

Mark Wiseman: I think the relationship with Canadian stakeholders is critically important.

Adam Chambers: Perhaps, as a further question on this, do you think it is irresponsible for politicians, for pundits, for columnists, for leaders in this country to fuel anti-American sentiment? Does that make your job difficult when you're engaging with our American counterparts?

Mark Wiseman: How I feel about that is not really what's at issue.

Adam Chambers: Does it make your job difficult?

Mark Wiseman: My job is to represent Canada in the United States. Sometimes that's difficult. Sometimes it's less difficult.

Adam Chambers: Do you think it's helpful that there are some who would like to fuel anti-American sentiment in the country?

Mark Wiseman: My job is to carry out the interests of Canada. Whether things are helpful, unhelpful, good or bad, I have to carry out the same duties.

Adam Chambers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You still have 25 seconds.

Adam Chambers: I'll just ask whether you regret that the work at the Century Initiative was misused by this government to grow the population by 3.5% for multiple years in a row.

The Chair: I don't think that has anything to do with the mandate of the ambassador, which is the point of this hearing. If we could stick to that, I would appreciate it.

• (1635)

Adam Chambers: I think that's a pretty reasonable question. I mean, he has to build relationships with his American counterparts, and he was promoting open borders.

I just asked if he regretted that the work was misused by the government. I think it was a fair question.

Thank you, Mr. Wiseman.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, we have Anita Vandenbeld.

You have five minutes.

Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador.

In your opening remarks you mentioned that it was quite welcomed by Washington that Canada met its 2% NATO target and plans to go beyond that. I also know that you have a very strong defence team supporting you. Canada has always had strong relationships and interoperability with the United States in defence and security, not least at NORAD, which you also mentioned.

Could you talk about your priorities and strategies going forward in that regard?

Mark Wiseman: Obviously, the co-operative defence relationship with the United States is very important to Canada and also to the United States. In the embassy, we have nearly 80 members of the Canadian Armed Forces, including a rear-admiral who not only helps, day in and day out, in working with our American colleagues but also advises me as it relates to defence policy.

I will be going out to Colorado Springs to visit NORAD. Of course, we have all seen the growing importance of Arctic security in conjunction with both the United States and our other Nordic allies. Obviously, a big part of my role is helping to further those relationships, including in procurement, making sure that Canada is getting the things it needs to defend itself and ensuring that Canadian defence suppliers are able to have continued favoured access to

the United States market. In that regard, earlier this week, for instance, I was in Washington, with Vice-Admiral Topsy, visiting a number of Canadian manufacturers who were presenting their products to not just the U.S. defence market but also the global defence market that had gathered.

That is part of my job. It's an important part of my job. As I say, with Canada meeting its 2% NATO commitment in the last fiscal year, we're off to a very good start. That is not going unnoticed.

Anita Vandenbeld: You also mentioned in your opening remarks that your core mandate, of course, is Canada's bilateral relationship with the United States. That is in the context of a very rapidly changing global geopolitical environment but also in the context of a broader Canadian government mandate, including domestically, to build Canada strong.

Could you talk about where the work you're doing on the bilateral relationship fits into the larger Canadian government mandate?

Mark Wiseman: The Government of Canada has made very clear and the Prime Minister has spoken regularly about the need for Canada to diversify. Obviously, diversifying also means changing our reliance, unnecessarily, on the United States of America, but diversifying does not mean abandoning our relationship with the United States of America. It is too big of an advantage to us. It is too important to us. We are next to the strongest market that has ever been built in human history. Other countries wish they were next door to the United States. As I said earlier, we also benefit, absent the section 232 tariffs, from very close to free trade with the United States.

Diversification means, yes, lowering our dependence on the United States in trade, defence and other areas, but it does not mean abandoning that very important and valuable relationship. It actually means growing it to our economic benefit, as we've seen in defence. It may mean growing our other relationships even faster, and therefore becoming diversified, but it's not a trade-off, in my view.

• (1640)

Anita Vandenbeld: Is there any time left?

The Chair: We're out of time.

Thank you. We're going next to MP Brunelle-Duceppe.

You have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wiseman, when you took office, you were introduced in the media as an international investment banker and pension fund manager who will have to help Canada find solutions to reduce U.S. tariffs.

As for tariffs, you may not know this, but I come from a forestry region, Lac-Saint-Jean, which is currently being hit very hard by the softwood lumber dispute. The forestry industry is the largest employer in the region.

I imagine you know the amount that comes from the countervailing duties related to the softwood lumber dispute and that's currently sitting in trusts on the other side of the border.

Is that correct?

[English]

Mark Wiseman: I believe the amount is close to \$10 billion.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's exactly it.

If we break that amount down by province, that's about \$2.5 billion for Quebec. That's 155,000 direct and indirect jobs. Sometimes, people think it's simply a regional industry outside the major centres, but it actually supports many small and medium-sized businesses, and there are also head offices in Montreal and the major centres.

