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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)  
[*English*]

### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the Yukon Land Claims and Self-Government Agreements Implementation Report 2012-2017, as well as copies of the report of the Implementation Coordinating Committee, Inuvialuit Final Agreement 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2020 annual report on the RCMP's use of the law enforcement justification provisions.

This report addresses the RCMP's use of specific provisions of the law enforcement justification regime, as set out in sections 25.1 to 25.4 of the Criminal Code. The report also documents the nature of the investigations in which these provisions were used.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### PETITIONS

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from concerned Canadians about domestic violence. As we all know, it is a growing issue in our country.

The petitioners want the government to make changes to the Privacy Act to allow the RCMP to fully have all the tools it would

need to combat the growing problem of domestic violence. They also want to the government to implement Clare's law.

#### PRISON FARMS

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House virtually this morning to present a petition. It dates from the previous Parliament, but a quick review of news clippings shows it is very relevant today.

This petition relates to the important issue of reopening access for prisoners to the opportunity to learn and rehabilitate through a connection to growing things. It has been shown over the years to be very successful. However, at the Joyceville Institution, the plan at the moment is not focused on prisoner rehabilitation. The petitioners fear it is on commercial production through the use of goats and dairy operations involving a Chinese corporation.

The petitioners urge the Government of Canada not to open dairy operations at prison farms, but to focus on activities that they describe as promoting ecological sensitivity and climate change solutions. They ask for a reversal of the current decision of the Correctional Service of Canada.

#### CONVERSION THERAPY

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is in regard to Bill C-6. The petitioners indicate that the definition of conversion therapy is far too broad and it wrongly applies a label to a range of practices, including counselling from parents, teachers and counsellors encouraging children to reduce sexual behaviour. It allows counselling medical and surgical efforts to change a child's gender, but prohibits it for a child seeking to de-transition to his or her birth gender. This is a growing issue.

*Business of Supply*

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to take the following actions to address the situation: ban coercive, degrading practices that are designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity; ensure that no law discriminates against Canadians by limiting the services they can receive based on their sexual orientation or gender identity; allow parents to speak with their own children about sexuality and gender and to set house rules about sex and relationships as parents; allow free and open conversations about sexuality and sexual behaviour; and finally, avoid criminalizing professionals and religious counselling voluntarily requested and consented to by Canadians.

## SEX SELECTION

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in regard to sex-selective abortion. It is legal in Canada because we have no restrictions on abortion. Sex-selective abortion is antithetical to our commitment to equality between men and women.

A 2019 Dart & Maru/Blue poll conducted for the National Post shows that 84% of Canadians believe it to be illegal to have an abortion if the family does not want the child to be a certain sex. International organizations like the World Health Organization, United Nations Women and the United Nations Children's Fund have identified that unequal sex ratios at birth are a growing problem internationally, and Canada's health care professionals recognize that sex selection is a problem in Canada.

The petitioners call on the government to pass a Criminal Code prohibition on sex-selective abortion.

## MEDICAL MARIJUANA

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling two petitions highlighting the rampant abuse of Canada's medical cannabis production provisions, including sale to the black and grey markets, destruction of property and negative impacts on residential areas, which municipalities do not have the authority to address. My constituents call for reforms to the regime overseeing the production of cannabis for personal medical use and to give provinces and municipalities the resources and authority required to properly regulate and enforce these activities.

My constituents do not accept that industrial medical marijuana operations should take place in residential neighbourhoods in Canada. The laws need to change. This has to stop.

\* \* \*

• (1010)

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—MEASURES TO SUPPORT CANADIAN WORKERS

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC)** moved:

That the House call on the government to include in the next federal budget measures to help workers and their families struggling the most in the current economic downturn by:

- (a) introducing sector-specific measures to support workers in the highly impacted hospitality, tourism and charitable sectors;
- (b) providing repayable loans to airlines in exchange for consumer refunds, job guarantees, restrictions on executive compensation and restoration of regional routes; and
- (c) improving support programs, including lending supports, for small and medium businesses to be accessible within 30 days of the passage of this motion to prevent a wave of bankruptcies and layoffs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to let the House know that I am splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

By way of context, the motion we are debating calls for the Liberal government to table a federal budget that includes specific support for the hardest hit sectors of our economy, namely tourism, hospitality, airlines, the charitable sector and, more broadly speaking, small businesses across our country. We all know that the pandemic has devastated our economy, but there is great convergence as to what needs to be done. We all agree that vaccination needs to take place. Then we need to reopen our economy, get people back to work and help get struggling Canadian businesses back on their feet again. We then need a plan to manage the long-term financial challenge that Canadians will face.

