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Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke



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• (1625)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 93 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, September 26, 2023, the committee is meeting to resume consideration of clause-by-clause on Bill C-33, an act to amend the Customs Act, the Railway Safety Act, the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, the Marine Transportation Security Act, the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act.

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.

Colleagues, to help us with the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-33 today, I'd like to welcome back our witnesses.

From the Department of Transport, we have Sonya Read, director general, marine policy; Heather Moriarty, director, port policy; Rachel Heft, manager and senior counsel, transport and infrastructure legal services; and, of course, Amy Kaufman, counsel.

To help us with clause-by-clause, as well, we are pleased to be joined, once again, by our legislative clerk, Philippe Méla.

[Translation]

Thank you again for being here today.

[English]

Colleagues, we're now resuming clause-by-clause. When we left off, the committee was debating clause 120, and had just voted on amendment PV-5, which did not carry.

(On clause 120)

The Chair: The committee will now resume debate on BQ-5.

[Translation]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased to a member of the committee again.

The amendment—

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but there seems to be a problem with the interpretation. We're going to look into that.

I'm told that the problem has now been resolved.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor again.

[English]

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Lewis, we don't see you, sir.

Mr. Chris Lewis: I know. My screen just went completely black. I was on the call. Should I log off and log on? What am I supposed to do?

The Chair: I will turn it over to the clerk for guidance on this.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Carine Grand-Jean): Mr. Lewis, you will have to log off and log on, but we will have somebody from technical support help you out.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you.

Do you want me to do that now, Madam Clerk? It literally just went black. I can see everybody, but nobody can see me. This is very strange.

The Chair: As a courtesy, I'm going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes to rectify the audiovisual situation with Mr. Lewis.

This meeting stands suspended.

• (1625)

(Pause)

• (1630)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I know the AV team is working with Mr. Lewis to rectify the situation, but I want to make the most of the time we have here together.

Colleagues, before we resume and I pass the floor back to Mr. Barsalou-Duval, I want to let you know there will be a delay in translation, because we are one of the committees that has been selected for a pilot project where they're doing translation virtually, at a distance. There will be a bit of a delay.

If it doesn't work, please let me know, but please take into consideration that delay.

[Translation]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor again. The discussion is on BQ-5.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I mentioned at the outset, I'm pleased to be back with my colleagues on the committee. I'm sorry I'm not with you in person. I'm virtual for a reason. I welcomed a new child to my family on November 29.

The Chair: Congratulations, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Voices: Hear, hear!

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I will probably be with you this Wednesday.

BQ-5 concerns clause 62 of the bill.

I move that Bill C-33, in clause 120, be amended by adding after line 37 on page 77 the following:

(3) Section 62 of the Act is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) Regulations made under paragraph (1)(a) must prohibit the loading and unloading of subbituminous coal and lignite coal containing less than 70% carbon to and from ships in a port.

Witnesses who took part in the committee's work told us about the fact that we're still allowing coal to be exported from Canadian ports, in addition to allowing coal to be used for electricity as well as for production purposes. This is a completely archaic practice, dating back to the last century, and it shouldn't be supported or encouraged by Canada. As a society and as an economy, Canada is trying to eliminate the source of energy that is oil, but we're talking about coal here. It seems completely incongruous to me that we're still in a dynamic that promotes the export of this type of energy.

However, the amendment makes a distinction. We're talking about thermal coal, or coal for heat production. We want this type of coal to continue to be exported so that the industry can continue to produce steel, because it needs it. We're not talking about steel-making coal or high-carbon coal.

I hope that all members of the committee will vote in favour of this amendment so that we have a better planet, to accelerate the energy transition to green and renewable energy, and to eliminate the energy sources of the past, which should no longer be used today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

I received a message from our interpreters. They kindly ask us to speak more slowly, if possible.

[English]

Next I have Ms. Collins and then Mr. Morrice. I also have Mr. Strahl. That's it for now.

Ms. Collins, the floor is yours.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to start by thanking my Bloc colleague for this amendment and congratulate him on the recent addition to his family.

This is a critical amendment. We know that we are in a climate crisis. This is the existential crisis of our time. The burning of thermal coal is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. We are definitely on a pathway of phasing out thermal coal ourselves, but emissions don't know borders. If we're shipping thermal coal to be burned elsewhere, those emissions are still contributing to the climate crisis.

