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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 20 of the best committee on the Hill, which is the international trade committee.

First, we are going to deal with the study budget for Bill C-13—you received a draft of it yesterday—for \$8,250. Could we adopt this before we start with the witnesses?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Thursday, December 11, 2025, the committee is resuming its study on Bill C-13.

We have back with us today, from the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Jeff Nankivell, president and chief executive officer, by video conference. From the Canadian Meat Council, we have friends back to see us. We have Claire Citeau, vice-president of international trade, and Jorge Correa, vice-president of market access and technical affairs. From the Canadian Pork Council, we have Stephen Heckbert, president and chief executive director, and René Roy, chair. All of them have been with us before.

Welcome. As you know, we will start with opening remarks and then proceed to rounds of questions. You each have up to five minutes.

We'll start with Mr. Nankivell, please. I invite you to speak to the committee.

Jeff Nankivell (President and Chief Executive Officer, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada): Madam Chair, good morning to you and to the members of the committee.

I'm speaking to you from Singapore, where I arrived today in advance of next week's Canada-in-Asia Conference, an annual event convened here by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada that is now in its fourth edition.

Supported by the Government of Canada and over two dozen other partners, this flagship event brings together leaders of businesses and institutions from across Asia and established and aspiring leaders in Asia engagement from across Canada. More than 700 participants attended last year's conference, a majority being from the private sector, with two-thirds coming from across Asia and one-third from Canada. We're on track for similar numbers next week.

I mention this event because it relates directly to my key theme today, which is that CPTPP expansion is an essential opportunity to advance Canada's core strategic interest of building new networks and new coalitions of like-minded middle powers.

Simply put, in a world with our autonomy and reliable access to markets under assault, we need to use whatever levers are available to us to build durable, rules-based trade arrangements with partners that are committed to continuing trade liberalization and resisting economic coercion.

U.K. accession to the CPTPP is important for Canada, because linking the CPTPP to other major trading partners and regional blocs is core to Canada's new strategic needs.

The CPTPP itself is a major asset for Canada, and it is doubly so in our present circumstances. It's a high-quality, comprehensive, state-of-the-art trade agreement among a group of countries that are genuinely committed to trade liberalization. The U.K. is another such country, and the precedent of growing the agreement outside the region is helpful for Canadian interests. The successful integration of the U.K. into the CPTPP signals that a high-standard trade integration is still possible, despite protectionist trends elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, U.K. accession has already been endorsed by nine of the 11 CPTPP members, and continuing delay on the part of Canada risks undermining our credibility as a leading voice in this group.

This is important because we now have other interests in areas such as defence, security and foreign policy, and our influence with these key partners depends in part on our reputation as a reliable, engaged player and a positive force in trade expansion.

The importance of CPTPP for Canada today is such that at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, we've made it a major element of our overall work, which is aimed at supporting Canadians to understand, connect with and succeed in Asia. In 2024, we launched a unique evergreen web portal on which official CPTPP documents and related research are made available to Canadians and a global audience, similar to the University of Toronto's G7 Information Centre. In our current, extraordinary geopolitical context, this work has taken on deeper significance and urgency. Of particular importance is the initiative to create linkages between the CPTPP and the European Union, as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN. Canada is uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in such arrangements.

APF Canada has encouraged such linkages in the past. Prime Minister Carney advanced the idea recently, and some initial progress was made at November's CPTPP Commission meetings in Australia, where joint statements were issued between the CPTPP and the EU and with ASEAN. The sooner we get ratification of U.K. accession fully behind us, the more we can focus on advancing this important agenda.

For Canadian exporters operating or seeking to operate in multiple regions, any progress in harmonizing regulatory requirements across Europe, the U.K. and the Indo-Pacific, even partially, would lower compliance costs and reduce other expensive complexities.

This brings me to my final point: None of this amounts to much if our businesses don't get the information and support they need to benefit from new trade agreements. The federal government, Crown corporations, provincial trade ministries and trade associations must be adequately resourced to follow through with proactive measures assisting Canadian businesses to understand the new opportunities, find new partners and navigate the regulatory requirements in jurisdictions that are new to them.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the committee's deliberations. I look forward to your questions, which I'll be pleased to answer in either official language.

• (1105)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and I hope you have a wonderful trip in Singapore.

Go ahead, Ms. Citeau, please, for up to five minutes.

[Translation]

Claire Citeau (Vice-President, International Trade, Canadian Meat Council): Thank you for inviting us to appear before the committee on behalf of the Canadian Meat Council.

[English]

the voice of Canada's federally licensed meat industry, known as the CMC.

CMC is the largest component of the food processing sector, with over \$32 billion in annual sales and nearly 300,000 jobs across the country. Our members process more than 90% of Canada's meat, supplying Canadian families and over 90 export markets around the world with safe, high-quality protein. Our sector depends on trade for value, diversification and carcass utilization,

with over half of Canadian meat production destined for export markets such as the U.S., China, Japan, Mexico and South Korea.

From the Canadian Meat Council's perspective, U.K. accession is a disappointment and a loss of negotiating leverage for Canada, although it will not significantly change the day-to-day reality for our beef and pork exporters. The U.K. continues to apply the same non-tariff barriers and sanitary and phytosanitary measures as the EU does, so our core market access challenges remain largely unchanged.

For beef, there is a strong interest in high-quality Canadian product, but the primary challenge is the limited availability of hormone-free cattle needed to reliably serve the U.K. market. This supply constraint is effectively the only barrier for small and medium-sized plants that can meet EU and U.K. standards and could otherwise consider exporting, as they are well positioned to serve this niche market.

Until we address this structural supply issue, CETA, the U.K. FTA or CPTPP accession alone will not unlock the full potential of the U.K. and EU as premium markets for Canadian beef.

Jorge Correa (Vice-President, Market Access and Technical Affairs, Canadian Meat Council): For pork, the priority is the removal of burdensome testing requirements, notably for *Trichinella*, which act as red tape and limit trade flows despite a strong demand for fresh, high-value Canadian pork.

Securing science-based recognition of Canada's controlled housing and on-farm food safety programs, as well as eliminating unnecessary and costly testing, would deliver a tangible and significant boost to pork exports to both the U.K. and the EU in the near term, aligning with the government's goal of doubling exports.

Another impediment for some of the largest Canadian plants is the requirement for complex, multi-year scientific review dossiers. Science-based antimicrobial interventions, such as the use of organic acids, have improved food safety and product shelf life, but their use in exports remains subject to lengthy and complex approval processes in the U.K. and the EU. The Canadian industry must further advance the required submissions and work with the government to move this file forward.

Our message today is that Canadian red meat remains committed to the U.K. market, in which genuine opportunities exist. However, the focus now must be on practical technical fixes.

We encourage the government to use every available mechanism, including CETA, CPTPP, the trade continuity agreement and our SPS dialogues, to resolve SPS and regulatory barriers rather than stepping away from existing agreements and further weakening Canada's leverage.

● (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much. Well done.

Mr. Roy, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

René Roy (Chair, Canadian Pork Council): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the members of the committee for having us here today.

My name is René Roy. I'm the chair of the Canadian Pork Council. With me today is Stephen Heckbert, our president and CEO. We're pleased to represent more than 7,000 Canadian pork producers from coast to coast to coast.

[*English*]

Our industry is an \$11-billion economic engine, and we are an export-focused industry, with more than half our product exported to countries around the world.

From our perspective, the U.K. accession to the CPTPP means that we have surrendered our negotiating leverage for Canada, but we understand the need for real politics in today's environment. This will not significantly change the day-to-day reality of our pork producers or processors, since the U.K. continues to apply the same non-tariff trade barriers and sanitary and phytosanitary measures as the European Union.

Our market access challenges will remain. For pork, we could remove burdensome testing requirements, notably for *Trichinella*, which serve only to limit trade flow despite strong demand for fresh, high-value Canadian pork. Canada has not had a case of *Trichinella* for almost 70 years, so this is no longer a requirement for health protection. It's simply a non-tariff trade barrier.

Securing science-based recognition of Canada's controlled housing and on-farm food safety program and eliminating this unnecessary, costly testing would deliver a tangible and significant boost to pork exports to both the U.K. and the EU in the near term, aligning with the government goals of doubling export.

As free traders, Canada's pork producers remain committed to growing opportunities for markets in which genuine desires for free trade exist. We are asking for a focus on delivering true access with practical fixes rather than the symbolism of another agreement. We encourage the government to use the mechanisms available—notably, CETA, CPTPP, the trade continuity agreement and our SPS dialogues—to resolve these SPS and regulatory barriers.