The Prime Minister promised that no one would be left behind in the process—

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Drummond on a point of order.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Madam Speaker, there is a problem with the interpretation. There seem to be technical difficulties with the French channel right now.

[English]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Can we try again, Mr. Fast?

The member for Abbotsford may now proceed.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Madam Speaker, the pandemic has devastated our economy. There is great convergence as to what needs to be done: We need to vaccinate Canadians, we need to reopen the economy, we need to get people back to work, we need to help struggling businesses get on their feet again and we need to plan to manage the long-term financial challenge that faces Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

The Prime Minister said he was going to leave no one behind, but today's motion highlights the fact that many Canadians have been left behind. Why is that? It is very easy. For two years we have had no budget, no plan to reopen the economy, no plan to get Canadians back to work, no plan to support struggling businesses or help them get back on their feet, and no plan to manage the massive financial challenge facing future generations of Canadians. There is just a promise to spend, without explaining how, when, why or where the money will be spent. There is only how much. That is not enough. It is not a plan. What we need is a budget.

Canadians do not want to be dependent on the government. They want their jobs back. They want their businesses. They want their communities and their lives back. Is the Prime Minister listening? We are not asking him to reimagine what the economy might be or conduct a grand social or economic experiment. Canadians simply want to get back to normal. That means doing everything possible to support struggling businesses and reopen our economy. Despite the Prime Minister's promise, there is no plan to support the hard-hit sectors of our economy.

Let me focus first on hospitality and tourism. Yesterday I met with the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. Their members reminded me that hospitality and tourism are among the most severely impacted sectors of our economy. Let us be clear what we are talking about. It is not just cruise ships. We are talking about hotels, motels, restaurants, bus lines, tourist-related retail, travel agents, the recreational fishing industry, outfitters and ski resorts. It goes on and on.

Prior to COVID-19, tourism was one of the fastest-growing industries in the world and it was our country's fifth-largest sector, but the pandemic has pitched that industry into a crisis. In fact, it is so bad that our tourism industry now employs half a million fewer Canadians than it did at this time last year. Tourism was the first hit industry. It was the hardest hit and it will be the last to recover.

The Prime Minister's response was empty promises, and no support has materialized. Instead, there are programs like HASCAP, the business credit availability program and the regional relief and recovery fund. These were so poorly designed that companies were either unable to access the programs or avoided them altogether because they did not meet their needs. As a result, many deserving business owners were unable to access these programs and are now struggling with insolvency. It is time to deliver the support they need to get that sector back on its feet.

Then there are the airlines. The motion calls on the government to support the hard-hit airline sector. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in that sector. We are advocating for fully repayable loans, but not without conditions. We want the airlines to deliver consumer refunds to travellers who could not travel because of COVID, and to deliver job guarantees for their workers and restrictions on executive compensation until we are past the COVID crisis. We want them to restore the regional routes that have been closed down over the last few months, and we want them to refrain from clawing back travel agent commissions.

The Liberal government could also implement robust rapid testing at the airports, which took much too long to implement. We would love to see the gradual phase-out of the current 14-day-quar-

antine period through better rapid testing. The Liberal government has been promising support for Canada's airline industry for over a year and still there is nothing. To date, Canada is the only G7 country that has not supported its airlines.

● (1015)

Let us talk about charities. The Prime Minister also promised to support our charitable sector. We are talking about the Salvation Army, food banks, soup kitchens, free legal and dental clinics, homelessness programs, drug recovery programs and community organizations that enrich our lives, such as music, theatre, art and spiritual support. My hometown of Abbotsford is the most generous census metropolitan area in the whole country.

I understand how important this sector is to our economy and to filling the gaps where people would normally fall through the cracks. The charitable sector has been all but abandoned, unless one's name is Kielburger and leads the WE Charity, because Liberal insiders and friends of the Prime Minister have a direct line to the Prime Minister's Office. Almost \$1 billion was paid to the WE Charity to set up a paid youth volunteer program. Let that settle in: a paid volunteer program. If one is in the WE Charity and one's name is Kielburger, that person gets access to almost \$1 billion of taxpayers' money. If not, one is left behind. Charities are left out in the cold. Conservatives are calling upon the government to immediately table a budget that includes badly needed, sector-specific support for the devastated charitable sector.