It's been two years since the Liberals promised to phase out thermal coal exports, and we've yet to see any legislation. That's why I'm tabling a private member's bill to ban thermal coal exports.

I want to thank my Bloc colleagues and my Green colleagues for pushing this. I want to extend a special thanks to Ecojustice, Environmental Defence, CAPE, as well as the Council of Canadians and citizens all across the country who have been pushing the government to do the right thing and ban thermal coal exports.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Collins.

Mr. Morrice.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Thank you, Chair.

To add to those comments, I'm really encouraged to hear from other colleagues who have been pushing for this for a long time. As members likely know, thermal coal contributes to 30% of global carbon emissions and 800,000 premature deaths every year from the choking smog it produces. The vast majority of thermal coal exported from Canada is from U.S. mines, because their own ports have already banned its export.

I'm encouraged that the Liberal Party promised to do this back in 2021. Former Green MP Paul Manly introduced a bill to do this in 2020. While the Green amendment was defeated at your last committee meeting, I'm optimistic that the Bloc version of the same amendment will be passed.

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

It's now over to you, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Before I begin my remarks, could you clarify the standing orders or the practices in committees in terms of independent members speaking when they are not moving an amendment? Obviously, during committee time, another member can give his or her time to an independent member. However, we are not at a normal hearing. We are studying legislation.

Could you or the clerk perhaps read the rules in terms of how this goes from now on?

The Green amendments were defeated. We're on a Bloc amendment now. Ms. May had the right to make remarks and ask questions, etc.

Before I go to my intervention, I would like some clarification on how that is intended to proceed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

I've asked the question of the clerk and she's advised that, as chair, I am able to provide speaking time to a member who comes to the committee and wishes to speak.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Okay. That wasn't my understanding, but we will leave it with the table for now and perhaps come back to that later.

I have a number of questions that I would like to ask of the witnesses. I will just put them out in general, and the best placed witness can respond.

Other than thermal coal, are there any other commodities or goods that are prohibited from being loaded or unloaded using section 62 of the act?

Ms. Sonya Read (Director General, Marine Policy, Department of Transport): To the best of my knowledge, I don't think there's anything under section 62 of the Canada Marine Act that is outright prohibited.

I think there are some regulations that may apply in the context of the handling of dangerous goods, but most of those are subject to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, so there are no outright bans under the CMA.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Okay, so this was not listed as one of the goals of the legislation. Neither Minister Alghabra nor Minister Rodriguez mentioned this as a possible outcome, nor did we hear from any witnesses calling for this to be included as an amendment, so it's a bit out of left field that this would be done this way.

Has the section ever been used in the past to perhaps do something a bit...? Obviously, this is under Environment and Climate Change Canada's purview. This is in the minister's mandate letter, which I'll get to in a minute.

Has this section ever been used in this way? Previously, I asked if it had banned any other goods and commodities. You said you didn't think so, so I guess it has not been used to perhaps....

We haven't used the Canada Marine Act to achieve an environmental goal in the past. Am I right to state that?

Ms. Sonya Read: I would say that the scope and the purpose of the Canada Marine Act is.... As it's set out in the "Purpose" section of the act, it does not refer to exports or imports of specific commodities. It has, in the purpose section, a reference to environmental protection in terms of the port operations, but that would be the extent of it.

There's no regulation that I could speak to that would ban a specific commodity through the Canada Marine Act.

• (1640)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Do you believe that this section could also be used, for instance, to prohibit the depositing of raw sewage in waters that are under the jurisdiction of a port authority? If not, why not?

Ms. Sonya Read: Only to the extent that it is actually a port activity. That's my understanding. If it was sewage, for example, that was collected in the context of the operations of the port, it may apply because that's specific to a port's operation—if there was

sewage collection on the port—but that would, to the best of my knowledge, be the extent of it.

Mr. Mark Strahl: If this amendment passes, how many direct jobs would be lost at the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and, specifically, Westshore Terminals?

Ms. Sonya Read: I'm sorry. I don't have that information at hand.

Mr. Mark Strahl: There's been no economic analysis of what the impact would be on ILWU-unionized workers working at the port if this measure was enforced. There's been none at all.