Do you have a strategy or vision for the new negotiations? For the forestry industry, it isn't just the new tariffs that are extremely harmful; it's mainly the countervailing duties associated with the tariffs. There's the impression that the government may not be doing enough in terms of negotiations. This may be the fifth or sixth trade war.

How do you see that, Mr. Wiseman?

[English]

Mark Wiseman: I am well aware, even in my brief time, of how important the lumber issue is to Canada and any number of provinces, including Quebec. It's not just a section 232 issue. It's not just a CUSMA issue. This issue, as the member has stated, has been going on for a long time. It comprises countervailing duties, anti-dumping levies and, now, section 232 tariffs.

This is on the front burner in terms of the need to try to get some resolution of what we see as unfair and unjustified tariffs on Canadian industry.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: There was a proposal made by the industry and supported by the unions, namely a program for the Canadian government to buy back a portion of the countervailing duties to enable the industry to have liquidity. The government didn't move forward with that proposal.

Have you heard anything about that proposal in Washington? Do you know if it made its way through? We have heard that some unions, on both sides of the border, were pushing it forward.

[English]

Mark Wiseman: I'm aware that there have been discussions that have taken place, but I'm not aware of the specifics.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go next to Monsieur Groleau.

You have five minutes.

[Translation]

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon to our witnesses.

Mr. Wiseman, you've been Canada's new ambassador to the United States for just 67 days. It seems to me that you're off to a bad start.

In 2024, The Globe and Mail published your column in which you took a position against supply management. You are the founder of the Century Initiative, which wants to introduce millions—yes, millions—of immigrants to Quebec to reduce the prominence of French. Yesterday, you sent an invitation to the members of this committee to a reception in Washington. The invitation was in English only. Even the Prime Minister is disappointed in you today.

Mr. Wiseman, are you the right person for the position?

[English]

Mark Wiseman: I believe that the Prime Minister has confidence in my position. He has appointed me and has continued to support me.

[Translation]

Jason Groleau: Here is a simple question: Are you against supply management, yes or no?

[English]

Mark Wiseman: My views on supply management, positive or negative, are not relevant to carrying out my role and representing the Government of Canada's positions.

[Translation]

Jason Groleau: You say that your position on supply management has no impact on your role.

Is that what you're saying?

[English]

Mark Wiseman: My job, as has been made very clear, is to support the chief negotiator and support the Government of Canada's position, including Bill C-202.

● (1645)

[Translation]

Jason Groleau: In the past, you've been an outspoken opponent of supply management, as has President Trump.

Do you consider yourself a weak link in the current negotiations when you agree with President Trump on this position?

[English]

Mark Wiseman: I don't think I've ever been in agreement with President Trump's position on this subject and many others.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: However, in 2024, you stated that you were opposed to supply management, which is the same position taken by President Trump.

[*English*]

The Chair: I just want to address my colleague.

I think he's answered the question numerous times and he's indicated that his job is to—

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, he's not answering my question.

[*English*]

The Chair: No, of course, but you keep going back in time. It's not a confirmation hearing. We had a discussion before in the committee.

This is about the mandate of the ambassador. Let's try to stay as close to that as possible.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: Ambassador, with respect to your mandate, in Canada all 343 members of Parliament support supply management. In the past, you've been against supply management. We are currently in the middle of negotiations with the United States. Just yesterday, the U.S. government was again talking about the fact that Americans want access to the Canadian market.

Will you defend us?

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: My job is to defend, to the best of my abilities, day in and day out, the policies of the Government of Canada, and I will continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: The position of all members of Parliament is this: We want to defend supply management.

I'll ask you again.

Is that the government's position? Do you have the mandate to defend that position?

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: Thank you very much for your answer.

I'm from Beauce, a region that borders the United States. We do a lot of business with the United States. As you know, there's a great deal of trade with the Americans in the steel and forestry sectors.

For several months now, there have been huge tariffs that have been hurting us.

We have the impression that you are deliberately not moving quickly to resolve this issue. Is that just an impression? I am asking the question because you are telling the people of Beauce and busi-

nesses that you haven't negotiated with the Americans for five months.

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: The Government of Canada and I, as a representative in Washington, understand the tremendous strain and hardship that the 232 tariffs are putting on a number of Canadian industries and a number, therefore, of Canadian communities. We believe that these tariffs are unjustified. We believe they are outside the bounds of the agreements that we have in place with the United States of America, and we are working very hard and aggressively to try to reverse the impact of those 232 tariffs.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: Thank you, Mr. Wiseman.

Mark Wiseman: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: You still have 36 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: Thank you very much.

Mr. Wiseman, you said you're going to work hard. What is your strategy in the coming days and weeks to advance negotiations with the Americans?

