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—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 12, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from November 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-301, an act to amend the Income Tax Act and to make a related amendment to another Act (registered retirement income fund), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Edmonton West for bringing this private member's bill forward. Many times the member and I do not see eye to eye, but I certainly have a lot of respect for him, and I enjoy listening to him.

It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the private member's bill, Bill C-301, an act to amend the Income Tax Act and to make a related amendment to another act, which will affect registered retirement income funds, otherwise known as RRIFs.

The NDP is supporting the bill at second reading because we feel it deserves to be sent to committee for further study. The issue of mandatory minimum withdrawal requirements is an important issue for retirees trying to maintain an adequate income in their retirement.

It is our view that a detailed examination of the rules regarding RRIFs is necessary to help ensure that seniors are not outliving their savings. Retirement insecurity is reaching a crisis level in Canada, as many Canadians do not have adequate savings to maintain their lifestyle upon retirement. Any measures that will make it easier for seniors to maintain an adequate income must be looked at.

Much more needs to be done to help our seniors live with the dignity they deserve. The high cost of housing and drugs, the clawback of the GIS, and the indexing of pensions are just a few immediate issues. The government also needs to keep its promise to introduce a new seniors price index to make sure that old age security and the guaranteed income supplement keep up with rising costs.

Of more immediate concern is that the government must immediately fix the flaw in its new plan for enhanced CPP benefits.

I am sure that members have heard the discussion about the mistake that the government made in Bill C-26 and how the exclusion of dropout provisions in the bill would have a negative impact on those who take time to raise children, especially women, and on those living with a disability. The government will have its chance next week at the finance ministers meeting to fix its mistake. We will all be watching.

This private member's bill will remove the mandatory minimum withdrawal requirements from registered retirement income funds and will change the retirement income fund definition. Registered retirement income funds, known as RRIFs, can be thought of as an extension of a person's registered retirement savings plan, or RRSP. An RRSP is used to help people save for retirement, while a RRIF is used to withdraw income during retirement. RRIFs are similar to RRSPs in several respects. Each allows for tax-deferred growth, offers several investment options, and is government regulated.

A major difference between an RRSP and a RRIF is that with an RRSP, a person can make annual contributions as long as they have earned income and have contribution room available. Withdrawals are optional and will be taxed. With a RRIF, contributions are not allowed, and a person must make minimum mandatory withdrawals each year. RRIF rules and withdrawal rates were introduced in 1978, and then increased in 1992.

In 2015, the Conservative finance minister lowered the mandatory registered retirement income fund withdrawal amount to 5.27% from the previous 7.38%. Also, previous to 2007, the age limit for converting an RRSP was 69. The 2007 budget changed the age to 71, in order to strengthen incentives for older Canadians to work and save. When RRIF rules came into effect, lifespans and time spent in retirement were much shorter than they are today. RRIF holders now face the considerable likelihood of running out of money in late stages of retirement.

The NDP has long been in support of lowering these rates. In 2015, the NDP pension critic John Rafferty introduced Motion No. 595. It read:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should review the Registered Retirement Income Fund mandatory minimum withdrawal thresholds and amend them to ensure they do not unduly force seniors to exhaust their savings too quickly.

Private Members' Business

The problem with the RRIF withdrawal schedule is that people are living longer, and if the schedule is followed then it is very likely that an account holder will run out of savings by age 92. At that point, the person who had saved diligently throughout their life will see their quality of life decline at a delicate time, through no fault of their own.

• (1110)

There are also concerns that RRIF rules can cause clawbacks on people's benefits from OAS and/or GIS. We know that people are living longer, and this fact will have an impact on seniors and on their ability to have enough money to see them through their retirement. In this context, it is interesting to look at some facts about today's seniors.

The probability today of a 71-year-old female reaching age 94 has almost doubled compared to 1992, from 13% to 24%. The probability of a 71-year-old male reaching that age has more than tripled, from 4% to 14%. There are 265,000 Canadians who are 90-plus years of age today. With the baby boom generation reaching these ages, the number of people living beyond 90 is expected to rise dramatically. By 2021, there are projected to be 355,000 Canadians aged 90-plus, including 80,000 people over the age of 95.

Most Canadians do not have alternatives to private savings for retirements besides CPP, OAS, and GIS. When RRIF rules were first put into place in the 1970s, Canadian households saved about 15% of income. By 2011, the household savings rate plummeted by a factor of five, to just above 3% of income. Canadians between the ages of 65 and 69 today hold only an average of \$40,000 in RRSPs, which is a very modest amount. In 2011, workers aged 55 years and over accounted for 18% of total employment, compared to 15% in the 2006 census. This was the result of an aging baby boomer generation and increased participation of older workers in the labour force. Mandatory minimum RRIF withdrawals are becoming irrelevant as women and men are living at least twice as long, and staying in the labour force longer.

As I said earlier, the NDP intends to support this bill at second reading, as we feel it should be sent to a committee where the issues of RRIF withdrawal and income security for seniors can be properly studied. I am disappointed to hear that our Liberal colleagues will not be supporting the bill and are not in favour of this issue getting further study. However, then again, maybe I should not be surprised. The Liberals have made some progress on the issue of retirement insecurity with their modest increases in the GIS and their modest increases in benefits in the enhanced CPP proposal. That being said, the government has also launched a tax on some Canadian pensioners. Its failure to include dropout provisions in the enhanced CPP is certainly an attack on women and those living with disabilities.

We also have Bill C-27, which is clearly an attack on every worker and retiree who has invested in a defined benefit pension plan. It is a policy on which the former Conservative government did consultations and eventually decided not to move forward with it. Now it looks like the Liberal government is going to finish the work that the Conservatives started. The current government's plans are inconsistent and confusing. The strategy for dealing with the

retirement income crisis is uneven, inadequate, and at the end of the day will be ineffective. Canadian seniors will be hurt as a result.

I urge all members to support this bill, so we can refer it to a committee where we can study how to better help Canadian seniors live with the security and dignity they deserve.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to speak in favour of Bill C-301, which was introduced by my colleague and friend from Edmonton West. I would like to thank him for the work he has done on this bill and very important issue that affects millions of Canadian seniors.

At this time, I also want to thank my NDP colleagues who have indicated that they will support this legislation and send it to committee, so witnesses, financial experts, and, most of all, Canadian seniors, can weigh in on the merits of this legislation. As a good rule of thumb, any time that a bill introduced by a Conservative is adopted by an NDP and opposed by a Liberal, it must mean we are on the right track.

The issue of mandatory minimum withdrawals from registered retirement income funds has long been a thorn in the sides of Canadian seniors. Many seniors who have diligently saved for retirement and invested wisely are well within their right to ask that mandatory minimum withdrawals from their RRIFs be completely eliminated.

It was just a couple of weeks ago that I spoke in the House against the Liberal government's heavy-handed approach of forcing Canadians to put more of their own money into the government-controlled Canada pension plan. At that time, I spoke about how the Liberal government's approach, however well intentioned, was a direct blow to Canadians who prefer investing their own money into savings vehicles and want nothing to do with putting more of their disposable income into CPP.

It comes as no surprise that the Liberal government is opposing this legislation, and it was highly discouraging to read the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance's speech, in which he dismissed the legislation outright. While the parliamentary secretary patted himself on the back for the recent changes to the Canada pension plan and old age security, my hon. colleague from Edmonton West was completely right to call out the erroneous information in his speech. The changes that the Liberal government has introduced will not help seniors today. Its recent legislation will not affect the vast majority of seniors currently living in Canada.

I support the legislation, Bill C-301, for three very important reasons. They are, one, that Canadian seniors should have complete and utter control regarding their own financial investments; two, the life expectancy of Canadians has increased dramatically since mandatory minimum withdrawals were introduced way back in 1978; and, three, financial markets are volatile and unpredictable. Seniors should be able to cash in on their investments when it is most advantageous for them.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-301 will have an immediate benefit by finally removing the archaic and outdated legislation that forces seniors to make mandatory withdrawals regardless of their own financial situation or the current state of financial markets. Far too often, governments, of all stripes, forget that the money invested in RRSPs or RRIFs is not their money. The money belongs to the hard-working Canadians who have earned it.

I firmly believe and have long advocated that the government has no business in forcing Canadians to divest themselves of their RRIFs. Canadians should be given the benefit of the doubt that they know what is best for their families. Millions of Canadians have financial investments, which range from mutual funds, stocks, and various other assets. Many folks have the assistance of financial advisors while, in some cases, they make their investments solely on their own. Financial literacy in our country has grown in recent decades. However, there is still much more to do.

In my recent speech regarding the Liberals heavy-handed approach to the Canada pension plan, I mentioned specifically how improving financial literacy rates should be at the forefront of every conversation regarding retirement savings. By empowering Canadians through education and innovative savings vehicles, such as the tax-free savings account, we can provide the tools needed so folks can retire with a high standard of living. Removing mandatory withdrawals from RRIFs is the logical next step to provide that much-needed flexibility.

When Canadians are asked if they want the mandatory minimums to be eliminated, the resounding answer is yes, they do. According to the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, 66% are calling for this elimination explicitly, and 78% say that offering retiree's complete control over their RRIFs is a more important goal than government recouping deferred taxes through mandatory withdrawals. I, for one, will stand up for Canadian seniors rather than giving this spend-happy Liberal government any more money. A dollar in the pockets of Canadian seniors will be far better spent on their priorities and needs than the Liberal finance minister could ever do.

●(1115)

In respect to the issue of the life expectancy of Canadians, people are living longer, healthier lives. This is just one more reason why this legislation needs to be enacted. If we do not pass it and make the necessary changes, there is a very real possibility that seniors will have completely depleted their retirement savings by age 91, only 20 years after converting their RRSPs into RRIFs.

Many of us in the House know very active seniors, who, by the grace of God, continue to live healthy into their 90s. As of right now, there are over 265,000 seniors living in Canada who have reached the wonderful age of 90 years old, and that number will only continue to grow in the years ahead.

Now to the issue of providing more flexibility for RRIFs, in many circumstances seniors continue to work part-time jobs for either financial reasons or because they are not ready to completely retire. Many seniors, who choose to work still, and do not need income out of their RRIF at that moment, should be given the option of foregoing mandatory withdrawals. Seniors are living longer and, in many cases, in their own homes, so it only makes sense to allow their RRIFs to increase in value until need those funds. If for some

reason a senior has serious health concerns and needs to move into assisted living or needs home care, it can be a tremendous strain on one's savings. Rather than ushering seniors into care facilities, due to the high costs of living independently and the costs associated with home care or health care aides, removing mandatory minimum withdrawals for RRIFs might allow a senior to continue saving so they could afford those higher costs later in life. The longer an investment can accrue interest, the more money seniors will have in their pockets.

For my Liberal friends who are concerned about the government's foregoing the capital gains taxes, the government will collect more in taxes if the investment continues to grow even larger. Now the issue of capital gains taxes is a much larger battle for another day, but in this circumstance, the Liberals' concern about the government's not collecting its fair share of taxes is moot. The government will still be able to tax the profit of a RRIF when it is cashed out. This issue should not be about the government's worrying about the loss of revenues, but about providing seniors with the freedom to control their own financial investments.

Further to my last point about why mandatory minimum withdrawals should be eliminated, the stock market has been extremely volatile since the great recession. When the market crashed in 2008 and 2009, our previous Conservative government introduced a one-time 25% reduction in withdrawal rates. It was my desire that this be dealt with at the time, but alas it was not, and now due to this legislation, it provides all of us in the House an opportunity to finally repeal this injustice.

While previous Parliaments have tinkered around the edges and slightly adjusted the minimum withdrawal rates, it is up to us in this chamber to enact the necessary changes. Giving seniors the freedom to divest their savings on their own accord will remove the pain of selling assets that have seen extreme swings in the financial markets.

Due to low interest rates and the sluggish economy, investments are not growing nearly as fast as they once were. For example, on long-term Government of Canada bonds, the interest rate has fallen from 8.5% to 3.1%, which is not that good a return when calculating inflation.

I also believe we can completely eliminate the needless headaches caused by cashing in RRIFs on a yearly basis when determining GIS or OAS rates. If people want to withdraw their savings of their own free will, they should be able to do so and at least have the peace of mind that the government's antiquated rules are not to blame for any clawbacks. If the Liberal government is serious about helping seniors, they will vote in favour of this legislation. If they want to do something meaningful to provide immediate assistance, then let us pass this bill.

Private Members' Business

While the Liberal government has already clawed back people's tax-free savings accounts, which has diminished seniors' ability to save without paying capital gains taxes, the least it can do is to give seniors greater financial flexibility in retirement. While the era of burdensome regulations continues to thrive, I believe this very minor change could send a powerful message, that Canadians do not need to be told what to do with their own financial investments.

In closing, I urge my Liberal colleagues to break ranks with cabinet and vote in favour of this legislation. Stand up for seniors; stand up for individual freedoms; stand up against excessive and outdated regulations; and most of all, stand up for your constituents and do what is right.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-301 is incompatible with the government's strategy to revitalize the economy, breathe life into the middle class, and help all Canadians save for retirement.

I am sympathetic to the intention of the bill, which my NDP colleague just explained. However, I would like to take a little time to go over some tax rules and the reality here.

Canadians who have a registered retirement savings plan, an RRSP, have to convert it into a registered retirement income fund, a RRIF, by the end of the year they turn 71. Beginning the following year, they must withdraw a minimum amount from their RRIF every year. By requiring individuals to withdraw increasing percentages of the funds in their RRIFs, the government ensures that tax deferral on amounts accumulated in RRSPs and RRIFs is in line with the purpose of these accounts, which is to supply retirement income, and prevents the undue hoarding of retirement savings for their estate.

Retirees are not forced to spend the money, but the idea is to defer tax, not eliminate it entirely. If this bill were to pass, there would be no mandatory minimum withdrawal. That would benefit mainly the wealthy, who would be able to save the money for their children without paying tax.

Bill C-301 is not consistent with the basic objectives of RRSPs and RRIFs since it allows seniors to postpone paying tax on the full amount of those savings until they are much older, well beyond retirement and well beyond age 71. An investor could even postpone it until death. The implementation of this legislation would also result in considerable fiscal costs.

It is estimated that eliminating the RRIF minimum withdrawal requirements would reduce federal tax revenue by at least \$500 million a year in the short term. The bill would also reduce provincial tax revenues.

Furthermore, the bill will create significant inequities between different segments of the population when it comes to tax deferral opportunities. Indeed, it will increase tax deferral opportunities for those who have savings in RRSPs compared to those who contribute to RPPs. It would also create a major intergenerational disparity because younger seniors would not be obligated to withdraw a portion of the savings in their RRIFs every year while older seniors were forced to begin doing so at age 71.

I would add that this bill would favour seniors who do not need the savings accumulated in their RRIFs, in other words high-income seniors, instead of supporting those who could use a bit of help.

We know that there are better ways to enhance retirement income security for Canadians. Let us look at young people. At times they feel like they are worse off than their parents. Far fewer of them will have workplace pension plans than the previous generation did. It is worrisome. They wonder whether they will have saved enough for a decent retirement.

Those are legitimate questions and concerns since one in four families approaching retirement age, or 1.1 million families, will likely not save enough for retirement. Together with the provinces and territories, we have come up with concrete solutions for all those families.

The answer is to enhance the Canada pension plan, the CPP, which will benefit Canadians in a variety of ways. For example, the maximum benefit will be increased by almost half once the enhanced CPP is fully operational. Also, CPP provides secure and predictable benefits. In other words, Canadians will know how much money they will get and will not have to worry about their savings dwindling or being affected by the markets. CPP benefits will be fully indexed to prices, so inflation will not reduce the purchase power of their retirement savings.

An enhanced CPP is the perfect response to a changing labour market. It fills in part the void left by the steady reduction in employer pension plans. It also follows workers from province to province, which facilitates professional mobility. The CPP has several million contributors. That is vitally important because it allows the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board to benefit from economies of scale and returns on significant investments.

I would like to summarize the main concerns about the bill introduced by my opposition colleague. The implementation of this bill would reduce the federal and provincial governments' tax revenues. It would not be consistent with the basic objective of tax-deferred retirement income provided by RRSPs or RRIFs.

• (1125)

Contributors to RRSPs and RPPs, and also older and younger seniors would be treated differently under the bill.

On the one hand, we have all the disadvantages of Bill C-301, which we just listed. On the other, we have all the advantages of the enhanced Canada Pension Plan, especially higher benefits.

We could also discuss the government's middle class tax cut. However, I think we have identified enough flaws to realize that we must vote against this bill.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise and speak in the House today on Bill C-301, an act to amend the Income Tax Act.

Private Members' Business

I frequently dealt with this issue as a former constituency assistant. So I find it interesting to hear the discussion today, because I think that we sometimes are in here making legislation without actually understanding what is happening on the ground to those people who are coming into our offices as constituents to see how we can assist them.

Many times seniors would visit the office because they were falling short and their RRIF was exhausted. Many of these seniors were quite youthful and had many years of financial worry left. In the office, we would always find a solution to assist them, such as payments through the guaranteed income supplement. However, I can honestly say that as constituency assistants, we thought, what could we be doing better for these people who are falling on desperate times? Many of those who would come in would only have their old age security and their Canada pension plan remaining for their retirement. I can say that some of them probably had 10 years or 15 years ahead of them, so there were many concerns.

I had not thought about how we could help them extend their RRIFs so they would not find themselves in these difficult situations. Therefore, it is wonderful to see the member for Edmonton West put forward such a great bill, with so much foresight, because these are truly the sort of changes the current government needs to make to help our seniors. It would give them the independence and ability to care for their own finances.

It is interesting because the member across just addressed my next issue. When I originally thought of this bill, my first reaction, too, was when would the government get its taxes, because a lot of times when we talk about RRSPs and RRIFs we recognize that it is a tax deferral, and to me that was going to be the challenging obstacle. Once I sat back and thought of the taxation trail of a RRIF, I realized that the solution proposed by the member for Edmonton West was an excellent option for all stakeholders.

Many Canadians save their money by investing in registered retirement savings plans, which are excellent vehicles for saving money for retirement, as taxation of the money invested in RRSPs is deferred until the money is withdrawn. Currently, these retirement savings are rolled into a registered retirement income fund at the age of 71, and regular withdrawals must then be made. However, for a few reasons, seniors are running out of retirement funds with many years left to live.

During and following the recession, the return on investment of retirement savings accounts dropped from 8.5% to 3.1%. This has had a huge impact on the amounts in the savings vehicles. Although the previous government had responded to the decreasing yields by adjusting features of RRIFs, we must understand that Canadians are living longer. According to the Canadian Association of Retirement Persons, CARP, in 2014, there was 265,000 Canadians who were over the age of 90. CARP also noted in its document entitled, "A New Vision of Aging for Canada", that an average 71-year-old can expect to live approximately 16 years more, for an expected lifespan of 85. That is three years longer than in 1992, when many of the rules for RRIFs were set. Because today's seniors are making withdrawals from RRIFs, we have to recognize that these rules from 1992 are definitely not what are needed in 2016.

These are two very important factors we need to consider. We need to recognize how the RRIF is taxed. A lot of times we hear of it being deferred, but we have to realize that when it is deferred it still will be taxed at some point in time. Let us say a spouse passes away and he or she leaves the other spouse as the beneficiary. There is an automatic transfer from the deceased's RRIF account to the surviving spouse's RRIF account and there are no tax implications. From that point on, the person can make those withdrawals and these are taxed at that point. Therefore, the Canadian government is getting its taxes then.

Another thing we have to take into consideration is if both spouses have passed on and the RRIFs are then given to the next generation. Then they are taxed fully at that time. Therefore, when we talk about the tax implications of this and losing tax revenues, we have to understand that regardless of whether we are taxing them yearly, because people are taking out amounts all the time, or at the time of the person's passing, the Canadian government will get its money back and its coffers will be filled.

Those are some of the things that are really important. Whether someone is taxed during the mandatory withdrawals until the fund runs out, or when they have passed on and the inheritance is disbursed among their beneficiaries, the RRIFs are taxed. I heard the member across speak about it as if we are treating people differently. However, at the same time, we have to recognize how taxation works.

● (1130)

I dealt with a file for an older lady who came into our office. Her husband, who had been in phenomenal health, unfortunately fell and passed away. Unfortunately, there were a lot of tax implications going on, because the organization holding the RRIF actually taxed her. There was something like \$80,000 she was going to have to pay on the RRIF because it all came to her.

What we ended up doing was we went through all the wills, the beneficiary documents, showing that there should not have been a transition and that since she was the spousal beneficiary, there was no tax. We were able to fix that up, but there was \$80,000 she was being taxed because she was the beneficiary.

We have to understand that in case one or in case two, whether it is going to the spouse or to the second generation of beneficiaries, it does get taxed. We are talking about a \$80,000 lump sum tax payment. We always have to keep that in mind. The money that is transferred to the spouse after one's death is withdrawn and the tax at that time is also going to be mandated on that. Let us say something, unfortunately, happens to one of my parents, as the spouse, one of them would be paying the taxes when they start taking those withdrawals.

The C.D. Howe Institute has called for these exact changes, according to a 2015 report, as well as CARP. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, removing the mandatory minimum withdrawal helps seniors whose withdrawals trigger clawbacks of the old age security and guaranteed income supplement, who find tax planning and investing outside RRIFs daunting, who cannot easily continue working and maintain their savings, and helps those anticipating late-in-life expenses, such as long-term care.

Private Members' Business

We must provide better options for Canadians, and provide them a way of planning their spending. In some comments made regarding the bill, Canadians have said, "I know that in a few years my needs for long-term care will change, and this allows me to make my own financial decisions." We must take into consideration that many Canadians have different retirement plans. Some will be entering long-term care facilities or assisted living residences, others may remain in their home depending on their health, and some may live with their families. Different situations cannot have a one-size-fits-all solution, and Bill C-301 provides greater flexibility.

RRIF rules and withdrawal rates were introduced in 1978, and in 1992, with a cash-strapped government, there was an increase to the mandatory withdrawals with the outcome being that the funds would be exhausted close to the age of death. According to 48% of the CARP membership, their own life expectancy has changed over the past 20 years and they state that they need to have more control over their own retirement funds to ensure that those funds will last longer.

I would like to go back to the point about constituents exhausting their retirement savings and how Bill C-301, introduced by the member for Edmonton West, does assist them with that.

The government talks a lot about the Canada pension plan, and we talk a lot about private pensions, but we have to recognize many people do not have public pension plans, or may not have had a private work plan.

I always like to refer to my parents. They were farmers, so there was not an option for anything other than RRSPs for them. They did not have a business that was matching their contributions. What they were doing was putting money aside in RRSPs, which have now been rolled into RRIFs. When I speak here, I think greatly about my parents. I think about what works best for them. They are excellent Canadians who continue to work and give back to the economy, and they should be allowed to have money that they can spend throughout a longer period of time.

If one were to see my 80-year-old father, one would know that we are probably stuck with him for another 15 to 20 years, because he is so vibrant. When he originally starting looking at this back in the 70s, did his plans for retirement mark the amazing shape he is in today? Probably not. His parents had passed away when they were 80 and 85, so for him, I am sure he thought 85 was going to be a great year, and that he would live until he was 85. I know that Dad will live for many years to come.

We have excellent medical research, and we have lots of things being done in our public systems to help our seniors. We have to recognize that life expectancy has increased dramatically, and the changes the bill is proposing take into consideration life expectancy. It is really important that as a government and as the official opposition, we must allow Canadians to choose for retirement. It is great to hear the NDP supporting this as well. This is an excellent option, especially for those people who had to, and will always, be planning their own future.

• (1135)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate in support of the private member's bill put forward by my colleague from Edmonton West. This legislation

would amend for tax purposes how retirement savings plans and RRIFs are treated.

I should mention my colleague's great work as the former president of Vancouver Island's largest hospital foundation. This foundation is responsible for six hospitals. My colleague speaks from great experience with respect to what seniors need and their care and the type of retirement savings they should have.

RRSPs and the RRIF program presently mandate that a mandatory percentage be withdrawn when one reaches the age of 71. Over time that percentage will keep going up to something close to 20%. It is easy to see how people who have done the right thing for a good part of their lives, which is put money aside, are then put into a situation where they might be forced by government edict to take more out of their retirement savings than they would like to take out and wind up depending on the government for financing through OAS and GIS, or are fully dependent on the government to provide home care or seniors care and they themselves have no means of providing for all of the extra expenses that arise in old age.

There is a Yiddish proverb that you can't have more in the bowl than you have in the pot. The pot is the savings that a person puts aside for their future. How one decides to fill that pot and what it is filled with is entirely up to the individual. Right now the government has a mandate to control that bowl and to control how individuals reach into that bowl and what those savings are used for. That is wrong. The government should not be able to force people to take more money out of their pot than they would like to take out. That is simply wrong and it should not be happening, especially now considering longevity and lifespan are far in excess of what was expected when RRSP programs were first introduced.

The mandatory withdrawals were developed in a different time, a time when people had shorter lifespan and a time when public finances were not as bad as they are today. We see that with the Liberal government's \$30-billion deficit and almost \$113 to \$120 billion of spending over the next four or five years. The government has absolutely no plan to return to a balanced budget in the future. It is simply not in the government's DNA to do that. The government is going to keep these rules in place in order to tax away people's savings. People aged 80 or 90 will be expected to pay for the Liberal government's failure to control its budget.

Mandatory withdrawals add to a person's taxable income after things like GIS and OAS are taken into account. Everybody knows that when we go into a bank or talk to a financial adviser, OAS and GIS are taken into account when plans are being made for our future. These are decisions people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s are making for 30 to 50 years down the line. All government programs are taken into account.

Private Members' Business

Seniors are concerned about the prospect of draining their financial resources before their death. Most people do not enjoy thinking about that prospect. People want to have the financial resources they need in order to have a comfortable life in the future, especially if they are saving for themselves. People choose to save for themselves and their spouse and kids. Many want to have enough financial resources to be able to pass some on to the next generation, a lifetime's worth of work, a lifetime's worth of accomplishments. This intergenerational transfer of wealth is very much family related. Families plan for themselves and for their future. I am planning for the future for all three of my kids, Maximillian, Jolie, and Enoch. I plan for their future by planning for myself, so I will not end up being a burden on them.

Today it is far better for Canadians to manage their own finances and savings in retirement in order to be able to reach into that pot of savings and decide how much they want to withdraw from it.

The current rules would empty out a RRIF by the time an individual reaches the age of 92. This would place many Canadians in a precarious position in their golden years.

CARP supports this legislation. It is calling for an end to all mandatory minimum RRIF withdrawals, and that is the right thing to do. With longer lifespan we should be enabling and empowering people to be able to withdraw from their RRSPs and their RRIFs in a way that is best suited for their financial situation. We should not be mandating through government edict when they can and how much they can withdraw from their accounts.

Most people aged 70, 80, and 90 have a much better sense of how they want to plan for their lifespan. People's health starts to really go down in their golden years and that is when things like home care and assisted living facilities need to be thought about.

Some people are fortunate enough to be able to assist their kids or their grandkids with some minor expenses.

● (1140)

However, that is also when they are thinking about potentially selling off real estate, about downsizing, about moving into different areas, perhaps taking that one final vacation with their spouse while their health is still solid enough to be able to travel. What we have with mandatory RRIF withdrawals is the uncertainty it builds into a person's planning for those last 20 to 30 years of life.

Because of low interest rates and increased longevity, RRIF mandatory withdrawals have an immense impact as shown by a CARP analysis that showed the vast gap between those who were saving in 1992 and withdrawing and those who were saving in 2014 and withdrawing.

We know that financial security is key in this proposal in Bill C-301 and that is what the member for Edmonton West is trying to achieve. It is to empower seniors in their golden years to have financial security and control over their own finances so they can plan better for their future.

In 2015, the previous Conservative government reduced the mandatory withdrawal rates for seniors holding a RRIF and while this was a step in the right direction, organizations like CARP and

the C.D. Howe Institute have recommended removing the requirement entirely.

I would like to mention one thing from the CARP report on this called "A New Vision of Aging for Canada", where it said, "The vast majority of CARP members (78%) say that offering retirees complete control over their RRIFs is a more important goal than government recouping deferred taxes through mandatory withdrawals."

The government backbenchers say we should think of the public treasury and the taxes we will be losing. Well, think about the seniors. The seniors should be placed first. They do not live in order for government to make a living. Members of Parliament live to ensure that Canadians have a living and that they are placed first before the government. We have it the wrong way. The government has to think about the public treasury and the taxes deferred are potentially never recouped, but I am thinking about seniors first. We are here for them and not the other way around.

Some might say that this deferred income so taxes should apply. Taxes in fact do apply. If people have money left over in a RRIF upon death, it will be taxed in their estate. It does get recouped. The money does get clawed back, so to speak, by the government at some point.

The real impact is on low-income seniors who could have saved a little in an RRSP that converts into a RRIF. Those are the people who could really use this extra funding for long-term care, home care, and other unforeseen expenses in their golden years.

We heard the member for Laurentides—Labelle talk about how seniors could pass on their RRSPs and RRIFs tax-free to the next generation and the government would not be able to recoup its finances, but the government is already taxing the estate upon their death. The government is there all the time recouping its money at some point.

The point is that we should not be placing the public treasury first, we should be placing seniors first. In the end, who saves for whom? Why do we not allow Canadians to have every single tool available to save for themselves? Given that consistency, given that certainty that in their golden years past 65 or whenever they choose to retire, they will be able to save and withdraw from that Yiddish pot with their bowl as much as they think is necessary to plan for their retirement.

Canadians should be the ones placed first to manage their retirement and how they save and where they spend. It is absolutely essential to start saving as soon as possible. That is where we should be starting. People should be thinking about the future, but if they know that government is going to tax it away, then they will not take advantage of RRIFs as much as they should.

We heard that 87% of CARP members are RRIF holders and 61% hold half or more of their retirement savings in a RRIF account. Some 54% are worried about having enough retirement savings, 25% do not expect their savings to last their whole lifetime, and 17% say they have enough savings to last a lifetime. That is an infinitesimally small number.

Private Members' Business

The right thing to do is to approve the bill, send it to committee, to the next stage and ensure that Canadian seniors have that certainty so they can save and plan for their future the way they want to. They should be able to withdraw from that Yiddish pot at the rate that they want to. They should be in control of the bowl, not the government.

• (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate.

Seeing none, we will allow the member for Edmonton West five minutes for his right to reply.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues who support the bill and who have spoken so well to the merits of it.

This legislation would help all seniors today by removing a punishing withdrawal structure that would harm the retirement savings of Canadians. Before I reiterate the specific benefits of the bill, I want to thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who spoke in favour of the bill during the first hour of debate. He said that he strongly encouraged support of the bill at second reading so we could at least bring it to committee, further study it, and hear from expert witnesses.

I also want to address comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who both spoke in opposition to the bill in the first hour. Neither of them pointed out specific potential harms of this bill, but rather launched into lengthy platitudes about how great the government was for forcing the CPP expansion. Their argument is meaningless because supporting Bill C-26 and supporting Bill C-301 are not mutually exclusive. The government members can support both bills without one impacting the other. I look at the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for this example. He doing both, and he has not exactly burst into flames because of it.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance elaborated on the benefits of the previous Conservative government's sensible lowering of the RRIF withdrawal rates in 2015. I congratulate him on this non-partisan behaviour and encourage him to continue to do this by supporting Bill C-301, which is the logical extension of the 2015 reduction.

In supporting the 2015 reduction, the member acknowledges that RRIF rates are out of touch with the changing realities of life expectancy and savings investments. Because government will never react enough to minimize the harms to seniors caught in the middle, the logical next step is to eliminate these rules entirely and stop punishing seniors for daring to have savings. I hope the member realizes his inconsistent logic in supporting the 2015 reduction by opposing this extension, and reconsiders his position.

He next made misleading arguments on tax deferral by implying that this legislation would allow Canadians to avoid taxes entirely. This is false and he is wrong. The government would get what it is owed. The only difference is that with Bill C-301, seniors would decide when it was best to withdraw their savings and be taxed. Government is not going anywhere and neither, by extension, is the

tax man. Government can wait, especially if it means our seniors are better off.

The member then doubled down on his flawed tax-exemption argument, but it was also an irrelevant point. He said that the bill could motivate seniors to press for tax exemptions, which would be contrary to the basic principles of our fiscal policy. I am not certain what the member was trying to get at. I wonder if he is seriously basing his opposition around the idea that just maybe in the future some people might push for better tax treatment. I wonder what is next? Maybe the government needs to take money from seniors because some might spend it on beer and popcorn.

His last argument is just as nonsensical. He said that this bill would create major intergenerational disparity, and we heard that earlier today as well, because older seniors had been forced to withdraw their savings already. I am very much unclear on what the member is thinking. I think he may misunderstand the parliamentary system entirely. I just want to clarify for him that every law that we change affects Canadians unevenly.

The Liberals' own prized CPP tax hike would not benefit anyone for about 40 years, yet would raise taxes on several generations that would see zero benefit. Adding over \$100 billion in debt for later generations to pay would do the same. His government is going to create the largest intergenerational disparity in Canadian history, but the Liberals argue against Bill C-301. I wish I could peek into the member's mind for a brief moment so I could witness the logic backflips he does to reconcile the support for the CPP tax hike and off-loading debt for future generations, but then opposes this sensible legislation because of intergenerational concerns.

Last, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader said that he could not recall anyone from his constituency contacting him regarding RRIF withdrawals, that it was not a substantive point. It is probably because the member never asked. However, I asked, and CARP asked. We heard overwhelmingly that the bill was needed and wanted.

The bill would address real harms. Canadians are living longer, their investments are earning less, and the RRIF withdrawal structure is depleting the savings of our seniors at an unsustainable rate. These forced withdrawals negatively affect seniors in many ways, and disproportionately hurt low-income seniors. Forced withdrawals count as income, which needlessly triggers clawbacks of OAS, GIS, and needed provincial benefits. This matters for low-income seniors who rely on OAS and GIS for their daily expenses, but need to continue saving their RRIF for expected later-in-life expenses such as long-term care or care for their disabled children.