We want to bring our high-quality Canadian pork to the world, and we know that British pork farmers simply cannot produce enough pork to serve their market. At present, they import high-cost EU pork, which merely serves to drive up food costs for their consumers. In a world where our alliances need to help focus on food security, as well as national security, we know that we can be a reliable source of delicious pork and pork products for Great Britain.

Thank you, and we'll be happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much to you all.

We'll move on to our members, please, with Mr. Groleau for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Good morning, Madam Chair.

Good morning, distinguished guests.

My question is for the president of the Canadian Pork Council, Mr. Roy, who proudly hails from Beauce.

Mr. Roy, are pork producers currently satisfied with trade relations with the United Kingdom?

René Roy: No. The issue is non-tariff barriers. We'd like to have smooth trade between partners who trust each other on scientific grounds. Right now, things are off kilter, because their side doesn't recognize the science. The trichina worm parasite has not been present in our livestock for over 60, nearly 70 years. That's not a valid argument to include in a trade agreement, but that's what the Britons are doing right now. This only blocks the entry of our products into Great Britain.

● (1115)

Jason Groleau: If I'm not mistaken, our food safety standards are among the highest in the world. Is that correct?

René Roy: Absolutely.

Jason Groleau: Why are they rejecting all of our products?

René Roy: In our opinion, this is a protectionist measure, and it's a matter of doing business with other players. As I mentioned earlier, others have access to that market, but Great Britain is blocking Canadian producers and processors from entering it.

Jason Groleau: Are other countries subject to the same non-tariff barriers as Canada?

René Roy: As far as we know, that's not the case.

Jason Groleau: So they are opening their market to those people and blocking our access with non-tariff barriers.

You often talk about food security and national security. What do you mean by that, specifically?

René Roy: We know that the geopolitical situation has changed considerably. As an agricultural superpower, Canada can create strategic alliances, because food security is a matter of national security. Beyond the issue of military defence, we also need to forge those alliances and this degree of attachment or co-operation in terms of food. Many countries don't have the capacity to produce all their own food. We have the capacity, so we can be strategic allies.

Mr. Heckbert, would you like to add anything?

Stephen Heckbert (President and Chief Executive Director, Canadian Pork Council): Yes, we can see, for example, that Japan is very aware of the fact that we would be their leading exporter of pork. So it really makes sense to work closely with the Japanese, and they can trust Canada to be with them when it comes to food. That's really the kind of alliance we need to make in a world that's changing every day. We really need to think of our food production capacity as a means to forge alliances around the world.

Jason Groleau: If I understand correctly, you have a lot of export capacity, more than the United Kingdom. If I'm not mistaken, they export roughly \$9 million a year, but you export very little because of this barrier. Are you able to produce enough?

René Roy: Yes, we can produce and export. It's really about market access.

Jason Groleau: We're going to sign another agreement with them when we already have a bad one. Do you think the government negotiators are doing a good job right now? Should we first resolve the issue of these non-tariff barriers and have them removed before negotiating on a larger scale?

René Roy: As producers, when we see pork products entering Canada but we can't export, it makes no sense to us.

Jason Groleau: Do you think it opens a door for all other future agreements if we say it's okay to leave non-tariff barriers in place for pork and not deal with them? Don't you think we should take a closer look at this?

Stephen Heckbert: Obviously, we're concerned about setting a precedent. That's why we're here today to testify before the committee. We want to make sure that the government and Parliament understand that we need to ensure that this doesn't set a precedent for other agreements.

The previous agreement was very good because market access was very unhindered and advantageous for us. However, we want to be sure that having a partner in an agreement with this type of barrier won't set a precedent that will extend to other countries in other agreements. That's really the reason we are here today. We're saying to be careful that this doesn't become a precedent whenever Canada enters into this type of agreement.

• (1120)

[English]

The Chair: There are 24 seconds remaining.

[Translation]

Jason Groleau: Should the Canadian government do more to defend its evidence-based agreements?

René Roy: Yes.

Jason Groleau: Thank you very much, Mr. Roy and Mr. Heckbert.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Monsieur Lavoie, please, for six minutes.

[Translation]

Steeve Lavoie (Beauport—Limoulu, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. We're very grateful to them.

My first question is for you, Mr. Nankivell. The agreement with the United Kingdom and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership are an opportunity for Canada to open up markets. There is potential. There is a lot of talk about diversification. It comes up all the time.

I often joke that I'm a visual person. For the average person, can you paint a before and after picture of this? Today, the United Kingdom isn't part of the agreement, but we want it to be. What would change in Canada's economy tomorrow morning? What would be different after we sign the agreement as opposed to what we have today? What will that look like?

Jeff Nankivell: Just to clarify, are you talking about before and after the U.K. joins, and the changes that entails?

Steeve Lavoie: Yes, that's right.

How will the U.K.'s accession to the agreement change Canada's economy and businesses tomorrow morning, for the average Canadian? I often like to talk about before and after. What's going to change?

Jeff Nankivell: There won't be a lot of changes overnight just by virtue of the U.K. joining. As the committee has heard, we already have ties with the United Kingdom, and those ties will continue on largely unchanged.

The importance of this step is the message it sends to the rest of the world, meaning that Canada will seek out agreements like the CPTPP. It provides opportunities to continue expanding that agreement. You're not going to notice any changes on the ground overnight. Rather, in the medium or long term, it's about opening up markets for Canadian exports.

Steeve Lavoie: If I understand correctly, it's more like we're signalling to the rest of the world that we want to continue diversifying our markets and opening them up. Many are saying we depend on the United States. I'm hearing things about China as well.

Where do you see the balance in all this? There's a lot of talk about being less dependent on the United States. At what point can we strike a balance? What remains to be done? We never talk about balance. People always say that we're too dependent and that we have to find new markets. That's all well and good, but where's the balance for Canada in opening up these markets? Are we ever going to say that we've diversified our markets enough? How do you see that balance?

Jeff Nankivell: It's hard to say in advance. I think things will balance out somehow and we'll see what our limits are.

Now, the important thing, the priority, is that we give ourselves the tools we need to create more options and push the boundaries in our relationship with the U.S. Of course, the U.S. is our biggest trading and security partner, so we'll need to keep our eyes trained on the White House as we go through all of these steps.

I feel like we've learned in recent days that we need to push the boundaries in our relations with the U.S., because tomorrow President Trump may conclude his own agreement with China. He obviously wants to. We mustn't ignore that. We must defend our own interests.

• (1125)

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you.

My next question is for you, Mr. Roy.

Earlier, you mentioned the scientific controls required and the fact that a certain bacterium had not been found here for over 70 years. What do these scientific controls involve? Are we meeting them, yes or no? What do they represent in terms of time and money for our producers?

René Roy: We're being asked to test meat for *Trichinella spiralis*, which is a parasite.

Steeve Lavoie: Is the testing being done?

René Roy: They require us to test a very large number of carcasses, which makes it prohibitive to export to Great Britain. That's the problem. We test on a small scale, because this parasite has been all but eradicated in our livestock.

Steeve Lavoie: Okay.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, you have six minutes, please.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

My first questions will be for those of you here in person. Then I'll go online to Mr. Nankivell of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

First, if I understand correctly, the problem is related to sanitary and phytosanitary regulations. Are there other levels, or is that pretty much it? Please respond quickly, if you would.

[English]

Claire Citeau: It's supply—SPS and supply.

We like the hormone-free beef to sell to the EU or the U.K. There's *Trichinella* testing and then supply and the lengthy requirements to complete the dossiers that we need to submit to the EU or the U.K. for approvals.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you.

That said, I've been hearing about this for a long time. We also heard about it in connection with the agreement with Europe. People said it was very difficult. They said that it's all well and good to guarantee tariff access if there are indirect ways of doing what can't be done through customs duties.

Now, if we compare the European Union to the United Kingdom, are we facing the same kind of blockade?

[English]

Claire Citeau: I think this is, more or less, an extension. The U.K. adopted the EU SPS requirements, so I think— from our perspective at least—we view the U.K. as an extension of the EU.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: They sold us on that agreement, of course, like they do with every agreement. We're told that these are opportunities for exporters. Have you heard any kind of commitment from the U.K. to encourage easier entry?

René Roy: Actually, no, we haven't heard that, on the contrary. They did say that animal welfare barriers could be applied, for example. When you start dealing with that kind of barrier, which could be an animal welfare standard to be applied in one country versus the other, it's extremely relative. In reality, it becomes a very asymmetrical situation.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: What about you, Mr. Correa?