I will provide a few thoughts on support for small business. Many of our small businesses are still falling through the cracks. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that by the time the COVID pandemic is done, we will have lost 240,000 small businesses, and it could be worse than that. Thirty-seven per cent of Canadian small businesses are losing money every day they are open. A quarter of them will run out of cash within the next three months, 56% have been negatively impacted by the second wave, and almost half are worried about the survival of their businesses. Where is the Liberal government? It has been missing in action.

*Business of Supply*

Lending programs such as CEBA only help the smallest businesses. The large employer emergency financing facility is so expensive and poorly designed that companies are reluctant to use it. Other programs, such as HASCAP, are deeply flawed and new businesses that were started in 2020 do not even qualify for support. These are individuals who invested their life savings to start a new business and the government simply walked away from them and said they did not matter.

In summary, hospitality, tourism, airlines, charities and other small businesses have been left behind. This pandemic has exposed the Prime Minister's failure to lead and failure to deliver what he had promised: that no one would fall through the cracks. The evidence is clear that hundreds of thousands of Canadians' small businesses have, indeed, been left behind. We have spent the most per capita, yet have the highest unemployment rate in the G7. It is all traced back to the fact that there is no plan.

Conservatives have called upon the government, time and again, to table a budget and a plan for our future, to table a plan to reopen our economy, and none has been forthcoming. We are calling on the Prime Minister again to table a budget and include the support for hospitality, tourism, airlines, the charitable sector and small businesses that he has promised and to improve the design of the current programs.

Where is the plan? It is up to the Prime Minister to deliver it.

• (1020)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this opposition motion is a great departure from the motions we saw the member's predecessor bring before the House, because he is actually bringing forward something of substance. He is setting up the day for a very good discussion of a very important topic and very important sectors of our economy that need support. I applaud the member for that. He has done the right thing by bringing forward an extremely meaningful motion such as this.

I know the member has been critical in the past of the amount of debt and what this country is taking on in order to provide support right now. I agree with support for the sectors that he has talked about, but how does he justify the fact that by offering these supports, whether through non-payment of interest or support for specific sectors, we will take on more debt? He will likely be back complaining about the debt later on.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Madam Speaker, in itself, debt is not a bad thing. In fact, we as Conservatives have supported the government in borrowing money and supporting Canadians in their time of need, and we reaffirm that today. We restate that today. In fact, we are calling for greater support for the most affected sectors.

However, whenever someone goes to the bank and wants to borrow some money to, let us say, buy a house, the bank will ask how it will be repaid, whether the person has the capacity to do this, whether it can be done responsibly and what the money will be used for.

That is something we have not seen come out of the Liberal government. The Prime Minister has been unwilling to be accountable to Parliament. In fact, he prorogued Parliament, shut down Parlia-

ment, to escape scrutiny. Accountability and oversight are absolutely critical in a functioning parliamentary democracy.

Yes, there is—

• (1025)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to give time for more questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward today. For him and for every other MP in this country, our phones are ringing off the hook with the government's expansion of the CEBA loan because of the delays in getting the extra \$20,000 out to small business owners.

One thing the member just talked about was the banks. The banks have been getting a free ride throughout this whole crisis. They are profiting from it, as are the largest credit card companies. We are wondering why the Conservatives are not joining the NDP in calling on the federal government to cap credit card merchant fees when Canada is allowing credit card companies to charge some of the largest fees in the world.

In fact, Europe has capped fees, which are a third of what merchants are paying here in Canada, and we know many merchants are—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Let us give the hon. member for Abbotsford an opportunity to answer.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the work the member from British Columbia does in the House.

I would say this: If the NDP had its way, it would control every single aspect of our lives. The NDP believes government is the solution to all of the world's problems and that all we need is a government program, a government cap or government interference to solve a problem.

I am of a different mind. I believe Canadians can make these decisions on their own. They are capable of doing that. We have to trust Canadians to make decisions that are in their own best interests. I do not believe in a pervasive government. In fact, if I had my way, I would want less government in our lives and have government only—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** For one last question, we have the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, this motion raises a lot of questions and makes a lot of recommendations.

If I understand correctly, the member is proposing loans with certain conditions for the aerospace industry.