Government Orders

• (1150)

This bill is broadly supported. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons supports the bill because it would return financial control over savings back to seniors. It would not cost taxpayers a dime. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, it would probably benefit the treasury, not cost the half a billion dollars as made up by the other side.

This bill is badly needed. There is only one solution, and that is to eliminate the mandatory withdrawal and stop punishing seniors for saving. Let us allow Canadians to manage their retirement as they see fit. Enact this broadly supported and sound legislation. Let us send it to committee so Canadians can have their say.

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, December 1 the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, December 13, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Seeing the clock, we seem to have gone through everything fairly quickly this morning. We will suspend sitting.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:55 a.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[English]

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT

The House resumed from December 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union and its Member States and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We are in questions and comments. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member has to do with public consultation. I know he spoke at length about it, but I would like him to underscore why it is important. Is it integral to the success of the trade deal?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very good work in the chamber and in her riding.

I would ask members to cast their minds back to last week. My speech in the House was with regard to the government's general approach to public participation in the public policy-making process. In 2016, the government undertook many different kinds of public participation, including around this trade deal, to some extent. However, the question I raised during my speech concerned the disingenuousness of some of the consultation processes.

During my speech, I alluded to the fact that while genuine public participation was certainly welcome and, indeed, necessary for successful public policy, there were two courses of consultation that the government seemed to be undertaking. The first is what Sherry Arnstein would call manipulation. That is where the government has a policy path in mind, decides it needs to make it look like it is consulting with the public, so it twists its consultation processes to be manipulative, to trick the public into thinking it has input when it does not.

The other process that is disingenuous is something called therapy, where people have very strong views about issues or policies and the government uses the public consultation process to cure them of their ills. This is what is happening with the CETA deal. The public is very wary of these trade deals when they look at, for example, how NAFTA has hollowed out the manufacturing sector in Canada and how other trade deals have had negative effects, mainly because the government does not follow the NDP prescription of being fair trade deals. That is why we have supported some trade deals in the past and do not support other trade deals, like this one, for example.

I would call on the government to be genuine in its process in the future to ensure it does not try to manipulate or subject Canadians to therapy.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. Unfortunately, I missed the speech he gave on Friday, but the question I am going to ask him will help me find out whether he talked about investor-state provisions and a legal system that operates parallel to the Canadian and European systems. I am talking about a parallel system that allows investors to sue the governments because of democratically implemented measures. Is he concerned about this? Like the Europeans, would he like to see changes made in this regard before supporting an economic and trade agreement?

[English]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his good work in the chamber and in his riding, which is of note for sure.

Government Orders

Canadians have a lot of concern about trade deals. The biggest concern is when sovereignty is taken out of the hands of Canadians. The problem with many trade deals is that Canadians like to control their own destinies. When bad trade deals are signed, they lose some of the sovereignty. I think that is what is happening. We have heard that from multiple actors across Canada, in terms of municipalities or producers of particular goods. That is part of the problem with this trade deal and why we object to it. It takes too much control out of the hands of Canadians and puts it in the hands of multinational corporations or other national governments.

We were hoping we would find a fair and equitable trade deal with Europe that we could support, but the Liberals did not deliver, mainly because they took the deal off of the table that the Conservatives had negotiated under the Harper government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has long been calling for improved trade with Europe to diversify Canada's markets. However, there are many serious concerns that have not been addressed and many unanswered questions regarding the proposed agreement.

I would like to say that I will not be supporting Bill C-30, an act to implement the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union and its Member States and to provide for certain other measures.

The Prime Minister signed the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA for short, on October 30, at the Canada-European Union leaders' summit. However, the Liberal government put Bill C-30, the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement implementation act, on the Notice Paper just two days prior to that, and it introduced the bill on October 31.

I would like to remind the House that this rushed process violated the government's own policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament. This policy requires the government to table a copy of the treaty along with an explanatory memorandum setting out the key elements of the treaty at least 21 sitting days before the bill is introduced, not just two.

Trade with Europe is too important to be taken lightly. The government has to make an effort to fix the unresolved problems in the agreement instead of settling for a flawed document. There is no shortage of flaws, including in agriculture, health, the environment, and the list goes on.

Nevertheless, the Liberals are blindly forging ahead. We need to think of the people, the jobs, and the local economies in our regions. The cost of pharmaceuticals will go up. The Liberals' promised compensation has evaporated. Some 23,000 jobs will be lost. That is the number of jobs Canada will lose because of CETA.

A study published by Tufts University's Global Development and Environment Institute in September showed that we will still be experiencing the job loss fallout from signing this agreement in 2023.

According to Maude Barlow, chairperson of the Council of Canadians, this agreement “suggests that there aren't economic gains—only job losses, inequality, and the erosion of the public sector”.

I refuse to sit here and do nothing. It is our duty to protect the interests of our constituents. While the Conservatives had promised a \$4.3-billion compensation package to supply-managed farmers who will be affected by the Canada-Europe agreement and the trans-Pacific partnership, the Liberal government ultimately decided to create a subsidy program worth just \$350 million for dairy farmers and processors.

I hope the Liberals realize that that amount is not nearly enough to compensate the dairy industry for the job losses it is going to suffer under that agreement.

I would like to explain what this will mean for a region like my riding, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

The agrifood sector is really the motor for economic development in the riding I represent. I often say that I am extremely proud to represent Canada's agrifood technocity. We have a high concentration of producers in various activity sectors, including educational institutions like the Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe, the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire, and our faculty of veterinary medicine, the only French-language school of veterinary medicine in North America. My riding is also home to laboratories, research centres, and many agrifood processing plants. My region's entire economy depends on the agrifood sector.

• (1210)

A retail clothing store owner recently told me that he realized that half his clients are farmers, or people who work in the agri-food industry. He realized, as a store owner, how much he relies on the agri-food industry even though he sells clothing for a living.

This is a fragile industry. Let us not forget that. I live on a concession road, on my husband's family farm. My husband is the son of a dairy farmer. When he was young, there were three dairy farmers along our road. Now there are none. I represent two RCMs, Maskoutains and Acton. There are very few dairy farms left in the Maskoutains RCM. It is almost all crop farming now.

In Acton, I have the good fortune of representing dairy farmers. If we look at the village of Upton, for example, we see that on some concession roads there is a dairy farmer at every corner, at every farm. We have to realize that every time we sign an international agreement where we chip away a little more at supply management, there are direct and immediate repercussions on these dairy farmers.

Government Orders

The “Strong and United” campaign was rolled out during the summer of 2015. What I found really encouraging about this campaign was that my constituents, and all Canadians, were made aware of the fact that supply management is not just the business of the farmers concerned. In fact, it is everyone's business because supply management of milk, eggs, and poultry ensures that consumers have an adequate supply. As its name indicates, the supply management system is a system based on supply and demand. It ensures that we have enough good quality products at prices that do not fluctuate.

My constituents have told me that they sometimes go the United States where a litre of milk is less expensive. I tell them to go back in three weeks to see what that litre of milk costs. Without supply management prices can fluctuate throughout the year. There can even be a shortage. In fact, two years ago, there was an egg shortage in the United States, which was followed by price hikes.

We can always count on having enough high-quality products. That is important. Under the Canada-Europe free trade agreement, 17,000 tonnes of European cheese will be imported to Canada. That is definitely going to affect dairy production. We will definitely not need to produce as much milk because we are going to be importing 17,000 tonnes of cheese. Small cheese makers are already talking about it.

In addition to the problems this will cause for dairy producers, there is also the matter of land use. I was saying earlier that I represent villages where there is a farm around every corner. When I visit the villages in my riding, I am told that the agrifood industry is the lifeblood of our villages and schools.

Earlier, I was talking about a clothing retailer, but this will also impact the village grocery and hardware stores. All of the jobs in my community are directly affected by the agrifood industry. It is therefore very important that, any time we sign an international agreement, we consider the specific impact that the agreement will have on the agrifood industry.

A few years ago, we decided to exclude culture from our international agreements because this is a sensitive field that needs to be handled in a specific way. The same is true of agriculture. It is a matter of land use and food security. Food self-sufficiency is important. When we sign an international agreement, we need to ask those questions about the agrifood sector.

In conclusion, the NDP cannot support an agreement that is harmful to our regions, our jobs, and all Canadians.

•(1215)

This could have been a good agreement. Unfortunately, the Liberals do not appear capable of acting in the public's interest.

We hope that the government will take the time to consult Canadians and rework the agreement, which hurts our regions and the public. This is the only way we will be able to build healthy and sustainable trade relationships between Canada and the European Union.

I am very proud to have been able to present this message on behalf of the farmers and the constituents of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I am somewhat familiar with her region, but not as much as my wife Joanie, who works there. She is quite familiar with farming and how the economy relies on this sector. There are in fact many indirect jobs. It is important that we defend the agrifood sector and everything that goes with it.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that, when the government announced that it would ratify the agreement negotiated by the Conservatives, it announced a different compensation amount than what the Conservatives proposed. At that time, the Conservatives were in government and they were the ones who negotiated the agreement. Today, the amount is \$350 million instead of the \$4.3 billion announced by the Conservatives.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this. The amount of compensation announced is smaller. It is basically a completely different compensation package.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his question.

Actually I am refusing to call the \$350 million amount compensation, because it is not.

When compensation was set at \$4.3 billion, it was calculated that this was how much the sector was losing. We see it in the diafiltered milk coming across the border. I have met with young dairy farmers who said that the losses, for some as much as \$50,000 per year, were as big as their profit margins.

The \$350 million spread over five years is being called compensation. That is a misnomer. It is a subsidy, a new subsidy. During the announcement, the Liberals said that it was a modernization subsidy. The dairy farmers in my riding have already modernized. I have visited their farms and have already seen their milking machines.

The subsidy will not even pay for the electricity needed to run the milking machines. The subsidy is basically telling farmers that they have to keep going deeper in debt and keep investing. However, they have already invested a lot. They are going to see their incomes drop, since production is expected to decrease because of the agreement and its 17,000 tonnes of cheese.

Currently, what they are being told is that they will be given a subsidy if they invest more, despite their losses. This is unacceptable.

•(1220)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

She mentioned in her speech that there used to be three dairy farms along her road. The idea of living out in the country like that, in nature, really appeals to me too.

Can she tell me why they shut down? Did that happen recently or a while ago? Did those dairy farms have to close up shop because of Agropur's huge monopoly? Did they go out of business because of a previous free trade agreement? Was it because nobody wanted to carry on the family tradition?

Government Orders

I am curious about why those farms went out of business.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I was talking about farms that went out of business 15 years ago, some of them 20 or 25 years ago. However, the same thing is still happening all over my riding, and the main issue is that there is nobody to take over.

A career in agrifood is a vocation, as I often tell farmers. They have to get up seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a week, especially when they are taking care of animals. They are always on alert because unexpected things can happen. That kind of job is truly a vocation, and it is getting harder to find people who want to take over. That is what farmers tell me.

It is obvious to young workers that the people their age with whom they went to school get better pay, better working conditions, and maybe even pension plans. A lot of young people in farming are in very precarious situations.

Every time a new international agreement is signed, it undermines their production capability because every agreement opens another crack in the supply management system that governs them. I have to point out that supply managed sectors are not entitled to government subsidies. That is an important thing to remember here.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-30 at second reading. This bill implements the Canada-Europe comprehensive and economic trade agreement, or CETA.

I have to say to my colleagues that, unfortunately, we will be voting against it. I would have really liked to be able to support a good agreement between Canada and Europe in order to increase trade, because we know that the European continent is ripe with opportunity for our businesses. They definitely could have benefited from a good agreement that increases trade with Europe. We do already trade with Europe, but a trade agreement would allow us to trade even more.

Unfortunately, the agreement and its implementation bill leave much to be desired. This is not simply my opinion; many Canadian and European experts have been very critical of the bill's provisions. One of the things that has been most roundly criticized is definitely the legal framework for investor-state dispute resolution. It is a parallel system that allows investors like multinationals and states to challenge our own democratic decisions made here in Canada at all levels of government. This means that we could be sued for implementing policies that could be seen as affecting the bottom line of multinationals or working against the interests of foreign states. That will be part of my speech.

I identified many other problems with this agreement. However, as I said earlier, I am disappointed that we did not manage to come up with a better agreement because Europe is a place where we must do business. If ever there were a continent we could work well with outside North America, where we live, it is indeed Europe, where there are very robust workers rights and environmental protections; very solid workplace health and safety regulations that are comparable to what we have here in Canada; and excellent food

safety and product safety regulations. This is a continent that Canada can certainly work well with because of our similar rules.

Today, as we speak, many of our regulations are similar to those in Europe. It is therefore important that we increase trade with that continent. Unfortunately, the bill and the signed agreement certainly do not meet our expectations.

Bill C-30 is definitely being rushed through. It allows the government to ratify CETA in full, but does not answer key questions. For example, many measures applicable to investors and states have not yet been defined and are being staunchly opposed in Europe. Right now we have no details about an appeal procedure or how the members of the arbitration panel will be chosen. That is where things stand at the moment.

The Liberal government is asking parliamentarians to sign a blank cheque, telling us it will fill it out later. Canada and Europe tried to alleviate Europeans' concerns about CETA, but the Liberal government has yet to consider Canadians' concerns.

I want to point out four problems that I feel are really important and that must be raised. They may make government members realize there are serious flaws in the economic agreement and possibly change their mind about this bill.

I have already mentioned investor-state measures in relation to our democratic states. These mechanisms are not fair to Canada, and they are not fair to Europe, either.

• (1225)

That is why even European experts and politicians raised this issue. They also felt that there was a problem with allowing multinationals to challenge our laws.

Let us imagine that a political party is elected based on the promise to ban a certain product that its members felt was a danger to the public. When the party takes office, it keeps its promise by declaring the product in question to be contrary to the interests of the economy and the public. Under the agreement in question, the multinational that manufactures the product could challenge the government's democratic decision to ban it and demand compensation by saying that it sold millions of units of the product in our country.

Multinationals and corporations would thus become superior to our sovereign states, which make decisions based on their election promises. These companies could get the last word and obtain compensation under the agreement as it stands today. That is why I want to speak out against this in the House today. I want every member to understand the potential consequences of these investor-state provisions and the parallel legal system created by this economic agreement.

Government Orders

Even though my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot did a great job of explaining how this agreement will affect dairy producers, I wanted to mention them too because they are going to suffer major losses. That is why the previous government promised to compensate them when it was negotiating this economic agreement. The previous government recognized that dairy producers were going to suffer real financial losses and that, if it disrupted our supply management system by accepting more dairy products on our market, European cheeses in this case, the sales of our producers here in Canada could be negatively affected. The previous government therefore committed to compensating dairy producers for their losses.

The government often tries to smooth things over by saying that in exchange for allowing a certain number of European products onto our market, Canadian products will also have access to the European market. This is a market of 500 million people, and it is a tremendous market for selling more products, but in reality, because of the support that European countries give their own producers and other factors, it will be very difficult for Canadians to compete over there.

As well, obviously there are transportation costs involved in exporting products there. This sets up an uneven playing field, and it is just not the case that farmers will be able to make up their losses just by exporting and by trying to sell their products in Europe.

Another issue is the rising cost of drugs, which my colleagues have spoken about. Experts have estimated that Canadians will be faced with \$850 million in extra costs. When the Liberals were in opposition, they called for a public study on the additional drug costs brought by changes to the intellectual property regime for pharmaceuticals. Unfortunately, once elected, they appear to have forgotten about this part, even though it was a prerequisite for supporting this agreement.

The fourth problem I wanted to talk about is that certain rules will prevent current or future rules from requiring greater local content. For example, municipal or other governments might want to see procurement rules encouraging a greater number of local companies to bid on government procurement contracts. These rules could also be deemed inappropriate under the economic agreement.

In closing, I will be pleased to answer my colleagues' questions if they would like me to clarify what I have said, or anything else.

• (1230)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly understand the member for Sherbrooke's main argument.

I wholeheartedly support this free trade agreement, but it definitely has some measures that, in some ways, take away from our great federation's sovereignty.

However, I get the feeling that his argument cuts both ways because he uses it in this case but not in others. We belong to all kinds of international treaties that diminish our sovereignty in areas such as maritime law. If fishers from Newfoundland and Labrador want to venture farther than 12 or 200 kilometres to catch a certain kind of fish, they could face consequences for that, such as legal action elsewhere in the world.

We belong to all kinds of treaties that diminish our sovereignty. I cannot name them just now, but I am sure there are plenty of them. The NDP supports them wholeheartedly.

Will the member for Sherbrooke admit that he uses this argument when it suits him?

• (1235)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

He says that there are other international treaties that govern or impose basic standards on certain issues, and that they generally make a lot of sense. For example, it might be a question of minimum safety standards and respecting certain rights.

However, in this case, private companies might say that the government is not acting appropriately from their point of view, that of a multinational corporation, and not from the point of view of a multinational framework whose members agree on all the minimum standards. Instead, we are talking about companies who are subjectively saying that the government is taking measures that are hurting them and their profits, and that it must change its approach or compensate them for it.

I do not think that we can compare these two situations. In some cases, this is truly a multinational agreement and every national government agrees on certain things, which obviously must be respected when an agreement is signed.

I do not think that we can compare that to the investor-state system in this case.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his speech. It is always a pleasure and so interesting to hear him speak here in the House. I know that he does a very good job representing his constituents. Many members of my family live in his riding and they are very well served. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for that.

I would also like my colleague's take on an issue that he touched on in his speech, namely government contracts. We know what an important economic lever infrastructure investment can be for stimulating our economy.

If a European company was vying for a contract that exceeded the established threshold, how would my colleague interpret that? Some of us here represent small municipalities of 200 to 500 inhabitants. What major repercussions could this have on these small municipalities?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention. I also want to take this opportunity to say hello to her relatives who live in Sherbrooke.

The member raises a very important issue, one that has also been raised by several municipalities. European companies will have more rights when it comes to participating in public contracts and local procurement.

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This is a serious concern that has been raised by several people, one that could have a real impact. We often hear about waste water management, drinking water, and waterworks as examples. European companies could take control of our water management systems. Concerns over that issue are genuine and significant.

As I said in my speech, and I think we have discussed in the House recently, governments are creating procurement policies with a certain percentage of local content. This means that those European companies, once again under investor-state systems—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying unequivocally that New Democrats believe that it is possible to create a Canada whose economy is sustainable, just, and fair while remaining competitive on the world stage. We believe that we all thrive in an equitable society where everyone has equal access to nutritious food, a safe home, an education, decent work at fair wages, clean air and fresh water, health care, pharmacare, a secure retirement, and child care.

Just today it was reported that child care costs in Canada are unaffordable. They are through the roof. Canadian parents know that, but the current government does not seem to have a clue. After 40 years of promises from Liberals and Conservatives alike, we still have no national, affordable, regulated child care in this country.

Our trade agreements should reflect not only the importance of a strong social safety net but our values as a nation, and child care is certainly one of them.

Any trade deal should promote and protect our communities and our families. Remarkably, it is not clear that CETA serves Canadians in regard to community needs and values. Because of this lack of clarity, New Democrats cannot support Bill C-30.

The NDP supports deepening the Canada-EU trade relationship to diversify our markets, but that does not cloud our vision or divert us from our commitment to ensuring that our trade deals serve the people who have placed their trust in us.

Despite lofty promises to the contrary, it appears that once again, the current government wants to force this bill into legislation without the transparency, public consultation, and careful consideration it warrants. This kind of smoke-and-mirrors tactic invites a healthy dose of skepticism.

Canada's trade relationship with Europe is too important to get wrong. We should be working to fix problems with the current deal rather than settling for this flawed agreement.

We have significant concerns and unanswered questions about CETA. It has been called the biggest trade deal since NAFTA. Without proper security, however, and scrutiny, trade agreements such as CETA have the potential to bargain away programs, services, products, and even the values that we, as Canadians, hold dear.

Our experience with NAFTA should be a lesson to us. Under NAFTA, Canadian workers suffered when well-paid union jobs

moved south to low-wage jurisdictions, leaving communities and local economies devastated. In London, the story of Siemens, ABB, Westinghouse, Philips, and Caterpillar are sad examples.

Under the investor-state dispute settlement provisions of free trade agreements, Canada has become one of the most sued countries in the world, winning only three of 39 cases against foreign governments. Under NAFTA, Canada has paid out over €135 million on these claims, mostly to the U.S., and outstanding cases worth another €1.75 billion remain and are a concern.

This past February, the minister announced changes to the ISDS provisions that are purported to improve transparency and neutralize the potential for arbitrator conflicts of interest. However, the renamed investor-court system still allows foreign investors to seek compensation from any level of government over policy decisions those governments make, decisions the investors say threaten their profit margins. In other words, foreign companies will have access to a special court system to challenge Canadian laws without going through our domestic courts.

There is evidence that private corporations have attempted to use the threat of investor-state charges under NAFTA to discourage governments from advancing legislation that is in the best public interest, threatening the progressive social values we hold dear as Canadian citizens.

Critics have argued that CETA threatens our public services, including health care; that it endangers local job creation; that it threatens our sovereignty when it comes to fresh water and a clean environment; that it threatens our food sovereignty and farmers' rights; that our cultural and communications sovereignty is in danger; and that indigenous sovereignty and human rights are threatened, as are labour rights and the quality of our existing jobs.

● (1240)

Several European states have already made it clear that the investor-court provisions of the agreement must change before it is implemented, yet Bill C-30 includes all the necessary legal changes to implement CETA without knowing what those changes will be. Liberals are basically asking parliamentarians to sign a blank cheque and trust them to fill out the amount afterward: Sign the contract and read it later.

It is not an exaggeration to say that our democratic and domestic sovereignty is at risk if we accept a deal whose consequences are unknown. We can do better. Some could argue that Canada and Europe have more progressive policies than the U.S., making CETA different from NAFTA in its potential to affect our democratic sovereignty. Consider, however, that most large American corporations have Canadian subsidiaries. What is to stop one of those subsidiaries from invoking the investor-court provisions of CETA to challenge the environmental, health, and labour policies of signatory states?

New Democrats have been calling for a national pharmacare program for Canada forever. Evidence shows that such a program is not only sustainable but is cost-efficient for the government to implement. It would save billions in taxpayer dollars and would make life easier for Canadians who rely on those prescriptions for their health and quality of life.

In opposition, the Liberals demanded a study of the fiscal impact of CETA on prescription drug costs. In government, they are rushing to implement CETA, while at the same time they are refusing to consider increased health care transfers to the provinces. One would think that sunny ways would require a comprehensive analysis of policies and agreements and their effects on Canadians before signing off, but that does not seem to be the case here. Canadians deserve better.

Recognizing that supply management farmers would suffer under CETA and the TPP, the previous Conservative government earmarked \$4.3 billion for compensation to industries affected by the deal. The Liberal government has announced a \$350-million package for dairy farmers, falling far short of their actual losses under CETA. Neither has the government explained how it will compensate Newfoundland and Labrador for fish processing losses expected under the deal.

Under CETA, companies will also have the increased ability to employ temporary foreign workers without consideration of the impact on Canadians. These effects have the potential to be devastating to our local economies as well as to those workers who must accept precarious working conditions to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads.

In opposition, Liberals called for further consultation with Canadians on CETA. In government, they passed a motion in camera to restrict written submissions to those who the trade committee had selected to appear. This is yet another example of Liberals campaigning on the left and governing on the right. It is understandable that Canadians might have a hard time keeping up with this Liberal sleight of hand.

Given that testimony from over 400 witnesses and written submissions from 60,000 Canadians were overwhelmingly critical of the TPP, it appears that the Liberals have learned from their TPP experience. If only they had used this hard-won knowledge to actually listen to Canadians about their very real concerns regarding CETA rather than restricting public consultation and conducting what should have been public business in a closed and secretive environment.

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We know from the example of Wallonia, in Belgium, that improving the agreement is possible where there is political will to do so. Because of Wallonia's intervention, consideration of trade union concerns has been incorporated into the legally binding, interpretative instrument of the agreement.

New Democrats do not oppose trade deals that reduce tariffs and boost exports, but we do not believe that investor-state provisions that threaten our sovereignty are necessary evils. In fact, investor-state provisions are unacceptable evils. They serve corporations and only corporations. These provisions do not serve people.

We believe that the job of government is to pursue better trade, trade that boosts human rights and labour standards, protects the environment, and protects our health care system, social security, and Canadian jobs.

• (1245)

We believe that better trade deals are achieved with inclusion and must involve a better consultation process than was employed by previous Conservative and Liberal governments, and now the current Liberal government. It has kept—

• (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. She is the NDP veterans affairs critic, and she is very dedicated to her community. I learn something from her every day, and I thank her for it.

In her speech, she talked about the higher cost of prescription drugs that would be caused by CETA. I would like her to tell us about the impact these higher costs will have on her community and veterans because people with physical or psychological injuries have to take medication.

In her opinion, what will be the impact of higher drug costs on those people's lives?

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely indefatigable in how she cares for her constituents.

I must say that her concern about the cost of pharmaceuticals is well-placed. The veterans in our community, the people who have given their health and a great part of their lives and their families' lives to the service of this country, will indeed also be adversely affected if they have to pay the horrendous costs of pharmaceuticals as prices increase because of the protectionism inherent in CETA. This applies to seniors as well.

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It is interesting that it was also said that NAFTA would reduce pharmaceutical costs and promote investment by pharmaceutical companies and research and development in new pharmaceuticals in Canada. It did nothing of the sort. In fact, investment in Canadian research declined significantly. Pharmaceutical companies are protected and do not have to do the work, but can simply recycle the same old drugs with a slightly different formulary and continue to make excessive profits.

This is not a deal that Canadians can accept.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have one comment and question for my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe.

First, one of the worries I have about this proposed legislation is that it has been rammed through the House in the absence of consultation with our indigenous peoples, without adhering to our constitutionally protected right or obligation to consult and accommodate indigenous peoples. I have seen no indication from the present government that it did so. That is extremely problematic.

One of the things the Canadian Environmental Law Association has said about CETA is that “It will significantly impact environmental protection and sustainable development in Canada.” In particular it “will impact the federal and provincial governments’ authority to protect the environment, promote resource conservation, or use green procurement as a means of advancing environmental policies and objectives.”

I would like my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe, to comment on that.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his absolutely incredible work with respect to indigenous rights. He has stood up for the people, not just of this nation, but indigenous peoples all around the world.

He is absolutely right about why this agreement is of concern with regard to the environment, and the fact that we owe it to the indigenous people of this country, of this continent, to consult with them when it comes to the environment, because we know that they are the protectors of the land, the water, and the air.

One of the things I want to draw attention to is the fact that Canada has been consistently sued under NAFTA when we have tried to protect our environment. A classic example is the Ethyl Corporation. It sued Canada because Canadians did not want MMT, an additive that not only increases the octane levels of unleaded gas but also impacts children. It is a carcinogenic. Ethyl sued Canada and it got \$201 million U.S. because of the protectionist articles of NAFTA.

I do not want that under CETA.

• (1255)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to have this opportunity to rise today to speak on Bill C-30, the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union and its member states.

Let me be clear that I am in support of and in favour of trade. The NDP is in support of trade. However, we want fair trade. We want trade that respects workers' rights, the environment, and aboriginal

rights, and does so in consultation with business, ensuring that the business community is protected. After all, Canada is a trading nation.

I was a small business owner and the executive director of a very successful chamber of commerce on Vancouver Island. I know firsthand the benefits that cross-border commerce can have for our economy and Canadian business.

As the progressive opposition, we believe it is important to review the details of trade agreements. We do not blindly support any trade deal. We take our time to look at a deal closely. We want to get it right, so that everyone wins on all sides of a trade agreement, which leads me to CETA.

This trade agreement is flawed, and trade with Europe is far too important to get it wrong. I am going to illustrate three ways in which this deal is flawed, including the investor-state provisions, cabotage, and the cost of pharmaceutical drugs. When it comes to the investor-state provisions, the Liberals are asking parliamentarians to sign off on CETA despite the fact that European states, such as Wallonia, have made it clear that the investor-state provisions will have to be removed before they will be willing to ratify this agreement.

Let us talk about the investor-state provisions, because that is what a lot of folks back in Courtenay—Alberni, my riding, are concerned about when discussing CETA. In February 2016, the trade minister announced changes to the investor-state dispute settlement provisions that were supposed to improve transparency and strengthen measures to combat conflicts of interest. Yet, the investor court system will still allow foreign investors to seek compensation from any level of government over policy decisions they feel impact their profits. That gives up local decision-making and sovereignty over our decision-making. That means that foreign companies will have access to a special court system to challenge Canadian laws without going through domestic courts.

The government has not explained how this would ensure that environmental and health and safety regulations would be protected from foreign challenges. The question is, why not? It is now clear that this deal will not pass Europe without significant changes to the investor-state provisions.

Another huge concern, especially in my riding of Courtenay—Alberni, is the maritime section of CETA. That part is very troubling to my constituents and residents of Vancouver Island and coastal British Columbia. The maritime section of CETA is of deep concern. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union just released a statement about this portion of the trade deal. They said:

The maritime section of CETA will destroy the Canadian maritime industry as it exists today by ending what is known as cabotage.

Many members are probably wondering what cabotage is. It is a measure under Coast Trading Act that protects our coastal trade by requiring any vessel trading within Canada to be Canadian owned, operated, and crewed. This is very important. It is important that we protect our jobs, environment, and economic health. If CETA goes forward, it will destroy the protection of cabotage. It will allow foreign-owned vessels to work the coastal waterways they are currently banned from. It will allow cheap labour from foreign countries to run their ships here, putting our Canadian seafarers out of work.

When I think about the people working in our coastal communities, they are our sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, who have good, safe family-supporting jobs in an industry that is vital to our economy.

These foreign-owned ships also will not pay taxes here in Canada. This is unfair. It is an unfair labour advantage. It is unfair advantage.

For decades, the U.S. and Canada have fought off aggressive attempts to remove our coastal protections, but with one swipe of the pen CETA will remove that protection. CETA will lead to the immediate loss of approximately 3,000 Canadian seafarers' jobs. These are high-quality, well-paid jobs.

• (1300)

I want to talk about how CETA will affect economic development opportunities in my riding specifically.

A plan is being worked on in Port Alberni in the Alberni Valley. This plan will be a great opportunity to invest in short sea shipping. This is being done with the Huu-ay-ah first nation.

Port Alberni is a deep sea port. It is the perfect place for the proposed Port Alberni transshipment hub, also known as PATH. It is an initiative to develop a container transshipment, short sea shipping terminal to move goods from the Alberni Valley to the Lower Mainland. CETA will impact PATH because it will undercut the Canadian labourers working on the docks and the ships. We have been working hard to develop a secure, healthy marine economy to help alleviate some of the congestion in the Lower Mainland, working with the Port of Vancouver and helping to support the Pacific gateway.

One-third of the children living in the Alberni Valley live in poverty. The valley has one of the highest unemployment rates in southwestern British Columbia. We are looking at this opportunity as a way to help drive us out of this difficult challenge that we are facing, to get us back on track, as we transition from a forest economy to one built on our marine economy. This deal will threaten the huge amount of work we have done in pulling all of the stakeholders together.

This trade deal is unacceptable to Canadians, but especially to my constituents who rely on the water for their livelihood. This deal would be incredibly damaging. Rather than building our economy, it would deepen the poverty and increase unemployment in places like the Alberni Valley.

The other major concern with this agreement is pharmaceuticals. Many constituents have sent me messages, telling me they are concerned about how CETA will impact the cost of drugs for

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Canadians. Changes to intellectual property rules for pharmaceuticals under CETA are expected to increase drug costs by more than \$850 million annually. The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions has warned that this deal would make it more difficult to bring down prices through a national pharmacare program.

When the Liberals were in opposition, we know that they demanded that the Conservative government present a study on the financial impacts on territorial and provincial health care systems and prescription drugs. The government is now telling the provinces that it will cut health care transfers while pursuing agreements that risk increasing drug costs for the provinces without any sort of analysis, which the Liberals asked of the last government.

Canadians are already paying more for important lifesaving drugs than nearly any other OECD country. I have knocked on doors in my riding and met people who tell me they have to choose between buying food or drugs. They are living in pain because they cannot afford their drugs. People have had to come out of retirement to pay for their drugs. How do I tell these people that drug costs will go up even more? We should not be considering anything that could increase drug costs for Canadians.

Right now in my riding, raw log exports have gone up tenfold in 10 years. The Liberal government, without doing a proper economic analysis, reduced and removed a 25% tariff on building Canadian ferries here in Canada, which are instead being built in Poland and Turkey now by people working for low wages. Our fish are being filleted in China and returned to our grocery store shelves. Our coastal economy is being decimated. The impact this agreement could have on our coastal communities is very concerning.

New Democrats are in favour of a trade deal with Europe. We have deep historical and cultural ties with Europe. Europe has some of the most progressive democracies in the world. However, I am concerned about specific measures in CETA as currently negotiated. It is our job as a progressive opposition to uphold the interests of Canadians during this process.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate what I said earlier about the duty to consult and accommodate indigenous peoples when legislation is considered here. It is not just about respecting those rights. It is also about our responsibility as members of Parliament to uphold the rule of law, which means respecting the Constitution, in which we find in Section 35 the rights of indigenous peoples and the duty to consult them. That has not happened with this legislation.

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My colleague is deeply committed to indigenous peoples, including the indigenous peoples in his riding. Could he comment and perhaps provide examples as to why we must continue to insist that the government upholds its commitments and promises to indigenous peoples, including that nation-to-nation relationship and the consultation it promised with indigenous peoples, including on international trade deals like the one we are considering today? Or is just a case of all talk and no action, as usual?