Jorge Correa: We haven't heard that they're going to give Canada exclusive access. They repeated the same rules they've always had to us. The U.K. is the third-largest pork importer in the world. The British therefore need pork, but they want to keep their standards and are unable to establish a standard for Canada. However, we've proven, with supporting test results, that we don't have a public health issue or the trichina worm. We don't have it on our farms. We test for it in our processing plants, and we don't have that parasite. They're not able to give us anything.

• (1130)

Stephen Heckbert: Our production system is different from the United Kingdom's. They have a lot of animals outside quite often, so that's where they're going to be exposed to the trichina worm. However, in our case, our animals don't have the same type of exposure. For us, it's much easier to guarantee that we don't have that parasite. They have to test every carcass for that. We have a scientific database founded on tests that prove we don't have that in our food system in Canada. So they test us as if we were producing the same way as them. That makes our product unprofitable because it costs a lot more to test all carcasses than it does to conduct the scientific tests we do. In a market that has to import 45% to 50% of its pork, we wonder why they're looking for more expensive pork. We're surprised, because our product would be more profitable for their industry and more affordable for their consumers.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: We're looking at this now and it's quite a strange situation because, as you seem to be saying, in terms of Canadian standards—correct me if I'm wrong—it's all above board and British meat is imported here quite easily and treated fairly. Is that the case? Please answer yes or no.

René Roy: Yes.

Jorge Correa: Yes. Meat from the United Kingdom and Europe is currently imported into Canada. That's because we have no requirement for this parasite, *Trichinella spiralis*. So their meat comes in here. To meet their requirements, we would have to test carcasses and therefore spend \$4 million to \$6 million on testing to gain access to the United Kingdom.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: My impression is that, as a matter of principle, we are all in favour of trade. We are all in favour of diversifying our partners in the Trump era, and so on. We are all in favour of the United Kingdom joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. That's not a problem.

On the other hand, aren't we giving it all to them on a silver platter and not leaving ourselves any bargaining chips? For example, we could pose a bit of a threat by saying that we're going to delay ratification or suspend concessions. We could keep one bargaining chip. Now we're saying that this hasn't worked for years, but they don't have to worry because we're not going to ask them for anything in return.

Claire Citeau: In our press release,

[*English*]

this is a loss of negotiating leverage. Yes, precisely, it is a disappointment.

The Chair: Thank you very much—

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: What are we—

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry. We're 10 seconds over.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: What can we do?

Claire Citeau: We could have an agreement that would enable us to eliminate this need for testing that costs several million dol-

lars and force our processors to send frozen meat rather than fresh meat, a product with more added value.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. McKenzie for five minutes, please.

David McKenzie (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

If I can, I'll pick up where my colleague was in questioning, more or less.

We believe in a science-based trading regime. You're describing circumstances in which the science supports our products in Canada, our exports and the opportunity to export to the United Kingdom.

I wonder if you could update me on what your organizations have been told about the status of discussions with the U.K. on these specific issues for which trade barriers are being put in place. Are you being kept up to date? Where do we stand? Is there hope for some progress?

Stephen Heckbert: We are aware that conversations happen between our officials and officials in the U.K. We've also heard that progress with the U.K. is perhaps not as strong as it might be with Europe at this moment. If I were grading my hope, I would say that my hope with Europe is probably 40%, and my hope with the U.K. is probably lower than that.

The challenge is that pork is a global commodity. We have competitors from Brazil who have a lower-cost product than what is in other markets. The battle that folks sometimes take on to protect their domestic production can lead to creating barriers. This has two impacts. First, it keeps partners out of the market that they probably would like to see doing business with them, such as Canada. The second problem is that it may keep their food costs higher than they would like them to be.

This is the real challenge: having a conversation with folks not only at the bureaucratic level, if I may be honest, but also at the political level. Sometimes, the food affordability question is harder to manage for someone who works as a government official. It's a political-level conversation that probably has to be had between folks from Canada and the U.K.

• (1135)

David McKenzie: From the Meat Council...?

Claire Citeau: I want to add that we remain in really close communications with the bureaucrats, the negotiators and the ministers' offices, and there is a gamut of trade negotiations happening and being implemented.

Regarding market access issues, the U.K. and the EU are important high-value markets, but there is also a lot of work being done elsewhere, in Indonesia and China. A lot of good and important work is happening there as well.

Yes, we remain in contact with officials, and we sense an openness on the part of the EU to have conversations, which I think we need to leverage and build upon.

David McKenzie: I very much appreciate your reflection of the place that any particular trading relationship has in Canada's overall spectrum of trading relationships around the world. We're all well aware of current circumstances with our single largest trading partner and some of the pressure that's putting on us.

Right now, we're just talking about the accession of the U.K. to the CPTPP. In that context, it seems to me that now is the time to bring up some of these issues. That's what I'm trying to get at. I want to refer to a press release that the Canadian Meat Council put out. It says:

Canadian meat is currently severely disadvantaged in the interim agreement with the UK as technical, non-tariff trade barriers have resulted in Canada being unable to access the UK market, while the UK enjoys unfettered access into the Canadian market.

Now, this is not a surprise. It's exactly what we're talking about this morning, but that press release was out just over two years ago, and that's something I'm trying to get out. Last week, what we heard from the minister was about conversations. When do we stop having conversations and try to use some of the dispute resolution mechanisms that exist in our trade agreements to try to see matters resolved? Have you heard anything about that from the Liberal government?

Stephen Heckbert: I haven't heard anything about using trade dispute resolution mechanisms, nor am I aware of the conversations.

When folks ask us, we continue to provide them with information. We have a very good working relationship with folks from CFIA and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, who are having these conversations with their international partners. I think there's a motivation question, probably on the other side. Is this a pressing concern for them? There are probably times when they continue to have the dialogue without necessarily trying to achieve an end to it.

On the balance of things that you have to advance in one of these trade agreements, we accept that there's a big, broad world of conversations that have to happen for any of these single trading agreements. One thing we're raising today is to please continue to have this conversation about pork, in our case, and about meat in general so that it's one of the—

David McKenzie: I'm going to interject—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. McKenzie, but you're 29 seconds over the time already.

David McKenzie: I apologize, Madam Chair. I had 30 seconds more on my clock.

The Chair: I have to go with the clerk's clock—

David McKenzie: Of course.

The Chair: —and you're now 39 seconds over.

We'll go to Mr. Naqvi.

Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here in person and virtually. It's always a great pleasure to work with you and engage in these very thoughtful conversations. I appreciate that.

I'll start with Mr. Nankivell.

It's good to see you again, albeit virtually this time. Thank you for all the important work you're doing in Canada and abroad. You spoke in favour of the agreement for the accession of the U.K. into the CPTPP. You alluded to linking Asia-Pacific and Europe and what a pivotal role this agreement could play.

Especially in the context of the geo-economic circumstances we find ourselves in, can you speak more about why the link between Europe and Asia-Pacific is important, what role Canada can play and where this agreement fits into that?

• (1140)

Jeff Nankivell: Yes, I'd be pleased to do that, and Madam Chair, I welcome the question and the opportunity.

If you look at a globe, we are geographically pivotal between those two regions, but we are also extremely well placed geopolitically as one of the larger middle powers, if you look at the whole scope of members of the United Nations. We are a member of the G7, the G20, APEC, the Organization of American States and so on. Therefore, we are well placed to be considered a valuable partner at a time when we've seen a real sea change in the interest and appetite in these countries and economies to take a fresh look at Canada. I can speak to that from my own experience and that of my colleagues from APF Canada in the travels we did around the region in Asia over the last year.

All of these countries, all of these economies, are facing similar challenges to those of Canada. It's not existential for any of them quite the way it is for Canada and Mexico, because of our relationship with the U.S., but they all have their own challenges with the U.S. and with China, as we do. Therefore, they're looking to diversify.

I think we have a moment in which there is some momentum, some impetus. The European Union is looking to increase its autonomy and to play a greater role on the global stage. It's a heavy-weight in trade matters—it always has been since it came together—but it underperforms in areas of defence and security, and this is a time when all of these things are linked through the concepts of economic security and resilience.

I would say in brief that the stars are aligned with an alignment of priorities across countries in the Indo-Pacific region, Europe and the U.K. to look for like-minded partners who are committed to maintaining and building, where possible, a rules-based international trading order, as well as being prepared to submit to the disciplines of dispute resolution mechanisms, which is an important feature of the CPTPP. It's a high-quality trade agreement, and they are looking for ways to bridge those things.