*Business of Supply*

Does the member know that Canada is the only country that has not invested in aerospace? Other countries, such as Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and the United States have invested in aerospace. In fact, Germany has invested \$14 billion. Canada has not provided any direct support to this very important industry.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether the member is referring to the airline sector or the aerospace sector writ large, because we can spend all day talking about the aerospace sector and the potential it represents for driving prosperity and economic growth in Canada.

With respect to the airline sector itself, meaning functioning airlines and not manufacturing itself, we believe the best way forward is to be responsible with taxpayers' monies in providing repayable loans to the airlines while making sure those loans are contingent upon the airlines fulfilling conditions such as making sure customers receive the refunds they are entitled to receive.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am extremely pleased to be participating in this very important debate today on a motion that requests the government to include help in the next budget to support workers and their families who are struggling during this pandemic, resulting in the economic downturn that has occurred.

I am doing this from Terminal 4, which is an area in central Ontario, in Barrie and Innisfil, that is known as “T4” because of the fact that hundreds of airline sector employees and their families live here because it is in close proximity to the Toronto Pearson airport. In fact, throughout the GTA, from Kitchener to Bowmanville and from Markham to Huntsville, tens of thousands of families depend on Canada's airline sector continuing to thrive and survive. Travel advisers like Charlene Caldwell in my riding of Barrie—Innisfil, food workers in Brampton, limo drivers in Mississauga, and restaurant and hotel workers are all watching, literally with their economic well-being on the line, waiting for help to come.

The situation is described by the Air Canada Pilots Association as “dire”. Many of those employees and their families are not just constituents but also friends, pilots, flight attendants and many others who have been directly and indirectly negatively impacted by the pandemic as a result of the government's decisions and policies, which many see as inconsistent, incoherent, misunderstood, and not based on any data, evidence or science, but simply on politics.

The effect of the decisions has been so profoundly negative that many are losing hope that the airline sector may ever recover to the way it was before the pandemic. When we add to this not just the incoherence of the public policy decisions that have been made and the fact that the families affected have seen so many other countries in the G7 step up to offer their airlines help early on when the trouble started, words and platitudes, which is all we have heard from the Prime Minister and now two ministers of transport, are not providing any sense of hope for many of these families.

When I talk of these families and of the impact this is having and the anxiety they are feeling, I know what I am speaking of. I come from a long line of airline employees. My mom worked for Air Canada. My sisters worked for Air Canada, and one still does. My

wife Liane did as well. My uncle was a mechanic at the Dorval airport. Like all airline families who have a long history of working for an airline, they have seen many good times in the sector, but they have seen nothing as desperate as what they are dealing with now. Help cannot come soon enough, and that is precisely what this motion is all about.

As the member of Parliament for Barrie—Innisfil and a representative of Terminal 4, I have been hearing from pilots, flight attendants and those who are directly and indirectly associated with the airline industry, including many travel advisers. I know the Air Canada Pilots Association has been asking its members to send letters to members of Parliament, and I am sure all parliamentarians have been receiving them.

In part, what the letter says is that by connecting people, goods and services, our airlines form a critical part of Canada's economic infrastructure. Every day we see how important it is to unite communities, support jobs across the country and transport goods within Canada and internationally. As incomprehensible as it may seem, this critical sector may not recover from the pandemic, much less survive it, without urgent help from the federal government. They go on to say that Canada's airline industry could emerge from the pandemic in a weakened state, unable to compete against foreign carriers that have benefited from direct government aid that for some carriers has been in the billions of dollars.

There may be countries that can function without a robust airline sector, but Canada is not one of them. Canada stands alone in its lack of meaningful direct financial aid for its airlines.

There are other concerns from the pilots that have been brought to light, including the fact that many of them, almost 600, have been furloughed. What does that say about their training? What does that say about their capability to recover from this and get the airline sector back on track? They describe the situation as being “dire”, and I would agree with them. The airline sector in and of itself, the travel and tourism and the billions of dollars that they represent to our communities right across this country, are really too big to fail.

● (1030)

The next area I want to focus on is travel advisers.

*Business of Supply*

There are over 12,000 travel advisers in this country. On the day after International Women's Day, it should not be lost on all of us that 85% of them are women. I have met with many of them over the course of the last year, and one of the things they are looking for is commission protection from the government when it comes to refunds. Not only are they being hit on that side of it, but many of them who have not been able to earn any income since this pandemic started a year ago are also being hit by credit card companies asking for refunds.