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: One of our strategies is to meet and influence as many important people in the United States as possible, and that includes members of Congress. We've seen dozens of them, even in the first few weeks that I've been on the job. It means members of industry. It means labour leaders in the United States, and it means, importantly, getting out to state legislators as well. I've already, in my short time, met somewhere in the neighbourhood of a dozen governors across the United States.

We have to keep putting on the pressure day in and day out. As I said earlier, it's important to understand that we think of the United States every morning when we wake up. They don't necessarily think of us. We have to remind them of the importance to the United States that the relationship with Canada represents.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go next to MP Marie-France Lalonde.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wiseman, congratulations on your new role. My colleagues and I were noting that you've only been in the position for a few weeks. I am confident that your experience will bear fruit.

The Prime Minister recently announced the creation of a new committee, the Advisory Committee on Canada-U.S. Economic Relations. On the Canadian side, a number of sectors contribute their expertise.

I'd like to hear your comments on the collaboration you have or are going to have with the Advisory Committee on Canada-U.S. Economic Relations.

• (1650)

[English]

Mark Wiseman: The new advisory committee—which was announced on Tuesday, I believe—will be chaired by Minister LeBlanc. It will provide advice and guidance to our chief negotiator and, by extension, provide help and guidance to me.

We are in a difficult situation with the United States. We should not deny the difficulty of the situation we're in. As a result of the unjustified section 232 tariffs, Canadian businesses, communities and workers are all facing hardships. We need, quite frankly, all the help and advice we can get. I believe the Prime Minister's announced advisory committee on Canada-U.S. economic relations, broadly, will help support us with the information and advice we need from a wide array of viewpoints, industries and regions across Canada in order to help us make better decisions.

As I said earlier, I feel I am very supported in my role as part of the team responsible for advancing Canada's cause with the United States. I think this new advisory committee will provide even more support, guidance and, at times, diversity of views to ensure that, as we develop our negotiating strategy and positions, we are doing so with as much information and input as we can possibly have.

Through my experience as an investor, I believe having more information and analysis allows one to make better decisions, so we need to gather as much information, opinion and analysis, and as many views, as we can. I believe this committee is in furtherance of that.

[Translation]

Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much for your comments.

Indeed, we can see that there are representatives from a number of sectors within the Canadian economy, as well as from the political sphere and the labour movement. I was therefore also very pleased to see those choices.

I'll continue along the same lines.

You spoke about your investment experience in your most recent roles.

I would like to hear your comments on Canada's key strengths that you intend to highlight personally in trade discussions in your new role as ambassador.

[English]

Mark Wiseman: Canada is in a very fortunate position. In many respects—and the Prime Minister has said this—we have what the world wants and needs today, be it energy, critical minerals or agriculture, and we have an incredibly talented and well-educated population. We are the envy of the world, in many respects. What is unfortunately happening in the world far away from us is making our strengths come even more to the fore.

We are in a stronger—and perhaps increasingly strong—position because of the benefits Canada has. I think about benefits in terms of either nature or nurture. We have nature by way of our natural resources and the geography that we benefit from, and we have nurture by having human capital and policies that allow us to appropriately exploit those resources for our benefit. Canada is in an incredible position today.

I have to say that being the ambassador for Canada to the United States is not an easy job in today's world, but I wouldn't choose any other country to be the ambassador of to the United States. We are in a position of strength as a country, and if we can harness both natural and developed advantages, we are going to be in a very good position in our relationship with the United States and with the world in the decades ahead.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Mr. Wiseman.

[English]

The Chair: We are starting our fourth round with MP Kyle Seeback.

You have five minutes.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador, thank you so much for being here. I want to take the time to thank you for your service to Canada. It's a very important role. Canadians are depending on you and others.

I want to talk about the section 232 tariffs. Could you confine your comments to that? When was the last formal negotiation meeting where positions were exchanged with respect to the section 232 tariffs between Canada and the United States? Just give me the date.

Mark Wiseman: I don't think I should be speaking here about specific meetings that have taken place, but I can tell you that there are ongoing discussions on almost a daily basis.

Kyle Seeback: Ambassador, I know you've had ongoing discussions. The minister says this all the time: I'm having conversations. We're having a conversation right now. It's not resolving anything, and I don't think it's a confidential secret when the last actual negotiation took place.

We all know that former prime minister Trudeau flew down to Mar-a-Lago to have a negotiation. I don't know why you're keeping this so secret. It's widely reported in the media that the last formal negotiation took place about seven months ago, where offers were exchanged. Is that accurate or inaccurate? If it's inaccurate, when was there actually another formal meeting?

Mark Wiseman: We're having ongoing negotiations and discussions with the United States. The one thing I will say—

Kyle Seeback: Ambassador, I'm sorry. Of course, you're having ongoing discussions. If you weren't, you wouldn't be doing your job. When the Prime Minister appointed you, he said you were a core member of the negotiating team. If you weren't having negotiations, you wouldn't be fulfilling your mandate. That's not my question.