• (1305)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his incredible work around ensuring that we honour our commitment to the laws of our country, and to the promises made by the current government to fulfill our commitment to work on a nation-to-nation basis with Canada's indigenous people. In this agreement, the CETA, it is clear that has not happened. The Liberals talk about a nation-to-nation relationship, but here we are ready to sign a trade deal with Europe; we have talked about a trade deal with the Pacific region, and aboriginal people have not been consulted. They are not being treated in a nation-to-nation way when we are making deals that could cause friction between aboriginal communities and foreign countries as they move forward with investor-state provisions in this agreement. That is one of the concerns.

Second, it is about our laws. It is about signing a trade deal that could go against the laws of our country. We have to honour laws. Fundamentally, the government has continued to say that it wants to move forward with a nation-to-nation relationship. The Liberals talk about consent, consultation, and accommodation. That is not included in this deal. This is one of the most important deals. It is the first trade deal that the Liberals are looking at ratifying, and they have not fulfilled their honourable commitment to Canada's indigenous people. That should be first and foremost in terms of all trade deals. They should be honouring that commitment before they sign any future deals. It is their commitment and their promise.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I was thinking about as my colleague spoke is the reality in Ontario under NAFTA. The member talked about cheaper food products and the fact that in a huge market, milk and dairy products can be produced more cheaply. That is the reality that we face here in Canada. We could very well be inundated with foreign production, to the point where our family farms and the farms in our communities are no longer viable. Farmers could literally be driven from the land.

That brings me to food security. I wonder if the member would please comment on the importance of food security, our nation's ability to feed itself with safe, clean, reliable products in a timely way. Does CETA worry him in that regard?

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, a lot of it concerns me, whether it be jobs or food security, or the environment or indigenous rights. There has not been a proper analysis in any of these areas to protect Canadian business people, to protect the environment, and to ensure that we have good-quality food at affordable prices.

The previous Conservative government went forward with promises to compensate those who are in areas that were going to lose on this side. The Liberal government has watered that down, again without further analysis. Now we are finding out that the terms of this agreement, which were negotiated in secret, will have an

impact on many companies, food producers, and companies across Canada. Again, they are not being fairly consulted.

There are huge concerns around all of it. There has not been an analysis. There has not been a proper discussion. This deal should not go ahead without that.

• (1310)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to convey my constituents' concerns. I am very grateful to voters from Nanaimo—Ladysmith who have been sending me their ideas by email, Facebook, and Twitter, letting me know what concerns them about the trade deal, CETA, that is on the table and is the matter of debate today.

New Democrats support trade deals that reduce tariffs and boost exports, while remaining firm that components like investor-state provisions that threaten sovereignty have no place in our trade deals. In my view, the job of government is to pursue better trade, trade that boosts human rights and labour standards, and protects the environment and Canadian jobs.

A final trade deal must be judged on its net costs and benefits. New Democrats have always been clear on this. We have opposed deals in the past that would jeopardize Canadian jobs and the environment, and that would have a net negative impact on our country.

As has been said so many times in the House, by all parties, trade with Europe is too important to get wrong. The NDP supports deepening Canadian-European trade ties in order to diversify our markets, but we remain with significant concerns about the proposed deal.

First, I have heard that changes in CETA will increase drug costs for Canadians, and the cost of prescription drugs is already a tremendous problem. If CETA poses a barrier to implementing a national pharmacare program, that is a problem for Canadians.

Second, local procurement could be interfered with. When I was elected to local government, we opposed the TILMA trade deal because it would have interfered with our ability as local governments to bias our procurement policies in favour of local businessmen and women.

Third, Investor-state provisions, as has been said so many times here, would have to be removed before this deal is ratified. We cannot have mechanisms inside trade deals that have the risk of inviting corporate lawsuits that would interfere, or would present a chill on Canadian democratically implemented protections for environment and labour.

Fourth, the Liberals have not properly compensated dairy farmers for the acknowledged negative economic impact on their industry. They would have a tremendous loss of market share, and that needs to be protected.

I want to speak today about two issues that are of particular concern to coastal communities and to Nanaimo—Ladysmith, the riding I am honoured to represent.

Wineries are a problem under CETA, and we are afraid it will exacerbate the already massive wine trade imbalance between Europe and my region in Canada. Currently, the European Union exports 180 million litres of wine to Canada, but Canada only exports 123,000 litres in the European direction. I note that the Canadian Vintners Association is asking for federal support to help the Canadian wine sector adjust and prepare for the implementation of CETA, but we have not had news on that.

Two wineries in my riding are being celebrated and supported by our local chamber of commerce and by the growing food movement, where people are willing to come out and especially support local wineries. The Chateau Wolff Estate winery and vineyard is in the Jingle Pot area of Nanaimo. It is an organic, five-acre vineyard that has some of the oldest vines on Vancouver Island. It is a lovely spot. It is right in the protection of Mount Benson, on a south-facing slope, with a large rock face that helps temper the climate. It creates a very unique growing region. We are proud of it.

A second winery that I want to see protected in this trade deal is the Millstone Winery. It is a family-run, six-acre vineyard, nestled in the Millstone River valley of Nanaimo, where I am elected. These are local businesses that we are protecting, celebrating, and supporting. For them, it sounds like the CETA deal is all downside and no upside.

A second area where coastal communities have significant concern is the impact of the trade deal on maritime jobs. CETA would, for the first time, legally allow foreign-owned vessels and foreign crews to transport goods between Canadian ports. It would also open up domestic dredging contracts to foreign suppliers.

•(1315)

We have had a huge downturn in our forest industry. We are making the shift from mining to more value-added industries. To lose these highly skilled, very localized local jobs at this time is impossible to contemplate, and it should not be done.

CETA, it is said, will lead to the immediate loss of approximately 3,000 Canadian seafarers' jobs. These are high-quality, well-paid jobs. These men and women have been working their whole lives to get the certification to allow them to do this work on our coasts. The industry as a whole supports 250,000 direct and indirect jobs. It is very valuable to us on the B.C. coast.

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Foreign boats will bring in foreign workers with no requirement for a labour market impact assessment. These workers can be paid as low as \$2 an hour, and they could suffer from low safety standards and poor working conditions. By permitting more foreign-flagged vessels, CETA encourages tax avoidance, since foreign ships registered with the flag of convenience countries like Malta or Cyprus take advantage of tax havens and the cheapest available labour.

The Marine Workers & Boilermakers Industrial Union has issued a very strong statement about CETA. It said:

The maritime section of CETA will destroy the Canadian maritime industry as it exists today by ending what is known as cabotage.

Cabotage is the protection given to the Canadian maritime industry under an act called the Coast Trading Act. Cabotage protects our coastal trade by requiring any vessel trading within Canada - from port to port along any of its coasts - is Canadian owned, operated and crewed. It is a simple, powerful and critical protection. It provides our sons and daughters, mothers and fathers with good, safe, family supporting jobs in an industry that is vital to our economy. It ensures that Canadian industry is regulated and inspected by Canada. That protects not only jobs, but also our environment and our financial health. Canadian companies pay taxes in Canada.

The statement went on to say about the negotiations:

...are not only attacking coastal trade. They have also included dredging companies, tugboat fleets and passenger vessels.

Are you willing to see your city government unable to give preference to a local company over a foreign bidder when a harbour needs dredging, barges need towing, logs are boomed or the ferry service critical to our province is required?

That is a statement from Rob Ashton who is the first vice-president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union of Canada. He is also co-chair of the Canadian Maritime and Supply Chain Coalition.

I have heard the same concerns echoed by Graeme Johnston, the president of the BC Ferry & Marine Workers' Union, and by his predecessor Chris Abbott, and by his predecessor Richard Goode, all strong leaders on the coast who are all standing up against CETA and its impact on coastal communities and coastal jobs.

Why pass Bill C-30 now? Given all these concerns and unresolved issues, I am reminded of the words of Maude Barlow, national chairperson of the Council of Canadians. She said, "Given the process could take another five years in Europe, what's the rush here other than another photo op?"

On the matter of indigenous peoples, we remain concerned that despite the Prime Minister's commitment to a true nation-to-nation relationship, there has been no duty to consult fulfilled here. When the Assembly of First Nations' national chief Perry Bellegarde appeared before the trade committee on TPP, he called for immediate consultations with all first nations.

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I am disappointed that the government is rushing this, and I will say in closing, once again, that while we are in favour of a trade deal with Europe, as it is an ideal trading partner, we are concerned about the specific measures within CETA as negotiated. It is our job to uphold the interests of Canadians in this process. The Liberals have missed key opportunities to fix CETA, but the deal is not yet done. We will continue to urge them to remove the investor-court provisions, address increased drug costs, local procurement, compensating dairy farmers, protecting coastal jobs for ferry workers and longshoremen, and protecting the interests of Canadian wineries so we can celebrate local business.

I say once again, trade with Europe is too important to get wrong. We must hold out for a better deal that protects Canadian interests and keeps our ties with Europe strong.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. member for her incredible work on supporting a marine economy in British Columbia, her standing up for the environment, for working with aboriginal people, and relying on local knowledge. We know how important local knowledge is in British Columbia.

When she talked about cabotage and the ending of cabotage, my question is, how important is local knowledge when we are booming our log exports for the forest sector, or for dredging our local communities, or for towing a barge? The member knows coastal waters very well because she was the chair of the Islands Trust in coastal British Columbia. I can rely on her to provide the House with a good opinion of how important this is and how this will impact coastal British Columbians.

● (1320)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, the member is so right. We are at a time that the Salish Sea, the sea between Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia, has increasing vessel traffic of every sort and an aging workforce that has meant that some of the most knowledgeable senior tugboat drivers and so on are leaving the industry. We are very reliant on them and as they move on, we need to capture the local knowledge they have.

The currents run very fast in my region. The tidal exchange is fast and the ecology is extremely sensitive. We cannot imagine even the impact of a tugboat or barge spill, like we saw with the *Nathan E. Stewart* up on the central coast just a couple of weeks ago. My region does not have sufficient oil spill response and containment, so we must prevent oil spills before they happen. That means having intimate local knowledge about currents, weather patterns, and the ways that waves bounce at different tides to protect local jobs and make sure there are men and women who know the coast like the backs of their hands, as they do.

The idea of allowing those jobs to go to foreign workers, who do not have the same commitment to our country, the same training, the same investment, or the same wage even, is unimaginable. We must stand very strongly against this threat.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith is, indeed, a very strong advocate for her community. She spoke about the environment and in light of the threat of climate change not only to

Canadians but people around the world, we are very cognizant of the importance of taking environment into consideration.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association is also very concerned. It said that CETA will significantly impact environmental protection and sustainable development in Canada. In that regard, we know that Canada has been sued over and over again, to the tune of billions of dollars, whenever governments try to protect the environment.

One case in point that we have to be concerned about is Lone Pine Resources, a Calgary-based oil and gas developer, that obtained permission to explore for shale gas under the St. Lawrence River. In 2011, the Quebec government revoked that permit in response to concerns about fracking under the river and then Lone Pine sued the government, through its U.S. affiliate under NAFTA, chapter 11, for \$250 million in compensation. It is not alone, there have been many more.

In that regard, I wonder if my colleague could comment on the importance of directing our own interests and looking after our own destiny when it comes to the environment and her environmental concerns in general.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I note that Canada is already one of the most sued countries in the world under the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism and we have won only three of 39 cases against foreign governments.

I am concerned, from my experience as a developer of local regulations when I was elected to local government, that it is not only having the horsepower, the budget, and a strong enough lawyer to win these cases but also how a legislative body might inhibit itself and be intimidated against introducing new and stronger regulations. The more we know about the climate change, the more we know we need to act. We cannot be intimidated, and I am afraid that CETA may well intimidate.

● (1325)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that members will grant me a bit of indulgence at the beginning of my speech as we approach the end of our fall sitting to say thanks to all of our families whose support makes it possible for us to do our work here today. I want to give particular thanks to my partner, Teddy Pardede, who keeps things running on the home front while keeping his own life running, which enables me to do my work here in Ottawa.

I also want to give my thanks to my Ottawa staff, Sarah Manns and Michael Wiseman, and my constituency staff, Bruce Fogg, Martha Juillerat, and Elise Cote, without whom I could not do this job as a member of Parliament.

Government Orders

I also want to give my thanks to friends who pitch in and help make it possible for us to do our jobs, especially those of us who have difficult travel to get here. I would give an example from the beginning of this session when my partner had to fly home to Indonesia for a family emergency the day before the session was to begin. My friend of 33 years, Allyson McKay, stepped in to house and dog sit with no notice in order for me to be able to get here and do my work in the House of Commons. My friend Chris Shewchuk also stepped in to help with the dog walking for the first days of those sessions.

These are all things that we sometimes forget about, our families, friends, and staff who support us in doing this work. Therefore, in the spirit of the season, I want to thank all of them and wish them happy holidays.

Now I will come to the topic of this debate today, the CETA.

The first thing I would say, as all New Democrats I think are saying in this debate, is “Europe, yes”. If there is any country we can trade with, it ought to be Europe, if we treat Europe as a country with its common standards. Why is that true?

Human rights standards are generally high within the European Union, and the European Convention on Human Rights means that many of the concerns that I have expressed in other trade agreements, in particular the trade agreement with Honduras, which has one of the worst human rights records in the world, are not a concern for me when we are talking about CETA.

The second reason for “Europe, yes” would be on the question of labour rights and labour standards. I have no doubt that workers in the European Union are able to organize unions, and those unions are able to represent their members' interests when it comes to things like labour standards. Therefore, if we are going to talk about free trade, of course, I prefer to think of it as fair trade, so that companies cannot win competitions based on who can exploit their workers the best, but they would have to do it on their ability to innovate and be efficient. Again, on labour rights and labour standards, obviously, “Europe, yes”.

On environmental protection, I think I can safely say the same kinds of things. In fact, in many cases, European standards and environmental protection exceed Canadian standards. Once again, we do not really want the competition in trade to be about who can burn through our resources and our environment the fastest and therefore win the trade war.

To start with, the question I have is not why a free trade agreement with Europe but why are we obsessed with one-by-one free trade agreements? What is it that drives us to this position, where Canada will end up with something like 100 free trade agreements if we keep going? Why are we abandoning working through multilateral international forums, like the World Trade Organization, or through conventions at the United Nations, which would lead to trade liberalization? There would be some really big advantages in going at trade in this manner.

We could, for instance, make sure that the poorest countries are not left out of these discussions. When we are discussing free trade, we are quite often talking about the privileged expanding their privileges around the world. It would also mean that underprivileged

groups within countries might get more attention on the world stage, in particular, of course, with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which might get its rightful place when it comes to discussing trade agreements if we moved to multilateral international agreements.

We might also get to talk more about food security, and I will talk a little bit more about it in the context of this agreement. However, food security around the world is an important question when we have nearly one billion people, including far too many in Canada, who do not have secure access to food at an affordable price and do not have secure access to nutritious food. If we were talking about this on the world level, then some of the poorest of the poor, both within our own country and within countries around the world, would have their interests much better represented.

In talking about things like water security, we all know that water security is becoming an increasingly important issue around the world, yet it tends to be neglected in our discussions of these trade agreements. Many if not most of the products we produce have water as some aspect of the production process, and water is also needed to grow food and sustain human life.

• (1330)

Finally, if we were talking in more general terms we might then talk about greenhouse gas implications of long-distance shipping of goods all around the world. Is this really what is best for all of us, and are the costs of the long-distance shipping that goes on under these trade agreements really being accounted for at an international level?

I am still one of those who believe that trade liberalization is, yes, a good idea but it probably needs to take place in multilateral fora rather than these one-by-one free trade agreements. The one-by-one process also makes it difficult for those who have an interest in the agreements but maybe not as big a voice as the corporations to get their voices heard. We find that Canadians who are concerned with natural resources, food security, or local procurement have to make their case again and again as each of these agreements comes forward, and burn up precious resources in their organizations in trying to deal with each of these agreements. I think particularly of the environmental movement in this country, which has to examine literally thousands of pages of free trade agreements to try to make sure that our environment is not being damaged by these agreements. I would like to say that again if we were back to a multilateral focus we might have agreements that actually had environmental protection as one of the focuses of the agreements. I do not see that in any of these one-off agreements that we are doing.

Government Orders

When it comes to this specific agreement, are there some good things in it? One of those, I will say yes to as the NDP defence critic. It does have a fairly broad exemption for defence industries so that we can make sure that defence industries can be sustained in Canada. If we were to allow a free trade agreement to mean that our defence industries and our shipbuilding died out, we would be in dire straits in any conflict in being unable to supply our defence industries locally. As I read it, and I think as most people read it, there is a fair degree of protection there for our defence industries. I know that the previous speaker, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, has been a very firm advocate of making sure that we have vital shipbuilding industries around the country.

I have a bit more of a question about maintenance under this agreement. This is something I have raised in the defence committee and I will raise again in the House today. There is an increasing tendency to open up contracts for maintenance of our defence facilities to bidders from outside the country. We know that the British got into a great deal of trouble, in fact, when some of their maintenance and supply contracts had critical materials coming from other European countries. When Britain got involved in the war in Afghanistan, countries that did not like that used their ability to control the end use of defence products to shut off supply under those contracts to the British. I have some questions still about this question of maintenance and supply under the CETA.

I have some other more serious concerns and I am not going to have time to talk about all of them today. The biggest of those is investor-state provisions. I cannot understand why we are entering into trade agreements where there is some substitute for the Canadian courts system being created and where businesses get privileged access to this system of arbitrators, and they can only use that system if they have millions of dollars to put up front to pay for these kinds of cases. As previous speakers have noted, Canada is already one of the most-sued countries in the world under investor-state provisions. How can we ensure that Canadian local, provincial, and even national governments are going to be able to protect our resources, protect our environment, protect state enterprises, protect our public health care, and protect the lower price of pharmaceuticals and not end up being sued under these investor-state provisions? Prescription drug costs are one of my biggest concerns because the agreement, if we sign it, would clearly increase drug costs by something like \$1 billion a year in this country.

In drawing this to a close what I really want to emphasize is, yes to Europe. Obviously if we are going to trade with anyone, this would be the one. I am still concerned about this agreement and its impacts on our ability in terms of our democracy to continue to represent Canadians' best interests in the way that elected officials see possible, and not end up being sued and prevented from doing the right thing by the agreement's investor-state provisions.

•(1335)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the fine work he does in the House and for our party on many files.

The member said that Europe would be an important group of countries to make a trade deal with, although this was not it. Could the member let us know what a better deal would look like?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the member's important work on behalf of all Canadians, but in particular British Columbians in opposition to the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

I am going to use that as an example. I fear that if we sign an agreement like this, we will end up locked into these kinds of resource extraction deals over the long run, which are not good for Canadians, not good for the environment, and not good for anyone in the world except those who will make corporate profits from them. If we took out the investor-state dispute resolution provisions, I would be a lot happier.

Again, I would be a lot happier if Canada were leading the world in having trade negotiations in multilateral forums, which started with trade agreements that would protect labour standards, human rights, the environment, and water, then go on to see where we could really remove barriers that were unnecessary to trade.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what a remarkable idea, a trade agreement based on the environment and the new energy economy. That would be a remarkable feat.

My colleague mentioned concerns with the lack of due attention to the environment in these agreements, since the 1990s, when NAFTA was signed. There were two side agreements, one on labour and one environment, with that. I had the privilege of working at the secretariat under the environmental agreement.

When the Conservatives were in power, it was all erased. One might be hopeful that the government, which espouses that environment is on par with economic development, would again bring forward all those provisions under the North American Agreement On Environmental Cooperation.

Could the member speak a bit about how important it is to Canadians that we ensure we give due attention to environmental protection?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the member has made a very practical suggestion that would make me more likely to support this trade agreement, if we had the assurance, as the government says, that environment and trade would go hand in hand. Where is the other hand? We only have one on the table in front of us.

If we had a commitment that this agreement would only go forward if it had attached to it a similar environmental protocol, a letter of understanding, like was originally discussed with NAFTA, I would feel much more comfortable about the agreement altogether.

This goes back to my point that as we move forward into the climate crisis we face, we have to get environment front and centre in everything we are doing.

Government Orders

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is preoccupied with rushing ahead on this trade deal without giving it careful thought. In the meantime, we need pharmacare, affordable child care, affordable housing, and conservation in our country. None of these things are of any interest to the government.

I wonder if you could talk about where we should be going instead of headlong into a trade deal about which we know very little.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sure the hon. member did not want me, the Speaker, to talk to this issue. I am sure she meant the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. I will let him continue.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the greatest surprise to Canadians who voted for real change is to get the Tory agenda back in front of the House again.

We thought, as Canadians, that we were going to get a new agenda. Like the member for London—Fanshawe said, the New Democratic Party put forward that agenda, an agenda that would focus on the real needs of families, the environment, and first nations. Instead we are getting recycled versions of what happened over the last 10 years.

It is very disappointing that we have not seen some of those more positive agenda items come forward. In particular, they are not reflected in this trade agreement. Where is the part of this trade agreement that deals with access to pharmaceuticals? Where is the part of this trade agreement that would protect child care programs? Where is that in this agreement? I do not see it anywhere.

• (1340)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we continue, I know it is easy for members to slip into the first person when the person they are talking about or asking a question of is next to them. It has been happening over the morning. I want to remind hon. members that they are speaking through the Chair and not directly to their colleagues, regardless how close they are seated to them.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hats off for my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. I want to second the comments he made, giving thanks to all his supporters and their work.

I am particularly grateful to my family, in particular, my brother. Now that it is 40 below with wind chill in Alberta, he graciously put my car in the garage, so I thank Peter Duncan.

I also want to thank all who support me in my work and, frankly, all in this place who do incredible work for the public every day we are here.

As my NDP colleagues have repeatedly stated, our party favours international trade agreements that are fair and reciprocal. During my tenure in this place, we have supported several that met these conditions. The previous government was quick to sign any agreement just to sign so-called free trade agreements. The current government promised better deals but instead signed off on the Conservative-negotiated deal with Europe, despite the unaddressed concerns expressed by many Canadians.

As has been mentioned, changes to intellectual property rules will cause drug prices to skyrocket. Considering our aging population, mounting household debt, and the number of Canadians, in particular seniors, already struggling to pay for food, rent, and medicines, this deal will seriously impact affordability.

The government should have at least assessed and addressed this impact in advance of signing, particularly since it appears pharmacare is missing from the government's priority list for additional health transfers.

CETA also poses significant impacts to Alberta's agriculture and agrifood sectors. In particular, concerns have been expressed by our dairy and dairy processing sectors. While most attention has been focused on the impacts to the Quebec dairy sector, Alberta dairy will also be impacted.

We are told that Canadian manufacturing standards, combined with generous subsidies for European producers, make it almost impossible for cheese makers to compete, at least to compete fairly.

The government promised dairy farmers and processors a total \$350 million investment fund over four years to help them modernize their operations, increase their productivity and efficiency, as well as diversify their range of products in order to capitalize on new European markets. Unfortunately this is far less than the Conservatives promised.

I am deeply proud of the contribution to our economy by our Alberta dairy farmers. I meet regularly with them to try to address their concerns. One incredible multi-generational farm family, the Bococks, operated a dairy operation since its immigration from Ireland in 1921. It not only introduced many beneficial innovations for sustainable farming, on retirement the family donated 777 acres of their operation to the University of Alberta for dairy research. Its contribution has been recognized with the Dairy Industry Achievement Award. It is farm families like the Bococks that are being impacted.

While the program will, for the most part, benefit the largest processors, the amount is far from adequate, as has been shared often in the House on debate of this bill.

These pioneers, other Canadian dairy families and processors who continue to produce fine product should be factored first in considering any potential impacts of trade deals. While Alberta dairy producers and processors are grateful some compensation has been promised, they are only matching funds and limited to modernization investments. This support will be unavailable to those who have already invested in changes, yet, they may still be impacted.

Alberta cheese makers estimate a loss of 17,000 tonnes in cheese sales. They are concerned if the promised funds are to be allocated to producers and processors or if they will be partly eaten up by administration of the fund. Also, they have expressed concern about how quickly the money will flow as they need to get out ahead of anticipated changes to the market.

Government Orders

CETA could also be problematic for our pork and beef industries. Although they potentially will benefit, there are European regulatory obstacles that must be addressed.

I wish to reiterate concerns expressed by many about the government's insistence on retaining the investor-state provisions.

Shifting authority to an independent court to rule on corporate complaints of what it deems unfair environmental or health provisions is reprehensible, certainly in a country that believes in rule of law. Surely such a measure contradicts the very principles the government claims to espouse, that the financial interests of investors should not be permitted to supersede the public interest, including environmental protections.

●(1345)

Successful industrial state-investor claims under the trade deals have already created a regulatory chill and, as some of my colleagues have shared, we have lost most of those cases brought against our country by investors.

It is the continued erosion of environmental protection prevailing over trade deals that troubles me the most. In the mid-1990s, when the North American Free Trade Agreement was entered into by Canada, the United States, and Mexico, Canada also signed on to several side agreements. One of those was the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. Every trade deal since has strayed from those foundational principles and institutions, including provision for independent assessment and reporting on the parties' adherence to the environmental commitments.

Yes, there are vague mentions of environment in CETA, but the measures fall far short of the bar set under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. Absent is any independent environment secretariat or council of environment ministers to monitor and act on complaints of failed environmental enforcement or delivery on public rights of engagement in decisions that place economic considerations ahead of the environment. In place of these credible mechanisms, the parties will merely appoint some officer as a contact point, presumably low within their respective bureaucracies.

There is no provision for independent assessment and reporting. Gone is the commitment to prepare and make public a state of the environment report, a matter that has been raised with me a number of times in the last few weeks. Whatever happened to the state of environment reports?

Gone is commitment to ensure public notice and right to comment in advance of any decision impacting the environment, including trade deals and agreements negotiated among the provinces, territories, and the federal government on climate. Gone is the framework for effective environmental enforcement. These are necessary to hold the government accountable.

Finally, what will be the effect on Canadian local job creation through the burgeoning Canadian renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors of article 24.9? It requires removal of any obstacles to investments in goods and services for renewable energy goods and related services. Will there be barriers to local hiring and incentives? Has the government even examined that?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very constructive speech. She does a good job on the environment file.

Every time I listen to her, we learn something from her. She also does a great job of representing her constituents.

A moment ago, she said that there is a lot of talk about the environment, but that there is no concrete action. She gave a few examples in her speech, but I would like to hear more from her about the concrete measures she would have liked to see. What concrete environmental measures could we implement in free trade agreements such as the Canada-Europe agreement?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Jonquière for her continuing to step up and speak on behalf of the dairy industry in Quebec.

As I mentioned, this agreement falls far short of what one would have expected of a government that portrays itself as the great environmental defender. The side agreement on environment under NAFTA was groundbreaking, but the then president of the United States, Bill Clinton, said that he regretted not making it binding within the actual NAFTA trade agreement.

One would have thought if the government were the great defender of balancing environmental impacts to trade and economic development, it would have done exactly what Bill Clinton suggested. Instead, we do not even have the basic provisions that were in the side agreement to NAFTA. They are completely pared down and are simply modelled on the cuts made by the Conservative government on all of the trade deals for which they voted.

●(1350)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is related to indigenous peoples, and not only from an internal perspective. As members know, we have a duty to consult and accommodate indigenous peoples whenever legislation that would impact their interest is considered by the House. There is also a dimension to all of this to needs to be considered whenever we negotiate international trade agreements in the interests of indigenous peoples in our country.

Does the member agree that in this age of nation-to-nation relationships and reconciliation with indigenous peoples promised by the other side, indigenous peoples should have been at the table when this legislation was drafted?

Government Orders

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, this agreement does not even include the basic provisions that were in the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, wherein if any decision is made that may impact the public of those three countries, there is the opportunity to receive notice and to comment. In that agreement, there was no mention of engaging indigenous peoples. There is some bare reference made in some of our legislation, but it is not enough.

The current government espouses that it endorses the UNDRIP, yet time after time it says that it will not abide by those provisions and refuses to support the enactment of the United Nations declaration, as my colleague has espoused.

Yes, indeed, first nations, Métis, and Inuit leaders should have been at the table, government-to-government, during the negotiations of this treaty. They certainly should have their say before this bill is signed off on and this agreement is signed and sealed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about a family of dairy producers who live in her riding. As we know, every time we allow more imports of dairy products, such as the 17,000 tonnes of European cheese that will be imported under this agreement, it undermines supply management and creates an imbalance in the dairy industry.

I would like my colleague to tell us more about the impact that this will have on the family dairy operation in her riding.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, time after time the dairy and milk producers in my riding have raised concerns about the fact that the management system may be eroded. Absolutely, this should be dealt with before we sign on to any agreement. I would like to thank the member for standing in defence of the dairy farms in her province.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate.

I would like to remind the hon. member for Jonquière that she has six or seven minutes. She can continue her speech after question period.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my whole family. This may be the last time that I rise to speak before the House adjourns for the holidays. I would like to thank my family for their support and recognize my colleagues for all of the work they do on behalf of all their constituents.

I would also like to commend my NDP colleagues for the quality of their work, speeches, and questions in the House. It seems as though the government members have already started their Christmas holidays.

The NDP has long been calling for improved trade with Europe in order to diversify Canada's markets. However, there are many serious concerns that have not been addressed and many unanswered questions regarding the proposed agreement.

Trade with Europe is too important to take lightly. The government needs to resolve the outstanding problems with the agreement rather than making do with an imperfect document.

A total of 87,605 people live in my riding of Jonquière. I represent them. Every day I work to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind the hon. members that debate is taking place. It is nice to see everyone in a festive mood, but the noise level is making it very difficult to hear what the member is saying.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your intervention. It is difficult to speak in the House when people are talking.

As I was saying, I represent 87,605 constituents. One of the issues they are greatly concerned about is forestry. I have spoken at length about it in the House. There is no longer an agreement in place and we are heading straight toward taxes, which has many of my constituents worried.

The riding of Jonquière is agricultural. There are many dairy producers and farmers. Throughout my remarks, I will speak about the concerns we have with the agreement, concerns that the Liberals are simply ignoring. I will then wrap up by talking about the NDP's position on how the government should act, if it will listen.

There is a lot of work to do before the agreement is fully ratified. As I just mentioned, in my riding there are many dairy producers, including a cheese factory. Fromagerie Blackburn has been a family farm for over 80 years. It is amazing to see dedicated people working every day on the farm. There are seven full-time employees, five of them at the cheese factory and two on the farm.

This cheese factory, which opened in 2006, produces six different cheeses and has won various prestigious awards. I am very proud to speak of it in the House today. Its Mont-Jacob cheese, in particular, recently won the silver medal in its category at the World Cheese Awards, in November 2016. I will not hide the fact that I get a little emotional when I talk about it, since this cheese has the same name as my son, or vice versa. Regardless of the name, I am very proud of Fromagerie Blackburn.

It also won the silver Caseus Grand Champion award in the 2013 Sélection Caseus competition and the Super Gold award at the 2011 World Cheese Awards, which is handed out to the 50 best cheeses in the world. This is all taking place in Jonquière, in my riding. I am very proud of the Fromagerie Blackburn and of all the people who work there.

I said I was proud because this cheese factory has won many awards. However it will also be affected by the Canada-Europe agreement. That is sad, because it is doing very well. Unfortunately, because of what is coming, it may have to make sacrifices and let some employees go. That makes me sad.

Statements by Members

This is not just about this cheese factory, but also about our dairy producers. After months of waiting, the compensation promised by the Liberals for the dairy industry's losses due to the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and Europe, CETA, will in the end be far less than the losses suffered by the producers.

After abandoning our dairy producers on the diafiltered milk issue and undermining supply management, the government has decided to get by with a minimum of effort, instead of giving its all. Sometimes I wonder whether the government wants to bite the hand that feeds us. The producers are not competing on a level playing field with their European counterparts, who are heavily subsidized.

Given the time, I will continue after question period.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): After question period, the hon. member for Jonquière will have four minutes to complete her speech.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, university and college students across the country are working on final exams, a particularly stressful period for many students. I would like to take this opportunity to wish them excellent exam results, in particular the students of Conestoga College, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the University of Waterloo. I am sure that elementary and high school students in the Waterloo region are also looking forward to the holidays.

I congratulate the entire faculty, the staff, and everyone working tirelessly in the school system and say a job well done in educating the next generation of leaders. I wish them and all Canadians a joyous holiday season and a new year filled with peace and happiness.

* * *

• (1400)

MUSICAL FUNDRAISING

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my absolute honour to rise in the House today to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of the Central Alberta Homeschool Choir and the Rosedale Valley String Orchestra, led by Debbie Zepick and Naomi Delafield. This talented group of nearly 200 students, singers, and musicians has donated funds from its concerts and CD sales to make a difference in a community half a world away. For the last seven years, this amazing group has committed to raising funds in support of the Christian Life Orphanage and Mothercare Nursery School in Mwanza, Tanzania.

This time, the students of the Central Alberta Homeschool Choir and the Rosedale Valley String Orchestra have raised over \$200,000, enough money to enable the orphanage to purchase six acres of land; build a new building; purchase a vehicle, bicycles, and desks; as well as pay for ongoing school fees and food.

I could not be more proud of this incredible group of talented young people. I invite all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Central Alberta Homeschool Choir and the Rosedale Valley String Orchestra for using their talents to make an impact on lives half a world away.

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TORONTO—DANFORTH

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the holiday season is upon us, and the Toronto—Danforth community is full of song and dance.

This weekend, I had the pleasure of attending a concert by the VOCA Chorus of Toronto at Eastminster United Church. Led by their artistic director, Jenny Crober, the choir filled the church with beauty and soul. Last weekend, I heard students from the Lippert Music Centre play at the Pape Village BIA Winterfest. Led by Charleen Beard, students took to the stage at the Bethany Baptist Church to play some festive tunes.

Lippert has been teaching kids throughout the community since 1957. This year, we lost the founder of the Lippert school, Joseph John Lippert, but his legacy of music lives on.

[*Translation*]

One feature of the season is the Riverdale Share concert, which took place at the Danforth Music Hall. Talented musicians and artists come together to take part and raise funds for local community organizations.

Thanks to host Michael Tanner and all the volunteers who have offered us another marvellous event this year.