At this point, this is a long game. We're not talking about concluding a free trade agreement in which everything is harmonized across CPTPP, the European Union and the Association of South-east Asian Nations, but we are at a point at which linkages can be made in certain areas, in certain sectors, in certain regulatory streams in areas like digital trade, in which we're not so far away from being able to harmonize. This has concrete benefits for Canadian businesses because the complexity of the new world of trading blocs and regional agreements is a really significant challenge for Canadian businesses, and basically, everything you try to do is more expensive these days.

The Chair: You have 16 seconds remaining.

Yasir Naqvi: I have 16 seconds, so very quickly to my friends from both the meat and pork councils, I am hearing from you that you support the government's approach in signing these important trade agreements and diversifying our trade.

René Roy: I do, as long as they are fair and based on science.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll begin with Jeff Nankivell from the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

An article published on your website in November 2025 states that, in your opinion, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership is attractive because it does not involve any economic superpowers. The article also mentions China's bid, and we know that this raises a whole series of issues: If China joins before Taiwan, it will spell the end of Taiwan's bid. This is a complex geopolitical issue.

The current agreement includes an investor-state dispute settlement process, a source of concern for the United Kingdom in 2023—and I quote: “Companies have already [used] ISDS to sue governments over a thousand times, including over laws to raise minimum wage, ensure affordable water for citizens, and phase out fossil fuels.”

We know that countries such as the United Arab Emirates, among others, are considering joining. This partnership will continue to increase the number of parties to the agreement. Will you share the UK's official concerns when this occurs?

• (1145)

Jeff Nankivell: The investor-state dispute settlement mechanism is controversial and warrants review. It is already being examined. A review of the agreement is currently being conducted by the commission chair.

Protections and limitations already exist in the current agreement. Canada was involved in developing them, in fact. There remains the possibility of direct discussions between the partners on that subject. At the same time, let's not forget that investors from member countries and economies, including Canada, also enjoy the protections in this agreement. These institutions are responsible for

Canadians' and Quebeckers' retirement funds. It's also about striking a balance between our offensive and defensive interests.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move on to Mr. Mantle for five minutes, please.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing.

My initial questions will be to the Meat Council and the Pork Council.

Over the last several years, you have described this deal—and I'll paraphrase—as a bad deal. Is that still your view today?

René Roy: Yes, it is still a bad deal.

We understand the geopolitical situation, but today, we have circumstances in which we cannot trade but they can trade with us. This is still unfair, so it's not a good deal.

Jorge Correa: Yes, we also confirm that it's not the best deal we could ever have. We believe it will be difficult to continue or for this current deal to be viable for the industry, because the United Kingdom is still very reliant on the European Union.

As for the regulatory context and framework that they have together, they will bring us to the same place we were in maybe two, three or five years ago when we signed the CETA. We're in exactly the same space now.

Stephen Heckbert: I'll put it in context in terms of numbers for you, sir.

We have a trade deficit in a product that the U.K. imports more than 50% of. We have a trade deficit with the U.K. of \$56 million in this commodity. Clearly, something's gone awry in the normal working of a market.

If we are a 70% export nation, then they are a 50% import nation, but they are exporting \$56 million of product to our market. The math just isn't really “mathing.”

• (1150)

Jacob Mantle: Thank you.

We had officials from Global Affairs at our previous meeting with the minister, and they indicated to the committee that the Government of Canada's intention is to maintain the trade continuity agreement on top of and above access provided by the CPTPP. Are you aware of that?

Stephen Heckbert: I was not aware of that.

Jacob Mantle: I'm seeing heads shaking, so I take that as a general no.

Do you have a view on whether the government should provide access under two agreements rather than just one?

Stephen Heckbert: In principle, we support having.... For example, we know the government is pursuing individual trade agreements with countries when we may also have a blanket agreement. For cases in which this can clarify some questions within those kinds of FTAs or even CEP agreements, it can be beneficial.

However, if neither agreement is delivering results for us, then I guess the number one question we would have is this: Where is the table at which we can seek some resolution on these? As long as that's clear to us, then I guess that is what we would ask for from the government as we have these discussions.

If this is at the continuity agreement table, that's excellent, but if it's at the CPTPP table, then where can we clarify how to get some resolution around these SPS questions?

Jacob Mantle: On that point, we've had the trade continuity agreement for years, but we've had no resolution. It seems as though we'll have no resolution under CPTPP. To your point, where is the table for these discussions to be happening?

In just the last minute I have, I also want to ask about dispute resolution. Both agreements, TPP and the Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement, provide for consultations, conciliatory measures and ultimately dispute resolution.

Do you think we're at the stage in time when the government should consider availing itself of those benefits? We believe in having this agreement, and dispute resolution is part of that. If you have a view on this, I'd like to hear it, and if not, at what point do you think the government should look at those options?

Claire Citeau: I would hope we'd access and use the existing mechanisms, SPS mechanisms, within each of those agreements before we get to the dispute resolution stage. We have not heard from our members on this yet. If this comes up in the future, we'll decide—the organization, the board will decide on this—but I think there are mechanisms.

Jacob Mantle: How much longer do you think the discussions should be? I guess the question is the tactic. We've had a couple of years of trade continuity agreement discussions. The minister was here last week. We just heard about more discussions. Is this satisfactory to you?

Claire Citeau: No, it is not, and we're here to say that more needs to be done, both with the U.K., within the CPTPP context, and with the EU.

To go back to your earlier question, I would add that if there is the TCA, or trade continuity agreement, and the CPTPP, I think all it does is provide venues for companies to see which agreement they want to utilize. We see that in other contexts as well. Mercosur is part of both CUSMA and the CPTPP. For Indonesia, it's the same thing with the broader ASEAN.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm sorry, but we're 52 seconds over.

Madame Lapointe.

[*Translation*]

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Welcome to all the witnesses. Thank you for being with us. For some of you, this is not the first time.

Earlier, Mr. Heckbert, you said that Great Britain's pork production is not sufficient to meet its own demand. Where does it buy its pork?

Stephen Heckbert: The pork it buys comes mainly from the European Union. Since it is a former member of the European Union, there are obviously agreements and trade practices already in place. The pork comes mainly from Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, but if we never open the market to other possibilities, we always fall back on what we know. That's one of the questions everyone is asking right now: Is it time to try to establish new international relationships?

Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

Earlier, you said that Great Britain's pork production is not sufficient to meet its own demand, but that it does not really want to allow our meat into its market. Do you know which proteins people prefer to consume in Great Britain? Is it lamb or chicken, for example?

Are they rejecting our meat because pork and beef are not really their preferred proteins and they want to close their market for local consumption?

• (1155)

Stephen Heckbert: They do like pork; that's not the issue. They would like to see a little more domestic production, but the life of a pork producer is a hard one. Many are leaving the industry, causing local production to decline and increasing the country's need to import. Protein consumption in Great Britain is roughly the same as ours, if you look at the distribution of proteins in percentages. So it's not really because the market doesn't promote pork. It's more because they want to encourage pork producers to stay in the industry in Great Britain. They want to protect their own production. Under a free trade agreement, local production sometimes has to become more competitive.

Linda Lapointe: Perhaps I misunderstood what you said earlier, but given that their production is insufficient, they cannot export their pork.

René Roy: In fact, in a context of market liberalization, they do export a little, as does Canada. Although we export, we also import. This trade balance is still heavily negative. So, even though they export a little, they have to import a significant amount for their own consumption.

Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

I now have a question for Mr. Nankivell, who is in Singapore at the moment. I don't know what the time difference is between us.

Jeff Nankivell: There's a 13-hour time difference.

Linda Lapointe: That's what I thought. I've had the opportunity to travel to Singapore, in connection with the first round of negotiations for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP. You are indeed far away. Thank you for joining us.

Do you see the CPTPP as a bridge between Asia and Great Britain, which is in Europe? Do you have a positive view of this?

Jeff Nankivell: Yes. Essentially, it's an important step because it represents an expansion of the agreement beyond the region itself. In addition, as we already know, it is becoming an agreement of [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Linda Lapointe: We can't hear you.

Jeff Nankivell: This is a high-quality agreement with high standards and some of the most modern provisions. It is an opportunity to build a new network of middle powers that share the same values and have adopted a system that is in line with what Canada wants. That is why we consider this step so important, not only for symbolic reasons, but also because of the concrete impact it will have in the medium term.

Linda Lapointe: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you to our witnesses for coming back to see us. I hope the next time we see you we'll be celebrating, having somehow overcome some of the issues that you raised.

We will suspend for a moment before we bring in our other witnesses.

- (1155) _____ (Pause) _____
- (1205)

The Chair: I'm calling the meeting back to order.