I want to take you back. My question is this: When was the last formal round of negotiations where offers were exchanged to remove the section 232 tariffs?

Mark Wiseman: Again, we are having ongoing discussions. What I will say is that in my career as a business leader, an investor and a deal-maker, I've never done a deal on the front pages of the newspaper that has been successful, and I think our—

Kyle Seeback: Ambassador, I'm not asking you for any of the details that were discussed. I'm not saying, "Please table what the offers were." I can't imagine that it's confidential information or relevant to the negotiations when the last negotiation took place, because the Americans were there. They would know what the date was as well.

Why are you so reluctant to give the last date of negotiations when formal offers were exchanged on the section 232 tariffs?

Mark Wiseman: There are ongoing discussions. Some of those are reported; some aren't. You will have seen, for example, that Secretary Bessent and Minister Champagne met last Friday. I was party to part of those discussions. There were other reported meetings between Minister LeBlanc and Secretary Lutnick.

Kyle Seeback: Ambassador, you're not going to answer my question. I've tried four different ways. That's fine. I don't need to hear about what the discussions are.

You've said very clearly today that Canada is—and these are your words—ready and prepared for formal negotiations on the section 232 tariffs. Mr. Greer has said they are prepared to have formal negotiations. Why haven't they happened?

Mark Wiseman: I think what I said is that Canada is ready, willing and able to commence the formal review process of CUSMA.

• (1700)

Kyle Seeback: Why haven't those formal meetings taken place? Mr. Greer has said they're ready as well.

Mark Wiseman: We are also ready.

Kyle Seeback: Something is happening. The Americans are saying they're prepared. You're saying you're prepared, but no one is meeting. What's the holdup?

Mark Wiseman: All I can do is reiterate that on the Canadian side, under the lead of our chief negotiator, Janice Charette, we are ready to commence the CUSMA review process.

I want to say that this is a review process. This is not a negotiation of a new agreement.

Kyle Seeback: I understand how it works. I used to be the trade critic for the Conservatives. I know it's a review process.

The section 232 tariffs have been in place for almost a year now. You've talked about how this has caused the strain on Canadian businesses. Has there been an economic analysis prepared, that

you're aware of, about how much this costs Canadian businesses every month?

Mark Wiseman: Yes.

Kyle Seeback: You do have that, so you're aware of what the cost is to Canadian businesses every single month of delay in resolving the section 232 tariffs.

Mark Wiseman: The Government of Canada does detailed economic analysis of the impact of the unjustified tariffs that the United States has put on Canadian business. I believe that the Government of Canada understands very well these unjustified tariffs and what they're doing to Canadian business interests.

Kyle Seeback: If delay was a tactic, do you know how much it's hurting Canadian businesses?

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go next to MP Rob Oliphant.

You have five minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is obviously not the first time Canada has faced tariffs under section 232 of the 1962 act, nor is Canada the only country facing these so-called metal tariffs.

When we were facing these before in the first Trump administration, not only did we have an advisory panel of experts, but we also promoted both parliamentary diplomacy as well as a sort of track two diplomacy that would engage civil society, business, labour unions, community groups, arts organizations and academics to look at the strong relationships we have. I'm wondering what thoughts you might have on the value of your conversations at the executive and congressional levels, which are important, but then also the conversations you and your embassy could perhaps foster among those who cross the border every day.

My mother came from Niagara Falls. We have family in Lewiston, and we have family in Chicago. I went to school in Chicago, where I have relationships. Is there a way I could be of use other than being an MP? Is there a way that your embassy can help us engage Americans at a level of conversation that would be helpful for Canadians?

Mark Wiseman: Thank you.

I think it is important to build relationships. I think it's important to remind American leaders, be they business leaders or political leaders, and to remind ordinary Americans of the importance of the relationship with Canada. As I've said, we share a tremendous amount in common on many levels. This form of engagement, I believe, is very critical to furthering the position of the Government of Canada as it relates to our relationship with the United States in trade, in defence and in many other matters.

One thing that I've been reminded of and learned about in my early days as the ambassador is the number of things that work unbelievably well between our two countries. For example, on Monday at the embassy, I hosted a lunch with the International Joint Commission, which is a commission that was struck under the 1909, I believe, boundary waters agreement. Americans and Canadians are working day in and day out to resolve issues as they relate to the international waters that flow from Canada to the United States and from the United States to Canada. That type of engagement showing the importance of co-operation, showing the importance of the business relationships and showing the importance of the cultural relationships goes a long way.