* * *

SUROÏT CO-OPERATIVE

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 16, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of an organization dear to the people of Soulanges, the coopérative de solidarité du Suroît. Coop-CSUR is a citizen initiative founded in 2006 by Benoit Guichard, Guy Guénette, Lise Couët, and Norman Molhant. They galvanized phenomenal citizen involvement and succeeded in providing the people of Très-Saint-Rédempteur and neighbouring municipalities with quality Internet service.

Coop-CSUR branched out, setting up Csur la télé, a community television station, and a telephone service. To encourage people to adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles that support local businesses, the co-operative created an eco-local market in Rigaud, giving the people of Suroît an opportunity to consume local products. Recently, a new pick-up location was added at La Factrie de Salaberry-de-Valleyfield.

After years of determination in pursuit of its vision, Coop-CSUR now has 1,120 members, 14 communication towers in Vaudreuil-Soulanges and eastern Ontario, and 60 kilometres of fibre optics.

I see Coop-CSUR as an outstanding example of what people can do when they work together. Long live the co-op.

[English]

YMCA PEACE MEDALS

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with much pleasure that I recognize the recipients of this year's YMCA Peace Medals in my riding of Oakville. The YMCA of Oakville proudly celebrates National Peace Week and recognizes the ongoing community work that creates conditions that allow for equality, inclusion, and respect for diversity.

The youth recipient was Victoria Winslow, an Oakville Trafalgar high school student who organized food drives and helped build schools in Kenya. Kate Rehm, the adult recipient, is a vice-principal at White Oaks Secondary School and is recognized for her work in student-oriented community initiatives. The group recipient was Resiliency 4 Recovery, a youth-led support group aiding those aged 16 to 29 with mental health or substance abuse challenges.

I am so proud to acknowledge these recipients in Oakville for their work as community peace-builders. As we enter this joyous holiday season, let us all look for peace and celebrate the peacemakers among us.

* * *

CANADA CUP OF CURLING

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the organizers, volunteers, and sponsors behind the most successful Canada Cup of Curling in its 15-year history held in Brandon from November 30 to December 4.

Once again Brandon has cemented its reputation as Canada's premier host city. Due to its success, it will only attract even more first-class Canadian curling competitions to Westman.

In particular I want to highlight the Brandon first team and the vice-chairs of the event, Ryan Shields, Nate Andrews, and Eric Dickson, along with their army of volunteers. These volunteers and the multitude of sponsors made this Curling Canada event the huge success that it was, with enthusiastic fans setting a record Canada Cup attendance. I would like all of those involved to know how proud everyone is of their efforts and for being such pillars in our community.

To cap it all off, I was thrilled to see two Manitoba teams, our very own Jennifer Jones and Reid Carruthers teams, come out on top.

As I have said many times in the House, Manitoba has proven itself as the curling capital of Canada.

* * *

● (1405)

ETOBICOKE—LAKESHORE

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today first and foremost to wish everyone in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore a happy and joyous holiday season.

While I am not the Christmas poet laureate of Parliament Hill, that title most definitely belongs to my colleague the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, I would nevertheless like to share a brief holiday ditty, which I dedicate to all of my colleagues who, like me,

Statements by Members

are celebrating their second holiday season here on the Hill, soaking up that special holiday magic aura that is unique to this place:

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the Hill,
'Twas no clanging of voices, no debating of bills.
No committees, no hearings, no witnesses abound,
Just the sound of celebration and joy all around.

May 2017 be all that it can be,
Good fortune, health and happiness for your whole family.
As we celebrate 150, from coast to coast to coast
A big party it will be, let's make it the most.

From this House to yours, both far and near,
I hope the peace of the season will last all year.

* * *

[Translation]

CHARLES-HENRI BELZILE

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to honour the memory of my friend and mentor, retired General Charles-Henri Belzile, who passed away on December 5, 2016.

Charlie served our country at home and abroad as a man, an infantryman, and a leader for 35 years, eventually rising to serve five years as Canada's army commander.

[English]

After his retirement, he invested his considerable energy into helping veterans and those who need it, and for his excellent service was awarded the Order of Canada.

[Translation]

As a family man and a Canadian Forces legend, Charlie Belzile was proud of his regimental family, the glorious Royal 22nd Regiment, and its motto, "Je me souviens".

[English]

This ceremony will take place tomorrow at the Beechwood Military Cemetery.

[Translation]

I remember, general. May you rest in peace.

* * *

PORT OF QUÉBEC

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Port of Québec is the furthest-inland deep water port in North America. More importantly, it provides the best direct access to railways and markets in the heart of the continent.

This deep water port boasts a 15-metre draft at low tide, which means that it can accommodate ocean-going vessels that cannot sail farther than Quebec City, making it the envy of many other ports.

Statements by Members

Beauport 2020 will provide the port with additional sources of revenue, which it needs to upgrade many of its existing facilities. If some of these renovations are not done immediately, the port's long-term viability will be jeopardized, plain and simple. Furthermore, the project to double the area of the port's wharves will make it more competitive relative to its direct competitors on the American eastern seaboard, which recently received massive state investments.

The various Port of Québec projects will not only contribute in a very meaningful way to our region's economy, but will also help revitalize the old capital.

* * *

[English]

SURREY

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a front page story in the *Vancouver Sun* last week highlighted the way that the city of Surrey has taken leadership in welcoming refugees into British Columbia. Fifty-two per cent of the refugees who arrived in British Columbia over the past year reside in Surrey.

The article also talked about how almost over 2,000 refugees are on waiting lists for English classes in Surrey. I am pleased that just this week the Prime Minister announced that improvements are coming.

I want to encourage him to look at Surrey as a model of what is working well, and where the government can step in to do more.

* * *

• (1410)

TORONTO ALPHA

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 79 years ago tomorrow one of the darkest moments in human history began. Over a six-week period, innocent civilians were raped and killed in China's then capital city of Nanking, during the second Sino-Japanese war. Women and young girls were raped by gangs of soldiers in the streets, in schools, and in their homes. Groups of residents were murdered with machine guns, bayonets and grenades, gasoline poured over their bodies and set on fire.

Known as the Nanking massacre, and the rape of Nanking, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East estimated that over 200,000 lives were taken.

Here in Canada, I salute the work of Toronto ALPHA, its founder, Dr. Joseph Wong, and executive director, Flora Chong, for their efforts to shine light on this forgotten history. Through education, we can teach future generations to never repeat the atrocities of the past, and we will never forget.

* * *

EGYPT

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn the despicable and cowardly suicide bombing of a Coptic church in Cairo, Egypt on Sunday. Twenty-three innocent souls were killed and 49 parishioners were injured on what should have been a peaceful day of worship.

The killer's aim was to drive fear into the hearts of Coptic Christians everywhere. I call on the Government of Canada to recognize that ISIL terrorism in Egypt is a grave concern for all Egyptians, but particularly for the Coptic Christians.

My thoughts and prayers are with those affected in Egypt and with the strong Coptic Christian community in Markham and across Canada, who know all too well what their families, friends, and communities face in Egypt every day.

* * *

[Translation]

SYRIA

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today with a very heavy heart but determined to do all I can so that, together, we will work to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of people experiencing the daily horrors of the war in Aleppo, Syria, the city where I was born, receive emergency aid.

Aleppo is being bombed, but those attacks must stop in order to allow humanitarian aid and medical assistance to get through to families and children. Canada led a resolution at the United Nations to demand an immediate cessation of hostilities in Syria and prompt action to help the victims in Syria. That resolution passed with the resounding support of 122 countries.

I invite all members of the House to join our government in encouraging all parties involved to stop blocking humanitarian assistance and to respect international humanitarian law and human rights in Syria.

* * *

GRAND RICHELLOIS GALA

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 24, I had the pleasure of attending the Grand Richelois gala organized by the Vallée-du-Richelieu chamber of commerce and industry, or the CCIVR.

I want to congratulate all the organizations, businesses, and individuals who won an award. Congratulations go out to Agence MOBUX, Ce que femme veut, Chocolats Campagna, the Manoir Rouville-Campbell, Brasseurs du moulin, Création NC5, SociétéThé et Café, Intégration Compétences, and Maison Victor-Gadbois.

I also want to commend Gilles Plante, mayor of McMasterville and reeve of the Vallée-du-Richelieu RCM on his tribute award, as well as the two personalities of the year, Anik Armand, from Desjardins, and Éric Saint-Pierre, founder of MIRA Foundation.

Thanks to all the winners and finalists, we have one of the most dynamic regions in Quebec. I especially want to thank the CCIVR and its entire team for doing such a fine job showcasing our entrepreneurs.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

Oral Questions

'Twas the weeks before Christmas, and the Liberals were spinning the max,
Trekking across Canada promoting their carbon tax;
Families and industries cried out in fear,
Knowing the carbon tax was looming so near;

With job losses growing, and unemployment rates high,
The Liberals seem oblivious with their heads in the sky;
Now Harper has retired they have no one to blame,
As their tax and spend scheme goes up in flame;

UN seats and selfies are the Prime Minister's goal,
While neglecting good-paying jobs like mining of coal;
The surplus we left them was gone in a flash,
The trees in Liberal ridings must be growing them cash;

Paying off their deficit will be no easy job,
Hardworking Canadians are the ones they will rob;
Deficits and tax hikes are the Liberal way,
But fear not—soon Canadians will have their say,

Election 19 will be one for the books,
The Liberals won't win on their leader's good looks;
Conservative voices will ring out with cheer,
As we celebrate with family over a sweet victory beer.

* * *

● (1415)

EGYPT

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, a horrendous act of terrorism struck worshippers in Cairo at Egypt's main Coptic Christian cathedral, killing 25 people and wounding dozens. St. Mark's Cathedral is the home of his holiness, Pope Tawadros II, and carries a special meaning to all Egyptians and Coptic Christians around the world.

Canada condemns this cowardly act. This morning I met with the Egyptian ambassador to offer our condolences to the Egyptian people. He updated me on measures taken by the Egyptian government to assist the victims and their families and to bring perpetrators to justice. Places of worship are sacred. Targeting unsuspecting parishioners because of how they worship, especially during this time of the year, is abhorrent.

I would like to offer our deep sympathies to the victims' families and express solidarity with Coptic Christians in Egypt, in Canada, and around the world. This Sunday, the Church of Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius in my riding of Mississauga Centre will be holding a special prayer event. I encourage all to join me and offer comfort to a community in mourning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's new carbon tax will put Canadian businesses and workers at a very real disadvantage compared to our American neighbours and our biggest competitors.

According to the Prime Minister's own officials, it will increase the cost of electricity, gas, and other fuel in Canada. Meanwhile, the president elect down south said he will cut taxes and energy costs.

How can the Prime Minister justify putting our own country at such a competitive disadvantage?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Friday was a very significant day for federal-provincial relations in Canada. The Prime Minister sat down with provincial and territorial leaders and with indigenous leaders to establish a pan-Canadian framework.

It could be that members opposite have hazy memories, because these meetings did not occur very often. They occurred every four years, maybe every five years. Now, as we are in the dawn of new federal-provincial relations, I think all members of the House should celebrate.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if getting all the premiers together is going to cost Canadians \$2,500 per family every year going forward, I hope they do not have any more meetings any time soon.

The Prime Minister himself does not even have the numbers. We actually do not know how much more this is going to cost Canadians, or maybe he is not telling us what he knows, or maybe the real problem is he actually does not care. He does not care about jobs, the economy, or the fact that families actually cannot make ends meet right now. Some Ontario families are choosing between groceries and paying their electricity bills.

Why is the Prime Minister plowing ahead with this new carbon tax when he will not even tell Canadians what it would cost?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the provinces will determine their own system, one of the features of Canadian federalism that makes us so special.

We can respect that the province of British Columbia will have a different system than Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec, but all told, it is a national strategy to do what Canadians want us to do, which is to put a price on carbon pollution and leave this planet a better place for our children and our grandchildren.

[Translation]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's carbon tax will put Canadian companies and workers at a disadvantage relative to U.S. companies.

According to the Prime Minister's own officials, this tax will increase the cost of electricity and fuel in Canada. In the meantime, the president-elect is committed to lowering taxes and reducing energy costs for U.S. companies.

How can the Prime Minister justify putting his country at such a disadvantage?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that different leaders, from coast to coast in Canada, have spoken openly about the impact of market pricing and carbon pricing as a way in which greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced, which has actually become a very important message that business leaders, who employ tens of thousands of Canadians, are delivering.

It is also true that former leaders of the Conservative Party, those who have been stalwart in their protection of these values that members opposite are now promoting, also agree—

• (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the more we know, the more it looks like the Prime Minister's cash for access fundraisers are unethical. Many have been quite open about how this works. People pay \$1,500, and then they lobby the Prime Minister once they are in the door.

We can see how uncomfortable even the Prime Minister's own caucus is when we ask these questions, but for some reason, there is one person who does not seem uncomfortable at all, and that is the Prime Minister. Not only is he 100% comfortable, he brags about all the government business he discusses at these fundraisers. In fact, he did it again at a press conference this morning.

How can the Prime Minister be so blind on ethics?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this government has taken the most unprecedented level of public consultation ever seen, and I would say, almost in the history of this country.

Our Prime Minister and this government are available to Canadians, whether it be at town halls or whether it be anywhere that anyone wants to talk to the Prime Minister or this government in regard to the very real challenges Canadians are facing.

This government will continue to respond to the concerns of Canadians. I believe we have a lot of work to do, and we can work together.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at one point the Liberal Party tried to spin its way out of this ethical mess. Its national director said in November, "Fundraising events are partisan functions where we do not discuss government business". She said that anyone who tried it would be "immediately redirected to...make an appointment with the relevant office".

Well, that actually sounds like the way it is supposed to work, but the Prime Minister has now thrown his national director under the bus. Now he brags openly about discussing government business at fundraisers.

Why is the Prime Minister bragging about doing the exact opposite of what is ethical?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that when it comes to political financing, we have some of the most strict rules across this country. Even the Chief Electoral Officer stated that Canada's political financing laws are the "most advanced and constrained and transparent" in the world. In regard to ticketed fundraising events, the Chief Electoral Officer has confirmed that every party in every campaign does them.

We know that only Canadians can donate to Canadian political parties. This government, this party, will continue to follow the rules.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to be the most ethical government in the whole entire world, even in the galaxy, but right after writing rules that banned cash for access activities, guess what the Liberal government did? It broke those rules.

What is the word when one breaks his or her own rules and gives special access for party donations? Oh yes, corruption. When will the Liberal government put an end to its cash for access corruption?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we have had unprecedented levels of public consultation to make sure that we are responding to the very real needs and challenges Canadians are facing. We will continue to engage with Canadians. We will continue to listen to Canadians. We will continue to respond to and work hard for Canadians.

I can assure all members in this House that we all have a lot of work to do. Let us work together so that we can respond to the needs and challenges Canadians are facing, and we will continue to do good work together.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reason the Prime Minister wrote rules prohibiting preferential access is that it resembles bribery. That is also why this government denies that government business was discussed at these ultra-exclusive events.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister just clearly confirmed that not only was government business discussed but that he is the one who deems whether it is appropriate or not.

Does the Liberal government really think that Canadians do not see that conflicts of interest abound?

Oral Questions

• (1425)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the request of Canadians, we have held unprecedented public consultations in order to respond to the real challenges Canadians are facing. The rules governing fundraising are among the strictest in the country, and our party follows the rules. The Chief Electoral Officer said that political financing laws in Canada are the most advanced and constrained and transparent in the world.

[*English*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of making every voice count, the Liberal government only seems content to hear from people when it gets \$1,500 donated to the Liberal Party.

Rather than confusing questions and useless data, I will keep it simple for the Liberals. I only have a few questions.

What on earth are their democratic values? Do they want to see a country where the views of Canadians are accurately represented in Parliament, or do they want a country where the government sells its influence for cash and only wealthy Canadians are heard? Is it really that difficult?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is responding to the very real challenges Canadians are facing. That is why we have invested in infrastructure in a historic way to respond to what provinces, territories, and municipalities are asking for. That is why the Canada child benefit will help families that need it the most, tax-free money for families with children so that they can use it the way they want. That is why we lowered taxes on the middle class.

We will continue to engage with Canadians. We will continue to respond to the very real challenges they are facing.

* * *

[*Translation*]**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's online survey might as well say the following: Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, catch a tiger by the toe. If he hollers, let him go, eeny, meeny, miny, moe.

It will not change anything. How boring. It is ridiculous.

Why did they not include the questions suggested by the experts from the Library of Parliament? They would get real answers. Perhaps the Liberals want to gamble with our democracy at the roulette table; cynics might say they want to play Russian roulette.

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the public service who work with us day in and day out to enhance the health of our democracy.

I would like to thank him for another opportunity to talk about MyDemocracy.ca, an initiative that is meant to engage Canadians in

a very real conversation about the democratic values they would like at the heart of their democratic institutions.

Tens of thousands of Canadians are responding to this initiative. We are thankful to the political scientists who have helped us design it. We look forward to hearing from as many Canadians as possible before introducing legislation in this House.

* * *

[*Translation*]**CONSUMER PROTECTION**

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if a member of the Quebec National Assembly were present in the House today, he would agree with us on C-29, because it encroaches on provincial jurisdictions.

The government is meddling again in areas of provincial jurisdiction. The bill will change consumers' rights and protections.

Will the Prime Minister stop interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction, withdraw the contentious elements of Bill C-29, and respect consumers?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned on Friday, my colleague knows very well that we will continue to work with consumer groups, stakeholders, and the provinces and territories in order to develop rules and enforce the law.

We will also consider the possibility of delaying the implementation of certain provisions of division 5 in order to allow the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce to study this important issue.

What we have done is in the interests of consumers. That is what motivates us. We will continue to work constructively with the Senate.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not need to delay implementation of the bill—the bill should simply be withdrawn. This is what needs to be done.

The premier of Quebec has asked for it to be withdrawn. The premier trusts the Senate, although perhaps he no longer trusts the members across the way. We believe that we need to continue protecting consumers, not bankers.

We will get the job done!

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that Canadians know who to trust when it comes to defending their rights in the House.

The Marcotte decision asked us to clarify the provisions, and we took the opportunity to modernize and clarify them in the interest of Quebec and Canadian consumers. We will continue to work collaboratively with the Senate, as always in the best interests of consumers across the country.

Oral Questions

• (1430)

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has now admitted that in order to meet Paris targets, Canadian taxpayers will have to pay billions of dollars to countries like China. Canadians deserve to know why they will be taxed to death so their hard-earned money will be sent to major emitters, like China.

When will the Liberal government unmuzzle the economists and come clean with Canadians about the hidden costs of this Liberal scheme?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that growing our economy and protecting our environment go together.

December is actually a good time of year to review all the progress we have made. In one short year, Canada played a leading role in international negotiations that led to the Paris agreement. We held three first ministers meetings, in contrast to the previous government, on climate change, concluding with an historic pan-Canadian framework on climate change and clean growth, which we achieved on Friday. We have moved forward with a number of key environmental initiatives relating to methane, coal, hydrofluorocarbons, and the pricing of carbon pollution.

That is real change. That is what we promised in the last election, and we have delivered.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are no ifs, ands, or buts as to who is in charge of this slow-motion train wreck.

The reality is that Australia has abandoned its carbon tax. France is not putting a price on carbon. Saskatchewan and Manitoba have some serious concerns about this pan-Canadian effort. The U.S. is our biggest ally, and it is not doing it either. There will be no carbon price down there.

Why are the Liberals so keen on putting Canadian businesses at a competitive disadvantage when our economy is already struggling after a year of mismanagement under these guys?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the historic climate plan we achieved on Friday is very much focused on driving growth and driving clean jobs, middle-class jobs.

Canadians agree. Let me quote from a statement put out today by 27 chief executive officers across Canada:

We congratulate the Prime Minister and Premiers on achieving a national plan to drive clean growth and make real progress on climate change. This plan includes the key elements needed to do so, including a rising price on carbon....The shift to a high performance, low carbon economy is underway across Canada and around the world, and it offers tremendous opportunity for all parts of the economy. This kind of coordinated government leadership is critical to accelerate our progress and help us keep pace with global leaders, by catalyzing private initiative and innovation across the country.

The government is showing tremendous leadership.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the government on driving jobs into the ground.

Australia implemented a carbon tax, but it was forced to reverse this attack on hard-working families, as it made life unaffordable for citizens and small business. The United States has been clear that it is not going forward with a carbon tax. Canadian families are already struggling, and the Liberals are making a bad situation worse.

When will the Liberals reverse this attack on hard-working families and quit forcing Canadian jobs to move south of the border?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that my hon. colleague actually consult leading and thoughtful Conservatives across Canada. The Manitoba government has committed to putting a price on carbon. Ontario Conservative leader Patrick Brown has committed to putting a price on carbon. Preston Manning has talked extensively about the need to put a price on carbon.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister failed to reach consensus on his climate change plan, and for good reason. It will hurt our economy, it will cost Canadians billions of dollars in new taxes, and it is unfair. The rest of the country will pay disproportionately for this new climate change plan while, in Ontario, its largest carbon emitters have received exemptions.

Will the Liberals admit that this climate change plan and carbon tax is an absolute sham? It is going to cost hard-working Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars in new unnecessary taxes and will achieve absolutely nothing.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to creating a cleaner, more innovative economy that reduces emissions and protects our environment while creating well-paying jobs for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

We and the provinces are establishing a benchmark price on carbon that will help us meet our greenhouse targets while providing certainty and predictability to businesses. After a decade of complete inaction from the other side of the House, we are actually taking measures to improve our economy and to protect the future of our children and our grandchildren.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under CETA, Canada will, for the first time, permit foreign-owned vessels to transport goods between Canadian ports and will open up domestic dredging contracts to foreign suppliers. This will lead to the immediate loss of 3,000 high-quality, good-paying Canadian seafarers' jobs, and threaten tens of thousands more.

Oral Questions

Why is the minister refusing to address CETA's negative impacts and continuing to push through a deal that will hurt Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CETA is clearly in Canada's national interest, and I call on all members of this House to rise above partisan politics and support it.

I have been astonished to hear the NDP consistently opposing this agreement and dragging its feet in the House, particularly at a time when the forces of protectionism in the world are threatening Canadian jobs.

All 28 European member states support CETA, including socialist parties in government. All of the provinces strongly support CETA, including Quebec.

Are there any trade deals that the NDP supports?

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before the Minister of Finance decided to give the banks a sweet Christmas present, everything was fine. The Supreme Court ruled that Quebec's Consumer Protection Act applied to bank customers.

The Liberals' Bill C-29 created a problem where there was not one before. By creating a conflict with Quebec law, the minister is trying to usurp power that he does not have. He cannot fix things and placate people by handing over a blank cheque and buying time. A law either passes or it does not.

Why is the minister playing constitutional politics at the expense of Quebec consumers?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by applauding my colleague's work on the Standing Committee on Finance.

He is well aware that the measures in Bill C-29 are a step forward and will help consumers across the country. He is well aware of that. In its Marcotte decision, the Supreme Court asked us to clarify that, and we took this opportunity to update the rules and create more rules to protect Canadian consumers.

My colleague is well aware that his constituents, like mine, will be protected under this new regime, and we will continue to work with the Senate on this issue.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a vast majority of Canadians oppose the Liberals charging \$1,500 to meet privately with the Prime Minister and senior cabinet minister, but things are getting worse. Reports today detail that major corporations lobbying the Liberals for favours are at the same time making massive donations to the Trudeau Foundation. In fact, since the

Prime Minister came to power, money has rained down on the foundation.

Canadians detest corruption. When these big companies are lobbying the Prime Minister, is he giving them the wink, wink, nudge, nudge, to donate to the Trudeau Foundation?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House once again to remind all members and Canadians that when it comes to political financing, we have some of the strictest rules across the country. It is also important to note that only individuals can donate. The federal rules clearly state that parties cannot take money from trade associations, unions, or corporations.

This government and this party will continue to follow the rules.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised that he would be open and transparent. It seems like he is only open if people pay the \$1,500 cash for access entry fee, but if they cannot do that, they could always kick in a bunch of cash to the Trudeau Foundation. The Liberals claim that the Prime Minister's open and accountable rules would be enforced by the Privy Council Office, so I asked the Privy Council Office who exactly in the office enforces these rules. It turns out that it is no one. Its response was, "PCO is not an investigative body."

When will the Prime Minister finally admit that he has deceived Canadians and that no one is enforcing his own rules?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said time and time again, and will have to continue to say, as the member does not seem to want to hear my answer, when it comes to political financing, we have some of the most strict rules across the country, and this government, this party, will always follow the rules.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you can see, there is nobody policing the Liberals when they are breaking the rules.

In opposition, the Prime Minister stated that every military deployment must have transparent objectives and a responsible plan to achieve them, but now the Prime Minister is being ambiguous. Over 120 peacekeepers have died in Mali alone, and Canadians want to know the facts.

Where will our troops be stationed, what are their objectives, what are the rules of engagement, will the UN be in command, and what is the exit strategy? Will the Liberals finally be transparent and provide us with the facts, or is this just another charade to get a seat on the UN Security Council?

Oral Questions

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is a fact is that Canadians want Canada to be a determined peacekeeper in the world. We need to do our share for peace in the world, so we are considering, with our allies, which deployment will make more sense and will provide Canada with the ability to achieve peace around the world. I am sure all of my colleagues will support this goal.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are going to deploy our troops to the mess in Mali. We know nothing about the mission. We know nothing about the objective, the duration, the rules of engagement, or the resources that will be deployed. However, we do know that our troops are the currency for obtaining a seat on the UN Security Council.

We hope that the Liberals will be just as transparent as the Netherlands, as the Senate is asking for, by providing all the details of the mission to Parliament in order to have an informed debate and to hold a vote before deploying our troops. Will the Liberal government hold a debate and a vote in Parliament?

• (1440)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that the premise of his question is completely false. Canada is engaging in peacekeeping around the world because it wants to promote peace, nothing more. No need to laugh at that. It is Canada's fundamental responsibility. I am sure that the opposition is going to stop taking this lightly. It is quite serious.

It is about promoting peace and we are going to do that with courage and determination because that is what we have always done in the past and that is what we will continue to do in the future, certainly under the leadership of this Prime Minister.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, CSIS has been storing sensitive data on totally innocent Canadians, a policy that the government defended, but the courts have now said is illegal. This metadata can reveal our medical conditions, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and much more. While many are calling for new safeguards, the minister has left the door open to double down and make it easier for CSIS to mine data from ordinary Canadians.

With Bill C-51 still the law, does the government now want to add the power to store the sensitive data of innocent Canadians, yes or no?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on national security, we will provide new scrutiny by a committee of parliamentarians, will provide a new office for community outreach and counter-radicalization, faithful compliance with the Charter of Rights, clarity about warrants, more precise definitions on propaganda, repairs to the no-fly list, full protection for the right of protest, a statutory review after three years, and, for the first time, Canadians are being thoroughly consulted about what other steps are necessary to keep

Canadians safe and to safeguard their rights and freedoms, including their right to privacy.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Federal Court deems something illegal, it seems pretty easy to answer if one is going to continue doing that or not, yes or no.

[Translation]

We know that torture is immoral, but the words of president-elect Trump are quite worrisome. He is suggesting a return to using horrifying methods such as water boarding. At a time when our security agencies are sharing more and more information with our neighbours to the south, the ministerial directive that allows the use of information obtained by torture is still in place.

Will the minister repeal this directive, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all ministerial directives under the previous government are under review. With respect to the issue of torture, as all members of the House know, it is contrary to the Criminal Code, it is contrary to the Canadians Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it is contrary to virtually every treaty this country has ever signed. We will be faithful to the values of Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as promised in January, the government appointed four temporary members to the National Energy Board in order to meet a commitment to consult communities and indigenous groups to get as much feedback as possible on the proposed energy east project. Three additional vacancies came up this fall, when three members of the energy east review panel stepped down.

As part of our government's commitment to a new merit-based, transparent process, can the minister update the House on when these three bilingual candidates will be appointed to the National Energy Board?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her question.

I am pleased to announce that, earlier today, we appointed three new bilingual temporary members to the National Energy Board. These new appointments could be assigned to the energy east review panel.

Those three individuals possess the skills and experience needed to pursue this important mandate.

*Oral Questions**[English]***HEALTH**

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister is planning to make heroin injection sites more accessible. When we were in government, we passed legislation to ensure that the potential sites have community support. Reports indicate that the minister intends to gut this legislation and force these unsafe injection sites into resistant communities.

Could the minister confirm that she will finally listen to communities and reverse her unilateral and dangerous plan?

• (1445)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I expect that the member opposite is well aware of the fact that we are facing in this country a very serious and growing public health crisis. In this crisis, hundreds of Canadians have lost their lives. It is absolutely essential that we together find ways to be able to support Canadians. Our approach to drug policy will always be comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and evidence based. I look forward to making sure that we have policies in place to support Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the media is reporting that the Minister of Health is about to introduce legislation to make it easier to open injection sites in Canada. This is a very sensitive issue, and the Conservative Party has always believed that respect for communities must come first.

The existing legislation governing injection sites created under the previous government requires extensive consultations, the collection of crime data, and a criminal record check of all employees that goes back more than 10 years.

My question is simple: can the minister tell us if those requirements will be maintained?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has said that this is a delicate matter, and indeed it is. I hope that the member is also aware that there is an abundance of evidence that supervised consumption sites, when properly established and well maintained, will save lives, prevent infections, give Canadians access to health care systems, and when they have the approval of the communities that want them and need them, they are important to the health of Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Wynn's law closes a loophole in the Criminal Code by requiring prosecutors to disclose the criminal history of bail applicants. For Constable David Wynn, this loophole proved fatal after his killer was let out on bail because his extensive criminal history was not disclosed. Given that the minister opposes closing this loophole, will the minister say when exactly it is okay for someone to be let out on bail and on to the streets without their criminal history being disclosed?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly I recognize the pain caused to Constable Wynn's family and his colleagues within the RCM Police. I want to say that I am committed to modernizing and improving the efficiencies and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Our government supports the bill's objectives of ensuring that all relevant information is considered at bail hearings. This is why we are working with the provinces and territories and relevant stakeholders to review the bail system with an eye to improving the efficiencies and the effectiveness.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has said that Wynn's law is unnecessary because measures in the bill are already in place. For Constable David Wynn, clearly those measures were not good enough.

Why will the minister not do the right thing and close this loophole in the Criminal Code? Why will the minister not support Wynn's law so that what happened to Constable Wynn never happens again?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I recognize the pain that was caused to Constable Wynn's family and to his colleagues within the RCMP.

In terms of this bill, I want to reference a report that was released following the Alberta's comprehensive bail review that was initiated after the death of Constable Wynn. It does not call for legislative changes at this time.

I will, however, continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that we improve the efficiencies and the effectiveness in the bill and the criminal justice system.

* * *

*[Translation]***CHILD CARE**

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives informs us of the rising cost of child care for families. That is unacceptable. Even though Quebec has the lowest child care fees and is held up as an example to follow, the province has still seen a 14% increase in the cost of child care since last year.

What is the government's plan to help families who are dealing with these rising child care costs?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my colleague for giving me this opportunity to remind the House how important it is to support families and children, including those of the middle class. That is what we did in budget 2016, because we know how important it is for the Government of Canada to recommit to supporting our families' learning and child care needs.

Oral Questions

We announced a \$500-million investment. I look forward to continuing to work with the provinces and territories to quickly implement this plan to help our families and children.

● (1450)

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, child care costs continue to grow at an alarming rate. A new report shows that average infant child care fees in Vancouver are more than \$1,200 a month. In St. John's, they come in at \$1,400. In Toronto, they surpass \$1,700. This rivals the cost of housing.

The Liberals have failed to produce the child care spaces they promised, they have failed to tackle growing child care costs. and their child benefit will lose its value by 2021.

Why is the government breaking its promises and failing children?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to take advantage of this important question to signal that indeed we put into place in March a historic Canada child benefit that would lift the families of 500,000 Canadians out of poverty. We have also signalled that over the next few months we will put into place a \$500 million package to support the early learning and child care needs of our children and families.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another question on the opaque proprietary protocols used by Vox Pop Labs.

In an interview, the company's CEO said, "when we've identified [responses] that are assumed to be from the same user, we take the first set of responses." In the case of MyDemocracy.ca, would the minister inform the House whether second and third responses from the same IP address will be rejected? Will information be made public as to the total number of multiple responses from single IP addresses, whether they were accepted or rejected, and on what basis?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the opportunity to invite all Canadians to go online to MyDemocracy.ca or to call 1-844-690-8363 to be part of this important conversation about their democratic values. I can assure them that the information will be protected by federal privacy laws. I can assure them that we want to hear from as many Canadians as possible before introducing legislation in the House. I can also assure all members of the House that we continue to be committed to hearing from Canadians before introducing legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know about you, but does the government realize that its approach to electoral reform is completely ridiculous? Does it not realize that? Because Canadians certainly do.

The minister set aside the parliamentary report that called for a referendum, the only right thing to do. Now the Liberals have come up with a postcard approach to democracy and launched a survey

that is all over the map. People can provide just about any answer they want. It is ridiculous.

Why is the government refusing to do what Canadians want and hold a referendum?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of the House to read the committee's report, and remind everyone that the government will be responding to the committee's report in due course.

The committee agreed, as do we, that we needed to hear from many more voices about the values that Canadians would like to see at the heart of their electoral reform. That is what we are doing. We encourage all Canadians to take part in MyDemocracy.ca. We thank the tens of thousands who have seen the merit in our approach and are engaging. We look forward to hearing from many more voices before introducing legislation in the House.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, I was informed by some rural mail deliverers that they were instructed to deliver the infamous democratic reform postcards only to houses and apartment buildings, not to farms. This weekend, Susan from Stokes Bay asked me why she had not received her postcard, and wondered if the Liberals were deliberately not asking rural Canadians their opinion.