With us today, from the Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners, we have Edwina Melville-Gray, the chair of the board, by video conference. From the Canadian Cattle Association, by video conference, we have Tyler Fulton, president, and Jennifer Babcock, chief government and international affairs officer. From the British Canadian Chamber of Trade and Commerce, we have Martin Buckle, vice-president.

Welcome to you all. Thank you for taking the time to join us today.

We will start with Ms. Melville-Gray for an opening statement of up to five minutes, please.

Edwina Melville-Gray (Board Chair, Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners): Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable members of the Standing Committee on International Trade, for the opportunity to provide you with testimony today.

The Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners supports strong trade relations between Canada and the United Kingdom. We welcome U.K. accession to the CPTPP. We do not oppose Bill C-13, but Canada should not ratify this agreement without first securing equity and reciprocity for the people who built both our countries.

More than 100,000 U.K. state pensioners live in Canada. They worked, contributed and paid into the U.K. system for decades. They earned their pensions, but because they chose to retire in Canada, their pensions are frozen forever. If they lived in the U.S.A., the EU or Turkey, they would receive full annual increases. In Canada, they do not. The only difference is geography. This is discrimination by postal code.

For example, Anne Puckridge is 101 and a Second World War veteran. She moved to Canada in 2001 to be near family. Her pension has been frozen for 25 years at £72.50, or \$135 a week. Had she moved to the U.S., today she would receive £180, or \$336 a week. She did everything right. She served, contributed and followed the rules, yet she has been penalized for choosing Canada. With inflation exceeding 60% since 2001, her purchasing power has collapsed, and Canadian taxpayers now help fill the gap.

Through GIS and other income supports, Canada now spends significantly more than \$200 million annually supporting British pensioners who should be supported by the U.K. system they paid into. This is a moral and fiscal issue. Globally, the pensions of more than 400,000 U.K. pensioners are frozen. Nearly 90% of these pensioners live in the CPTPP countries, each and every one, with most living in Canada and Australia. This reflects outdated postwar arrangements that no longer match modern mobility or modern values.

Canada uprates CPP and OAS abroad, including in the U.K. The U.K. does not reciprocate. Successive Canadian governments have raised this issue politely, respectfully and persistently. Nothing has changed. U.K. officials admit that the policy has not been reviewed in 70 years. Why? It is because there has been no leverage until now.

Bill C-13 gives Canada leverage. Once ratification occurs, the leverage disappears. Canada is being asked to grant permanent trade privileges, market access, tariff elimination and investment flows worth billions while leaving pension injustice untouched. That sends the wrong signal.

As Prime Minister Mark Carney warned, middle powers can no longer afford to "go along to get along", which is what Canada has been doing on frozen pensions. This is the moment to insist that trade reciprocity includes people, not just products and capital.

U.K. treasury officials cite uprating costs of £930 million. That assumes full historical equalization, something the U.K. has never done in past agreements.

Official U.K. FOI data shows that the real cost of uprating pensions in Canada would be about £13 million, or \$24 million, for 2027-28. That is a rounding error on a U.K. pension budget of £146 billion per annum.

The barrier is not money; it is political will. We are not asking to rewrite the CPTPP. We are not asking to block accession. We are asking for a responsible pause, a pause to secure a formal U.K. commitment to amend the reciprocal social security agreement to include annual uprating. That is not obstruction; it is good governance. It is standing up for residents of Canada. It protects Canadian taxpayers, and it strengthens Canada's credibility.

We therefore ask this committee to recommend that Bill C-13 not proceed until Canada obtains a formal U.K. commitment to enter negotiations on annual uprating for U.K. state pensioners residing in Canada. We also ask the ESDC and Global Affairs Canada to actively pursue a modernized, bilateral, reciprocal social security agreement with the U.K. that explicitly provides for annual pension uprating. Trade access should not move forward on a one-way basis while pension justice remains frozen.

After 70 years, it is time for equity and reciprocity. This is the moment, as Mark Carney said, to “tak[e] the sign out of the window” and for Canada to act.

Thank you.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fulton, go ahead, please.

Tyler Fulton (President, Canadian Cattle Association): Good morning. My name is Tyler Fulton. I'm the president of the Canadian Cattle Association. Together with my wife, I have a beef cattle operation in Birtle, Manitoba.

Today I'm joined by Jennifer Babcock. We're both dialing in from our U.S. counterpart's meeting, CattleCon, this week. Unfortunately, we can't join you in person. As you can imagine, trade with the U.S. is our highest priority. Our leadership team is on the ground working closely with our friends south of the border.

That said, we're pleased to join the committee virtually today to discuss the U.K.'s accession to CPTPP, or Bill C-13.

We want to clarify CCA's position on the U.K. accession to CPTPP, as well as to address our ongoing concerns with the U.K.'s non-tariff barriers.

CCA was opposed to the U.K.'s accession from the beginning due to the U.K.'s not following the high standards of the CPTPP agreement. Once the U.K. left the EU, we hoped it would remove non-tariff barriers and be a trusted trading partner for Canada. However, with the continuity agreement between Canada and the U.K., an agreement that was always understood to be a temporary bridge before a new agreement, we saw the U.K.'s trade practices in action. The U.K. continued to follow the EU's example and put up non-tariff barriers to keep our beef out of its market. When the U.K. wanted to accede to CPTPP, we were opposed because it would water down the agreement's high standards and set a dangerous precedent for other countries wanting to join.

The CPTPP continues to be a positive agreement for Canadian beef producers, particularly in Japan. We also see market potential with other Asian markets, such as Vietnam.

With its veto, Canada had an important negotiating lever with the U.K. However, Canada did not use its veto. Instead, it allowed the U.K. to join before addressing the non-tariff barriers. Unfortunately, Canada lost negotiating power the second it allowed the U.K. in to the CPTPP without getting something in return. It was for this reason that CCA asked the government to give notice to the U.K. to pull out of the continuity agreement, with the intent of restarting bilateral negotiations in which our issues could be addressed.

Last June, Canada and the U.K. committed, through parallel exchanges of letters, to work together on issues of relevance to trade in the meat sector, yet no progress has been made on addressing any of the meat issues or ensuring meaningful trade access.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement about setting up a technical working group to address market access issues, there have been no indications of progress on Canadian beef access.

We urge the government not to give anything further to the U.K. until our non-tariff barriers are addressed, using whatever mechanisms are available. Resolving these barriers would be consistent with the scientific findings, would not cost the U.K. any money and would allow Canadian beef the opportunity to get into and compete in its market, as it does for other CPTPP countries.

CCA continues to offer its support to the Government of Canada to reach the best trade deal possible for Canadian beef producers and all Canadians. The pathway for economic growth and trade diversification is through meaningful, rules-based trade.

In these uncertain geopolitical times, Canadian beef producers need every opportunity to diversify their markets with trusted trading partners. At a time when the government is looking to diversify trade, we should focus our trade negotiations toward looking, with like-minded allies, to find solutions that benefit both economies.

We look forward to your questions and to getting into more detail. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Buckle, the floor is yours for up to five minutes, sir.

Martin Buckle (Vice-President, The British Canadian Chamber of Trade and Commerce): I'd like to thank the committee for the invitation to appear before you today.

The British Canadian Chamber of Trade and Commerce was founded in June 1951 under our original name, the British Canadian Trade Association. This is our 75th anniversary year.

The chamber exists to promote the transatlantic business interests of our members and stakeholders, and our mission includes four objectives: to promote the bilateral development of trade, commerce and investment between the U.K. and Canada; to help create better understanding between the Canadian and British business communities; to provide opportunities for members to meet for business and social networking; and to represent the opinion of the British business community in Canada on trade, commerce, finance and industry, and to represent the Canadian business community in the U.K. in the same respects.

It is the fourth pillar that brings me here today to speak in favour of Bill C-13.

The total trade between our two countries varies from year to year, particularly as commodity prices change, but the U.K. remains Canada's third-largest export market, and the two-way balance of trade in goods and services exceeded \$50 billion in the 12 months to the end of June 2025. The U.K.'s financial trade with Canada exceeds that of Italy and Spain combined, despite the size of those two countries and their proximity to the U.K.

Most of our trade is covered by the continuity agreement signed after Brexit, and a new bilateral agreement is much needed but seemingly still some way off. The CPTPP is an opportunity for our two countries to affirm our mutual commitment to fair trade that does more than simply remove tariffs. It's a high-standard, forward-looking framework that includes strong commitments to digital trade, data flows, intellectual property, labour and environmental protections. These are rules that Canada supports and even helped design.