As I said, I think there's a very important role for parliamentarians, including members of this committee, to help in that as well. As the ambassador, I'm very encouraging of parliamentarians from all parties—I've now welcomed parliamentarians from all parties to the embassy—and I encourage you to continue to do that both as parliamentarians and as ordinary Canadians.

We are going to engage Canadian business, Canadian labour leaders and Canadian cultural leaders with their American counterparts to remind the United States of the importance, the depth, the breadth and the richness of the relationship between our two countries.

• (1705)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I would caution you: Beware that, in my first two years in my role of representing Canada around the world, I gained 15 pounds. The luncheons can kill, so keep your health in mind as well. Diplomacy is a lot about eating.

You talked earlier about the network of consulates and trade offices that we have around the United States. We also have key interests in border states, so the relationships between our premiers who are on border-facing states as well as governors and state-level representatives become important. Has that been part of your briefing? Has that been part of your mandate as well?

Mark Wiseman: Our provinces and territories that border the United States actually have a particularly important role to play. I've already worked with many premiers, asking them to help the Government of Canada with our relations, particularly with governors from adjacent states.

There are a number of... I forget the acronyms of the various organizations, but there's one in the northwest, and there's one, obviously, in the northeast and Atlantic provinces. I think those relationships between our premiers and their counterparts in the governors' offices, particularly in border states, are incredibly important.

Those border states feel the presence and the economic connection to Canada in many respects more than anywhere else, whether it's North Dakota, Maine, Alaska, Washington state or one of the other nine states that border Canada. I believe that there's a special place for our provinces and territories to help us in delivering the message, and I've already reached out to them.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Senators go to those governors' meetings as well. It's really quite important. We all engage. We have opportunities to do that.

Briefing notes from your embassy are important for us to make sure that we are up to date on the status of trade issues. I originally come from Sault Ste. Marie—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but I have to interrupt. We are way over time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador, don't worry. My questions won't be as tough as Mr. Oliphant's.

Today, my leader offered to meet with you to inform you of Quebec's distinctiveness, whether linguistic, cultural or economic.

Do you intend to accept his offer and meet with him one-on-one to discuss your upcoming mandate and Quebec?

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: Absolutely. Whenever the leader is available, I will make myself available.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's fantastic.

Thank you very much, Ambassador.

We talked a bit about your past. I understand that it may have unsettled some people here, but we truly did not do it in bad faith. We've heard real concerns, and serious doubts have been raised by people affected by the sectors in which you've held positions in the past. That's why we raised the issues of supply management and the plan to triple Canada's population without taking into account Quebec's cultural and linguistic specificity.

What do you say to people who have raised serious doubts?

I understand that you want to represent all Canadians, including Quebecers. As you mentioned, you read the newspapers in both official languages. However, many people still have serious doubts about your past and the positions you have held.

In the historical context of the tense relations we currently have with our neighbours to the south, what do you say to people who are concerned?

[*English*]

Mark Wiseman: One thing about my role is that I get to meet a lot of people. Something that I've made sure of is that I spend time in the province of Quebec and with Quebecers. One of my first meetings with business leaders anywhere was with Minister Joly in Montreal, where I met a round table of business leaders from Quebec. I will, in fact, be back in Quebec City and Montreal next week, meeting leaders from the province.

I've also had very constructive meetings with the former premier—and I will be welcoming the new premier to my office in the coming weeks as well—not to mention excellent engagement with Quebec's representative in Washington.

Part of my job is to make sure that I understand the views of the people I represent. Those are views that come from across Canada. They're varied views; they're different views. It's important that I understand them, and I'm making a very large effort in particular to understand the important views from the province of Quebec.

● (1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now go to MP Michael Chong.

You have five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Chair.

We have no date as to when formal discussions are going to begin between Canada and the United States on the section 232 tariffs. We've no confirmation of what the government's strategy is with respect to the 232 tariffs and that's creating, in my view and in the view of many, a great deal of uncertainty.

I want to raise the alarm bells on behalf of Ontario's auto industry. Our auto industry relies on the U.S. market to survive, to exist. Eighty-five per cent of all vehicles produced in Ontario are exported to the United States. As you know—you said you were privy to economic data—Canadian auto manufacturers say the industry has absorbed \$5 billion in tariffs since 2025 and according to StatsCan, exports of motor vehicles and parts dropped 21% in January and passenger car and light truck exports fell more than 32%.

I want to quote two industry representatives. Brian Kingston of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association said, "You cannot have a commercially viable automotive plant in Canada facing tariffs of that size." Toyota has said—and they're the largest, as you know, auto assembler in Ontario—that the tariffs have made manufacturing in Ontario "unsustainable". Recently, Honda and Toyota formed a new Canadian industry association and my interpretation of that is that they are extremely worried about where this is all going.