Where is the democracy in excluding rural Canadians? Does the minister actually think rural Canadians do not have an opinion on electoral reform, or is it because the Liberals are scared of what farm families might tell them?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as an MP from a rural riding, I can assure the hon. member that the voice of rural Canada is incredibly important to me. One of the reasons we decided to send out a postcard via mail was that we recognized that access to the Internet was not equal among all Canadians living in rural areas. Individuals in my rural riding and others have received the postcard.

I thank the hon. member for bringing this to my attention. We will work to resolve it.

* * *

● (1455)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian travellers and businesses are anxious to know if they can count on a better preclearance system to expedite travel between Canada and the U.S.

Oral Questions

In March, the Prime Minister signed an agreement in principle to expand preclearance to new sites, including Montreal's Central Station, as well as Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, and Rocky Mountaineer in Vancouver.

Could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update the House about the status of the binational legislation necessary to implement the agreement?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, border preclearance between Canada and the United States has existed for 60 years. It makes our border more secure and more efficient both ways. Last spring, the Prime Minister and the President of the United States agreed upon a major preclearance business expansion into the locations mentioned by the hard-working member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

In Canada, we introduced the necessary legislation last June. I am pleased to note that both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate enacted their preclearance law this past week. The ball is now in our court to pass Bill C-23. Let us do it this afternoon by unanimous consent.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the minister admitted that only half of the Syrian refugees who had come to Canada had found jobs. This means that this month thousands of refugees will require ongoing social assistance payments.

The Liberals have committed to bringing in tens of thousands of new Syrian refugees in 2017. On that note, I am wondering if the minister could provide the House and Canadians with some clarity as to how much this refugee commitment will actually cost the provinces as well as Canadian taxpayers.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the provinces have been on side from day one. As has been the case with past waves of refugees, it is in the early days an act of kindness by Canadians but over the long run it is a hugely positively investment. These refugees integrate into the labour force. Their children do exceptionally well. I have no doubt the Syrian refugees will do just as well or better than the Vietnamese boat people and many others who came before.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POVERTY

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals boast about working on behalf of the middle class and being progressive.

However, requests for food aid in Valleyfield have skyrocketed and organizations cannot afford to provide Christmas hampers this year. The use of food banks has increased 300%.

In an effort to reduce the number of requests for food aid, Food Banks Canada and Les Banques alimentaires du Québec are recommending a poverty reduction strategy.

How can the Liberals justify voting against the national strategy to combat poverty brought forward by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for allowing me to acknowledge the NDP's support for the work we have been doing in recent months with the provinces, territories, indigenous peoples, and municipalities in order to develop, for the first time in history, a national poverty reduction strategy and to ensure that this strategy supports the efforts of other governments and continues to lift hundreds of thousands of families out of poverty.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 3,500 Canadians die every year from the flu. Jude was a 2-year-old boy living in my riding who passed away this year on Mother's Day weekend because of the flu. His mother Jill has since then begun a campaign, encouraging Canadians to get the flu shot to decrease the spread of the flu so that kids like her son do not lose their lives: #forjudeforeveryone.

Could the Minister of Health please update the House on what our government and Canadians can do to prevent deaths due to the flu.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation that the member raises is a tragedy. My heart goes out to the family and anyone who has lost a loved one due to the flu.

An important defence against influenza is a flu shot, which is why I got mine already this year. We will work with all provinces and territories to promote vaccination.

I encourage Canadians to talk to their health care providers about getting their flu shots, or visit healthycanadians.gc.ca to find out where they can get theirs.

* * *

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even Liberals are now being forced to admit that their policies are costing Canadian families dearly. Reports show that even before the Liberals impose their disastrous carbon tax, the cost of food will significantly increase in the new year. All Canadians will be affected, but low-income families will be particularly hard hit.

When will the Liberal government stop its attack on struggling families and stop making a bad situation even worse?

Points of Order

● (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with due respect, I would encourage my colleague to encourage her colleagues to pay a bit more attention to the importance of reducing poverty in Canada, perhaps signalling the importance to their constituents of the Canada child benefit, which is going to reduce the rate of child poverty from 11.2% to 6.7%, the lowest ever level of child poverty seen in our country.

As we work together, there is ample ground to do even better in the future.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC'S INTERESTS

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the true face of the Liberals in power is one that talks out of both sides of its mouth. On the fight against climate change, protecting Quebec consumers, health transfers, funding for Muskrat Falls, the lumber industry, promoting institutional bilingualism, financing Bombardier, head offices in Quebec, compensation for cheese producers, electoral reform, political party financing, and so much more, the Liberals do not walk the talk, to put it mildly.

Is there anyone in the House who knows what the 40 Liberal members from Quebec are good for?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that we are 40 Quebec members and we are here to defend Quebec. For starters, there is the Prime Minister, six cabinet ministers and 33 members working very hard in Quebec's interests. We are here to defend the interests of Quebec, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is offering to delay implementation of measures that will allow banks to circumvent Quebec consumer protection legislation. Basically, banks will not be able to start gouging consumers right away. Unfortunately for them, they will have to wait until spring. After trying to put one over on consumers in its mammoth bill, the bank-friendly government wants Quebecers to give it a blank cheque.

Is this the best plan the Quebec Liberals could come up with in order to save face with voters?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleague to read the bill. He might want to know what he is talking about before asking a question. I can tell him very clearly that, in Marcotte, the Supreme Court asked us to clarify consumer protection provisions. That is exactly what we did. Our sole purpose in modernizing those provisions was to protect consumers in Quebec and across Canada. I encourage my colleague to read those provisions and see for himself that we are taking a step forward for consumer protection.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-29 limits consumer rights in Quebec and restricts Quebec's societal choices.

No need to rehash the debate when Quebec is unanimous: the National Assembly is against this bill, consumer protection groups are against it, the Chambre des notaires du Québec is against it, the Barreau du Québec is against it, and law professors are against it.

That says it all. Only the banks and the Liberals are in favour of the bill.

Why are the 40 Liberal members from Quebec serving the interests of the banks and not the interests of Quebecers?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): That is a lot of rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. The reality is quite simple. In the Marcotte ruling, the Supreme Court asked us to clarify the framework.

I am sure that my constituency colleague would agree that basic banking services should be available to all Canadians.

Disclosure should allow clients of an institution and members of the general public to make informed decisions. I am sure my colleague agrees.

Clients of an institution and members of the general public should be treated fairly. I am sure my colleague agrees.

The complaints process should be impartial and transparent. I have no doubt my colleague agrees.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Jacques Chagnon, the Speaker of the Quebec National Assembly.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1505)

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am rising today in accordance with Standing Order 39 and Question No. 575 on the Order Paper regarding the government's new carbon tax.

According to O'Brien and Bosc, Order Paper questions are a way for Parliament to obtain "detailed, lengthy or technical information" about the government's plans.

Since Confederation, members have had the right to submit these questions to the government or to a specific ministry for a response within 45 days. It is a way of obtaining specific information from the government. It is also one of the ways the House keeps the government accountable. It is a basic right of members of Parliament to ask these questions on behalf of Canadians.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

The environment minister did not attempt to answer my Question No. 575 and the questions I have raised therein, even in the slightest. I have in my possession the purported response received from that department. I also posed questions to the Departments of Finance and ESDC, and they did not respond.

Let me just highlight the questions that were asked in writing and submitted in proper format: How would the carbon tax impact family budgets? How many people would a carbon tax push below the low income cut-off line? By how much would it increase the market basket measure of goods, a measure used by Statistics Canada to determine the affordability of common household goods? How would it impact people in each province? How would it impact grocery bills? How would it impact electricity bills?

The environment minister provided nothing more than vague talking points in her response. What little substance the minister did provide is concerning. She said:

Any impacts on business and consumers will be modest...

A carbon tax is a big deal. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation says that the costs will be approximately \$1,028 per person, or \$4,112 for a family of four. Does that sound modest to the House? Does the government expect Canadians who live on fixed incomes to find an extra \$1,000 per person to pay for this costly new government scheme?

Professor Nicholas Rivers has said that the carbon tax would add 11 cents a litre to the price of gasoline, 10% to electricity, and 15% to natural gas.

I could go on with—

The Speaker: Order. I think the member is going on and it is getting into debate. I would like him to stick to the point of order, if he would, please.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, if I could just conclude by saying that the questions I was asking were not in search of opinions or talking points from any particular political party, but for specific numbers.

Presumably any government that is proposing to implement a tax of this size, this magnitude, and with these consequences would have calculated the actual costs and impacts on Canadian families. That information, I am sure, exists within the Government of Canada. It will have been documented and it will have been provided to ministers before such a policy could ever have been considered, and certainly before Treasury Board would ever approve it.

Given that it must exist, it must be provided to Canadians. That is why I asked for the government to do so through the very specific use of Order Paper questions, to which the government is bound by parliamentary tradition as old as this country to respond.

It has not responded, and therefore it falls to you, Mr. Speaker, as the presiding officer of the House to ensure that the Standing Orders are upheld, that the questions are answered, and that Canadians get all of the facts before they have to pay the costs that the government will impose upon them.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Carleton for raising his point of order. I will take it under consideration and come back to the House.

• (1510)

[*English*]

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to its study of genetically modified animals for human consumption.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[*English*]

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology entitled, “Review of the Government of Canada report entitled ‘Fresh Start: A Review of Canada’s Insolvency Laws’”.

HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Health entitled, “Report and Recommendations on the Opioid Crisis in Canada”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a response to this report.

We are pleased and excited that all members of the committee were involved with this report and made contributions to it.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics entitled, “Protecting the Privacy of Canadians: Review of the Privacy Act”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from Thornhill constituents who recognize and stress the importance of expanding Canada's international trade with Asia-Pacific partners as a top priority in building a stronger middle class and ensuring Canada's long-term economic prosperity. These petitioners call on the government to better inform itself and the Canadian public on the benefits of pipelines, specifically the Trans Mountain and the energy east pipelines, and to reconsider the decision on the northern gateway pipeline.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions, including e-petition 297.

The petitioners call upon the government to implement a carbon fee and dividend on a nation-wide basis as quickly as possible in a way that is integrated with provincial pricing.

I commend the hard work of Cathy Orlando over the last decade in support of carbon pricing, the continued advocacy of my constituents Cheryl McNamara and Doug Pritchard, and the work of the Citizens' Climate Lobby and its 300 chapters worldwide.

I am proud to stand in support of our government's leadership to establish the recent and historic pan-Canadian framework for clean growth and climate change.

SHARK FINNING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions today. The first deals with the issue of shark fins. If the private member's bill put forward by the preceding member for Beaches—East York had passed, we would not need to keep asking for a ban on the importation of shark fins. The petitioners call upon the House to ban the possession, trade, distribution, and offer for sale of shark fins.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents throughout my riding as well as into Saskatchewan and Alberta. The petitioners call for a moratorium on the introduction of genetically modified alfalfa. They are asking for a proper review of the impacts on farmers before this step is taken.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Lastly, Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding are also calling on the government to extend the tanker ban on crude oil tankers on the west coast of British Columbia to the entire west coast of British Columbia to maintain the protection of fisheries, tourism, and coastal communities.

CURLING

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and present a petition on behalf of all Canadians. This petition is signed by thousands of individuals from every province

and territory. They call upon the government to recognize curling as a national sport. Curling brings together Canadians from all walks of life. It has been and remains to be a Canadian staple. Curlers today continue to inspire future generations of Canadians in pursuing greatness both on and off the ice.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present three petitions today. The first is with regard to gender-based violence against women and girls. The petitioners highlight that the worst form of discrimination against females begins before they are born due to the practice of sex selection. They call on Parliament to condemn sex selective pregnancy termination.

● (1515)

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to impaired driving. Families for Justice is a group of Canadians who have lost a loved one killed by an impaired driver. They believe that impaired driving laws in Canada are much too lenient and they want the crime called what it is, vehicular homicide. The petitioners are calling for mandatory sentencing for vehicular homicide.

The petitioners are also calling on this Parliament to support Bill C-226 and Bill C-247, Cassandra's law.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition has to do with conscience protection. The petitioners call upon this Parliament to pass legislation that would ensure that no Canadian is forced or coerced against his or her will to participate in assisted suicide or euthanasia.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition today calling upon the government to reject the Kinder Morgan pipeline for all kinds of reasons. These petitions were collected by the We Love This Coast group, led by Shirley Samples and her friends, who have been petitioning all over the lower mainland gathering hundreds of signatures against this pipeline. The petitioners say that they speak for those who have no voice, including the endangered orca pods in the southern Salish Sea. The petitioners are calling upon the government to reject this decision.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to confess that I am a little late with this petition. These petitioners are asking the House to pass Motion No. 47, which we have already done, which is good news for them. I will table it anyway to bring their perspective before the House. The petitioners are calling upon the House to support a study of the impact that sexually explicit material has on children. I look forward to seeing the results of that study at the health committee.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 582, 584, and 589.

[Text]

Question No. 582—**Mr. Alexander Nuttall:**

With regard to the government's plan to implement a carbon tax or carbon price: (a) for vendors that sell products subject to a carbon tax or price on carbon, will the vendors be required to include the carbon tax or price on carbon when calculating the amount of consumption taxes associated with the purchase, including (i) Goods and Services Tax (GST), (ii) Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) (broken down by province), (iii) Excise Tax, (iv) Transportation Taxes; and (b) what is the projected increase in government revenue for each of the next five fiscal years as a result of increased revenue from (i) GST, (ii) HST, (iii) Excise Tax?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is proposing pan-Canadian pricing for carbon pollution, which would be implemented across the country by 2018. Under the proposed pan-Canadian approach, provinces and territories will have the flexibility to choose between two systems: a direct price on carbon pollution or a cap and trade system. Currently, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec, representing over 80 per cent of the population, have already implemented or introduced legislation to implement carbon pricing. The government will introduce a backstop pricing system that will apply in jurisdictions that do not meet a national carbon pricing benchmark. That federal backstop system is currently under development, and details on its application will be announced at a future date.

With respect to the impacts of carbon pricing on other federal and provincial revenue sources, the extent to which these revenues may be impacted will depend on the approaches taken individually by provinces and territories in implementing a carbon price that meets the proposed pan-Canadian benchmark for carbon pricing.

Question No. 584—**Hon. Michelle Rempel:**

With regard to the team that the government dispatched to Iraq in October 2016 on a fact-finding mission in relation to Yazidi refugees and the mission itself: (a) what date did the team members arrive in Iraq; (b) what date did the team members return to Canada; (c) what was the detailed itinerary; (d) what locations were visited; (e) what refugee facilities were visited; (f) what were the titles of all (i) government officials, (ii) United Nations officials, (iii) officials from non-governmental organizations, with whom the team members met; (g) what was the date and location of all meetings referred to in (f); (h) did the team members meet with Yazidis who were internally displaced persons (IDPs) in United Nations camps and, if so, what are the details of such meetings; (i) did the team members meet with Yazidis who were IDPs living independent of the UN camps and, if so, what are the details of such meetings; (j) who were the government representatives on the mission; and (k) what was the objective of the government representatives on the mission?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC, is concerned, IRCC officials travelled to Erbil, Iraq, in October 2016 to conduct interviews with Syrian refugee applicants and to consult with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration on a potential program for individuals who have suffered grievously at the hands of Daesh, including Yazidis.

For operational security reasons, further details of the trip cannot be provided, as this information has the potential of putting at risk the safety of IRCC officials, partners, and vulnerable populations.

IRCC has engaged and consulted with trusted international partners, non-governmental organizations, and governments in developing the plan for a program aimed at individuals who have suffered grievously at the hands of Daesh, including Yazidis.

Question No. 589—**Mr. John Brassard:**

With regard to Senate appointments recommended by the Prime Minister in March 2016, and the response from the Prime Minister's Office to Q-288 where it said "The advisory board established a list of five qualified candidates for each of five vacancies, for a total of 25 recommended candidates": (a) of the seven senators appointed in March 2016, from which list did each name originate; and (b) were any of the appointed senators not on one of the five lists of recommended candidates and, if so, which ones?

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the transitional phase of the new Senate appointments process, the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments, the advisory board, provided their advice to the Prime Minister in accordance with their terms of reference, OIC 2016-0011. They established one list with a total of 25 recommended candidates, representing five qualified candidates for each of the five vacancies. The list of recommended candidates was broken down by province. As noted in his March 18, 2016 news release, the Prime Minister made his seven recommendations—three from Ontario, two from Manitoba, and two from Quebec—for the transitional process from the list of candidates for these provinces provided by the advisory board.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, furthermore I would ask if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 581, 583, 585 to 588, and 601 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 581—**Mr. Alexander Nuttall:**

With regard to official diplomatic communications regarding the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between the Minister of International Trade and her European counterparts: what are the details of all official diplomatic communications since November 4, 2015, including the (i) date, (ii) titles of individuals participating in the communication, (iii) location, (iv) type of communication (in person, phone call, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 583—Mr. Robert Sopuck:

With regard to the Firearms Reference Table (FRT): (a) what information is contained in the FRT; (b) how many entries are there in the FRT; (c) what is the threshold for changing information in the FRT, including (i) the information required to necessitate a change, (ii) the process for drafting changes, (iii) the stakeholder engagement process, (iv) the approval process, (v) the approval authority; (d) who has access to the FRT, including (i) federal government entities, (ii) provincial government entities, (iii) foreign government entities, (iv) Canadian businesses, (v) foreign businesses, (vi) Canadian institutions, (vii) foreign institutions, (viii) Canadian individuals, (ix) foreign individuals; (e) does the government consider the FRT a quasi-statutory instrument due to the potential impact on the property rights of Canadians; (f) if the answer to (e) is affirmative, what is the legislative basis for the FRT; (g) if the answer to (e) is affirmative, were there any outside legal opinions sought regarding the FRT as a quasi-statutory instrument due to the potential impact on the property rights of Canadians; (h) has the government conducted an analysis as to the application of the Statutory Instruments Act to the FRT; and (i) if the answer to (h) is affirmative, what was the conclusion of the assessment?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 585—Hon. Michelle Rempel:

With regard to the development of apps for smartphones by the government or for the government, since November 4, 2015: (a) what amount has been spent developing apps; (b) what is the list of apps developed; and (c) for each app developed, what are the details, including (i) the amount spent on development, (ii) the date of launch, (iii) the current usage rates, (iv) the monthly download statistics, (v) the list of operating systems for which the app is available, (vi) whether the app is for public or internal usage?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 586—Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

With regard to contracts granted by any department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity, since November 4, 2015, to The Gandalf Group or any of its partners: (a) what are the vendors' names; (b) what are the contracts' reference and file numbers; (c) what are the dates of the contracts; (d) what are the descriptions of the services provided; (e) what are the delivery dates; (f) what are the original contracts' values; (g) what are the final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values; and (h) what are the details of any research, polling, or advice provided to the government as a result of such contracts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 587—Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

With regard to trade negotiations: (a) what is the list of trade negotiations which are currently ongoing; (b) what is the current status of each trade negotiation; (c) what is the list of trade negotiations which have ceased or been suspended since November 4, 2015; (d) on what date did each of the trade negotiations referred to in (c) cease or suspend; and (e) for each negotiation referred to in (c), what was the reason for the negotiation ceasing or suspending?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 588—Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trip to New York in September 2016 to address the United Nations General Assembly: (a) what were the total costs for the government delegation's trip to New York; (b) what is the itemized breakdown of each expense related to the trip; (c) broken down by individual expense, what amount was spent on (i) air transportation, (ii) meals, (iii) per diems, (iv) ground transportation, (v) hotels, (vi) mints and candies, (vii) bottled water, (viii) alcohol; and (d) what were the titles of all members of the government delegation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 601—Hon. Tony Clement:

With regard to the Prime Minister's announcement in January 2016 that the Member for Ottawa South will serve as Chair for the yet to be formed National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians: (a) has the Member for Ottawa South received pay for serving as Chair of the National Security and

Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians; (b) what are the detailed expenses for the Member for Ottawa South's international travel with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in January 2016; (c) how were the expenses in (b) paid; and (d) was the Member for Ottawa South reimbursed for expenses incurred during his international travel with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in January 2016?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

EMPLOYMENT IN ALBERTA

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has received a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 52(2), I am asking for an emergency debate on the Alberta jobs crisis. I know that you have received requests of this nature before, and I will be brief, but there is a vital need for us to have this emergency conversation.

As others have pointed out, the number of unemployed Albertans has nearly doubled since 2014, from 112,000 in January of 2015 to close to 210,000 in August of 2016. We are not just talking about oil and gas. Our province has lost one in five resource jobs, one in four manufacturing jobs, and one in five agriculture jobs. Over 120,000 energy workers have lost their jobs, and our unemployment rate is now at 9%, which is a 22-year high.

While the government is failing to propose anything to address this terrible situation, we need to discuss these issues in the House as soon as possible. Rather than fixing the problem, the government is doing everything it can to make matters worse. It is raising taxes in every way possible, on small businesses, on individuals, and on consumers. It is even raising payroll taxes. It talks about jobs, but it is raising the tax on jobs. This is making the jobs crisis in Alberta worse, not better.

There is a vital role for government here, and we need the government to act. I ask that you grant this debate so that we have the opportunity to finally discuss what needs to be done to respond to the Alberta jobs crisis.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his intervention. As he certainly may know, based on the previous interventions of a similar nature, the request does not in fact meet the requirements for an emergency debate. I would certainly recommend for his consideration that he consider other avenues that might be available to him in respect of bringing these matters before the House for its consideration.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union and its Member States and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House was last debating the motion, the hon. member for Jonquière had four minutes remaining.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to continue debating the motion.

As I was saying earlier, I wonder if the government has a grudge against the hands that feed it every day. I am talking about the people who work on the farms, the dairy producers—in fact, those who feed our children.

The announced program of \$50 million per year offers no real compensation and will not provide satisfactory protection for our supply management system. Indeed, the industry estimates that the annual losses to Canada's dairy producers will be \$116 million. Those losses come at a time when the Liberals are still missing in action on the diafiltered milk issue despite the fact that they have been promising a solution for over a year now.

More cracks are starting to appear on the issue of supply management, a system that Canada has chosen as a society to guarantee the survival of our family farms and proper land use. The region's milk producers were not very excited by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food's announcement.

Mr. Daniel Côté, president of the Producteurs de lait du Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, has said that his association was extremely disappointed at the plan announced by the government. It was clear that the Liberals had failed in their job. They had promised a comprehensive program to solve all of the sector's problems, including diafiltered milk, but the announcement was only concerned with CETA, and it was for very insignificant amounts. The government says it consulted producers, but it would seem to be hard of hearing because the results are far from what our dairy producers expected. As Mr. Côté has said, the government owes it to the region's producers to shoulder its responsibilities and keep its promises.

The agreement before us today also has shortcomings with respect to government purchasing and procurement. Many witnesses have said that they are afraid of the impact the Canada-Europe agreement will have on the flexibility of the government's internal supply and services structures.

Witnesses representing the municipalities have pointed out the important role played by government supply policies in local economic development initiatives. They believe that the provisions of CETA risk undermining local development plans by granting new rights to European companies.

Government Orders

I will conclude by saying that New Democrats support trade agreements that reduce customs duties and stimulate exports but firmly exclude elements that threaten sovereignty, such as the provisions concerning investor-state disputes. We believe it is the government's responsibility to conclude better trade agreements, particularly as regards human rights and labour standards, as well as protection of the environment and Canadian jobs.

I have serious reservations about the so-called progressive trade program of the Liberal government. When all is said and done, a trade agreement has to be assessed based on the costs it entails and the net benefits it affords.

In the past, we New Democrats have always stood in very clear opposition to agreements liable to have a negative impact on Canadians, such as the agreement with Honduras and the foreign investment promotion and protection agreement, or FIPA, with China.

Allow me to add that better processes lead to better agreements. Far too often, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have negotiated behind closed doors and kept Canadians in the dark about the process. That is notably what happened with the negotiations of the trans-Pacific partnership.

• (1525)

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Jonquière raises a very important point about local procurement. We are in a country right now where many are suffering from unemployment or just part-time jobs. We are also struggling to try to establish our renewable-energy and energy-efficiency sector.

At a time when I know my city is trying to move forward and take action on climate change, it would be really important if we could provide local employment on energy-efficiency programs. Does the member have concerns in her own community that this agreement may mean that local communities will actually have to compete with European entrepreneurs?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments. I would like to add that I too am concerned about what is going to happen in terms of the big European corporations in the event that the Canada-Europe agreement is signed.

In my riding, there are small municipalities with a population of around 700 where there are crying needs for infrastructure projects, particularly roads and waterworks. For example, we have a wastewater treatment problem. Often local companies will bid on infrastructure contracts for major projects representing a great many jobs. However, the bigger the contracts, the more European companies will be able to bid, to the detriment of our local companies, sadly.

I am worried about what is going to happen in terms of the protection of our small local companies. In its current form, the Canada-Europe agreement offers them no protection. That is why I am still worried about what is going to happen in my riding of Jonquière.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier my colleague from Jonquière mentioned the fantastic cheese producers in her riding. We know that the previous Conservative government had promised that under CETA the dairy sector would be provided with \$4.3 billion in compensation. Instead of honouring that commitment, the Liberals have fallen far short, and what they would provide to dairy farmers now is \$250 million over five years. This would have a huge impact on local cheese producers, like those that the member mentioned in her own riding of Jonquière, and the cheese quotas.

There are so many unknowns about CETA. The dairy producers do not know whether they would be allocated those cheese quotas or they would go to retailers. That still has not been distinguished. The cheese producers are seeking that quota so that they can offset more of these losses, but the Liberal government refuses to let them know whether that is the case.

I wonder if the member can speak further to how CETA would impact those cheese producers in her riding of Jonquière.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, an exemplary member who is working very hard in committee on the Canada-Europe agreement. I thank her for her question and for her work.

As I mentioned in my speech, in my riding we have the Fromagerie Blackburn, which employs seven persons full-time. That may seem a small number, but those are quality jobs held by people with big hearts. This is a family farm that has existed for over 80 years. Those people are at work every morning and have won many awards for the quality of their cheeses, which have earned the distinction of being among the 50 best cheeses in the world. That is wonderful for them and we are proud of them.

However I am concerned about the Canada-Europe agreement, because unfortunately, the Liberals' plan is not going to help those people. These are direct jobs we are talking about. Also, this cheese factory has been in operation since 2006 and is doing very well. People in the region are proud of it, but so are people outside of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. The owners and workers are worried about what is going to happen to them, and so am I, very much so.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to add my thoughts on a very important bill, Bill C-30. This bill will implement a proposed free-trade agreement with Europe, an agreement which has been talked about for years here in Ottawa.

Indeed, to be quite frank, never in my life have I seen an agreement be the subject of so many press conferences and ceremonial events. I remember former prime minister Stephen Harper regularly blocking the halls of Parliament to go off once again to sign the free-trade agreement with Europe.

Our new prime minister cannot stop announcing it. He sometimes takes the plane on Sunday morning to go to Europe to sign the same agreement once again. One time it was because Wallonia had given its consent. Today we are in the process of discussing a bill, because there is still no agreement.

The reason why there is still no agreement is that certain serious questions have been raised about the very signing and content of this agreement.

• (1530)

[English]

When we look at the details of any trade deal, we have to look at our own past track record in signing similar deals and ask ourselves why we continue hitting our heads against the wall with some of the provisions that are in here, including, in particular, the investor-state provision.

A lot of people, when the Prime Minister rushed off for the umpteenth signature of this European trade deal, were a bit surprised to find out that the Walloon parliament had thrown in its lot with this thing, yet nothing could be further from the truth. There had been a lot of promises along the way by Canada, what is going to be changed, what is going to be modified, and Wallonia had simply decided to keep its powder dry.

There is an attempt right now to push this thing through. We all know that trade with Europe is important, but trade with Europe is so important that we have to get it right. That is why we keep asking the same questions.

I have played a role in the past in various trade deals. When the NAFTA was brought together, I was the president of the Quebec Professions Board. I did a lot of work with Americans on this. It was actually helpful in bringing down trade barriers within Canada, which is something we do not talk enough about. It was such a balkanized version of the professions, both in the U.S. and here, it put considerable pressure on the professions to make sure that any rules against free movement of professional services had an overriding interest in terms of public protection, consumer protection.

That is worthwhile. That is some of the good things that can come out of these deals. It is too easy to simply say we are going to have this new regulation or that new rule and it is all about public protection. However, we have to know whether or not that is actually the case.

Here is the rub. Who gets to decide? When we talk about an investor-state provision, what we are in fact talking about is the ability for an investor to go before an anonymous tribunal to have the very question resolved, in their favour most often. Canada has an awful track record on this. We have lost 70% of the cases under the NAFTA. What we are saying is that before we turn that over to an anonymous international panel instead of leaving it with our domestic courts, let us know what we are talking about.

The government keeps on insisting that in matters of environment and health, there is going to be a carve-off. However, that still leaves the question of who decides whether or not it is a legitimate environmental or health concern.

Government Orders

Again, let me give a real example, one that I lived when I was the minister of the environment in Quebec. I banned 2,4-D, a widely-used pesticide produced by the Dow Chemical Company. Dow turned around, under chapter 11, and immediately started suing the Canadian government, saying, “You're not allowed to ban 2,4-D. You don't have conclusive evidence that it is directly dangerous to human health when used as directed.”

If an average suburban lawn owner gets dressed up in haz-mat outfit and starts putting this stuff around, and their kids are wearing haz-mat outfits and not playing on the lawn, and Rover is wearing a haz-mat outfit out on the lawn, that argument by Dow Chemical is true, perhaps in the immediate, without talking about how much of that is going to leach into the environment.

The Canadian government, for once, did not lose, because Dow was convinced to withdraw its lawsuit because Canada admitted that there was no conclusive evidence of a direct immediate harm to human health when 2,4-D was used as directed. However, who decides? That is the key question here.

[*Translation*]

Who has the final say with respect to health and the environment?

If we made regulations prohibiting the use of certain chemicals in the textile industry, for example, would we be immediately sued by a big European corporation such as BASF, a major German chemical manufacturer? The answer is almost certainly yes, because companies will never accept being told that a government can decide that; they will call in a group of two or three lawyers from big business and commercial law firms to win the right to continue.

Despite the many announcements, the process that has been proposed was rushed, if we compare it to what exists elsewhere. An NDP political slogan comes to mind when I look at what we have on the table, which is that we have to put people before profits.

● (1535)

[*English*]

There is a long-held view in my party that we have to put people before profits, and that was never more true than in the case of something like CETA. We are giving over to corporations the ability to sue national governments if they feel that their profits are being compromised.

There is also the risk of what we could call “regulatory chill”. The people in government who are responsible for protecting the environment and public health are going to be discouraged from doing so because of the threat of being sued under these new agreements.

Let us also look at what we are going through right now to know what the future can hold.

[*Translation*]

They say that what goes around comes around. It is astounding to see our dairy farmers, who are expecting market control in the form of supply management, currently losing several hundred million dollars per year because of incompetence and mismanagement by the Liberal government, which is pursuing old Conservatives policies.

Let me explain. Supply management protects our market for milk. When a dairy product comes over the border, it is subject to duty. Cheese is not allowed to be made if it does not contain milk. A metamorphosis does actually occur; it is all very Kafkaesque. At the border, the government says this product is not milk. With another word from this same government, a perfectly identical product suddenly and magically transforms into milk when it is used in cheese production.

We were promised \$4.5 billion in compensation, but that simply evaporated. We are now left with less than one tenth of that amount.

Newfoundland is losing hundreds of millions of dollars because of our decision to do away with rules requiring processing to be done here.

[*English*]

It will be almost impossible to bring in national pharmacare. We are protecting companies and their profits instead of protecting people. The NDP will continue to fight against this trade deal, because we are not making Canadians' lives and our environment the priority.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of concerns that I have been hearing in the House and have been trying to get an answer to, which is on the difference between the \$4.3 billion in compensation that the prior government told dairy farmers they would be provided, and the \$350 million that the new Liberal government says is all they are going to get. Members keep saying that New Democrats are opposed, opposed, opposed to free trade, and yet we are trying to do our due diligence so that we are not surprised, surprised, surprised.

My question is this. Does the member feel the same way that I do about the difference between the \$4.3 billion and the \$350 million, and that somehow dairy farmers might be getting milked dry?

● (1540)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that my colleague from Hamilton Mountain is quite right. There are provisions in these agreements that are there to protect the companies, and we are not thinking enough about human health and the environment. Promises have been made by both the Conservatives and the Liberals that are clearly being broken, because the compensation that is on the table now is less than one-tenth of what was promised.

Let us stay with the example of Hamilton and steel. I have no doubt that Canadian companies can compete with anyone in the world with regard to steel production. However, if we are dealing with countries that do not have the same or similar environmental or labour rules, then we are allowing products in, and it is no longer economic dumping, but environmental dumping, or social dumping. That is what happens when we do not pay attention to these trade deals. We are always going to hear the same song from those in favour of all of these deals, that they are always good. That is just not true. We have been chumps in Canada for too many years, and some of these deals have not turned out to be very helpful for us. In fact, they have produced a race to the bottom.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Very often these international agreements take away good jobs and favour only those companies that push governments to sign them. This is why I am very proud to be part of a social-democrat family that asks the right questions.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my hon. colleague to comment on the provinces' role in the free trade agreement negotiation.

He said that Canada could be sued, or it could also be sued as the result of decisions taken by provinces. They could go in their own direction and may not necessarily agree with the free trade agreement, and as a result there could be lawsuits.

I think it is important to respect the fact that provinces can make their own decisions in their areas of jurisdiction, but these things could happen. This has been seen in cases of proposed moratoriums and other free trade agreements.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's question, because it is extremely relevant. I gave the example of the time when I was the Quebec environment minister and banned 2,4-D.

We know that the provinces are responsible for directly regulating in health and environment much more than the federal government, even though environment is shared.

We also know that the provinces risk bearing much higher costs, especially for generic drugs, because they will be much more expensive and it will be harder to bring them to market because of intellectual property protections. Once again, the agreement is putting profits before people. We want to put people before profits.

The provincial governments should be extremely careful, because this agreement will have a chilling effect on the provinces' ability to regulate in health and the environment. This is why, from our perspective, we need to proceed very cautiously before signing this kind of agreement.