The U.K.'s entry also strengthens the CPTPP itself. Britain brings economic weight, investment capacity and strong alignment with Canada's approach to labour and environmental standards. The inclusion of the U.K. makes the CPTPP an even more attractive partner for future members, reinforcing a rules-based trading order that brings social, environmental and economic benefits.

COVID taught the world a lesson in supply chain resilience. The Russian invasion of Ukraine gave us another supply shock, and extreme tariffs on trade with the U.S., yet another. The CPTPP gives U.K. and Canadian companies more flexibility and more places to source, to process and to export. It spreads risk and strengthens our combined economic security.

After Brexit, there was an uptick in U.K. companies' reaching out to our chamber to learn more about Canada and doing business here. After the introduction of tariffs on many goods heading from Canada into the U.S.A., we started to see an uptick in Canadian companies looking to trade with the U.K. Changes in the global

structure of trade focus attention on both the opportunities and the challenges those changes introduce. The spotlight illuminates everybody.

Last week, we joined Canadian and Scottish businesses online to prepare for Scotland-Canada business week at the end of April 2026. This initiative offers a unique opportunity to connect Scottish and Canadian businesses looking for new export or investment opportunities. Meanwhile, the West Highland Chamber of Commerce will be making another trade mission to Nova Scotia this March.

Last year, Virgin Atlantic opened a new route between Toronto and London Heathrow. In partnership with WestJet, the carrier is now able to open Canada to more travellers than ever before, whilst its onward connections from London to Europe, India, Africa and the Middle East enable greater opportunities for Canadian companies looking to access global markets.

This year, starting in May, WestJet will connect four times weekly with Cardiff, the capital of Wales and gateway to the western parts of the U.K.

I don't want to upset any of our Italian friends, but if Wales makes it to the World Cup this year, fans will have the easiest route ever to visit Toronto and support their team.

The social, economic and cultural ties between our countries are flourishing, and this bill gives Parliament the opportunity to support our values, our businesses and our vision for a flourishing future.

Thank you for your time.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Buckle, and congratulations on the 75th anniversary. You're certainly seeing a lot of accomplishments.

We'll now go to our members.

Mr. Mantle, you have six minutes, please.

Jacob Mantle: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to our witnesses for their testimony this morning and afternoon.

My first questions will be directed to the Cattle Association.

Your association has previously described the deal that we're currently considering, the U.K.'s accession, as a bad deal. Is that still your position?

• (1220)

Tyler Fulton: Yes. To be clear, we have shipped no Canadian beef into the U.K. for the last two years. On the other hand, there's more than \$40 million in beef, I think, flowing from the U.K. into Canada. When it's that one-sided, I think it's pretty clear there's a problem.

Jacob Mantle: Thank you.

We had officials from Global Affairs present at the committee last week, and they informed us that it's the intention of the Government of Canada to maintain the existing trade continuity agreement. Are you aware of that?

Tyler Fulton: Yes, we were made aware of it.

Jacob Mantle: When were you made aware?

Tyler Fulton: It was last week.

Jacob Mantle: You had previously called for the government to withdraw from the trade continuity agreement. Is that still your position?

Tyler Fulton: Yes. Our perspective—albeit specific to the beef cattle sector—is that the continuity agreement represents a leverage opportunity to get our issues addressed. We haven't seen any development on having those issues addressed, so, given the understanding that it was a temporary continuity agreement before the next one was signed, we think it's reasonable to consider terminating it in an effort to address our issues.

Jacob Mantle: We heard from the minister, who appeared last week on this bill as well. When we asked the minister about some of these issues, he responded—and I'll paraphrase—that discussions were ongoing on this. My understanding is that these discussions, as you mentioned, have been ongoing for several years, because the trade continuity agreement was meant to be temporary. Do you believe that the current discussions, as the minister described them, are sufficient to address your issues?

Tyler Fulton: Well, I have to say that, recently, we have been meeting much more frequently with the Minister of Trade than we did previously. I sense that, more broadly, we're getting much more engagement on trade-related issues. As for addressing our non-tariff barriers specifically, we've not seen any developments there.

Jacob Mantle: Both agreements, the TPP and the trade continuity agreement, contain provisions for consultations and then, ultimately, dispute resolution. How much longer do you think discussions should proceed before the government considers availing itself of those mechanisms?

Tyler Fulton: Given that we're advocating using the continuity agreement and terminating it as leverage to address it, I guess I'm a bit skeptical as to whether those mechanisms will address our issue. We have had, as you said, lots of time since the development of these agreements.

Jacob Mantle: Thank you.

You noted in your opening remarks that you are at CattleCon, if I have that right.

Tyler Fulton: Yes.

Jacob Mantle: I've heard reports that the U.S. is considering returning to some form of discriminatory labelling for beef products or other meat products. Are you aware of these discussions?

Tyler Fulton: Yes. It's been an issue that has raised its profile up and down over the course of the last 15 years. This year—actually, as of January 1—they introduced a voluntary “product of U.S.” label, which we're watching and are concerned about. Given that it's a voluntary label, we don't have the same concerns as we did when we successfully fought a country of origin labelling case at the WTO and won. That informs our position on this issue, and it's one that, on behalf of beef producers across the country, we'll continue to keep tabs on.

Jacob Mantle: Has the Canadian government consulted you on this new voluntary labelling?

• (1225)

Tyler Fulton: We work closely with embassy staff. I would say that we're probably very much connected and have a good understanding as to what's developed. We don't feel as though we're lacking any information on that front.

Jacob Mantle: In the last 15 seconds I have, what would it do to the industry if country of origin labelling returned in the CUSMA review?

Tyler Fulton: It would decimate the relationship. It would represent discrimination against Canadian live cattle in the country, which would prevent us from having the benefits of an integrated beef market and have implications for pricing not just on the producer side but on the retail side as well.

Jacob Mantle: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fonseca, you have six minutes, please.

Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, from the testimony of our witnesses at this committee meeting on Bill C-13 and the U.K.'s accession to the CPTPP, we have heard what's on the table, and the stakes are very high. We've always understood that at this trade committee. This is why we've worked in a very collaborative way, with a team Canada approach, and we need to continue to do that, Madam Chair.

I hear that it's not the same at all committees on the Hill. There are many that do not work the way we do, but we understand the importance and what this means for jobs in my community and right across our great country of Canada. That's why we do this work on behalf of the stakeholders who come before us and provide witness testimony. It's so that we can take it, use it and advocate on their behalf to get the best deals and the best agreements we can.

My first question is for Mr. Buckle. Congratulations on your 75th anniversary. I want you to give us insight into what this agreement will mean for Canada in bringing the U.K. into the CPTPP. We heard one of my colleagues talking earlier about the bridge of the U.K., and Canada being an Atlantic and a Pacific nation and bridging over to many of our Pacific partners.

Could you take us through what some of the positive impacts would be for my community in Mississauga and for Canadians in general?

Martin Buckle: We've mentioned the fact that the trade continuity agreement, after CETA, was still in place, and I would like to see that renegotiated. There are still elements missing that need to be there.

The U.K. has already obviously been acknowledged as a member of the CPTPP, but what we're talking about is whether Canada and the U.K. get to trade on those terms.

There are two parts to it.

One is that, mentally, any time you tell a business—whether it's in the U.K. or Canada—that the tariff and non-tariff barriers are coming down, it makes them interested in a way that they were perhaps a little fearful of before. Going overseas and doing business is always a bit of a struggle, and when you just let them know that things are being improved, that is an important first step in the process.

The other part of it is that over the last couple of years, we've been working with other British chambers across Latin America to get ready for this agreement, and there is a huge amount of interest across Latin America in this opportunity.

The U.K. started to look a little more broadly at countries outside the EU, as it was forced to do after Brexit, and all these companies started to trade in South America, Central America and North America.

Once they start doing that trade, they get into a habit of doing international trade. They get comfortable. They have the expertise. They know how to deal with foreign banks, letters of credit and all the import-export paperwork you have to do. It starts to snowball as people get more comfortable with the process.

Therefore, I think the benefits for Canada are as much on the spotlight of promoting exports as they are on specifically improving the recognition of Canada. The U.K. loves Canada. Last year's Canada-England final in the Women's Rugby World Cup was the most highly watched game of women's sport in the history of sport. People love Canada. They just need the encouragement to come here and do business.

● (1230)

Peter Fonseca: In what sectors do you see some of the greatest opportunity? In my community of Mississauga, we have companies like AstraZeneca; we have advanced manufacturing, defence manufacturers and security companies.