Let us think about this. Let us put ourselves in their position. People who have not been able to earn income for the better part of a year are now being asked to pay back that income. Many of them will not be able to survive, so I can clearly empathize with travel advisers and the impact this situation is going to have on them.

A lot of this is an unintended consequence of the passenger bill of rights, and I spoke earlier about misunderstanding it. The passenger bill of rights passed by the government in 2019 allows for refunds not to be provided in non-controllable circumstances. It is probably one of the most widely misunderstood facts among consumers, and it falls directly on the government, because many of the decisions that have been made during this pandemic that have caused the airlines to effectively shut down have been made by the government. Almost every other sector in this country has received support from the government, with the exception of the airline sector. I am not talking about the emergency wage subsidy; I am talking direct sectoral relief, similar to what other G7 countries have done, including the United States, where billions of dollars have been spent. Delta is recalling all of its pilots and United Airlines just made an expansion announcement; meanwhile, in Canada, we are at 5% of our passenger loads and some pilots have not flown since March 18.

The other thing this motion calls for is relief for the charitable sector. I can personally speak on that. I have heard from charitable sectors within my community that are hurting as a result of this pandemic. Businesses continue to fall through the cracks. Many of them, as my colleague from Abbotsford said, are sole proprietorships, not incorporated businesses, and many of them started in 2020, yet the government programs that exist are still far too prescriptive and far too restrictive for many of them to receive the type of benefits they are applying for. Many have been turned down, and I have been hearing from a lot of them lately.

We need a plan, not just for bailouts but also for recovery. This virus is not going away, and we need to ensure we manage it with every tool we have in our tool box. That includes vaccines, rapid testing, isolating the most vulnerable and making sure we are contact tracing. Not everything should be defaulted to a lockdown or further restrictions; we need to make sure that when a plan is developed, it includes a plan for recovery, and that recovery should include the power of Canadian business. It should include the people they employ and the products they produce so that we can create a competitive environment, both domestically and internationally, for the things Canada produces in every sector, including forestry, natural resources, airlines and construction—all of those things—with less government intervention and legislation. We need to ensure we create this competitive environment so that investor confidence will come back into this country. It is going to be critical for us to do

that, because the debt and deficits will be paid for generations to come. We need to improve the revenue side of the ledger.

After this is all over, the Prime Minister will be fine, but many of these families I am speaking about will be left to pick up the shattered pieces of their lives and try to recover economically.

As I conclude, those families include travel agents like Charlene Caldwell, Judith Coates, Brenda Slater, Nancy Wilson, Laura Gaudet, Margie Connor, Nancy Eleusiniotis and Loretta Sellers. They also include pilots like Michael Frena; the QuoVadis family, both dad and son Brandon, who followed in his father's footsteps; the Kennedy family; the Russell family; Martin Tremblay; the Rasical family and the Ceppos family. All of them have been directly affected by what is happening in the airline sector and the travel and tourism sector.

● (1035)

Today the Conservatives are asking the government to put action to their words—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** That is all the time we have for the member's speech.

Continuing with questions and comments, we will go to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil for speaking to a very meaningful and important discussion on the opposition motion that has been brought forward.

My question for the member is quite simple. When I was asking a question of the finance critic, who the member shared his time with, I asked him about debt. The critic said that debt is a good thing. Would the member for Barrie—Innisfil agree that debt is a good thing?

● (1040)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, this is not the first circumstance that Canada has been in an economic crisis.

As we know, in 2008, during the great meltdown of the economic markets, the government at the time, led by Prime Minister Harper, did in fact incur debt. It incurred debt to provide stimulus to the economy, which worked and helped Canada recover faster than any G7 nation.

This is an unprecedented circumstance, and the level of supports for families has been needed. However, let us make no mistake, this is not a debt that has been incurred by the Government of Canada. The Prime Minister likes to say that the government took on debt so that families did not have to, but this money will have to be paid back.



This debt will have to be paid back by Canadian families. The way that can be done is by raising taxes. I do not expect that the government will do anything less than that if it is re-elected. We have to be concerned about what we are imposing on future generations.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we are trying to do whatever we can to save our businesses and reduce this unprecedented debt.

I have a question for my hon. colleague.