To those who would suggest that the NDP always votes against free trade agreements, I will say that nothing could be further from the truth. In recent years we supported the Canada–Korea Free Trade Agreement and the Canada–Jordan Free Trade Agreement.

We examine these agreements on a case by case basis, and this particular agreement is far from guaranteeing provincial capacity, in particular, capacity to ensure the public is protected. And what is more important in a government's mandate than protection of the public?

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak alongside our leader and my colleagues in opposition to Bill C-30. I would also like to thank my colleague, the member of Parliament for Essex, and our entire team for pushing the debate forward.

On something as important as the trade agreement with the European Union, it deserves proper debate in the House of Commons. Truly, it is only the NDP that is pushing for that debate, pushing to ensure the government is being held to account on a

proposed trade deal that we find extremely problematic for Canadians.

I also rise in the House today not just as the member of Parliament for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski but also as the jobs critic for the NDP. Earlier today, we presented our federal call to action entitled “The Precarious Generation: A Call to Action”. It was based on our months long national tour, a series of national consultations in nine provinces and one territory. We heard from young people, millennials, their parents, their friends, and people from our communities across the country. They all came to share their stories, their lived experiences with respect to what was an emerging crisis in Canada, which is the rise of precarious work.

Today I was honoured to put forward the kinds of recommendations that millennials across our country shared with us, recommendations that are bold, that are hopeful, that are visionary. Those recommendations come from a place of great challenge and increasing difficulty. Millennials are facing the prospect of being less well off than their parents generation in a very real way. That is a phenomenon we have not seen in recent times in our country.

The numbers talk for themselves. The rate of youth unemployment is twice the national average. Thirty-nine per cent of workers under the age of 30 are precariously employed. Most are working in temporary and contract work, despite the fact they are currently looking for, and certainly would much rather have, full-time employment. In provinces like Ontario, 300,000 young people are working unpaid internships and, in many cases, those unpaid internships do not lead to paid work.

We heard heart-wrenching stories across the country. I remember hearing from a young worker in P.E.I. who talked about the fact that he had just graduated with a Bachelor of Science in biology, and he could never imagine having a job in his field on the island. Every morning he woke up at 4 a.m. and went to work in a fish plant. Every night he worked at Best Buy.

In Newfoundland, young people talked about the fact that their provincial government had just brought in an austerity budget. They knew they came from a province where people usually had to leave to find work. Despite the fact that they thought times were getting better, once again their generation would have to leave to find work somewhere else.

In Halifax, a young woman came forward. She told us that where she came from the most secure form of employment for young men was to join the military, a real precarious kind of work.

In Winnipeg, we heard about work, particularly in the public domain. Jobs like garbage pickup, which had been done for a very long time by younger, indigenous men, had been outsourced and devolved. These men were able to support their families with the income they made, but now they were unable to make that kind of living. As a brother told us at that meeting, they were treated as disposable as the garbage they pick up.

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In Regina, we met a young woman who broke down in the meeting. She talked about how she could not afford her tuition. She could not bear to think what she would do to come out of the burden of student debt that she faced. She knew she had to find work that had pharmacare benefits to ensure she had the medication she needed.

In Calgary, we had a NDP cabinet minister tell us that for many years Calgary had been the promise land for young people from across the country. Today, even if individuals are from Alberta and are young, they can barely make it there.

● (1545)

In Vancouver, a young woman talked about the fact that because she was in a cycle of precarious work and because housing prices were so out of reach, she, like many young people, found it heartbreaking to know she would never be able to afford a home in the community she came from, and “heartbreaking” is the word that she used.

One of the last meetings in our 14 stops was held in Windsor, Ontario. When we talked about precarious work across Ontario and across the country, people told us to go to a place called Windsor. Windsor tells a story of how our generation has been sold out. Year after year, we have seen the impact of trade agreements that certainly have not had our best interests in mind. We have seen governments that have not had our best interests in mind and we have seen where that has gotten us. An older activist talked to us about the way in which manufacturing had been dealt a blow there for quite some time. Jobs that young people would normally do and certainly hope to raise a family with that do not exist the same way they used to. At the end of that meeting, we heard from a young woman who was finishing her law degree, her third degree. She is from Windsor. She moved back home and into her parents' basement. At the end of that meeting, she said that she did not know why anyone in the room was surprised that people of her generation could not imagine owning a home, having kids, and raising a family as that was just how it is now.

Those stories inform me and the work we do in the House, as we stand to oppose CETA, yet another trade agreement set to sell us out. It is clear from the messages we heard that both our generation and people who care for the millennial generation will not tolerate further actions from federal governments that do not have the interests of young people, and all people, in mind going forward.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

In recent decades, and certainly since the start of the neoliberal era, we have seen a great many good jobs leave our country. We have witnessed the erosion of our social safety net to the benefit of corporations, millionaires and billionaires.

Today, and I have witnessed this throughout recent months as I was crisscrossing the country to take stock of the working conditions of our generation, it is clear that good jobs are becoming increasingly scarce, and that the millennial generation is living in uncertainty, with no benefits and no job security. How can we have come to this point, when we were promised an unprecedented level of prosperity if we opened our borders and liberalized trade all over the world?

Well, it is because, from the start, liberalization was designed for the corporations and the billionaires, not for the middle class and the working class. We opened our borders not for human beings but for money, and massive amounts of it left. The tax havens are overflowing with profits made on the backs of workers here and elsewhere. We have allowed the rich to break our social contract, and to pay for our social services we are turning ever more to wage-earners who are paying today so that their employers can be subsidized to the tune of billions of dollars. We were promised that free trade would create jobs, but where are they? I would like someone to show me the jobs that have since been created, because after 10 months of consultations, no one seems to have found them.

We in the NDP have always been skeptical of these free-trade agreements unilaterally designed for the richest people, and time has obviously proven us right. Employment today is part-time and rarely unionized, and does not allow one to support a family or future projects. That is the sad state of our society.

Is it possible to conclude agreements that promote trade and serve the interests of Canadian workers? Of course it is, and that is why we are fighting today against Bill C-30 and the free-trade project with the European Union.

Finally, I am proud to stand up with my colleagues in the New Democratic party and thousands of Canadians all over this land who are opposed to this government's measures.

[*English*]

I am proud to stand with my colleagues in the NDP and in solidarity with tens of thousands of Canadians, many of them young, who call on the government to work with us in providing a better future.

Bill C-30 and the proposal before us is not in that vein. We will continue to oppose it.

● (1555)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the comments from my friend from Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

I am intrigued by her embrace of the exact same phrase Donald Trump uses, describing trade agreements being bad deals for us. Yet there is a lot of evidence that these trade agreements are actually good for Canada.

In the case of the Canada-European Union trade agreement, studies were done in advance and were the basis for the negotiations that indicated a \$12 billion annual boost to the Canadian economy from a trade agreement such as the Canada-European Union trade agreement. If that were the case, a \$12 billion boost to the economy, that would provide the kind of growth for the young generation of workers, who she says lack hope. It would give hope that they would have jobs and opportunities under this.

Does that promise of a \$12 billion boost to the economy not provide the member some encouragement that perhaps this free trade agreement with Canada and European Union is a good deal, and that we will not see all our manufacturing jobs flee to France or to Luxembourg?

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Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I believe, as my seat colleague will know, that I prefer to subscribe to the philosophy of Bernie Sanders, a progressive politician who has also questioned the free trade dogma.

In all seriousness, as I have relayed here today, my generation, the millennial generation is speaking very clearly with respect to the challenges ahead of us, and very clearly of the ways in which federal government decisions to sell us out, whether it is free trade deals that have gone bad, or foreign ownership that has sold us out, and I can speak to that with respect my hometown that has seen that reality and is living it, or its gusto for privatization and de-regulation.

All of these measures are coming together to make for an increasingly challenging reality for many Canadians, particularly young Canadians. We know that to be the case from the most recent Statistics Canada information. We need to change course. Opposing this trade deal before us, which is bad news for Canadian workers, is only one step in that direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech.

I heard something that really surprised me. Perhaps I am mistaken, but I thought she said that jobs in the Canadian Armed Forces are precarious. I would like to tell all Canadians who are listening that, on the contrary, working for the Canadian Armed Forces is wonderful. I did it, as did my brother, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. It is a very well-paid job.

I strongly encourage all young millennials who are watching at home to contact their closest recruitment centre and join the Canadian Armed Forces.

If the member is saying that being a member of the Canadian Armed Forces is precarious because it involves dangerous missions, I would like to remind her that statistics show that it is much more dangerous to be a fisherman in Acadie or a city firefighter than to be part of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I want Canadians to know that being part of the Canadian Armed Forces is a wonderful experience.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

I do not think my point has come across. What we were told is that young men and women want more choice when it comes to jobs. As we know, many do not want to move away and they want more secure jobs than those provided by the Canadian Armed Forces. Of course, it goes without saying that some do want to join the armed forces.

We must recognize that relying on the armed forces, for example, is not an economic policy that our country can support. There must be choice. Our young people must have choices. What is obvious in today's Canada is that there are fewer and fewer choices when it comes to careers or full-time jobs. We must change that, and that is why we oppose the bill before us.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House at the point of calling the question

on Bill C-30, the bill that would bring in the comprehensive economic trade agreement between the European Union and Canada.

I have the honour to represent the only party in this place that has voted against all investor-state agreements. Although mostly the NDP members vote against them, they do not always. I would urge them to reconsider and ensure, for the future, that all investor-state agreements be rejected. They really have nothing to do with trade at all. I want to dive into that aspect of the investor-state agreement and touch briefly on the other aspects Canadians should be concerned about.

First, as many members in this place have already raised, it will increase the cost of pharmaceutical drugs. It is very clear that this will happen. Numerous independent studies have looked at the implications of the so-called CETA on drug prices for Canadians.

Second, it is also clear, and it has been raised by a number of groups, that the language the European Union wants in the text on the question of municipal powers for procurement will also be negatively affected by CETA, including access to procurement for municipalities, academic institutions, school boards, and hospitals. If they should decide that they want to make sure they are buying locally, they could be offending the provisions of CETA.

The third part is the most controversial. It is certainly the most controversial in Europe. It is why Canadian parliamentarians are being sold a bill of goods when we are told that there is any urgency here. I am really surprised that the Liberal government chose not to have significant review and consultation nationally. We had that on the trans Pacific partnership agreement but not on the comprehensive economic trade agreement with the European Union. This is surprising, given that there can be no need for urgency in Canada to ratify when there are 28 countries, and an additional 10 subnational groups throughout the European Union, that have yet to ratify, and given that there is still a pending decision from the European Court of Justice as to whether the comprehensive economic trade agreement is compatible with European law.

The controversy within Europe is overwhelmingly about the one piece of this agreement that I think could be very conveniently and easily removed without affecting the trade aspects at all. This takes some underscoring. What kind of trade agreement has an entire section that has nothing to do with trade? The answer, these days, is almost all of them. We are being sold, hook, line, and sinker, the notion that a trade agreement must include something called investor-state dispute resolution systems, or FIPAs, foreign investment protection agreements.

The first of these anywhere in the world was chapter 11 of NAFTA, and we have a lot of experience with it. I do not believe that even the negotiators of NAFTA believed that they were introducing anything novel when they negotiated chapter 11. As much as Canada had a national debate on NAFTA, chapter 11 never came up, because it was a sleeper provision. It might have stayed asleep, actually, if it had not been for the ingenuity of a Toronto lawyer, Barry Appleton, who decided that chapter 11 of NAFTA could be interpreted in a completely novel way.

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The essence of the legitimate protection of investor interests in other countries is that we do not want a government coming along and nationalizing the assets, saying, “You have built a lovely refinery here. We are now going to say it belongs to the government of ‘fill in the blank’, and you, as an investor, are not going to get your money back on that.”

That is what people thought chapter 11 was initially, because it talked about protection from expropriation, but chapter 11 used some novel language. It talked about governmental measures that were tantamount to expropriation. Here is where the clever lawyering came in.

The first chapter 11 came to us when this Parliament banned the trade and use of a toxic gasoline additive, a manganese-based gasoline additive, that had a human health threat component. It also gummed up the diagnostics of the on-board catalytic converters for automobiles, so car manufacturers were worried that it would void their warranties. Environment Canada was worried that it would cause more air pollution. Neurotoxicologists, like Donna Mergler, at the University of Quebec in Montreal, was worried about it causing an increase in a disease that looks a lot like Parkinson's, but it is manganism.

● (1600)

Well, Parliament banned it, but because of a chapter 11 NAFTA challenge from a private corporation in Richmond, Virginia, Ethyl Corporation, Canada found itself in an arbitration case. This was just the first of many, and we keep losing them, or we keep having them settled out of court, although we cannot call these places courts, unless we use the word “kangaroo” first. These are arbitrations in hotel rooms with private arbitrators. They make money being arbitrators. They are expert lawyers. We can find Canadian lawyers who claim to be environmental lawyers suddenly selling out to be expert lawyers for U.S. corporations at these secret hearings.

The secret hearing process under NAFTA in chapter 11 is egregious. Just as egregious is the Canada-China investment treaty. I would have to say that it is more egregious, because every investor from the People's Republic of China is going to be a state-owned enterprise for the People's Republic China. Therefore, their ability to sue us is virtually unlimited. Of course, the Canada-China investment treaty never had even as much debate as we are getting on CETA. It never went through Parliament at all, because previous Prime Minister Harper approved it in cabinet, confidentially. The treaty binds the Canadian government until the year 2045 to the People's Republic of China, and its state-owned enterprises have more right to challenge decisions made in Canada than any Canadian corporation does.

CETA falls somewhere in between. CETA is being sold to us by many as the gold standard. It was the head of trade negotiations for the European Commission, Cecilia Malmström, who came up with the idea that since this investor-state provision in CETA is so controversial and is attracting so much protest from within the European Union, maybe we can make it look more like a real court and end the fact that it is so clearly profit driven.

Can members imagine arbitrators who are one day working in their big downtown law firms and the next day are essentially judges determining whether the decisions passed through parliaments

around the world are going to hold up to their private scrutiny? There is no appeal, no oversight, and no room for intervenors to make the case as to why it was appropriate to ban a gasoline additive or to stop the export of PCB-contaminated waste or to not put a toxic waste disposal facility next to a town's freshwater supply. These are all real-life examples under chapter 11 where the polluters have won and the citizens have lost, and it happens over and over again.

CETA proposes some improvement, no question. It is much better than chapter 11 of NAFTA and better than the Canada-China investment treaty, which we seem to have forgotten ever even happened in this place. When I hear Conservative members getting up and asking whether the new administration under the Liberals is moving too close to China, I kind of want to run over, shake them, and ask if they do not remember that they passed, in secret, or their cabinet did, the Canada-China investment treaty, which is the worst of all of these.

Professor Gus Van Harten, of Osgoode Hall Law School, literally wrote the book on the bad investment deal with China. The book is called *Sold Down the Yangtze*, if members want to pick it up to find out how our sovereignty was sold out by the Harper administration.

Gus Van Harten has done a careful study of what is being offered in this so-called gold standard, and there definitely are flaws.

The arbitrators will have a more permanent roster. Can members imagine if our judicial system picked judges at random from the private sector, and they did better on cases where the rich guys won? Can members imagine how fair our judiciary would be seen to be? Well, CETA makes an improvement on that. There will be a permanent roster of such judges. They will still be drawn from private-sector work, and although they will be prohibited under the CETA terms from acting as advocates and lawyers before a CETA investment court, they will not be barred from operating as advocates and lawyers under other dispute resolutions, such as chapter 11 of NAFTA.

There is still this culture of an elite group of corporate lawyers who are literally global ambulance chasers. They find companies and tell them that they can sue a government if they want to.

The sad part, as well, is that, for a moment, Cecilia Malmström's proposal called for allowing civil society to come forward as intervenors. That part of her proposed gold standard was dropped.

My plea to the current government, and my plea to all parliamentarians, is to dig in our heels on this. I commend the NDP caucus for digging in its heels on this. We should dig in our heels and say that these are anti-democratic by definition.

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●(1605)

There is no chance in the world that a company that emanates from the European Union is going to expropriate Canadian property in Europe, contravening all the laws and international common law practice. We are in a safe zone here, developed country to developed country. Let us get rid of the unfair investor-state provisions and fix CETA so that it is about fair trade.

●(1610)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that fools rush in where wise people fear to tread. My question has to do with rushing in to sign this agreement.

We know that CETA will not be fully ratified until all 28 EU member states have passed the agreement in their own parliaments. Clearly, we have time. We should take that time.

I wonder if the member has any thoughts in regard to taking time so we can address the issue of investor-state provisions and the very clear concerns expressed by CELA in regard to environmental degradation. Of course, there are our dairy farmers and those who produce the good food we rely on. Can we accommodate those folks? Can we slow down? Should we?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, absolutely we should slow down. This is going to take a minimum of five to seven years to get through the European parliaments we are dealing with. We also still have the very substantial, some might say risk but I say hope, that the European Court of Justice will say that it is not in accordance with European law to allow Canadian corporations to sue European governments.

The shoe is on the other foot. It is something like the Ajax mine they pushed in Kamloops, B.C. that local residents do not want. It is owned by a state-owned enterprise from Poland. If CETA does not go through, the B.C. government can turn down the Ajax mine without the risk of a corporate suit against B.C. taken at the national level. Goodness knows how much money we could lose.

I have to underscore this: The decisions under investor-state provisions have nothing to do with trade. They do not involve Canada doing anything wrong. They do not involve us violating any scientific principles or acting against evidence. We just have to be shown to have cost them money. That is it. It is completely corrosive to democracy.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many European countries had reservations about signing this agreement, and many have now signed but with the proviso that they have not yet ratified. The debate within Europe, especially about the investor-state dispute settlement clauses, is far from over.

There are other aspects of the agreement that could be positive, and there are some negative ones too.

I am wondering who the member thinks is putting on all this pressure. If the investor-state dispute settlement clauses are what risks having the deal fall through in Europe, who is pushing for them? If it is the Canadian government, why would the Canadian government be willing to risk the rest of the deal for the sake of keeping these provisions? Certainly not many of the governments in Europe are pushing for these. In fact, that is where they are getting the push-back from their own population on this deal. Who is

defending these, and why is it so important to keep them in there if it jeopardizes everything else the Liberals and Conservatives say is good about the deal?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, that is, as they used to say on the old TV show, the \$60,000 question. Adjusted for inflation, I guess it is now the \$6-trillion question.

We have issues with some of the trade aspects, and I am glad my friend from London—Fanshawe mentioned the dairy threat. I mentioned pharmaceuticals. There are the procurement provisions, but even they are not primarily about trade.

What we are talking about here is increasing the powers of transnational corporations while decreasing the regulatory powers of governments. In whose interest is that? It is not in any sovereign nation's interest. It is in the interest of transnational corporations. It is the first plank of global corporate rule, and it is being advanced by the corporations.

The current Liberal government should look at who pushed it in the last round of negotiations, realize it was the Harper administration, not the Europeans, take it out, and start a rethink of all these investor-state provisions and renegotiate them so they make sense and defend the sovereign rights of governments to protect public health, safety, and workers' rights within their own countries.

●(1615)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again to speak to CETA in the House, because there is a lot to talk about and I do not think we have done a good enough job yet of discussing what is in this deal. We have heard a lot of platitudes by those who support the deal and, I would say, not a lot of information. The government has certainly not provided any detailed study of the anticipated economic impact of this deal. Canadians are supposed to just take it on faith that somehow it is going to be good for them, their jobs, and their communities.

It is reasonable for Canadians to expect at any time, and particularly from a government that has promised to bring back evidence-based decision-making and a scientific approach to government, to be provided with information and analysis on the particular ways that the government thinks this deal would be beneficial. However, we have not received that at all. Instead, we get an ideological repetition of the idea that these deals must obviously be good.

The NDP, instead, has been trying to offer an example of how to look at an agreement's details, to evaluate the various clauses, and to come to a conclusion about whether, overall, it is a good agreement for the country. I do not think it is any secret that the conclusion New Democrats have come to on this particular deal is that it is not, on balance, good for Canada. I will get to why.

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There is one thing we need to recognize, first and foremost, which may sound silly to say. When considering the positions and arguments advanced by other parties, it bears repeating that trade deals are an important part of public policy. It is not as if trade, on the one hand, is separate and divorced from all the other public policies of government, on the other hand. Trade deals have important implications for governments, particularly these kinds of comprehensive trade agreements. They set the economic framework and a number of other important rules under which government can or cannot apply other levers of public policy.

Consider, for instance, a previous trade agreement that Canada once had with the United States called the Auto Pact. It was an agreement on the trade of a particular good, in this case automobiles, across the border. The people who negotiated and concluded that agreement recognized that trade deals were public policy. Therefore, the public policy goals of that agreement were not just to create more wealth for transnational corporations. They said that if they were going to sign a trade deal, they needed to enunciate what their public policy goals were. An important public policy goal was to ensure that jobs were created within Canada and that the goods being sold in Canada actually meant that Canadians got a slice of the production of that good and received wages for the goods sold in Canada.

When we talk about trade deals of different kinds and the values that can be represented in them, here is an example of a trade deal that we should not need to approve just because it concerns trade. Let us face it, multinational corporations have negotiated with themselves, because they are advising all of the various governments involved in these negotiations. These are not negotiations including union leaders and people representing the interests of the environment and ordinary Canadians. They are largely negotiations with government representatives and representatives of multinational corporations meeting behind closed doors and coming up with rules. Then, when they come out of that negotiating room, we are told that either we agree with trade or we do not, and that this particular set of rules that has been negotiated behind closed doors represents the best possible scenario for ordinary Canadians. That is a laughable claim. They never provide any evidence to back up that claim and we are supposed to just take it on faith. When we look at agreements like this, it is not clear what the public policy goal is.

Consider CETA, for instance. This agreement, we know, because it has been confirmed by a number of independent studies, will raise the cost of pharmaceutical drugs in a country that already has among the highest such costs. We need to go from where we are right now with respect to the costs of drugs and to find ways to bring those down, and we know that CETA would move us in the wrong direction. What gain would we be making that would offset that loss, unless the public policy goal, perversely, of the government is to fatten the wallets of international pharma?

● (1620)

I do not think that is a defensible public policy goal. However, if that is the goal of the government, let it say so; and if it is not, let it tell us what we are getting out of this deal that counteracts that effect on Canadians. If everyday Canadians are made to pay more for their pharmaceutical drugs, that is a tangible cost, and what tangible benefit can they expect to see in return?

There are lots of other ways we could pursue other public policy goals within the context of these kinds of trade agreements. For instance, we could say that because we want green public transportation in Canada and with our trading partners, whether they be in Europe, the United States of America, or wherever else, we want a firm commitment, with timelines and penalties if these goals are not met, to work toward a common charger for electric vehicles. That would be a legitimate thing to do. Certainly, if a trade deal like CETA can pronounce on the minuscule details of municipal procurement, we could certainly reach a deal that would bring its member parties together to pursue a common charging standard that would allow that industry to reach economies of scale, increase production, whether in Canada or the other member countries, and begin greening public transportation in those various areas.

However, we never hear about that because we do not actually get into a debate about what the public policy goals of a trade deal are. Rather, we are just told that this will create massive wealth, that it will be great for everyone, and that everyone is going to get a job after we pass this.

The evidence does not support that at all if we look at the historical record of what has happened in the Canadian manufacturing sector since the late 1980s and early 1990s when we began signing these kinds of agreements. No further evidence has been provided. When we look at the historical track record, I would argue it is not particularly good, and we are not given any contrary evidence.

We might also say that when it comes to labour mobility, for instance, these agreements tend to have lots of provisions on how companies can bring in their own workers from wherever to perform work here in Canada that ought to be performed first and foremost by Canadians who are looking for this kind of work. That is not the right way to go about this in these provisions, but we do know that there are labour mobility challenges. For instance, trade unions who have hiring halls have people here who are out of work and there are places with labour demand in the United States, and those people cannot get that work because in order to be authorized to do the work, they first need an employer and a visa. However, because there is an agreement in which the employers go to the hiring hall to fill their labour demands, the workers need to be cleared to work at the hall first, but until they are cleared at the hall they do not have an employer so they cannot apply for the visa and cannot be cleared at the hall until they have a visa. That is a legitimate labour mobility issue.

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We could be working to address labour mobility issues in that way rather than encouraging the import of temporary foreign workers who then work only for that company and who are thus, frankly, under the dictatorship of that company, because if the company decides for whatever reason that those workers are complaining too much about their working conditions or if the company does not pay them what they were promised when they came over, the workers can be sent back by the company. That is not a fair arrangement for those workers. It is not a fair arrangement for Canadians who are expected to then compete against them. There are other ways to do that, but these do not come up when we are talking about these deals.

What the NDP is trying to do in this debate is to say that there are other ways of doing this and there are other important public policy goals that ought to be taken into consideration when we pursue trade agreements. However, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to do this. That is the problem. That is what we are trying to zero in on. We are trying to show that, yes, trade deals and trade is important, but there is more than one way to do it. There are an infinite number of ways. This particular way, in which we take away the ability of democratically elected governments in Canada and elsewhere to make decisions about health, the environment, and working conditions within their own jurisdiction and to put them at the mercy of trade tribunals that are more concerned about whether transnational corporations are losing money than about the substance of those issues, is the wrong way to do it. That is not to say there is not a way to do it, but it means that we have to ask more of our governments here in Canada when it comes to negotiating a trade deal.

• (1625)

Conservatives and Liberals alike have shown that they are not up to the task. Although we have seen a change in government, we have yet to see a change in approach. We saw the same when David Emerson switched from being the Liberal international trade minister to being the Harper international trade minister, and we saw it when the current Minister of International Trade hugged the former international trade minister on the floor of the House of Commons the day CETA was signed. There is no difference between the two.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I again thank my friend from Elmwood—Transcona for his opposition to the investor-state agreement.

Getting back to the core of this, we really do need to ask how we became so ensnared in so many of these agreements that only privilege the rights of foreign corporations. Canadian corporations cannot sue under such provisions if the Canadian government makes a decision that hurts their profits, but if we accept this agreement, companies from Germany, Poland, Belgium, or wherever, would be able to sue the Canadian government just how U.S. corporations can do now. The People's Republic of China's corporations can, and if the TPP goes through, another nine countries' corporations can bring these private cases against Canada.

Would the member agree with me that we need to reopen the whole bundle of investor-state agreements and renegotiate them globally to ensure that they fairly balance the rights of corporations versus the sovereignty of governments?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that there is something fundamentally

broken at the conceptual level with the investor-state dispute settlement clauses. There absolutely is. Giving foreign companies the ability to intervene in areas of domestic policy-making, which we elect democratically governments to do, is just completely backward.

The idea that somehow in order for those companies to get fair treatment in Canada we need these investor-state provisions, when we have a whole body of common law and other international agreements that give reasonable assurances to those companies they will not be treated unfairly, is also wrong. Added to that is a mechanism by which these transnational corporations can use the threat of serious financial punishment of a government in order to direct its policy behaviour. That is what is wrong about this. It is not about fair treatment. That already exists under the law before we sign these agreements. This is about whether we are going to give these companies the hammer and the threat of it use to direct government policy. That obviously is wrong and should not be a component of deals going forward.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up jobs, and we need to have an understanding of what we face in terms of employment under CETA, but, unfortunately, we do not because the current Liberal government has not done any analysis. We do not know what the projected job losses could be, but we do have one study coming out of Tufts University in the United States saying that Canada would lose 30,000 jobs from CETA. It is not just Canada that is concerned. In the EU as well, just last week the European Parliament's employment and social affairs committee voted for a motion saying that the EU parliament should refuse to approve CETA because it would lead to the loss of some 200,000 jobs in the EU.

There is no evidence to back the potential number of jobs that we hear the government and the trade minister talking about all the time; but quite the contrary, what we only see going forward in Canada and the EU are job losses.

Does the member for Elmwood—Transcona believe that we should have a full analysis of the job losses that would be incurred in Canada?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think that is exactly what is required. I cannot imagine a large company embarking on a new contract with a new supplier or new partner without doing some serious due diligence. I cannot imagine that they sit down in corporate boardrooms and say they have the opportunity to have a partnership with a major new supplier or a competitor who wants to join with them and that they are going to approve the merger simply because bigger is better and mergers are good. I cannot imagine their saying they do not need to take the time to study it, they do not need any numbers, because they believe that bigger is better is a good economic principle and therefore that they just need to go ahead. I cannot imagine their saying that all of the questions are just slowing them down and that the board needs to stop asking questions about the money and the jobs and about their obligations under a new contract and just plow ahead because it is a great principle, that they run the company based on principles, not on spreadsheets or numbers.

There is not a company that would last a day in the market if it ran itself that way, and Canadians should expect better from their government.

• (1630)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, Agriculture and Agri-Food; the hon. member for Essex, International Trade; and the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock, Justice.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this may well be my last speech before the House adjourns for the holidays, so I would like to take this opportunity to wish my constituents a very happy holiday and to thank my team members: Francine, Sébastien, Nesrine, and Catherine. They have been very patient with me during the especially long five weeks of House sittings coming to a close this week. While some might say, “Finally”, those of us on this side of the aisle have just begun. We would like to wish everyone a very happy holiday.

I am pleased to rise today. I like saying that I am pleased to rise, and people seem to say that all the time. Still, I am not exactly ecstatic here because there are a lot of problems with this Canada-European Union free trade agreement. When we oppose Bill C-30 and the agreement as written, it is very important to emphasize that we did the same during the previous Parliament. What really bothers me is having to make the same arguments that we used with the Conservatives in debates on international trade issues. Our stance on free trade keeps coming up. We are in favour of free trade, but it has to be fair and not at just any cost.

Unfortunately, that is what is missing from the approaches taken by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. It is clearly missing from this agreement, as well as other agreements, such as the trans-Pacific partnership, which is also before the House, in a way, considering the conversations that have taken place with various civil society groups.

There are several aspects that are of concern, and I would like to begin with the most troubling one, the one that has been raised most often in this debate, namely the investor-state provisions. This is fundamental. If you were to go door to door, something every MP has done, and you asked everyone if it seems appropriate that a private company could sue its government for making a decision after it was elected, and the government has to defend itself, or even compensate the company using taxpayers' money, I think virtually everyone would unanimously agree, and no one in Quebec or Canada would think that was acceptable. However, that is exactly what this agreement allows.

The problem with those provisions is that they undermine two pillars that the NDP sees as the most important pillars of free trade and free trade agreements, namely regulations on environmental protection and the protection of workers.

These investor-state clauses would allow a company to sue the Government of Canada if the federal government or a provincial government introduced regulations or legislation that the company felt hurt its bottom line and its ability to make money. This is

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completely unacceptable. A perfect example of this problem is the North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Mexico. Quebec passed laws to ban fracking in certain areas of the St. Lawrence River. In 2011, if I am not mistaken, a company took the federal government to court because Quebec passed environmental legislation. This completely compromised environmental protection and violated one of the pillars that the New Democrats consider essential in order to support a free trade agreement, which is to be able to trade with a partner with environmental legislation similar to ours.

I am choosing my words carefully because the answer we will probably hear from the other side of the House is that this is what makes the European Union an ideal trading partner. Certainly, we share values with the European Union as a political unit, but the problem arises when a private sector company can begin pitting its interests against regulations made by elected governments here in Canada. There we have a serious problem.

The same applies to worker protection. Even the most responsible of companies require a certain degree of government oversight with legislation to ensure some minimum protections for workers.

• (1635)

That is the purpose of the Canada Labour Code and the Quebec Labour Code. They ensure that workers have a minimum of rights. In a society such as ours it would be unacceptable for a company to take legal action against the government on the basis that such rights are detrimental to its business.

The government has told us not to worry because these provisions will not affect workers' rights, environmental protection, or any other area. However, as the member from Outremont so clearly pointed out earlier today, there will be two sides to the debate. The investors will take legal action against the state, who will argue about the importance of environmental protection. The company will only have to justify its position by saying that it does not harm the environment and that they can proceed. That is the problem.

As the member for Outremont said so well, to date, Canada has done nothing to demonstrate that it can win in these circumstances, in these secret tribunals, and protect the people we are here to protect and that this agreement does not protect.

The other problematic aspect is that the government has not come up with a concrete solution for Brexit. The majority of our EU trade is with the United Kingdom, which is now preparing to leave the European Union. The government does not seem to have taken this fact into account. When, unlike the past few days, government members decided to participate in the debate, they were asked that question, but their answer was not convincing.

There is also the issue of higher prescription drug costs, which will affect the daily lives of Canadians. The members opposite are good talkers, but they still do not have a plan to reduce drug costs like the one the NDP proposed during the last election campaign. The government should acknowledge this problem.

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In the 2012 dissenting report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, the Liberals specifically requested a sectoral study to explain the costs associated with the free trade agreement between Canada and the European Union, and especially its impact on the cost of prescription drugs.

I do not understand why the Liberals were calling for such a study when they were in the opposition, and today everyone acts as if it never existed. I will not even speak of the debate on health transfers, where the same reduced transfers proposed by the Conservative government have been maintained.

Since time is passing, I will close by addressing the final point, which is the most important one for the people in my riding. I am of course referring to the way that the dairy producers have been swindled. Despite the real change promised in the last election campaign for Quebec's dairy producers and craft cheese makers, the Liberal government is doing worse than the Conservative government that preceded it.

In the last Parliament, a motion by my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé was passed unanimously. Every party in the House, including the Liberal Party, voted in favour of this motion, which called for the producers to be compensated. That is the least that can be done after putting supply management on the table, something Stephen Harper's Conservative government had promised not to do.

The Conservatives had promised to compensate producers in the amount of \$4.3 billion. That was a very fine commitment on their part. Today, however, the Liberals have dropped that to a mere \$300 million. That is staggering. It is a betrayal of dairy producers, one of the many betrayals they have suffered at the government's hands.

Take for example the diafiltered milk issue, which is still not resolved. This is the sort of issue that demonstrates that the Liberals are acting just as the Conservatives did, if not worse.