Ms. Sonya Read: I'm sorry. We would not have that information on hand right now.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Would this amendment apply only to the port of Vancouver? Is that the only one that would be impacted directly? Is it exporting 100% of the coal?

What other port authorities would be impacted by this amendment, should it pass?

Ms. Sonya Read: I don't have that information immediately available, but we could provide it.

Mr. Mark Strahl: We're voting a bit blind on this issue. We don't know where it would apply, other than at the port of Vancouver.

What does the Minister of Environment's mandate letter state in terms of the timing of the ban on thermal coal exports?

Ms. Sonya Read: My understanding is that the commitment is to ban thermal coal by 2030.

Mr. Mark Strahl: If this proposed subsection of the act were to be adopted at this meeting and, subsequently, by Bill C-33, when would it come into force?

Ms. Sonya Read: My understanding is that it comes into force as of royal assent. It's section 62 that you're—

Mr. Mark Strahl: The minister's mandate letter calls for this to be done by 2030. This section would come into force by 2024 if we assume the normal process is followed. That's six-plus years ahead of what the minister has in his mandate letter.

Do you know what the value of the investment at Westshore Terminals is in terms of their other coal-handling facilities? Also, they are planning, with the government, to switch to potash handling. Do you have information on when they will be ready to make that changeover, and when they can expect a reliable supply of potash?

Ms. Sonya Read: I'm sorry. We don't have that information at this time.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Okay.

I note, Mr. Chair, that the bells are ringing in the chamber.

The Chair: Mr. Strahl, I'm going to have to ask for unanimous consent in order to continue with that line of questioning.

I don't have unanimous consent, so we're going to suspend until after the vote.

• (1645) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1730)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order. We will now resume where we left off.

Mr. Strahl had the floor.

Once he's done, I'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Strahl, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I think I was asking some questions of the witnesses. I was told that no other commodities or goods have been prohibited under section 62. It hasn't been used previously in this way.

During the break for the voting, I was able to look up the number of jobs that would be directly impacted by this amendment's passing. I think we should be very clear that Westshore Terminals is aware that the government has a 2030 timeline. They are not trying to overturn that.

They are not trying to change the government's mind, even though they might have a difference of opinion there. They recognize the direction that this is going in and in fact are working with the government, but not at the transport minister level. This is being done with natural resources bureaucrats and with Environment and Climate Change Canada. This company is working with the government on their timeline.

The mining companies and terminal operators do not operate in six-month projections. They are planning out decades into the future, and I think what is so surprising about this is the timeline that's being proposed. It's not giving Westshore Terminals...which would lose, we've been told, anywhere between 125 and 350 ILWU workers, who would be out of a job, if this came into force as quickly as the Bloc amendment proposes that it does. They are, as I said, planning for a thermal coal free future. They are planning to bring on a significant volume of potash from a new mine in Saskatchewan that will not become fully operational until the end of the decade. Then they have plans already into the mid-2030s to move ahead and switch commodities and keep those 350 jobs and the untold number—hundreds more—of indirect jobs at the port.

I think the timing is a real issue here. The timing caught them completely by surprise, because they are currently negotiating with the government on timelines. In the last meeting we had, last Wednesday, when Mr. Badawey was explaining that they would be supporting this amendment from the Bloc, he talked about a phase-out, and he talked about the Minister of the Environment's mandate letter. A phase-out isn't six months. That's not a phase-out. That's slamming the door in the face of those workers and telling them to hit the bricks. There is no way to phase in potash when the mine won't even open for several years and won't have enough production for another decade.

That is a real insult to those ILWU workers that the government claims to stand up for, that the NDP claims to stand up for and that the Bloc Québécois claims to stand up for. It's a funny way to show

it: to show them the door within six months if this passes, as we expect it would.

There's also the issue of a mine in Hinton, Alberta, the Vista mine, which is the only thing going, quite frankly, in that region. The community rallied around that mine, again with an understanding that thermal coal has a shelf life and that 2030 is the deadline for how long they can hope to export this commodity. We know that they are planning for that as well. There are 400 union jobs at stake and an entire community that believed they had until 2030 to continue to work at that mine, which supports their families and supports their community. In fact, to get it reopened, the community, the suppliers and everyone at that mine took a huge hit.