Where do you see the greatest potential for growth and opportunity, especially for jobs, when we talk about Canadian jobs?

Martin Buckle: Undoubtedly, both Canada and the U.K. are world leaders in the defence industry. Sadly, we're facing global threats, but with them, we know there's going to be investment, and there are great opportunities.

I think those partnerships will be more possible between U.K. and Canadian aerospace industries. The OAC is a fantastic organization in your region. Those partnerships will be much easier to de-

velop with the improved communications we have and with the improvements that come from these trade deals.

Peter Fonseca: As for the opening of this agreement to have the U.K. in the CPTPP, you've heard from other witnesses before us today about some of the challenges. They have actually gone on for decades. I recall that former prime minister Harper and the Conservatives couldn't get anything done when it came to pensioners or dealing with the beef or pork. Nothing was done at that time. We're still working on it. I know we do it collaboratively at this committee.

Do you have any thoughts on that? What could you share from the British Canadian Chamber of Trade and Commerce?

Martin Buckle: The trouble is always that when you open up trade agreements and you start getting into the details, you're going to be looking at the fractious elements at the edge. I'm not diminishing the concerns of any of the other speakers here today.

Most industries are doing very well and will benefit from this. When you start opening up these deals and the U.K. says that they want to open up dairy too, the idea that you could open up a one-sided agreement and not have an increase in the amount of U.K. dairy coming into Quebec is not realistic. It's just not going to happen. This was one of the problems with the last trade agreement that we were trying to negotiate a couple of years ago.

I feel for them. I remember that when I was younger, Danish pork coming into the U.K. was a matter of contention. I've heard that it's now very popular.

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

We'll go to Monsieur Savard-Tremblay for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for their remarks. My first question is for Mr. Fulton.

Earlier, in response to one of my colleague's questions, you said that the best way to tip the leverage in our favour would be to threaten to terminate the bilateral agreement. Is that what you said?

[*English*]

Tyler Fulton: I'm not sure I fully understand your question, but to clarify what I said earlier, we believe that using the continuity agreement as leverage to address our issues is appropriate.

We fully understand that there are broader sectors and broader parts of the trade relationship in scope. We wouldn't call for a termination without an FTA in place, but we would want to have the government use the leverage of the existing continuity agreement to get our issues addressed, which are simply that non-tariff barriers are preventing Canadian beef from moving.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Do you think it might even be wise to delay ratification until there is sufficient agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary standards?

• (1235)

[English]

Tyler Fulton: Yes, that's exactly our position.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, we think there are opportunities for modest changes to be made in the U.K. to allow for access. It is not based on science that we cannot access the market, and any leverage that we have should be on the table.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Do you think it might be a good idea to formally establish—as is the case with many agreements—a review mechanism every two, three, or four years, for example, at reasonable intervals?

[English]

Tyler Fulton: Honestly, I think we are willing to try anything. We have struggled to make use of some of the provisions in the CETA for addressing our SPS-related issues. There is a desire to truly diversify our beef market, so we're ready and willing to try something new.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Fulton. They will be very useful in helping us do our work and make the most of this agreement—which is worthwhile in itself—but also in strengthening our bargaining position and enabling meat producers to increase their exports.

My next question is for Mr. Buckle.

You mentioned the defence industry. As you know, Quebec has one of the largest and most impressive aerospace clusters in the world. After Seattle and Toulouse, it is one of the industry's largest hubs.

Do you happen to have any examples of collaboration between the British industry and the greater Montreal industry?

[English]

Martin Buckle: Yes, for sure. One of the most iconic names in British manufacturing is Rolls-Royce, and Rolls-Royce has a long history in Quebec and Canada.

Back in the day, Bombardier was a very big investor in what used to be called Short Brothers in Northern Ireland. Investissement Québec has a long history of investing in the U.K. and last year announced, I think, just over \$3 billion of investment in the U.K. nuclear power industry.

The importance of Quebec to the U.K. economy cannot be overstated. It's a tremendous investor. It's a huge opportunity for the aerospace industry and other manufacturing industries. I know there's a lot of interest in the U.K. in promoting this trade.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: In fact, after the United States, the United Kingdom is Quebec's second-largest export partner, I believe. It is very, very far behind the United States—there's no comparison—but it's still second in terms of exports.

That said, you're saying that many partnerships and collaborations are under way. Would the agreement improve anything, or is there not necessarily an impact on that?

[English]

Martin Buckle: In terms of manufacturing, following the collapse of the negotiations around a new bilateral agreement between Canada and the U.K., some things dropped out of the continuity agreement, such as car manufacturing. That's not a big industry in itself in Quebec, but obviously Quebec is a supplier to the industry.

I used to work in the aluminum industry. It's aluminum for our English-speaking North American friends and aluminium for our French friends. The increase in the exports of aluminium to the rest of the world following the tariffs that have been put on it just shows how flexible Quebec can be as an industry and how important those global markets can be.

The Chair: Ms. Kronis, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm grateful to be here.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their presentations.

Ms. Melville-Gray, I'd like to thank you for your presentation about the 127,000 Canadians from the U.K. who have a U.K. state pension that the U.K. refuses to index to inflation.

As you know, almost 3,000 of the people in that community live in my community. I'm wondering if you could share with us in practical terms what a frozen pension means for a senior living on a fixed income in Canada, especially in the context of rising costs for housing, food and health care.

• (1240)

Edwina Melville-Gray: It means that they start to reduce the amount of food they eat. They cannot support themselves and they start calling on the Canadian health care system and support system for other costs and so on.

If you've been here for 20 or 30 years, you're down about 50% of the income that you should be getting. You can't survive on that kind of funding in this current inflationary time. People split pills. They don't take their medications. They go to food banks. It's really a tragedy.

Tamara Kronis: Thank you.

Many of these pensioners paid into the U.K. system for decades. How does your organization see the fairness of having their pension value permanently frozen simply because they chose to retire in Canada?

Edwina Melville-Gray: Well, it's a current issue in that people often come here to be with their families, their grandchildren; they come to support their kids and their grandkids. However, it's also a future issue...listening to the other members today.

Why would somebody come from the U.K. when...? Let's say they've worked for 20 years in the United Kingdom. They've paid in. They come here at the peak of their career to find out that if they choose to stay, they will not get a yearly increase in their pension. We would at least expect to keep up with the inflationary amounts, but that doesn't happen.

Tamara Kronis: As you explained, this is a problem that applies to some countries and not others. Have you ever been given a justification as to why the U.K. provides annual increases in some countries but not in others?

Edwina Melville-Gray: The U.K. states that it's because they do not have a reciprocal social security agreement. We actually do have a reciprocal social security agreement, but it does not include pensions from the U.K. to Canada. It's simply a couple of paragraphs that are missing. It's a postwar thing that started with mostly Commonwealth countries. Fifty Commonwealth countries are frozen. Every single one of the CPTPP countries is frozen, and it's an anomaly. They pay six out of 10 overseas pensioners. They do not increase the annual amount for four out of 10 overseas pensioners.

Tamara Kronis: What role could the Government of Canada be playing in advocating for our British pensioners with frozen pensions?

Edwina Melville-Gray: We need the government to advocate on our behalf; we are pushed aside by the U.K. because they feel we're far away and they don't need to deal with us. They've actually stated as recently as yesterday that their policy is to spend any pension money only on U.K. pensioners, which would make sense if they weren't paying all of the ones in Europe and in the U.S.A. specifically, as well as in many other countries.

It's a discriminatory policy. We need Canada to stand up for us, to help us bring the U.K. to the table. All we get are polite refusals. When Canada asks the question as well, it's politely pushed away. It's time for Canada to take a stand.

Tamara Kronis: This committee is here to advise the Government of Canada in that regard. If you could recommend one, is there any sort of concrete action that this committee should consider taking to support you in your quest?

Edwina Melville-Gray: We would ask that you take a pause and require, as I put it in my opening remarks, that the government ac-

tually come to the table to negotiate a social security agreement that is truly two-way—reciprocal. People need to be treated fairly and equally.

Tamara Kronis: In the few seconds I have left, I want to turn to Mr. Buckle. First of all, congratulations on 75 years. Has the British Chamber of Trade and Commerce been active on this file? Is there anything you can add?

Martin Buckle: Some of our members are also explicitly members of Edwina's group. As I am from the chamber, I'm happy to leave her to speak to this because she's much more of an expert on it, and she has focused on it. As I say, some of our members—potentially me too; I'm not that far from becoming a pensioner myself—are already in that position, and she and her organization have done a tremendous job of raising the profile of this issue that I prefer to leave it to her.