• (1640)

It is for these reasons that we are opposed to Bill C-30 and that we are demanding that the government reflect upon and renegotiate these important matters. It is not too late to make these fundamental changes which will allow us to exercise our duties as parliamentarians, that is, to protect the citizens we are representing here, the citizens whom this sort of agreement will not be protecting, the citizens it will be betraying.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the good fortune of representing a riding where cheesemakers have set up shop over the last two decades and work hard to make quality products. These include Fromage au village, Les fromages Fromabitibi and La vache à Maillotte. They are being threatened, just like the dairy producers that are going to suffer major financial losses, by this free-trade agreement.

At this time, however, there is a good deal of talk of climate change and doing more for the environment. Does my hon. colleague not find this a little illogical?

From the environmental standpoint, it would be logical to consume local products so far as possible; yet we are importing greater quantities of products from across the ocean, perishable products that cease to exist once they are consumed.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Correct me if I am wrong, but as far as I know French cheeses are among the most subsidized in the world. We are creating a situation where cheese made in Quebec and Canada will not be able to compete on a level playing field.

As my colleague said so well, we want to encourage people to buy local and reduce greenhouse gases, and food transportation is a major contributor to greenhouse gases. There is even talk about food sovereignty and food waste. It is all related. That is the problem with the government's approach. In an agreement like this one, which includes investor-state provisions, has an impact on the price of drugs and betrays our dairy farmers and cheese makers, the government once again makes all kinds of fine promises, but as it has shown since it arrived in power last year, it does not walk the talk. That is what we have a problem with.

It is good to encourage people to buy local, but the government also has to give people the tools to do that. The government is telling people that international products are on an equal footing with our own, local products, even that they present some advantages. That is not good for our local economies or for our local producers. It is yet another broken promise.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the residents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford who sent me here expect this place to operate by a certain set of rules and principles. The government's own policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament very clearly states that 21 sitting days have to pass before implementing legislation can be laid before the House after a treaty is signed. Had the government followed its own rules in that policy document it could have legitimately laid this legislation on the table on December 5. Instead, it decided to present it a day after. This just seems like an incredibly rushed process given the fact that all 28 member states of the EU still have to ratify this.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this rushed process, on the fact that the government is breaking its own policy in that regard, and what that means for the government's intentions as we go forward in this 42nd Parliament.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

This is a point that was raised by my colleague from Essex. Incidentally, I will take this opportunity to congratulate her for all the excellent work she is doing to express a position as the NDP international trade critic. That position is based on certain principles and on an equitable and intelligent approach to international trade.

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She spoke of government policies, that is, the same thing that my colleague was just explaining. The argument we have heard from the government, namely that it is no big deal and optional in nature, is very disappointing.

We have indeed found many problems in this agreement. With only 10 minutes at my disposal, however, I was not able to address the procedural issue.

I note in passing that when the Conservatives announced this agreement, the Liberals supported it without even having read it. But in offering their support, they nonetheless said that it was important for Prime Minister Harper and the Conservatives to take an inclusive approach, to hold consultations and to organize committee meetings. However we saw just the opposite from that government, in spite of its commitment to transparency.

A good example is the fact that the committee cannot even do appropriate study—the problem raised by my colleague. With all the consequences that an agreement has on the lives of citizens, the least one can do is satisfy the expectations that were created for transparency and respect for citizens.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to rise today to share my thoughts on Bill C-30, an act to implement the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union and its member states. This bill includes all necessary legal changes to implement the free trade accord with Europe, commonly known as CETA.

Today, I wish to raise four major concerns. The concerns are very important to the people I represent in North Island—Powell River. They want to hear more about prescription drug costs and what it will mean to them in their everyday lives. They want to make sure that we are not participating in investor-state provisions. They want to know that Canada has the ability and the right to protect itself. They are also concerned about the compensation for dairy farmers, the loss of market for the people in Comox with dairy farms, as well as, very importantly, maritime jobs.

The four motives in this bill will negatively impact my riding of North Island—Powell River, and because of this, I cannot in good conscience support it. Might I also add how sad it is for me to stand in the House today and realize we are not having a rigorous debate on these very important issues that will have long-term impacts. It is very simple for the government to point out that it feels the NDP is not interested in supporting trade agreements, but that is false. New Democrats are asking for these serious concerns to be addressed in a meaningful way. We absolutely have the time to do this work, and it is imperative for government to work with us to make sure that work is done.

Simply put, trade with Europe is too important to get wrong. The NDP supports deepening the Canada-EU trade relationship in order to diversify our markets, but there remains significant concerns and unanswered questions about this proposed deal. The government should work to fix the problems with the current deal rather than settle for a flawed agreement.

In my riding, there is a major concern about prescription drug costs. I have had the chance to meet with some of the most wonderful people over the last year who live across my vast riding, including many seniors. In the first year of my first mandate, getting to know people and understanding their needs was not only essential but paramount. I conducted a series of town halls focused on the demands of seniors in the riding, and I am proud to be continuing this series in the new year.

Unfortunately, the reality for many seniors is that they cannot afford their medications. I have heard on many occasions that Canada badly needs a strategy in place to meet the needs of seniors, and they want to know why it does not exist. One of the many challenges they face is the increasing cost of drugs. I am under the impression that legislators in the House have an abstract understanding of our social safety net, but the reality is that seniors are often vulnerable, on fixed incomes, and have to choose whether they purchase medications, food, or heat. This is a reality, and these decisions are happening daily across Canada.

Let me be very clear: this does not fit my vision of a prosperous Canada. We know that drug costs in Canada are already too high. According to the most recent data available from the Canadian Institutes for Health Information, Canadians pay the second most per person for drugs in all of the OECD countries, second only to the United States, and our costs are significantly higher than the average.

We know that that there needs to be a coordinated effort to contain these costs. What do we do to ensure that seniors can afford the necessary prescription drugs at a reasonable cost? Respectfully, one of the issues now is the reality we are facing with CETA, which would change intellectual property rules for pharmaceuticals. Under this agreement, consumers, including seniors on fixed incomes, can expect their drug costs to increase by more than \$850 million annually.

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions has also warned that it would make it more difficult to bring down prices through a national pharmacare program. While in opposition, the Liberals demanded that the Conservatives present a study of the financial impacts on provincial and territorial systems around these issues, but now they are cutting this and not listening to these important voices that need to be heard.

The second flaw in this piece of legislation is the investor-state provisions, which allow corporations to sue governments over regulations they claim negatively impact their businesses. The Liberals are asking parliamentarians to sign off on CETA, despite the fact that European states have made it clear that investor-state provisions will have to be removed before they ratify it. I do not understand why Canada will not say this as well.

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• (1650)

In February 2016, during CETA's legal scrubbing phase, the minister announced changes to the ISDS provisions that are supposed to improve transparency and strengthen measures to combat conflicts of interest of arbitrators. However, the new investor-court system allows foreign investors to seek compensation from any level of government over policy decisions that they feel impact their profits. Foreign companies would have access to a special court system to challenge Canadian laws, without going through domestic courts.

Canada is already one of the most sued countries in the world under ISDS. Canadian companies have won only three of 39 cases against foreign governments, and the Canadian government has lost many NAFTA cases, while continuing to be subject to ongoing complaints seeking billions of dollars in damages. Existing ISDS measures have also contributed to the regulatory chill, where governments fail to take actions in the public interest for fear they may trigger an investor claim.

Another concern of the investor-state provisions brings us back to my first point on pharmacare. According to Natalie Mehra, from the Ontario Health Coalition, the ability for investors to sue the government puts much more significant risk on the federal government. It would limit our ability to create a national pharmacare program, which would be the single biggest step we could take to containing drug costs, improving safety, and improving access all at once. The Liberals have not explained how they would ensure environmental and health and safety regulations would be protected, and how they would be protected from foreign challenges.

I am proud to represent the Comox Valley. Farming, agriculture, has been a mainstay for a long time and remains incredibly vibrant. It is one of the few locations in Canada that has tracked a surge of agri-investment activities. This has helped culinary tourism in our area. For example, we have great artisan yogourt and award-winning cheese makers.

Many small and medium-size cheese makers across Canada want to continue to grow the market for high-quality Canadian dairy products. Under CETA, European dairies would receive tariff-free access for an additional 17,700 tonnes of cheese, representing 2% of the Canadian milk production. According to the Dairy Farmers of Canada, this will cost them \$160 million a year in perpetual lost revenue.

The previous Conservative government recognized that CETA would lead to significant losses to Canadian dairy farmers, offering \$4.3 billion in compensation. Instead of honouring this commitment, the Liberals have offered an investment package worth \$250 million over five years. This falls short of the losses that dairy farmers would incur.

CETA would, for the first time, legally allow foreign-owned vessels and foreign crews to transport goods between Canadian ports, and will open up domestic dredging contracts to foreign suppliers. CETA will lead to the immediate loss of approximately 3,000 Canadian seafarers' jobs. These are high-quality, well-paying jobs. The industry as a whole supports 250,000 direct and indirect jobs. Foreign boats will bring in foreign workers with no

requirement for a labour market impact assessment. These workers could be paid as low as \$2 an hour and suffer from low safety standards and poor working conditions. This is not the Canada that I want to see. By permitting more foreign-flagged vessels, CETA would encourage tax avoidance, since foreign ships registered in flag-of-convenience countries take advantage of tax havens and the cheapest available labour.

Trade with Europe is too important to get wrong. It is important that we have a vigorous debate about these issues. I do not understand why the government is not standing up for Canadians, standing up for the jobs and the realities we face. I know in my riding of North Island—Powell River, we hold sacred our commitment to keeping Canadian jobs local. We are a small riding that has faced many challenges, and we keep rising again and again. We do not need to have the government not negotiate in a positive way so we can see the results that we so desperately need.

• (1655)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was carefully listening to the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, and she was mentioning that the NDP is not against trade. As far as I can recall, and I am certain you can recall as well, Mr. Speaker, I have not seen a single trade agreement that the NDP has ever supported.

I also come from British Columbia, and when I am out on the ground, I can tell you that B.C. is a very diverse province. People from all over the world have settled in British Columbia. People of the European region are very excited about CETA.

The member talked about the negatives of CETA. However, there are definitely positives about the agreement as well. I would ask the hon. member if she could point out the positives of signing CETA.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, my job as the representative of North Island—Powell River is to do the work of my riding and to listen to the industries that will be impacted.

The reality is that in my riding we have a large number of seniors. We live in a beautiful location, we have affordable housing, and people are going there to retire and spend time with their families. However, they are all coming to me, because they are very concerned about the reality that they are already struggling to afford their medication. What are these trade agreements going to mean for them when they are on a fixed income and challenged every single day?

My job in opposition is to make sure that the government is doing its job. I hope the member will be take an opportunity to reflect on the real impacts that this agreement will have on real people's jobs in B.C., and the reality that it is going to have negative impacts.

Our job is to protect those folks and protect those jobs, and that is what I would like to encourage the government to do.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her excellent speech. She has skilfully laid out the reasons why we are opposed to this agreement. It is not because we are against an agreement with Europe. On the contrary, we are in favour of a good agreement with Europe. She gave a good review of the problems there are.

With regard to cheese producers, there are three in my riding of average size: Fromagerie St-Guillaume, Fromagerie Agropur de Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil and Fromagerie Lemaire, which produce around 17,000 tonnes of cheese, or roughly the production of Drummondville. So imagine the repercussions that this agreement may have on a region like ours and like that of my hon. colleague.

Why does the member think that the government has failed in its task of helping the cheese companies? Why has it not resolved the diafiltered milk issue either?

• (1700)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that across Canada, especially in Comox, where I will always argue that our cheese producers are the very best, there are substantial dairy farming communities that create local jobs. They really are focused on developing their communities and making sure that there are good jobs in that area.

I cannot answer why the government is turning its back so profoundly on the dairy farming industry. These farmers need to see that support if the government goes through with the significant transition that CETA would impose upon them. Therefore, I would like to see the government follow through to raise the amount to a more appropriate number, which will actually help those industries as we go through that transition, and make sure that we remember that many of these smaller communities desperately need these jobs. These are meaningful employment opportunities for businesses that pay taxes and are looking after the communities they live in.

Dairy farmers need to be respected for the long-term work that they have done, and it is shameful that the current government is not respecting them in the way they should be.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disturbed that the Liberals are ready to shut down debate on CETA. No Liberals are even speaking today to Bill C-30 in this House. It is incredibly important that Canadians hear that their concerns are being listened to, and the New Democrats are proud to be doing that today along with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I appreciate her words today as well.

This agreement is far too important to get wrong, and it is far too important for parliamentarians to simply rubber-stamp before we fully consider the range of implications that it would have for Canadians. I have participated in the second reading debate on Bill C-30, and what I saw was that the few Liberal and Conservative MPs who rose to debate this legislation completely ignored the very real concerns around this agreement. It is easy to look at one side of an agreement and only speak about the positive. What takes courage and dedication to the people we represent is to stand and also address the negative aspects.

This deal is far from perfect and it is far from done. In Europe, each of the 28 EU member states, as well as Belgium's regions, must approve the parts of CETA that fall under their regional competencies. If any of these states or regions refuse to ratify, the deal falls apart. I also hope that my colleagues are aware that in the Netherlands right now activists are collecting petitions of signatures to trigger a referendum on CETA. There is still a lot of opposition to this agreement. Just last week, the European Union's employment and social affairs committee voted 27 to 24 for a motion saying that the EU parliament should refuse to approve CETA because it would lead to the loss of some 200,000 EU jobs.

The reality that my colleagues do not want to face is that these kinds of massive, so-called trade agreements actually lead to job losses and greater inequality. Deals like the TPP and CETA are not traditional trade agreements. They go so much further than just reducing tariffs. They set new rules of commerce that benefit the largest multinationals. People push back against these agreements not because they are afraid of trade, but because they know these agreements would continue shrinking the middle class; eliminating good-paying manufacturing jobs and jobs in seafaring; and trading away the public interest in favour of corporate interests.

Canadians support trade. It is vital to our economy and supports jobs in every single region of our great country. New Democrats support deepening trade with Europe and expanding those opportunities for Canadian exports. We also take very seriously our duty to evaluate trade deals on the balance of what they offer to Canadians, and we want the government to do the hard work to fix the remaining problems with this deal.

As I have said before, trade with Europe is too important to get wrong. Yet my colleagues in the Liberal and Conservative parties seem to have their blinders on. They are so ideologically supportive of any and all trade and investment agreements that they refuse to properly study these massive trade deals before passing them into law. Canadians deserve better.

There are still so many unanswered questions and unaddressed concerns, including the following:

Why does this bill include investor-state provisions, when EU member states have said they will not ratify the agreement if these provisions are not removed?

If Bill C-30 goes through, how will the minister appoint judges to the investor court? These judges have enormous powers. Will the minister have all the power to select them, unilaterally and with no oversight or consultation?

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What would be the implications of changes to the Patent Act on prescription drug costs in Canada? How much more would Canadians be paying? How would the provinces and territories be compensated?

If Bill C-30 is meant to be implementing legislation only, why are there clauses that go above and beyond what is in the actual CETA?

Why will the government not provide clarity to Canada's maritime sector about which cabotage routes would be open to Europeans? How many jobs would these new rules cost us? Why are these provisions not reciprocated by the EU? Why are we opening up cabotage for the first time in Canadian history when we know how many well-paid Canadian maritime jobs are on the line? Why do we not insist that foreign-flag vessels employ Canadian and not foreign crews?

The list just goes on and on.

● (1705)

Just last week we heard from the Canadian Vintners Association. They support the removal of tariffs but are concerned that CETA will deepen the already large trade imbalance on wine between Canada and the EU. In fact, they estimate the EU exports to Canada 180 million litres valued at \$1.16 billion, compared to Canadian exports to the EU of 123,000 litres valued at \$2.77 million. They state that they support CETA, but that, "Ratification must include federal support to help the Canadian wine sector adjust and take advantage of, and prepare for the implementation of major trade deals, such as CETA."

We have a thriving wine industry in my riding of Essex, and we all want it to continue to grow. I ask my Liberal colleagues if they have considered this important industry and what kinds of support should be offered to them to ensure they can remain competitive should CETA come to pass.

All of these concerns that I have mentioned have not been given the proper attention in this place or at the international trade committee. We have only held a handful of meetings on CETA, giving it just a fraction of the time and attention that we devoted to studying the trans-Pacific partnership. We have barely made time to hear from witnesses on CETA's intellectual property provisions and changes to the Patent Act. We still have not heard from the maritime industry, which will be significantly impacted by CETA.

Even the beef industry, which supports this agreement, has several recommendations and outstanding concerns that they would like to see addressed before CETA is implemented.

I feel compelled to ask my colleagues in this place to consider the many outstanding concerns with CETA and to push for those changes that this agreement needs.

We should remove the ISTS rules that give foreign companies special rights and privileges that our own domestic companies do not enjoy. If they want to attack our rules and regulations, they should be obligated to go through our domestic courts first.

We should study how much CETA will increase prescription drug costs in Canada. Canadians already pay some of the highest cost drugs among the OECD countries, second only to the United States.

I frequently hear in this place that Parliament should not worry about studying CETA because we have known about the deal for a long time. It is true that negotiations started many years ago, and that the trade committee studied CETA in 2012 and 2014. I have read these reports, but I wonder if any of my Liberal colleagues have done the same because when I read their dissenting reports from 2012 and 2014, I was left with the impression that they felt more consultation, study, and analysis was needed before CETA was ever finalized.

In 2012, the Liberals recommended the report be titled as an interim report, and that further hearings be held, given that the committee's meetings were "deficient" and that CETA would have a greater impact on Canada than NAFTA. They recommended that the government share with the committee an analysis that clearly indicates both the benefits and costs of the agreement identified by the sector.

The Liberals talked about the impact of CETA on prescription drug costs. They said, "it was of concern that the federal government has provided no third party analysis with respect to the entire issue."

Where is this concern today? When I raise the issue with the minister, she accuses me of fearmongering and says that there will not be any impact for eight years, so it is no big deal. The hypocrisy is truly astounding.

I also read the Liberals dissenting report from 2014, and I have to say that they restated their support for the 2012 recommendations and made even more. The Liberals, in 2014, said, "it is hard for Canadians to give outright support to an agreement when they haven't yet seen the text but only the technical summary." So much seems to be speculative. All that witnesses are able to do is speculate about the possible gains, losses, and/or other impacts of CETA.

Here we are, in the next Parliament, and we have done very minimal consultation. We have heard from witnesses at the trade committee in a very few meetings. There are many other people who want to appear before the trade committee on CETA and are not able to do so. They are not even able to provide a written report to the committee.

I would be happy to share with my Liberal colleagues copies of their own party's reports so that they, too, can get a sense of the work remaining to be done on this agreement. I simply cannot understand how they can now turn around and pretend to have no concerns with CETA.

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•(1710)

I appeal to my colleagues from all parties on both sides of the House to vote against the motion to shut down debate. At the beginning of my speech, I outlined some of the many issues and concerns that we, as parliamentarians, should consider before rushing through an agreement of this size and scope. There is no reason we cannot do our job as MPs and take our time with this NAFTA-like agreement.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have not touched in the debates is how investor-state agreements operate to create regulatory chill. I will give my friend, the member for Essex, a chance to think about this.

I have seen what happens first-hand under chapter 11 of NAFTA. Under Prime Minister Chrétien, the government avoided the decision of the arbitration panel by making, and we cannot call it out of court because it is not a real court, a settlement provision. It took the money that was paid to Ethyl Corporation, a manufacturer of leaded gasoline and this toxic replacement of manganese-based gasoline, as I recall it was \$12 million at the time, out of the A-based budget of Environment Canada, just to add extra punishment to the regulators who thought it was important to protect the environment.

For many years, and I think to this day, the effect of that was regulators were afraid to take action against toxic chemicals. Action that was being promoted at one point by Health Canada to get rid of carcinogenic chemicals used in people's backyards for the purpose of having a nicer looking lawn was blocked when the trade minister contacted the health minister to say that everybody could be sued by U.S.-based chemical manufacturers over the loss of profits, even if it was in the interest of Canadian public health.

That is called “regulatory chill”. No one sees it, we cannot document it, but yet another investor-state agreement will increase the number of times Canadian regulators do not act because they are worried about being sued.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, what the member is saying is incredibly valid. As regulators and legislators in the House, we are here to protect public health, public safety, the public good. We are here to ensure that everything we do benefits Canadians, that it will have a positive outcome for Canadians.

When she talks about the regulatory chill, it is very real and it does exist. What happens is that when we start to bring in progressive legislation, we find ourselves being sued. We need look no further than to Quebec and what happened on the moratorium on fracking there.

A company came in and decided it wanted to do fracking underneath the St. Lawrence River, a body of water that all Canadians respect and understand the ecological and freshwater, and how important it is to that community. What ended up happening was the province of Quebec decided to put in some legislation to regulate and prevent fracking. Immediately, a company from the United States turned around and sued the province of Quebec.

Something the member has said is very important. All of this comes out at the federal level. Even if provinces and territories are making decisions that are being challenged by investor-state, whether it is the court system in CETA or under chapter 11 in

NAFTA, it always come to the federal level. Therefore, the responsibility falls on the federal government.

Are we sitting here as parliamentarians, saying that we are going sign ourselves on to a provision that could prevent us from legislating in the interest of Canadians? I think not.

•(1715)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Essex, for her impassioned speech. It reminds me of something that goes back to 1997. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you were a mere child then, but I do recall the election of 1997. The Liberals stood up on their hind legs and said that they would bring in pharmacare and they would have it in place by January of 1998. We know where we are now.

That brings me to my concerns about what is in this agreement with respect to the establishment of pharmacare. We know that to preserve our health care system and reduce those waiting lists, we have to find ways to reduce costs and reinvest in things that produce results. Pharmacare and bulk buying is one of those things. In fact, they reckon we can save \$11 billion a year if we had pharmacare. This agreement puts pharmacare in danger. In the fact, the nurses association says that CETA could increase drug costs by more than \$850 million.

How on Earth are we going to maintain a universal health care system with this kind of situation?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from London—Fanshawe has asked an excellent question, a question I posed for the trade minister and for many Liberals in the House. No one seems to want to address it. No one wants to talk about the fact that 25% of the implementing legislation we are talking about today consists of patent changes that will cost Canadians more money.

The minister has said that it will be eight to 10 years off. Eight to 10 years is not a long span of time. Many drugs will be coming forward to be patented, such as the biosimilar drugs. These drugs could be the future. They could cure cancer and diabetes. When those drugs are patented, Canadians will have to pay more. The government has absolutely no plan to deal with that cost to the provinces. There was mention of that under the previous Conservative government, but absolutely nothing under the Liberals. I have yet to receive an answer to that question.

We would be hard pressed to find one Canadian outside of the chamber who thinks that signing a trade deal that increases the cost of drugs for them, their neighbours and loved ones is a good idea. No one thinks this is a good idea.

Government Orders

The other issue is pharmacare. Canadian nurses have told us quite clearly that we will likely never see pharmacare in our country, that we will be sued for trying to bring such a plan into Canada. Many countries in the EU already have—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The time has expired for the hon. member.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-30, the Canada-European Union comprehensive economic and trade agreement implementation act.

This is not the first international agreement that we have considered. In the past, we examined NAFTA, an agreement between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. One part of NAFTA still sticks in our memories today, years later, and that is the infamous chapter 11, which allows companies to sue a government.

Governments that want to legislate on environmental, health, and worker safety issues can be taken to court by companies that are unhappy with these laws, even though every government has the responsibility of protecting its citizens.

When NAFTA was signed, I was still a university student, and I clearly remember talk of the free trade area of the Americas, or FTAA, which resulted in many protests. I remember that, at that time, there was a protest in Montreal. People there even tore down fences because they were so opposed to an even broader free trade agreement that did not respect the right of governments to legislate.

What is happening with the Canada-European union comprehensive economic and trade agreement is unbelievable. This should be an easy deal to reach since Canada and Europe are so similar. It should not be so hard to reach a deal. We should not be having so many problems.

However, once again, this deal is being negotiated behind closed doors with very little public consultation. Once again, there are also many flawed provisions, including those that will allow companies to sue governments that are seeking to protect the environment, health, and worker safety.

If we tried to explain this to people who are unfamiliar with these types of provisions, they would not believe us, and yet it is true. As a result, as I was saying, it is unbelievable because Canada and Europe should be able to easily reach agreements. We should be able to reach a deal without too much difficulty, and yet we are being faced with these types of problems.

Another problem is the fact that Canada has what is called the supply management system. It is extremely important for producers in my region and other areas of Quebec and Canada, particularly dairy, cheese, poultry, and egg producers. These sectors have a supply management system that does not rely on government subsidies.

People sometimes say that supply management is expensive. That is absolutely not the case, because it does not cost people a cent. The government does not subsidize either producers or processors. The

supply managements system ensures a balance. Unfortunately, this agreement opens up the market to cheese. Basically, 17,000 more tonnes of cheese will come into the country, and that will have a direct impact on citizens as well as dairy and cheese producers. I will say more about this shortly.

I would also like to talk about the notorious investor-state provision that makes it possible for an investor to take legal action against a state. I can already picture how surprised people will be about that; I can hear them tell me that there is no way and it is just not possible. It is, though. In recent years, there have been 39 cases, and Canada came out on top in just three of them. In the rest of the cases, Canada had to pay billions in damages and interest to foreign investors. Why? Because we, as a government, decided to protect health and the environment and ensure better working conditions.

• (1720)

We should be proud of that, but instead we are taken to court. It costs us billions of dollars that we can no longer invest in the shift towards green energy or give to our dairy and cheese producers who are going to suffer during this transition. Indeed, some 17,000 tonnes of cheese is going to enter Canadian markets.

Let me give a concrete example. The people of Drummond know very well what I am talking about. I want to talk about shale gas. I have been working very hard on the shale gas file for many years now. Something terrible happened. An American company, Lone Pine Resources, sued the Government of Canada. That company wants to do hydraulic fracking. Without going into too much detail, I can say that that practice is extremely polluting, dangerous, worrisome, and unsafe, and the science has not yet shown that Canada can afford it.

There is a moratorium on the practice in Quebec, specifically for the St. Lawrence Valley. In the Drummond region, we are very happy about that moratorium, since permits had been granted for fracking in my region, Drummond. Tens of thousands of citizens spoke out to prevent it from happening.

Under NAFTA's famous chapter 11, this company sued the Government of Canada for \$250 million. Unfortunately, if we look at how other suits against the Government of Canada played out, we are going to lose this one too. That is money that could have been invested in health, in protecting the environment, or in supporting our dairy farmers and cheese makers, for example, during a transition period like the one we are about to enter into.

One of the reasons I am extremely upset is that the negotiations have resulted in this kind of thing, which we see in so many international agreements. It is embarrassing and shameful that governments can be sued for wanting to protect their citizens.

The other problem affects our dairy farmers and cheese makers. For a little over a year now, I have been touring the dairy farms back home in Drummond. In fact, I had the opportunity to see my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who came to meet our dairy farmers and cheese makers. They told her that they are quite concerned about the agreement between Canada and Europe. They were concerned even before the arrival of the Liberal government, when the Conservatives were in power.

Government Orders

At least the Conservative government promised \$4.3 billion in compensation. Right now, all the Liberals are promising is \$350 million. This is just another embarrassing moment for the Liberals on top of the diafiltered milk issue. It is shameful because they could have resolved that problem in no time at all.

It is really quite simple. It is a matter of applying the same definition at the border and the processing facilities. What is considered milk at the border should be considered milk at the processing plant. What is not considered milk at the border, the issue we are currently dealing with, should not be considered milk at the processing plant either. This issue could have been resolved during the government's first 100 days in office. Dairy producers in the greater Drummond area and across Quebec and Canada are suffering as a result of this situation. It is extremely serious because they are losing millions of dollars a year. A dairy producer in Drummond can lose between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year because this situation has not been resolved, even though it would have been a relatively easy fix.

I began visiting the cheese factories in my riding: Fromagerie St-Guillaume, Fromagerie Lemaire, and Agropur's Fromagerie de Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil. They are saying that, right now, the government is not doing enough to compensate dairy and cheese producers. They are extremely concerned. They want something to be done to improve the situation. That is why we cannot give the government carte blanche on this agreement. We want an agreement with Europe, but we want a good agreement.

• (1725)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Drummond for his speech.

Members may know that my colleague from Drummond and I are neighbours not just here in the House, but also in our ridings. When he speaks about dairy production in his riding, he is referring to what is happening in both our ridings, because the two are adjacent.

The member quite rightly spoke about the fact that the previous Conservative government had earmarked and promised \$4.3 billion in compensation. That was the estimated loss of dairy producers caused by the entry into Canada of 17,000 tonnes of European cheeses. The \$350 million program, which includes \$250 million for producers and \$100 million for processors, cannot be called a compensation program. It is a new modernization subsidy program.

My colleague from Drummond spoke about it. Last year he invited me to visit a dairy farm in his riding. Producers in our ridings have already modernized their operations. They are ahead of the curve, and a \$350 million spread over a few years will barely pay for the electricity that powers the milking machines they already have.

I would like our colleague to comment on the fact that the current government is not acknowledging the losses caused by 17,000 tonnes of imported European cheeses. It is not acknowledging the detrimental impact on the industry and our regions' economies.

• (1730)

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who has the good fortune of representing a constituency whose reputation for agrifood technol-

ogy is well deserved. When it comes to agriculture, she knows what she is talking about. Her riding has a lot going on in terms of agriculture.

The Liberal government's handling of the dairy products file is an epic failure. It started with diafiltered milk. How is it that diafiltered milk is still an issue? The government was supposed to keep that promise in its first 100 days. If the NDP were in power, we would have dealt with the issue because it is really not that hard. All it takes is harmonizing the definition at the border with the definition for the processing industry.

Adding another 17,000 tonnes of fine cheese to what we already import is a major concern. I have talked about cheese makers in my riding: Saint-Guillaume, Lemaire, Agropur. These three cheese makers may go out of business. The equivalent of their combined output is what could be coming into Canada.

Of course, these three medium-sized cheese makers employ not two or three people, but hundreds of the people who live in my region. There are regional economies. This is about the regions. Saint-Guillaume and Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil are great little municipalities. Their economies are diversified and bustling thanks to these great, prize-winning businesses. Given the time, I would list all of the prizes that Saint-Guillaume and Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil cheeses have won. It is incredible.

The point is that the government said it would deal with this in its first 100 days. It did not, and now it is making things even worse. Of course we will not stand for that. We have to make things better. We need a good agreement with Europe, one that the NDP can back too.

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, trade between Canada and Europe is already free. There are very few tariffs between Canada and the members of the European Union, which raises the question of why we need a comprehensive economic and trade agreement. However, if we are to evaluate this agreement as a trade deal, a logical starting point is to examine the current pattern of trade between Canada and the European Union.

In 2015, Canada exported \$38 billion of merchandise to the European Union and imported \$61 billion of merchandise from the EU. This imbalance meant a trade deficit of \$23 billion.

An implication of this is that if CETA functioned as advertised and boosted bilateral trade flows, it would increase our trade deficit with the European Union. For example, a 10% increase in bilateral trade would boost exports by \$4 billion and imports by \$6 billion. That would raise our trade deficit with the EU by \$2 billion, which is a subtraction from Canadian output and employment.

Government Orders

The economic models that were used to argue for CETA simply assumed balanced trade and full employment, but of course we know those assumptions are not realistic in the real world. Furthermore, these models take no account of Brexit. The United Kingdom has voted to leave the European Union, which is of course very consequential for CETA. The United Kingdom is the only major European economy with whom Canada is running a trade surplus.

In 2015, Canada exported \$16 billion of merchandise to Britain and imported \$9 billion. If we looked at the remaining European Union countries, Canada exported only \$22 billion of merchandise and imported \$52 billion. In other words, Canada imported more than twice as much as we exported to the European Union, excluding the United Kingdom, and that means a trade deficit of \$30 billion with what remains of the EU.

In that scenario, a 10% increase in bilateral trade would boost our exports by just \$2 billion and would increase our imports by \$5 billion. That would raise Canada's trade deficit with what remains of the European Union by \$3 billion, an even larger subtraction from Canadian output and employment.

When we look at the actual trade flows between Canada and the EU, particularly the EU excluding the United Kingdom, there is very little reason to believe that CETA could increase Canadian output and employment; but even if it did, CETA also makes it easier for European companies to bring in temporary foreign workers. Even if there were some increase in employment in Canada, there is absolutely no guarantee that it would go to Canadian workers.

Beyond trade, I think it is important to recognize that CETA has many other provisions that have nothing to do with free trade. As other New Democrats have mentioned in this debate, CETA would increase the duration of pharmaceutical patents. That is the opposite of trade liberalization. It is a restriction that would make it harder for generic drug manufacturers and harder to have competition in pharmaceuticals and it would boost the price of those medications for consumers.

Another aspect of CETA that is very controversial and has very little to do with trade is the investor-state dispute provisions. These provisions have been watered down somewhat to try to make CETA more palatable to Wallonia and other areas of Europe that were concerned, but nevertheless there still are investor-state provisions, and CETA for the first time extends these to the municipal level of government.

• (1735)

The question I would ask is, why do we need these provisions at all in CETA? The origin of investor-state provisions was in NAFTA where Canadian and American investors may have had doubts about the Mexican judicial system. However, clearly Canada has a well-functioning court system. Clearly, Europe has a trustworthy judicial system. Why is it even necessary to set up a special tribunal process that is only accessible to foreign investors? Why can Canadians not use the European court system, and why can European investors not use the Canadian court system? We really have not heard an answer to this question from the government side.

It is worth reviewing some of the outrageous cases that have been brought against Canada under the investor-state provisions of

NAFTA. If we go back to the 1990s, there was the Ethyl case, in which Canada tried to ban a gasoline additive, MMT, that was already banned in the United States. However, the American producer of it sued Canada under NAFTA, and the Canadian government not only lifted the ban, but also paid \$13 million U.S. in compensation.