The auto sector in Ontario employs 100,000 people, and they want to know when relief will be in sight. The lack of answers on this is, frankly, quite concerning. The government keeps saying that we have the lowest tariff rate of any country in the world. That's of no consolation to the automobile manufacturers in Ontario when they've paid \$5 billion in tariffs, and they've said that this is unsustainable and that you can't have manufacturing plants in Ontario with this level of tariff. The government won't tell us when the section 232 tariffs on automobiles are going to be resolved, unlike Mexico, which is actively negotiating on these issues this week, our government here....

By the way, this is not an investment bank. It's a democracy, and this is the heart of the democracy. Canadians have a right to know what's going on. We don't know what's going on. Do you understand how this lack of transparency, the lack of answers at this committee, which is a formal public forum, is driving a great deal of even more uncertainty in Ontario's automotive sector about what the future of the industry is in Ontario? Do you acknowledge that?

Mark Wiseman: As I said earlier, uncertainty is a very bad thing for the economy. It's bad for business and it's bad for investment.

The uncertainty in this case has been caused by the unjustified 232 tariffs that the United States has put on—

Hon. Michael Chong: Ambassador, with respect, I agree with you on that, but there's even more uncertainty layered on top of those unjustified 232 tariffs because of the government's unwillingness to tell us what is going on.

We get more information from the Government of Mexico about what they are doing through the statements they are issuing, and we get a dearth of information about what is coming from the Canadian government. We read news sources about anonymous, high-ranking Canadian sources, about unnamed anonymous Quebec sources, telling us what is going on. This is the forum for us to hear officially from the Government of Canada what exactly is going on.

We have been having these debates now for some time in Parliament and we don't get any information. Like I said, there are families who go to bed every night in southwestern Ontario, where I'm from, who are scared to death about where their future paycheques are coming from. Manufacturing in my part of Ontario is plummeting. It's shrinking. People are worried. Information is important.

Don't you agree? Will you take back to your government the need for more information to come from the government about what the approach is and when we're going to have negotiations on section 232 tariffs? The industry is running out of time. You can't keep paying \$5 billion in tariffs and keep these plants open. At some point, something is going to break.

● (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go, next, to MP Sameer Zuberi.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wiseman, thank you for being with us today.

[*English*]

I want to congratulate you on your new posting and the important work you're doing on behalf of the Government of Canada. We appreciate your being here for the full two hours.

I want to continue the conversation we were having. Actually, my colleague Mr. Oliphant was asking about this. You elaborated, in those answers, on the interactions you are having with governors in the United States. Perhaps you could continue on that theme and share with us how you're engaging with the executive, Congress and other governors beyond the border states.

How are those interactions going, and what are the results thus far?

Mark Wiseman: Thank you.

Just as there are many constituencies in Canada, there are many constituencies in the United States. In my early days, what I'm trying to do is interact with as many of those constituencies as possible. In my first two months, I've met with dozens of members of Congress, both members of the House and members of the Senate. I'm particularly making an effort to meet Republican members of Congress and members of Congress from border states.

In addition to that, in terms of engagement with the United States, I've met with a number of members of the executive branch in the administration. They are the ones who are putting the policies in place, obviously, including the unjustified section 232 tariffs. I'm trying to understand their position and explain Canada's position.

Importantly, I'm explaining the importance of Canada to the United States. For example, the previous member was talking about the auto industry and the importance of the U.S. market. It's also important to remind both the American industry and American political leadership that Canada is the single biggest buyer of U.S.-manufactured automobiles and light trucks outside the United States of America. We are both a producer and a market for many American regions and many American industries.

In terms of governors specifically, I attended the National Governors Association meetings in Washington. That was in my first or second week on the job. I'm in regular dialogue with certain state governors on the border. I will be travelling to various regions of the country to meet people on their own turf, which I think is also very important.

Finally, I want to reiterate the incredibly good work our consulates do across the United States. Each of our consulates represents not just the state it's located in but also a number of other states so that we have direct representation and a plan for each of the 50 states across the United States of America. That coverage model is particularly important. Our consuls general and their teams are integrated, and they will be even more integrated into our plan going forward.

That's what I've done in the short time I've been there, along with my team. I am incredibly well supported and very well briefed for all of these meetings, and we will be doing more of them. There can't be white space in our calendars.

• (1720)

Sameer Zuberi: Thank you. That was a pretty fulsome answer.

I have about 30 seconds, so I'll leave it to you to share what you'd like with us in the remainder of this time.

Mark Wiseman: I'll go back to what I stated in response to one of the earlier questions.

I am incredibly honoured to have this position. I am humbled by the trust and confidence the Prime Minister has placed in me. I recognize the importance of this role to all Canadians across the country. I will not be perfect. Mistakes will be made, but where we make mistakes, we will correct them. We will try not to make the same mistakes again. I will tirelessly carry out this mandate to the very best of my ability in support of Canada, all Canadians and the Government of Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will have a shortened round for the final round, beginning with MP Kyle Seeback.