• (1735)

They were owed money when a previous iteration of the mine couldn't make it. They took less money than they were owed so this mine could continue to operate on the Liberal government's timeline, and I think that is the critical issue here. There is no one who believes the future of the mining sector in this country is in thermal coal, but we do believe in an orderly process. We do believe words should be kept and negotiations that are under way should not be abruptly cut off with this type of amendment, which has no coming-into-force provisions outside of royal assent.

I do have a subamendment, Mr. Chair, which has been circulated to a legislative clerk, which says that Bill C-33, in clause 125, be amended by adding after line 16 on page 80 the following: "(6.1) Section 120(3) comes into force on January 1, 2031."

What that would do is honour the government's commitment to allow both the terminal workers and the mine workers to continue to transition away from thermal coal to other products, as has been promised by this government and is currently being negotiated by this government and these entities that are currently processing thermal coal.

That subamendment has to do with the main issue we have here—that an abrupt six-month timeline or even a year to come into force is still half a decade shorter, six or seven years shorter, than what these workers were promised. I think we need the government to keep its promises. It can still meet the objectives of the mandate letter. It can still honour their word in the negotiations that are currently under way. Simply saying that this comes into force when royal assent is achieved, I think, is extremely unfair to those workers and it's not what they have been promised by this government.

This amendment would ensure that, as of January 1, 2031, there would be no more thermal coal imports or exports, but it does allow for the time those companies have been promised and those workers have been promised to be honoured.

I'd be happy to hear my colleagues' comments on that subamendment.

• (1740)

The Chair: I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Bachrach.

Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I welcome Mr. Strahl's questions and interventions.

I think the process of creating regulations takes some time. We've seen other bills under which three years has been allowed for the government to create the regulations and bring them into force. Some of them have taken less than that, sometimes as little as a year. I think, with the subamendment that's been proposed, if this part of the act came into force on January 1, 2031, the actual prohibition of coal exports wouldn't come into effect until the regulations were written and came into force. They would have to go through the regulatory process, which recently has involved a discussion paper and then a framework and then the different regulatory steps, the Canada Gazette, part I, etc.

I don't know if there's another approach that might be taken, perhaps even just a simple subamendment to the Bloc amendment that would read "Regulations made under paragraph (1)(a) must prohibit the loading and unloading of thermal coal to and from ships in a port by 2030" or "by the end of 2030" or "by January 21, 2031". I think that would imply that the crafting the regulations with that regulatory process—

The Chair: I'm sorry to cut you off mid-sentence, Mr. Bachrach, but—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Can't I talk about my own ideas?

The Chair: You can, Mr. Bachrach. I just don't want you to do so at the wrong time.

The legislative clerk has looked into this, and this is not a subamendment to what we are discussing. This is an amendment to clause 125, which Mr. Strahl would have to do at that appropriate time. We shouldn't be moving off from what we were discussing to discuss this, because it's not a subamendment.

You have my apologies for cutting you off. I just wanted to make sure that you knew.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That's no problem. That's helpful and informative.

I was trying to suggest something that might achieve the same outcome that I think Mr. Strahl was getting at, which is that the prohibition would take place on January 1, 2031 or at the end of 2030.

The Chair: I'll make sure that you're the first to get the floor when we are at clause 125, if that's okay with you.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That's fine.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: My last thing, Mr. Chair, is that I know that there are some folks around the committee table who have other places to be, and I know that the votes, etc., have shifted the timeline of this meeting. I wonder if you would entertain a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: It's non-debatable, so we'll go to a vote.

Do I have unanimous consent?

We do not have unanimous consent.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I didn't ask for unanimous consent. I asked for a vote.

The Chair: We have to vote.

(Motion negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I listened carefully to the comments of my Conservative colleague, as well as those of my NDP colleague. I completely understand their concerns or their point of view with regard to the amendment we're proposing. However, I don't have the same concerns.

I would say that my concerns are the opposite of his, because my main concern is about climate change and the damage that coal use is doing to the planet and our environment. Greenhouse gas emissions from natural gas, heating oil or petroleum are unparalleled compared to those from coal. No fuel is even comparable to coal in this respect.