More recently, we had the AbitibiBowater case, where AbitibiBowater, a Canadian pulp and paper company, shut down its last remaining mill in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The provincial government reclaimed water rights that it had given to AbitibiBowater to operate those mills. The company, which had registered itself in the United States, was able to present itself as an American investor and sued Canada under NAFTA for the loss of these water rights that it was no longer even using. What happened? The Canadian government paid AbitibiBowater \$130 million in compensation.

To talk about an even more recent case, Lone Pine Resources is an Alberta-based oil and gas company that registered itself in Delaware and then used NAFTA to sue Canada because of Quebec's ban on fracking. Lone Pine Resources is claiming \$250 million in compensation.

What we see in all of these cases is that companies are abusing the investor-state provisions of NAFTA to directly challenge democratic laws, regulations, and public policies that arguably interfere with their potential future profits. Given the bad experience we have had with the investor-state provisions of NAFTA, it is totally unclear why Canada is pushing to include these provisions in CETA. Again, it is not just a matter of re-including in CETA what is already in NAFTA. CETA actually goes farther, in the sense that it imposes this regime on municipalities, something that NAFTA and previous trade deals did not do. There is a real objection to the investor-state provisions in CETA, notwithstanding the government's efforts to water them down somewhat.

In conclusion, there is no case for CETA as a trade deal, if we look at the actual trade flows between Canada and what is left of the European Union after Brexit. Furthermore, there are many negative non-trade aspects of CETA, such as more temporary foreign workers, longer pharmaceutical patents, and more of these outrageous investor-state disputes. For all of these reasons, the NDP is opposing Bill C-30.

• (1740)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that we are diving into the investor-state provisions. I thank my friend for mentioning the ones under chapter 11 that we have already lost.

Government Orders

One of the most recent decisions that I think is particularly egregious was a split decision, two arbitrators against one, in the Bilcon decision, a U.S.-based open-pit quarry company. Bilcon is from New Jersey. It wanted to do open-pit mining in Digby Neck, Nova Scotia to get material to build highways in New Jersey, but it threatened extinction to one of the most endangered whale species on the planet, the right whale.

The Canadian arbitrator in dissent said of the Bilcon case, “a chill will be imposed on environmental review panels, which will be concerned not to give too much weight to socio-economic considerations”. It goes on about some of the details of the case and continues with “the decision of the majority will be seen as a remarkable step backwards in environmental protection.”

This is the kind of thing that happens in secret tribunals where there has been no offence under Canadian law. A Canadian corporation would have no right to complain, but Bilcon of New Jersey was able, under chapter 11 of NAFTA, to sue Canada for \$300 million.

I would ask my colleague if it is not time to actually open up all of the investor-state agreements, stop taking on new ones, such as in the TPP, and take investor-state out of the comprehensive economic trade agreement.

It is the number one reason why I do not believe CETA will ever be, in its current form, ratified sufficiently in the EU to enter into effect. It is because of this kind of impact, of which Canada has been a major victim in investor-state agreements.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the proposition that we should be trying to remove these investor-state provisions from existing trade agreements. The U.S. president-elect has promised to renegotiate NAFTA, and I would submit that one of Canada's objectives in those negotiations should be to remove chapter 11, because, of course, Canada has been victimized by these investor-state challenges more so than either the United States or Mexico.

I also want to pick up on the point that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands made about a regulatory chill. We have talked about specific investor-state cases and the negative effects they have had, but another effect they have is often to deter regulators from trying to strengthen standards or improve public policies in the first place. It is very difficult to measure this negative effect of investor-state provisions, but it is clearly pernicious to have regulators constantly having to second-guess whether some sort of improvement they might want to make to public interest regulation might attract one of these investor-state challenges. This is another reason to take these provisions out of trade agreements.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, very quickly, I want to thank and congratulate my colleague on his speech.

Does my colleague share our concerns regarding the possibility of higher drug costs for patients in Canada?

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Yes, I do share that concern. I think it is rather clear that that agreement is going to cause an increase in drug prices. It really has nothing to do with free trade. The agreement is going to make it harder to produce and sell drugs at a modest price. This is really going to drive up prices, not only for individuals, but also for provincial governments that have to purchase drugs for their public health care systems.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to this important subject, Bill C-30, regarding the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union.

Canada is a trading nation. As we have heard so many times in this debate, we need good trade agreements, and we need to diversify our trading markets. Trade is too important to get these agreements wrong, especially with such an important partner as the European Union. We have to take the time to get it right. However, the Liberal government seems to be in a real rush to get this treaty ratified. The government signed CETA on October 30. The government has a set policy for the tabling of treaties in Parliament. That policy states that the treaties must be tabled with explanatory notes 21 days before the enabling legislation is presented. What happened with CETA? Bill C-30, the enabling legislation, was put on the Order Paper two days before the agreement was even signed, and it was tabled in Parliament on October 31, the day after the signing. What is the hurry? The European Union nations will be taking their time to make sure that this deal is good for them. Why are we giving them that advantage when we should be taking our time to make sure we get it right as well?

There are obviously good things about freer trade with Europe. We are happy to see the reduction or elimination of tariffs on Canadian industries, particularly those in the agricultural sector, such as beef, pork and canola. We like free trade when it is fair trade.

Government Orders

There is a forest products mill in my riding called Greenwood Forest Products, which creates laminated pine shelving and furniture parts. It sells its own products across western North America, but to serve eastern Canada and the eastern United States, it imports finished products from Romania. It is cheaper to do that than to ship products across Canada. That is another story. Therefore, it depends on trade with the European Union to survive. It does not pay any tariffs on products coming from the EU now, so CETA will not directly benefit it, but it does appreciate any strengthening of trade ties between Canada and Europe. It may likely have to do more business in Europe in the near future because it is deeply concerned about the direction that the softwood lumber agreement is taking with the United States. Its products have never been hit by countervail duties or tariffs in the past with the U.S. However, the recent moves in the United States between the U.S. lumber industry and the U.S. Department of Commerce have apparently expanded the number and types of products covered under the industry complaints to include a wide variety of value-added products, instead of being restricted to the dimension lumber, as it has been in the past. Therefore, it is very disappointed with the Liberal government's inaction on the softwood lumber front.

That is a good example of why we need to diversify our trading relationships. We need good trade deals with other nations and other regions. However, we do not want bad deals that will result in decreased market share for Canadian companies, unfair competition, reduced sovereignty, and significant job losses.

We are particularly worried about the investor-state dispute provisions brought in by this agreement. Under similar trade agreements, Canada has become one of the most sued countries in the world, winning only three of 39 cases against foreign interests, as we try to maintain our sovereignty in legislating protections for the environment, health, and other social interests.

I would like to quote something from the Canadian Environmental Law Association about this. It states:

[CETA] will significantly impact environmental protection and sustainable development in Canada. In particular, the inclusion of an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, the liberalization of trade in services, and the deregulation of government procurement rules will impact the federal and provincial governments' authority to protect the environment, promote resource conservation, or use green procurement as a means of advancing environmental policies and objectives.

Yes, there are carve-outs for some of these categories, but that will not stop corporations from initiating litigation, forcing us to prove that we are protected, and putting a regulatory chill on governments across this country, stopping them from enacting progressive legislation as they fear possible litigation. Since some European regions are clear that they want this provision removed, why does Canada feel compelled to insist on this part of the agreement when it is clearly not in our national interest?

● (1750)

I am also concerned about what CETA would do for drug costs in Canada. Changes to intellectual property rules for pharmaceuticals under CETA would be expected to increase drug costs by more than \$850 million annually. This would not only be harmful to individual Canadians and their families who are struggling to get by but would make it increasingly difficult to bring in a national pharmacare program in Canada, something this country desperately needs.

We in the NDP are also concerned about compensation for sectors that would be negatively impacted by CETA. The dairy industry was promised compensation by the previous Conservative government, but the current Liberal government is now offering dairy farmers less than 10% of the amount previously on the table. There are other sectors that would be directly or indirectly affected by this agreement.

As many members know, my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay produces the finest wines in Canada. I will admit that good wines are produced across the country, from Vancouver Island to Nova Scotia. I have sampled a nice wine produced from grapes grown by the President of the Treasury Board, and I hear that the member for Brome—Missisquoi makes a great late-harvest Vidal.

The Canadian wine industry is a very important sector in the Canadian economy, contributing \$8 billion to the national bottom line. It almost died after the free trade agreement with the U.S. in 1988, but through hard work on the part of a few small wineries, a long-term vision, and attention to high-quality products, the industry survived to live another day and now produces some of the best wines in the world.

In 2004, Canada signed a wine and spirits agreement with the European Union. Since that time, imports from the European Union to Canada have increased by 40 million litres to 180 million litres a year, valued at \$1.16 billion. This compares to Canadian exports to the EU of only 123,000 litres, valued at \$2.7 million. It is a significant imbalance.

Canada has one of the fastest-growing wine markets in the world. More and more Canadians are drinking wine, but three-quarters of that growth has gone to imported wines. The Canadian wine industry is not asking for protection or tariffs under CETA. Members of the industry are in favour of continued free trade in wine with Europe, but they are asking for help from the federal government to build the domestic industry to a level at which they can fairly compete with Europe and other wine regions of the world. The Canadian wine industry, through the Canadian Vintners Association, is asking the federal government to implement a 10-year wine industry innovation program to support the growth of this industry and to create jobs across Canada.

We need to be supporting Canadian industries at this time so they are not unduly harmed by these trade agreements but can truly take advantage of them.

Government Orders

To conclude, the NDP is very much in favour of trade. We are very much in favour of good trade agreements. We simply want to ensure that these agreements are in the best interests of Canada, that they help grow local industries, and that they support job creation across the country.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and congratulate him on his extremely clear and detailed speech on the many dangers and pitfalls of this free trade agreement with the European Union. Actually, it is a proposed agreement, since it is far from a done deal.

I wonder if the member could explain how it is that an agreement negotiated by the Conservatives, for which the Liberals asked for studies on the impacts and the costs of various aspects, magically and suddenly became a progressive agreement because it is now endorsed by the Liberal Party.

What does that say about this new government's true beliefs?

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague mentioned, when the Liberals were in opposition in the previous parliament, they were very concerned about CETA and asked for more studies. Now we are presented with a bill and a trade agreement. The Liberals accuse the New Democrats of being against all trade agreements. We just wanted to look at this and look at the details to find out how this would help Canada. We did not want to say yes to a deal we had not seen. Now that we have seen it, we would like time for Canadians to comment on it and for industry to comment on it. I am still getting comments from people and from industries in my riding about their concerns. We have to take the time.

There are good things about this bill. There are good things about this agreement, but there are some things that are deeply troubling and certainly are not very progressive. We talked about the investor-state provisions and the intellectual property extensions that would raise the price of drugs across Canada. Those are things that are not progressive and that we would like to see changed.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I know how important the agrifood file is to him.

I will not compare the quality of the wine in his riding to that of the wines in other ridings, as he did. However, as many MPs have said today, it is important to go over this agreement as it applies to the particularities of each of our ridings.

Every member of the House has the duty to go over such an agreement and assess its impact on people, jobs, economic development, and our regions.

Like my colleague, I have demonstrated how bad this agreement might be for the dairy industry in my riding. Importing 17,000 tonnes of cheese from Europe will further erode the supply management system. Under this system, our constituents are guaranteed an adequate supply of high quality products at set prices.

I am sure, knowing my colleague's interest in agrifood, that he also has an opinion on the impact of this agreement on this industry.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, agriculture is certainly one of the most important industries in Canada. We hear more and more about eating local produce, about supporting our local agriculture for health reasons, for economic reasons, for climate action reasons, and for reducing the cost of transporting these products. It makes real sense to make sure that our local agricultural industries are well supported.

Agriculture is a large part of my riding. It is mainly fruit, grapes and wine as I have mentioned. There are real issues with trade around these products.

We want free trade but it has to be fair trade as well. It cannot make the trade imbalance larger. My colleague from Regina—Lewvan mentioned the effect that would have. I talked about wine. If we make it easier to import and export wine without other measures, the Canadian wine industry may suffer as wine imports increase. The same goes with the dairy products my colleague mentioned. We have to be careful about keeping the playing field level.

• (1800)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank all of my NDP and Green Party colleagues who participated in today's very important discussion on this bill.

This bill is about approving a free trade agreement with the European Union that could have a major impact on thousands of workers, our communities, the provinces, and hospital patients. It was worth taking the time to discuss this.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government seems to want to cut the debate short after spending very little time consulting people. That is the opposite of what happened with the trans-Pacific partnership, which got people up in arms. I get the feeling the Liberals did not want to go through that again. That is too bad because we could have made time for individuals, organizations, members of civil society, and experts to unpack a massive agreement that may have hard-to-predict consequences.

Besides, the Liberal Party members have been completely absent in this debate. It feels as though they want to completely wash their hands of this, like Pontius Pilate, and be done with it as quickly as possible. I remember a song from a few years ago called "What happened to all the real rebels?" Today we could be asking what happened to all the Liberal members. You could say the Liberals are missing in action. It is too bad, because they keep saying that they are proud of this free trade agreement, and yet we have hardly heard anything about it today from the governing party.

Government Orders

It is important, because the European Union is a natural trading partner for Canada. Our countries are western democracies governed by the rule of law with a minimum of protections for workers, some freedom of association, as well as environmental standards. The European Union is definitely a natural trading partner for us. If we want to export our products, goods, and services to a more diverse range of markets, Europe seems to be just the place for us to do business.

However, just because something seems promising does not mean that it is. When we examine the details, we see that there are major pitfalls. The main one I would like to talk about is the dispute resolution mechanism. We have experience with that in North America as a result of chapter 11 of the North-American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, negotiated with our partners the United States and Mexico.

NAFTA's infamous chapter 11 allows companies to sue different levels of government over decisions that could diminish their current or forecast corporate profits. A similar dispute resolution mechanism is in the free trade agreement that the current Liberal government is trying to sell us.

First, it threatens our democracy and our sovereignty because it gives multinationals the right to sue in certain tribunals over the decisions of our elected representatives. That is not fantasy, it is reality. The NAFTA experience was a rather painful one for Canada because 70% of corporations' lawsuits under NAFTA against federal, provincial, regional, or local governments were lost by Canada.

In 2013, Lone Pine Resources sued Canada for \$250 million after the Quebec government stopped oil and gas exploration projects in the St. Lawrence River. We have a duly elected government that wants to take steps to protect the environment and ecosystems, as well as the jewel that is the St. Lawrence, and a company that complains and sues because the government's actions will deprive it of future profits. This case could cost us \$250 million and it is just one example of many.

As long as there is this sort of charter of corporate rights that flies in the face of people's democratic rights, the NDP will stand up and oppose it, and we are not the only ones.

• (1805)

Members will recall that the Walloon parliament recently took a stand against the agreement for the exact same reason. Let us remember that the Walloon parliament did not accept the Canada-European Union comprehensive economic and trade agreement as it stands. It agreed to sign on the condition that the dispute resolution mechanism is removed or drastically changed. It is still opposed to that mechanism. We are far from an agreement because the 28 national parliaments of the European Union still have to go through the ratification process. We therefore cannot understand why the government is in such a rush. This process is going to take months if not years to complete.

The price of drugs is another concern for us because it affects people's lives and their health. This free trade agreement will change the intellectual property rules regarding drugs, which will drive up the cost.

Some organizations are saying that the cost of drugs may even go up by \$2.8 billion a year, which is an average of \$80 per Canadian per year. However, that average includes those who are not sick and who are lucky enough not to have to pay for drugs. Under the Liberals' free trade agreement, drugs could cost an average of \$80 more per person and even more for those who are sick.

I think that these reasons are sufficient for us to oppose this harmful free trade agreement.

ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

December 12, 2016

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 12th day of December, 2016 at 6:15 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to a certain bill of law.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace

Secretary to the Governor General

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union and its Member States and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has three minutes remaining.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I concluded my speech. However, I am prepared to answer my colleague's questions.

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to my colleague for providing time for this question. Forty-two per cent of Canadian exports to the European Union are to the U.K. Canadian concessions were based on the premise that the UK would be part of CETA. Those concessions include things that we are very concerned about, such as the loss of income for dairy farmers. There was supposed to be compensation and now is now questionable whether it would be adequate. There is also the cost of pharmaceuticals. Will we be able to afford drugs in our country? The joint interpretive instrument, which is outside the treaty, is supposed to be the government's right to regulate and yet it has very little weight in regard to the CETA document.

Now that the U.K. is re-evaluating its position within the European Union after Brexit, the Liberals have failed to re-evaluate the net benefit of CETA. Could my colleague comment on this change? The world has changed but the Liberals have not accounted for that change.

• (1810)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

Indeed, the Liberal government is being inconsistent. When the Liberals were in the opposition, they criticized the free trade agreement negotiated by the Conservatives. The agreement has suddenly become progressive now that it has the Liberal stamp on it. They criticized the lack of impact assessments and cost analyses. My colleague is absolutely right when she says that nothing has changed in that regard.

The government is rushing the process unnecessarily without taking into account the unanticipated change in the European Union with Brexit. While 42% of our exports to the European Union go to the United Kingdom, the Liberal government is not taking into consideration the fact that the United Kingdom will likely no longer be part of the European Union once this process has been concluded. This smacks of amateur hour. They are in a rush to be done with this.

I would also like to thank her for her question about pharmaceuticals. In an early 2011 study commissioned by the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association, two eminent Canadian economists, experts in the health field, estimated that, if the provisions go through, they will delay generic drug entry in Canada by three and a half years on average. For those buying the drugs, that delay is likely to cost \$2.8 billion per year, according to Jim Keon, president of the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association. That should worry everyone from ordinary citizens to the provinces, which, because of hospitals, will have to absorb a significant portion of rising drug costs. The Liberal government did not account for that or figure out how much it would cost.

[English]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask about the theme of Brexit. The member for London—Fanshawe asked about the effect it would have on trade flows. I would like to ask whether the decision to leave the European Union by Britain reflected a turn away from this orthodoxy of free trade, corporate globalization, and whether that change in the temperament of the

Royal Assent

times should influence Canada's evaluation of CETA and other free trade agreements.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. This should force the government to reconsider the whole process. I will have other opportunities to talk about this and criticize the Liberal government constructively.

[English]

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion that this question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the division on the motion be deferred until tomorrow after the time provided for government orders.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1825)

[English]

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House did attend His Excellency the Governor General in the Senate chamber, His Excellency was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the royal assent to Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, the Hazardous Products Act, the Radiation Emitting Devices Act, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the Pest Control Products Act and the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act and to make related amendments to another Act.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find the will to call it 6:30 p.m. at this time.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the continued frustrations that I routinely hear from agricultural stakeholders is that the government is focused on big cities while ignoring prairie farmers who feed Canada and the world.

It took the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transport nearly a year to hold their first meeting with prairie farmers. The meeting occurred because the Minister of Transport was roundly criticized for having failed to invite farm groups to his round tables that informed his national transportation strategy. Considering the size of the agricultural sector and the jobs it creates, it is hard to believe that the invitation was lost in the mail.

While their visit to Saskatoon and the photo taken under the sign at the airport was a good start, visiting Saskatoon is a far cry from actually seeing a 5,000-acre farm and the technology that goes into modern-day farming, or witnessing a trail with 200 hopper cars being loaded at a grain elevator. Unfortunately, and despite this meeting, the government is not just ignoring this sector but is actually putting it at a disadvantage.

The new carbon tax, regardless of how it will be levied, will disproportionately hurt farmers, as they cannot pass the extra cost back to the end user. Every single segment of the supply chain can pass the cost of the carbon price down the line, except our producers. Farmers cannot sell their products to Asia at a higher price and not be disadvantaged relative to producers in the U.S.A.

On the issue of infrastructure, the Liberals have done nothing to help address the railroad bottlenecks in British Columbia. The infrastructure needed to make sure that the hopper cars bound for the Port of Vancouver do not get stuck waiting outside the Burnaby tunnel takes political will to get built. To date, we have seen a greater emphasis on curling rinks in Prince Edward Island than on building more fluid transport corridors.

Also, we have not heard anything from the government on the replacement of the hopper car fleet and whether it will be shippers or the government that will make the financial expenditure. The minister did make a number of commitments to farmers in his speech in Montreal on November 3, but failed to mention the future of that hopper car fleet.

I would like to ask a specific question of the minister. When will an announcement be made concerning the replacement of the grain hopper fleet?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last few months, our government has encouraged Canadians to submit their ideas on how

Canada's transportation system can continue to support our nation's economic competitiveness, trade objectives, and prosperity.

On April 27, the Minister of Transport launched an initiative to discuss his vision for the future of Canadian transportation. Soon after, in May, we started consulting with Canadians, stakeholders, indigenous groups, and provinces and territories, listening to their views and discussing with them ideas for a long-term agenda for transportation in Canada.

These consultations took many forms, including a series of structured round tables that the Minister of Transport himself hosted based on five themes: safer transportation; trade corridors to global markets; green and innovative transportation; the traveller; and waterways, coasts, and the north. We continued to engage the public throughout the summer, and we continued to do so this fall.

Our officials met with many stakeholders, including producers and grain shippers, as did other ministers. The Minister of Transport also met with his provincial and territorial counterparts at the end of September. On October 20, he met with grain producer groups. In addition to these meetings, several stakeholders, including many producer associations, have written to the minister and to some of his colleagues with their views.

Many stakeholders rely on Canada's transportation system to get their goods to market, both domestically and overseas. Manufacturers of consumer goods, mineral products, petroleum products, wood and paper products, plastics and chemicals, and yes, farm products, all rely on Canada's transportation system.

We have heard how important, efficient, and resilient the transportation system is in supporting Canada's trade competitiveness. We have also heard about the need for supply chain partners to work together with each other and with government. All the valuable comments we have received so far are being carefully considered. These comments, along with our assessment of the CTA review report, are invaluable to our work as we consider measures to strengthen the efficiency and competitiveness of Canada's freight rail system as a whole.

Let me be clear. The Minister of Transport and his officials are meeting regularly with a broad range of groups and individuals to discuss these issues as well as other freight rail transportation issues. I can assure the House that we all have a shared interest in working together to ensure that our transportation system in Canada performs optimally, because we know that a well-functioning transportation system is critical to this country's economic growth.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1830)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as I said, it took the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Transport nearly a year to hold their first meeting with producers in Saskatchewan. I asked about the replacement of the hopper car fleet, and the lack of a response from the parliamentary secretary on that is worrisome to all producers, shippers, and the railroads. New hopper cars have significantly more capacity and would reduce congestion in port areas.

Since the Liberals do not seem to have an answer on this issue, I will turn to the carbon levy. I asked the government in Order Paper Question No. 536 whether any studies have been done on the impact the carbon tax will have on agriculture, and the response answered everything but my question.

I would note that prairie farmers are among the most efficient and innovative in the world, and saying that they will just adapt and benefit from this tax is naive at best.

I will try again. Does the government—

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, our government understands the scope and importance of the grain sector and that a strong rail-based supply chain system is essential so that all Canadian producers and shippers can remain competitive in domestic and international markets. As such, we have been consulting with farmer organizations, other agricultural associations, and shippers.

The minister met personally with grain producer groups on October 20 in Saskatoon. I have met with grain producer groups as well in the past few months. I would like to assure members that as part of our commitment to the efficient operation of the freight rail service for all commodities, including grain, we have been carefully considering the CTA review report as well as all the comments received so far from a broad range of stakeholders, Canadians, indigenous groups, and provincial and territorial governments. All of this is helping us make informed decisions on policies that will support the efficiency and competitiveness of Canada's transportation system.

•(1835)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak about a critical ongoing issue, the uncertainty in Canada's softwood lumber industry. The industry and the many thousands of workers whose jobs depend on its viability are deeply concerned that the government cannot seem to get a new deal with our friends in the U.S.

The Liberals promised they could get the job done, but the standstill period has long since expired, and the U.S. industry recently filed a petition with the Department of Commerce, asking for duties to be slapped on Canadian imports.

The industry is already hurting. This fall, the Tolko mill in Merritt, B.C. closed its doors, leaving 200 people out of work in a small town that depended greatly on these jobs. It closed because of a lack of timber supply resulting from the end of salvageable beetle timber, another issue compounding the uncertainty facing B.C.'s forestry sector.

The same company recently sold another mill in The Pas in Manitoba. This mill, too, is the town's single largest employer. If a buyer were not found, the mill was set to close its doors.

I think this speaks to a wider trend in the industry that we should be very concerned about as this softwood lumber dispute continues with no prospect of a resolution. Lumber mills and saw mills tend to operate in smaller towns where they are the town's biggest employer. If mills are forced to close because of the softwood dispute, entire towns and communities are devastated.

In early 2017, the U.S. is expected to begin applying tariffs to Canadian lumber, despite the fact that Canada has consistently proven that our softwood lumber is not unfairly subsidized. The prospect of Canada's getting a fair deal with president-elect Trump seems like a daunting task.

Last week, Quebec announced that it's prepared to provide loan guarantees to affected companies, even if the federal government does not come on board.

The Liberals have failed to deliver on a deal, so the least they can do is to give Canadian workers some peace of mind and answer whether or not they will provide loan guarantees. I will ask the government again, is it prepared to provide loan guarantees to assist Canadian companies in keeping their doors open and their workers employed?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question as posed in the original Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

CETA is an absolute priority for our government. We worked closely with our European partners to reach a deal that, once implemented, will create economic opportunities for Canadians all across the country in a way that is progressive and consistent with the inclusive values that we and the European Union share.

CETA was signed on October 30, 2016. Canada demonstrated good will in working with all of its European Union partners in order to reach this historic agreement. During the negotiations, we listened to the concerns expressed by certain European and Canadian stakeholders regarding CETA, and worked closely with members of the European Commission in order to address those concerns.

In doing so, we reached a progressive agreement that fully respects and promotes the values shared by Europeans and Canadians.

The agreement reaffirms governments' right to regulate in the public interest and includes firm commitments in the area of protecting labour rights, environmental standards, and public services.

Adjournment Proceedings

CETA includes provisions to ensure that protecting trade and the environment are mutually reinforcing by promoting trade flows and economic practices that help guarantee decent work and environmental protections.

Last February, important amendments were announced with respect to the CETA chapter on investment. We know that investment is key to growth in an interconnected global economy. However, we also know that governments must be free to act in the interests of their citizens. That is why we included in CETA a brand new approach to investment protection and investment dispute resolution that reaffirms the sovereign right of governments to regulate in the public interest, and makes the resolution process for disputes concerning investments more independent and impartial.

CETA has been signed and now Canada and the European Union are taking the steps to implement the agreement according to their respective internal procedures. In Canada, we are working very hard to ensure that the implementation bill is passed and that our regulations and policies are brought into compliance with our commitments under CETA.

CETA will generate real benefits for Canadians and will contribute to Canada's long-term prosperity. Therefore, our government is steadfast in its support for this agreement.

• (1840)

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed to not have an answer on softwood lumber, because this is such an important issue for Canadians.

We are pleased to see the premier addressing this issue in Quebec, but he is certainly asking for support from the federal government as well. Next April, softwood producers will see duties of 25% to 40%. Mills are closing. Jobs are being lost. It is disappointing to not get an answer.

I will ask the question once again. Is the federal government prepared to provide loan guarantees to assist Canadian companies with keeping their doors open and their workers employed?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, once again, I am answering the question as posed on the Order Paper for this closing session.

[Translation]

We negotiated a progressive agreement that will help improve economic opportunities, while respecting our commitment to issues of common concern, such as sustainable development and public services.

The government is doing everything in its power to implement CETA. We expect this agreement to be provisionally applied in 2017, after the Canadian and European Parliaments have completed their processes. Our government will also ensure that every business, regardless their size, can reap the full benefits that CETA has to offer.

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first raised this issue on June 6 in a statement that

highlighted that between 2013 and 2016, the Toronto police investigated 359 cases of sex trafficking, and in each of these cases every single girl was advertised on backpage.com.

This is a reality in other cities across Canada, as well. These are women and girls who are being sold online to be raped for profit.

On June 13, I sent a letter to the Minister of Justice laying out this information and conveying that in 2010, under the former Conservative government, the former minister of justice officially requested that Craigslist eliminate their erotic services section for the same reason, and Craigslist complied.

I want to note that the former Conservative government's request was also supported by the provincial attorneys general in Liberal, NDP, and Progressive Conservative governments across Canada.

I urged the current Minister of Justice to take whatever steps she could to prevent backpage.com from advertising victims of sex trafficking. On October 7, the day after the CEO of backpage.com was arrested on sex trafficking charges directly resulting from the ads on backpage.com, I asked the government what action it was taking.

At the time, the parliamentary secretary indicated that they were examining the issue. He is very aware of this issue as it is his former department that investigated hundreds of these sex trafficking cases on backpage.com.

Finally, a few weeks later I received a response from the Minister of Justice and was extremely disappointed by her response. The minister indicated that the police use backpage.com, in a sense, as a tool, to rescue victims of sex trafficking and that they do not want to see it go because it would make it harder to find victims.

I would like to know which human trafficking units are saying this, certainly not the ones I have heard from. They take offence to the idea that backpage.com is a tool they need. One unit noted that they do not need backpage.com to find victims. They sometimes might make use of it if it is there, but they view backpage.com as part of the problem, not the solution. Backpage.com is not a tool that police need.

Last week I spoke to a front-line agency that helps girls trying to leave prostitution. The founder, also a survivor, emphasized that it is wrong to view backpage.com as a tool because it is just not worth it. She pointed out that there may be hundreds of girls being sold in one city in just one night but the local human trafficking unit might only have time to investigate two or three cases.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would ask the government, why does it permit backpage.com to profit off ads that offer women and girls to be raped? Why is the government not taking action against a company of which 90% of its revenue is solely from its adult services ads, whose CEO was arrested for sex trafficking, whose payments have stopped being processed by Mastercard, Visa, and American Express due to connections to sex trafficking, which has been held in contempt by the U.S. Senate, and which repeatedly refused to take down ads of minors being sold despite multiple requests from parents?

I would hope that in the government's answer, it could address these serious issues. Canadians do not want to hear that they are only examining the issue. All this information is well known. Will the government take action to prevent backpage.com from advertising victims of sex trafficking, and what is its plan to do this?

● (1845)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Peace River—Westlock for his strong interest and advocacy around this issue, and I hope to have an opportunity to respond to his concerns.

Our government, the justice minister, and myself take the issue of sex trafficking and exploitation of women and girls very seriously. As the member has indicated, the statistics that he quoted are from a unit for which I was responsible and oversaw for well over a decade. I was actually involved in the original establishment of it.

We are committed to the fight against all forms of human trafficking, both at home and globally. Like many countries, Canada focuses on a multipronged approach of prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership-building in order to combat this very serious and heinous crime.

Canada has very strong laws to prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, including for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The Criminal Code contains provisions dealing with adult trafficking, child trafficking, materially benefiting from human trafficking, and withholding or destroying identity documents to commit this crime. The maximum penalties for these offences range from five years to life imprisonment.

Other Criminal Code offences of general application can also be used in cases of sex trafficking in order to help hold traffickers accountable, including offences related to kidnapping, forcible confinement, sexual assault, and prostitution-related offences, which includes advertising the sale of sexual services.

The advertising offence, which is punishable by a maximum of five years on indictment and 18 months upon summary conviction, targets individuals who place advertisements in print media, or posts them on websites. It also allows our courts to order the seizure of materials containing advertisements for sexual services and their removal from the Internet. Publishers or website administrators can also be held criminally responsible as parties if they are aware of the existence and purpose of the ad.

Although the federal government has jurisdiction over criminal law, the enforcement of these laws is primarily an area of provincial responsibility. The federal government continues to collaborate closely with our provincial and territorial partners through the

federal Human Trafficking Task Force and the RCMP Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre. The National Coordination Centre regularly gathers intelligence to maintain an ongoing threat assessment of this crime in Canada, and to coordinate efforts at the national level.

Our government understands the pressing concern that Backpage.com contains erotic service ads that would advertise the sexual services of minors and sex trafficking victims. I am aware that, in the past, the advertising website Craigslist also hosted similar ads and then removed them. Following the removal of the ads on Craigslist, many of these same ads resurfaced on Backpage.com.

It is also my understanding, and has been indicated by the member for Peace River—Westlock, that some law enforcement agencies use these advertisements as investigative tools to identify, locate, and rescue sex trafficked victims. When traffickers are caught through an exotic service ad, they may be charged not only with the advertising offence but also with other more serious offences, such as procuring or human trafficking. The result is that these offenders are punished severely. Given that these ads can occasionally act as enforcement tools, the actions of the government must take full account of the complexities of responding to these horrific offences.

This is why this government, through the human trafficking task force and the RCMP Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre, continues to work closely with experts, front-line workers, investigators, and the police to carefully explore all options to address this concerning issue in keeping all victims of human trafficking safe.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the government wants to take sex trafficking and the exploitation of women and youth in prostitution seriously. I would seriously encourage it to start with Backpage.com.

If Backpage.com was the key location for child pornography to be advertised and sold, and it was making significant revenue from it, would the government be defending these ads as an important tool for police? I would hope not. Therefore, why does it defend it when as a tool when it comes to actual children being sold every day in every city in Canada on Backpage.com?

The minister does not need to wait for the provinces to take action. She does not need to wait for other countries to take action. I am asking the minister to take leadership on this. Will the Minister of Justice officially request, on behalf of Canada, that Backpage.com eliminate this section from its ads in Canada?

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1850)

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, the offences related to the activities of Backpage.com are already well codified in Canadian law. The sexual exploitation of women and girls in Canada is, of course, a serious issue for our government.

I would like to share some statistics which confirm that the vast majority of human trafficked victims in Canada are in fact young women. Between 2009 and 2014, 93% of the victims in our country were female, almost half of them between the ages of 18 to 24.

These offences are a very serious matter. I want to assure the member opposite and all Canadians that our government will

continue to work with victims groups, advocacy groups, and with the police to ensure that people are held accountable when they violate our laws and victimize people in a human trafficking situation.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

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