You have five minutes.

Kyle Seeback: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, Ambassador, thank you for being here.

I share my colleague's deep dissatisfaction with your sort of unwillingness to answer very direct questions on things that do not seem to be confidential in nature, including when the last formal negotiations took place on section 232 tariffs. The American ambassador has been clear on this, that it hasn't happened for at least seven months. I find your unwillingness to confirm that to committee deeply troubling. We're here to represent Canadians. I have a lot of auto workers in my riding who have lost their jobs at the Brampton assembly plant, and others who work at Honda who are deeply concerned that they may lose their jobs. I think your lack of forthrightness on this is deeply troubling.

You did say, however, that you're in possession of an economic analysis of the economic damage that is being done to the industries suffering from the section 232 tariffs. I would ask that you provide that economic analysis to the committee so that we also can understand what economic damage is happening to those affected industries. Will you provide those documents to the committee?

Mark Wiseman: I believe some of those documents constitute privilege and advice to ministers—

Kyle Seeback: The ones that don't, can you provide those to the committee?

Mark Wiseman: Mr. Chair, I will get back to the committee on that. I'm not experienced enough to know exactly which of those documents fall into—

Kyle Seeback: Okay, but I would like to have your agreement that if there are economic analysis documents that are not privileged, you will produce them.

Mark Wiseman: Mr. Chair, I'll get back to the committee on our ability to produce those documents.

Kyle Seeback: I really don't think that's an answer. I don't want privileged documents. If there are economic documents that are not privileged, will you produce them for the committee?

Mark Wiseman: Mr. Chair, I will get back to the committee on my ability to produce those documents. I just don't have the awareness.

Kyle Seeback: I'm not asking about your awareness. I'm saying that you cannot produce confidential or privileged documents, but if there are unprivileged or non-confidential documents, will you produce them? I'm finding your obtuseness on this deeply troubling.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The witness has answered. The question has been asked five times now. The answer has been received. It is inappropriate to continue to badger a witness who is a public servant.

Kyle Seeback: He hasn't said yes or no.

The Chair: My understanding is that the witness has committed to learn about the process of responding to committee requests for documents and abiding by our process.

Kyle Seeback: He's undertaking to do that—okay.

Ambassador, given that an economic analysis has been done on the cost of these section 232 tariffs, the government therefore knows what the cost of delay is. If it turns out that there has been a strategy to slow-roll negotiations or delay negotiations, it's being done with the full knowledge of the economic impact it's causing Canadians. Would you agree with that statement?

• (1725)

Mark Wiseman: As I stated earlier, the Government of Canada, our chief negotiator and Minister LeBlanc are ready, willing and prepared to commence discussions. There's no hidden strategy. We are ready to go.

Kyle Seeback: Ambassador, it's just been reported in the Wall Street Journal that Prime Minister Mark Carney has said that officials are ready to negotiate or wait it out until the U.S. addresses some of his country's concerns.

If part of the strategy is waiting it out, as the Prime Minister has said, as reported in the Wall Street Journal, the waiting out strategy is being done with the knowledge of the economic harm it's causing.

Mark Wiseman: I can just reiterate that we are ready, willing and prepared with our chief negotiator and Minister LeBlanc to commence the formal review process of CUSMA whenever possible.

Kyle Seeback: I'll ask again: Why hasn't that meeting taken place, then? The Americans have said they're ready, willing and able as well.

Mark Wiseman: It takes two sides to have a meeting.

Kyle Seeback: Right, but if both sides are saying they're ready and willing to negotiate, and they're not meeting, obviously something else is going on. I might not be the smartest man, but I can certainly figure that out. What's going on?

Mark Wiseman: I believe I've answered the question to the best of my ability.

Kyle Seeback: Is it because, as was reported in The Wall Street Journal, that the Prime Minister is waiting for the U.S. to address

some of his concerns? Is that why there are no meetings taking place?

Mark Wiseman: I can't speculate as to why meetings are or are not taking place.

Kyle Seeback: You're the ambassador, and you say you're ready and willing to have meetings, yet somehow you don't know why there are no meetings. I think that's deeply troubling. You should know why there are no meetings taking place.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go next to MP Vandenberg.

You have five minutes.

Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador Wiseman, for being here. I note that earlier you talked about how well supported you feel. I think all Canadians feel that we all, parliamentarians included, need to have your back because it is extremely important that we're all pushing in the same direction on these important files. Thank you so much for answering our questions.

To switch a little, you mentioned in your opening remarks that you have, of course, 600 diplomatic and professional staff. Nobody today has asked you about the consular work that is done by those professionals and diplomats. Perhaps you could comment a bit about some of the work that we're doing on the consular side.

Mark Wiseman: Thank you.