The government did promise to ban the export of coal by 2030. It was in the Liberal election platform. However, I would say that 2030 is too far away. We need to accelerate climate action now. There's a global crisis, and 31% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from burning coal for electricity. This is major. The impact of burning coal is huge.

I'm completely open to the idea of discussing the terms we'd like to impose. Is six months too short? I don't know. I don't know what they're basing the six months on, either. Basically, amendment BQ-5 proposes that the regulations prohibit the loading and unloading of coal. I can't say whether the regulations will come into force in six months, three weeks or a year. Maybe the government could tell us. Perhaps a specific date will even be set out in the regulations. However, I find that proposing a coming into force in 2030 isn't responsible. I think it's too late. We're already behind.

The Conservatives, and perhaps even the Liberals, often say that we have to keep up with our American neighbours when it comes to electrification or the standards we want to put in place. It's used as an excuse. However, we're even behind the Americans. In reality, saying that Canada wants to keep pace with the Americans is an excuse for not acting, for not moving faster than them. The fact that our neighbours aren't moving quickly shouldn't even be an excuse for us to move at a slower pace.

Mr. Chair, I don't want to belabour the point, but I think it's important that we move forward and that we adopt this amendment. Canadians, like Quebeckers, expect their elected representatives to take responsible measures in the interest of everyone, such as reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and reducing the combustion of coal. There are virtually no other fuels that generate more pollutants than coal. I don't see how we can say we're going to do this later, or we're just not going to do it.

I think it needs to be done more quickly, and I invite the members of the committee to vote in favour of the amendment. In terms of enforcement, if there's a desire to have a specific enforcement provision in the bill, I think we'll have time to discuss that later. In the meantime, we have time to think about it, because I have a feeling that we won't finish the study of the bill this evening, Mr. Chair.

• (1750)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

I have Mr. Bachrach, and then Mr. Strahl.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I would like to ask the witnesses what consultations Transport Canada has undertaken with the ILWU.

The Chair: Mr. Strahl, you have my apologies. I had given the floor to Mr. Bachrach, and you were next.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I'm sorry. I heard Mr. Strahl. I will stop talking for a moment.

The Chair: I'm sorry about that, sir.

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thanks, Mr. Chair. My apologies to Mr. Strahl.

I also have questions for the witnesses.

Based on the wording of the Bloc amendment in front of us, what would the approximate timeline be if the government were to start considering what the regulations were to look like when this bill comes into force?

How long before you could get through all the consultations, the regulatory stages, etc., and actually have a regulation coming into force?

Ms. Sonya Read: The process, as far as I'm aware, would normally take about 36 months from inception through consultation through gazetting.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: If this bill came into force in 2024, then it could take as much as three years. Thirty-six months is three years.

Ms. Sonya Read: It can be longer. It depends on the nature of the regulation.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: We're looking at 2027-28. Even if we were to pass this today, it's going to take several years to actually get regulations that hit the ground and create the change.

Could those regulations also include a timeline for the phase-out? I guess what I'm getting at is that the language before us is

fairly broad. "Regulations made under paragraph (1)(a) must prohibit the loading and unloading of thermal coal to and from ships in a port" doesn't include any timeline. How would that be interpreted? Could the regulations include a timeline other than right away?

Ms. Rachel Heft (Manager and Senior Counsel, Transport and Infrastructure Legal Services, Department of Transport): Given the language in the proposed amendment, it's impossible to say exactly how it would be interpreted, but it does use the language "must"—that the regulations "must prohibit". Therefore, I think we can interpret that to be literal.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Can we interpret that to be right away?

Ms. Rachel Heft: We would have to examine that. The regulations are being drafted, but it seems to be phrased as an obligation.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: From your perspective, would the amendment benefit from clarity on the timeline, or is that an opinion you could provide?

Ms. Rachel Heft: I don't think that's an opinion we can provide.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: The first answer, to me, was the most illustrative, which is that the regulatory process takes quite a bit of time. Therefore, the alarmist commentary that Mr. Strahl was providing.... Although I understand how he interpreted it that way, I don't think that's actually the reality that would unfold. We've seen with other regulatory commitments that the reality is that the government takes quite a bit of time to consult people, put together the regulations, consult people on the regulations and put together amended regulations. That can take three or four years.