• (1245)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have Mr. Lavoie for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being with us today.

Mr. Buckle, I congratulate you on your organization's 75th anniversary. It seems to be in very good shape. If I'm still here in 25 years, I will be quite pleased.

I'd like to talk about economics. I represent the riding of Beauport—Limoilou, in Quebec. I spent my career in economics, including 20 years in banking. I was also president and CEO of the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce and Industry for four years.

You spoke earlier about improving trade conditions and removing barriers. In addition, you spoke with my colleague about the sectors that could benefit from the United Kingdom's accession, including aerospace defence. However, I have a question.

I asked the previous witness a question, and I would like to know if you agree with his answer. I asked what would change tomorrow morning for the average person and for businesses. I am thinking of the businesses in my riding, Beauport—Limoilou. I was told that it would not change much, but that it sends a message. In other words, Canada is sending a message to the rest of the world that it wants to continue diversifying its markets. Do you agree with that?

If not, do you have any concrete examples?

[English]

Martin Buckle: I don't think there's going to be a huge difference. This is not like it was when Donald Trump announced his tariffs. There was an immediate global reaction to that. It's not going to have that kind of impact.

The important thing, as I said earlier, is that it's partly about shining a light on the opportunities and letting people know that Canada is open. Partly, it's about showing the rest of the world that this group that started with 11 members has already grown to 12 and is open to grow to include other countries if they're prepared to sign up for the values we share.

Speaking to our British Chamber of Commerce friends in Costa Rica, they're very excited about what this would mean for them in how they can do business and the standards of business in terms of equity and the environmental standards they want to stand by, but for which they need the support of other countries. Canada, the U.K., Australia and New Zealand can all offer such guidance through this organization. As for what people in Beauport will see, it's not a great change.

[Translation]

In fact, I played rugby in Beauport 20 years ago.

[English]

That's the only time I've been to Beauport.

I don't think they'll see a lot of difference tomorrow, but the point is that we're going in one direction when a certain other country is going in another direction.

[Translation]

Steeve Lavoie: You're talking about our citizens and businesses from the perspective of the markets they belong to.

I'll take this opportunity to ask you another question, which is more geographic in nature.

Most of our trade is with the US, for obvious geographical reasons. Within ten years, we want to double our exports to Europe and Asia. When their companies do business here in America, they cross the ocean and come to the US. They also want to diversify their markets and come to Canada. We agree that, for them, there is no cost difference between going to Canada and the United States, since it's the same route. For us, going to the United States rather than Europe is not the same thing.

Do you think this situation could lead to a trade imbalance between us and the Europeans? They just have to load the boat, so to speak, and then come further north to Canada, whereas we would require infrastructure and new roads. It's really much more complex. By the time we build all that, do you think there could be a trade imbalance?

[English]

The Chair: Make it a brief answer, Mr. Buckle, please.

Martin Buckle: There are great advantages in that and the stability Canada has compared with the issues we have down south, where tariffs can change whilst the ship is on the ocean. Canada has great advantage there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, you have two and a half minutes.

● (1250)

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Buckle, do you share the U.K.'s concerns about the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism? They've pointed out that there have been thousands of lawsuits.

[English]

Martin Buckle: I don't think so. The business people I know hate going to court. They hate it for its costs and its distraction from business. It ruins relationships. It's not why anyone gets into business. There might be a few strange people who get into business so that they can have fights. Most people want to do business because they're excited about doing business, about customers and about markets. I don't see that.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Perhaps it would be simpler to abandon that approach? There are also excesses. There are cases involving certain multinationals, which have more money than some third world countries and employ extremely aggressive legal teams. Wouldn't it be simpler to rely solely on a state-to-state mechanism? That way, if a company is truly wronged, it goes through its own country, and then it becomes a diplomatic issue as well.

[English]

Martin Buckle: There's definitely an opportunity to make access to equitable trading much easier for people. I think that good, well-written frameworks are part of that. You're right: Big companies have in-house lawyers that can do this, and they want to keep busy, so they might do more than small businesses. A good framework can avoid that for small businesses. That's an important part of what we want in any trade agreement.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. McKenzie for five minutes, please.

David McKenzie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Melville-Gray, I would like to ask if you are aware of whether Prime Minister Carney has brought up the issue respecting pensioners. We understand that he has a close relationship with the British Prime Minister. Is there anything happening there that you're aware of?

Edwina Melville-Gray: Our understanding is that at present, there isn't. Of course, it's only been a year that he has been in his position as Prime Minister, and there have been many things happening in the world.

In the visit that's coming up with the Australian Prime Minister, we have asked that he engage with the Australian Prime Minister and perhaps jointly ask Mr. Starmer to assist.

David McKenzie: Have you received a positive response? Do you expect this to happen, or is it simply a request that's outstanding?

Edwina Melville-Gray: That's our request. As yet, we haven't received a response on it.

David McKenzie: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Mr. Fulton, or perhaps Ms. Babcock, when the question of our Canadian cattle industry's capacity to export to the U.K. in the event that the non-tariff barriers are addressed came up last week, the minister suggested that our capacity may hinder our ability to export to the U.K.

Could I ask you to comment on that? I told him in response that there are a lot of cows in my part of Alberta.

Tyler Fulton: I jump at the opportunity to answer that question, because it's one we get commonly as well.

The best way to think about it is that more than 200 products come off a beef cattle carcass, but only some of them are actually in demand in Canada.

We already export about half of what we produce, either in live cattle or in the form of beef or beef cattle products. Quite simply, many markets are complementary, and it is ironic that we are able to extract better value for variety meats—products that have a very low price because of non-existent demand here in Canada—and add value there. We can get the market incentives through other cuts to keep growing our herd and not have to impact domestic consumers. It's actually complementary, and it has the effect of reducing, over the long run, the cost to consumers.

• (1255)

David McKenzie: If I'm understanding you correctly, a beef animal, once processed, produces quite a range of different products that may have appeal to different markets, so the ability to sell in different marketplaces gives the opportunity to increase the value from any single animal. Do I understand that correctly?

Tyler Fulton: Yes, and this was much more concise than what I said. Yes, that's right, absolutely.

David McKenzie: I'm just trying to make sure we're all clear.

Mr. Buckle, could I ask if your chamber has a view on what agreements should follow from here?

This committee was advised last week, and others have received the news as well, that the intention of the government at this time is to continue the TCA. There's also been some talk about a new bilateral agreement directly between Canada and the U.K. that might be more specific to our trading relationship with the U.K. beyond the CPTPP terms. Does your chamber have a viewpoint on that?

Martin Buckle: Yes, a few years ago—obviously post-Brexit—there was, as people have mentioned, an idea that the continuity agreement was going to be a temporary stopgap. We were involved with the U.K. negotiators, diplomats and politicians in expressing our viewpoint on what we would like to see in the agreement.

As does everybody else, we all want to throw 101 little bits and pieces into an agreement. A personal one is that, in Ontario, it's illegal for me to call myself a qualified professional accountant. That strikes me as bizarre and unnecessary. Things like this would certainly be good to put in there.

I mentioned earlier that the dairy industry in the U.K. is keen to see Canada as a market; the car industry is as well. There are lots of things that still need to be settled, and people today have mentioned a bunch of very important issues that need to be settled.

I hope that both governments work towards a settlement on those ideas and that we get some progress on the bilateral agreement.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you to our witnesses.

We have run out of time.

There are a couple of comments I need to make.

We've had discussions. As everyone knows, any amendments to Bill C-13 will need to be in by 6 p.m. this evening.

The minister will be coming for the first hour on Thursday to speak to Bill C-18. The second hour will follow with clause-by-clause.

For Bill C-18, on Tuesday, February 10, we will have witnesses and officials, and we will do clause-by-clause of Bill C-18 on Thursday, with a deadline for amendments of Tuesday, February 10. Any suggestions for witnesses on Bill C-18 should be submitted to the clerk as soon as possible.

One other bit of business is that, this morning, the House approved our request for travel to Mercosur countries, so there will be ongoing discussions on this issue as well.

Thank you again to the committee.

Mr.—

Jacob Mantle: On committee business—

The Chair: Yes.

Jacob Mantle: —I just have a comment.

As members of the committee will see, last week we received some partial disclosure with respect to our production order for a USMCA/CUSMA review.

I would ask the chair to review what we received. In my opinion, it is not in accordance with our production order.

I ask that you to take a look at it, and we can discuss it at another time.

The Chair: Yes, I will, absolutely. Thank you very much.

All right. I move adjournment.

Thank you all.

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