I know that we and all Canadians are very focused on the tariffs situation, particularly the section 232s. I know that we are all very interested in the CUSMA review that will take place. However, I think it's also important to remember the breadth and depth of both the relationship with the United States and also the scope of work, as the question indicated, that takes place in the embassy and consulates.

There is a tremendous amount of consular work that goes on: protecting and ensuring that the rights of Canadians in the United States are respected to the fullest extent of the law, and assisting Canadians in need, particularly when tragedies take place. As you saw, our consulate in New York got involved immediately after the horrible events at LaGuardia about a month ago. The job of our embassy and consulates is to support Canadians when in need and also to promote Canadians.

For example, we're working hand-in-hand with our friends in the United States and Mexico on the upcoming FIFA World Cup—I was briefed on that today by Secretary van Koevorden—because it's a very important part of our relationship with both the United States and Mexico. It's a great opportunity for us to share and to celebrate together, while also making sure that we can do so in a way that Canadians, Americans, Mexicans and those from around the world who come to experience the World Cup on our continent will be protected and be able to do so in a safe way.

We have cultural and art connectivity as well. Some of that takes place in our embassy.

Of course, this is also a very important year in the United States. We will help and celebrate, with our American friends, the 250th anniversary of their nation.

I think it's a very good point: We're very focused, and we should be focused on economic matters, trade, unjustified tariffs and the CUSMA review. However, each and every day those 600 people—whether they are from law enforcement, consular services, cultural attachés, our Canadian military, the RCMP, etc.—are working hand-in-hand with Americans and their agencies to ensure our mutual interests.

• (1730)

Anita Vandenberg: You said earlier that part of your job is to talk to Americans about how important the Canada-U.S. relationship is to them.

I think we have only about a minute left, but could you comment on what some of those things are?

Mark Wiseman: Part of the job—and unfortunately, Mr. Chair, it is true that a lot of it seems to involve eating—is to interact socially with Americans, in due course. I've only been there for two months, and I've made the decision that I'm not yet in the position to engage with American media. At some point, we may decide that it makes sense strategically.

I am the representative of Canada in the United States, in every part of that. It is a critical part of my job. I recognize that I am a public figure. That means I have to be front and centre as our representative, and that's not just on economic matters.

I'll give one more example. In July, there will be a game between the Washington Nationals and the Toronto Blue Jays in Washington, D.C. It's on Canada Day, so I'm going to be practising because I think I'm going to get to throw out the first pitch.

The Chair: That's excellent. We look forward to that.

Next, our final questions will come from Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

You have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador, as my party's critic for foreign affairs, I have the opportunity to meet a number of ambassadors from various countries. Part of an ambassador's role is to have a thorough understanding of the history of the country they represent. I have often had the opportunity to meet ambassadors who walk me through the history of their country in detail, which helps us better understand it.

Since that is part of your mandate, you will be called upon to speak with your interlocutors to help them understand Canadian history.

For example, if someone were to ask you, in your role as ambassador, to describe what the Quiet Revolution was in Quebec, how would you summarize it?

[English]

Mark Wiseman: One thing that I'm quite proud of—and I described my education at the beginning—is that I indeed have a degree in history from Queen's University. That was my first degree. I spent a tremendous amount of time studying Canadian history, broadly speaking, from coast to coast. I will say that was a number of years ago, so some of it is a bit rusty.

I agree with the question. My job is to represent Canada and to explain Canada.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: My question was specifically this: How would you describe the Quiet Revolution, in broad strokes, to someone who asked about it?

• (1735)

[English]

Mark Wiseman: I don't think it's my role or this committee's role to talk about the Quiet Revolution. However, I will agree with the question. I do have to broadly know, as part of my role, the nuances of Canadian history, including the history of Quebec. I spend quite a bit of time explaining to Americans the nature of Canada's formation—

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm waiting for my answer on the Quiet Revolution, Ambassador. Actually, I thought you were going to tell me right away. It wasn't even a trick question.

[English]

The Chair: We're out of time, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, unfortunately. You've had the opportunity to ask the same question a number of times.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: It's very disappointing, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: We will conclude the meeting by thanking both Ambassador Wiseman and Glen Linder for appearing before the committee and for their testimony.

Please note, colleagues, that there will be no meeting on Tuesday, April 28, due to the 2026 spring economic statement, as we agreed.

Our next meeting will take place on Thursday, April 30, regarding private member's bill, Bill C-219. The sponsor of the bill has confirmed his appearance for the first hour, and the departments have been invited to appear during the second hour. A second meeting will be scheduled to hear additional witnesses on Bill C-219. Members are invited to submit their witness proposals to the clerk. An email will be sent in this regard.

I also want to announce to colleagues that the informal meeting with the Kosovo deputy minister of foreign affairs is still on for Tuesday morning. You have the details from the clerk. The Kosovo

friendship group is also meeting with the deputy minister on Monday at 6:30.

Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

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