Even on the very fastest timeline that this bill would envision, it would still only come into effect a couple of years before the 2030 commitment. Maybe that's something that can be refined with sub-amendments, but this is just to be clear about what we're talking about here for anyone watching who thinks that, as soon as this vote is done, it's going to cause cataclysmic change.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Before I turn the floor over to Mr. Strahl, I want to inform members that we, unfortunately, only have resources until 6 p.m. Because of the virtual translation, we would then have to switch from virtual to a crew who would have to come in, so we will have to end the meeting at 6 p.m. today.

I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Strahl, and then, if we have time, we'll go to Ms. Murray.

Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I, perhaps, am not as trusting of the government as Mr. Bachrach is, understandably. I do think he's heard a possible scenario, but these workers have also been told that 2030 is when this transition will be done by. I recognize that "done by" means it could be earlier, but I am not convinced that this is something that we should leave up to a cumbersome regulatory process in order to give those workers the opportunity to have the government live up to its promises.

Yes, the regulatory process takes time. With regard to the amendment, which I apologize for moving early—I misunderstood that—I want to be very clear that we are not talking about giving a free pass to thermal coal. We are simply talking about giving the workers the time they were promised for an orderly phase-out, as has been indicated.

That would be my question. This is not in, by the way, the Minister of Transport's mandate letter, as far as I'm aware. This is in the Minister of Environment's mandate letter.

Quite frankly, to tack this on to Bill C-33 without consulting with the ILWU and with the workers in Hinton, Alberta, is outrageous. We would never consider that this would be something that was appropriate.

I guess this would be a question I would ask the officials: Has Transport Canada entered into discussions with the ILWU or with workers at the Vista mine in Hinton, Alberta, to discuss the timeline for a phase-out on thermal coal exports?

• (1755)

Ms. Sonya Read: It has not, to the best of my knowledge. I think our colleagues at ECCC would be better positioned regarding the conversations in respect of the phase-out of coal.

Mr. Mark Strahl: That's right, because they are actually having those conversations right now at Environment and Climate Change Canada. Perhaps Minister Guilbeault asked that we short-circuit all that and just tack it onto a transport bill, and the workers be damned.

I think this, again, is not the place this is intended to be done. A thermal coal phase-out is coming. Everyone knows it. No one's even fighting it, but they are fighting the idea that they would lose years off the transition timeline because they're already losing billions of dollars because of the timeline that there is. For companies, that's a risk they take with investment, I guess, in this Liberal government's investment climate. They take the risk that their projects will be cancelled because of the environment minister's mandate letter, which is neither here nor there.

I'm sorry, but it's not alarmist to alert the workers that their jobs are being dangled, and, quite frankly, we're told we aren't supposed to care about that. There's a process that is under way, that the government has under way, so it's either undermining its own negotiations or undermining its own promises to workers by supporting

this sort of amendment, which will, by the admission of the witnesses, short-circuit, by years, the period workers were promised for transition.

We won't apologize for standing up for those workers, even though they're in an industry that the government doesn't like. We've done it before with the oil sands. We've done it before with mining. We've done it before with forestry. We will continue to stand up for workers when their jobs are threatened by the actions of government.

That's what we're doing here today. We're saying to protect the negotiations that are under way. Protect the timeline you already agreed to with those workers, and stop messing with their livelihoods and threatening their livelihoods by years.

I just think that is something we will always do. We will always stand up for those workers when their jobs are threatened and say that it should be done in an appropriate way. You're phasing out thermal coal, but this is not the way you do it, by tacking on something that we never heard from witnesses and that we never heard from the minister. This was not part of this bill until this amendment. This is outside the scope of everything we've heard. I think it's entirely appropriate for us to stand up for those workers.

• (1800)

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

Before I adjourn, I just want to read something in. There was a quick correction that needed to be made, which was shared with me by our legislative clerk, with regard to subamendment NDP-15.1. It's a small correction.

We had voted on the following text, “In the case of a port authority specified in subsection 37.3(a)”. That doesn't actually exist, so I need unanimous consent to change it to, “In the case of a port authority specified in paragraph 37(3)(a)”.

It's a very small change, but it's important for the legislative clerk and the team to be able to do their work.

Do I have unanimous consent to do that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: With that, this meeting is adjourned.

Thank you.

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