My question is about the Conservative Party's solutions and promises around economies of scale. The member's own leader said it would be a good idea to create economies of scale amounting to a considerable \$425 million by switching to a single tax return for Quebec, an idea that has unanimous approval. Why, then, did his party trash the idea at the Standing Committee on Finance?

[*English*]

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, I do not know the circumstances or the context of the discussion at the finance committee, so I do not think I am qualified to speak to that.

The one issue the hon. member did bring forward was the issue of the power of business. I wholeheartedly believe that it will be, as I said in my intervention, the power of Canadian business, the people they employ and the products that they produce, that will propel us out of this, as long as government does not get in the way, and as long as government is allowing regulations, legislation and policy that create investor confidence, both domestically and from foreign investment as well. That includes every sector of the economy, firing on all cylinders, because government supports it.

It is not about reimagining the economy into something of the Prime Minister's idyllic view, but to use those sectors of our economy that have traditionally propelled this country to great wealth, great opportunity and great hope for Canadians. This is what we need to do as a government, and this is a plan that Conservatives are working on and will be providing that option to Canadians as we move forward in the next election.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague touched on the issue of passenger refunds, and this is something that really concerns us.

Other countries acted swiftly last spring to mandate the airlines to provide passenger refunds, but Canada did not. As a result, billions of dollars in passenger refunds have become a bargaining chip in the current negotiations between the government and the airlines.

The Conservatives were silent on this issue for months while the other parties raised concerns. Going back to last spring, what would the member have liked to have seen the government do differently on the issue of refunds?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, as I said, that is probably one of the most largely misunderstood, unintended consequences of the passenger bill of rights, which was implemented by the government in 2019. I think this is widely misunderstood among consumers, and it is right in the passenger bill of rights, but if there is a

### *Business of Supply*

situation that is non-controllable than it is not incumbent upon the airlines to provide those refunds.

That is not to say that they should not provide them. One of the things we talk about in this motion as part of the potential sectoral relief to the airline sector is providing refunds to passengers.

• (1045)

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I am able to take part in this debate. I was tempted to say, "to rise in this House", although it has been more or less a year since we have had the opportunity to be there in the flesh, and maybe that is a good point to begin my remarks.

It was a little more than a year ago when the world did not know what COVID-19 was. As I mentioned, a year ago we were physically attending debates in the chamber of the House of Commons, but it feels as though it were a century ago. So much has changed in the world since that time as a result of this pandemic, which has turned the ordinary lives of Canadian workers and families upside down.

The motion before us today highlights a number of areas where the Conservative Party would have us seek to develop supports for individuals, families and certain industries, and I think it provides a healthy starting point in the conversation. Although, quite frankly, the starting point for us was more or less a year ago when we were arriving at solutions for some of the issues that are now coming up in debate.

Over the course of my remarks, I hope to highlight some of the measures that the government has actually implemented to help Canadian workers, families and businesses get through this pandemic and discuss briefly where we go from here. I do have some criticisms of the motion before us, which I will be happy to share as well.

However, I think it is important to begin by addressing the significance of COVID-19 and what it has done to Canadian households and families. The starting point is obviously the public health consequences that have stemmed from a global pandemic, the likes of which the world has not seen in a century at least.

There are 22,000 Canadians who are no longer with us as a result of this illness, despite the heroic efforts of frontline health care workers in long-term care facilities and community-level decision-makers to keep their communities safe. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, there are grieving families in Canada today, and to those who may be tuning in, please know that I extend my sympathies to those who have lost their loved ones.

In the early days of the pandemic, before the full scope of this emergency had made itself apparent, like most MPs who are attending virtual Parliament today, I was taking phone calls from small business owners. They were asking if this was going to last a couple of weeks, and if there would be some support coming through so that they could enjoy this and show some solidarity with their community members.

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However, a week or two after that, people started to appreciate just how serious this really was. They were worried whether their business would survive this pandemic. I remember being on the phone with family members who were sincerely worried about whether they could afford groceries, and whether there would be food at the grocery store at all, even if they could afford it.

I talked to people with the most human concerns possible, and they were asking, “Will I be able to keep a roof over my head and food on the table for my family?” The small business owners I spoke to were by and large concerned with the well-being of their employees, more so than they were concerned for themselves. I saw an enormous sense of community come out of those early conversations.

Across parties, across regions of Canada, I thank those who reached out to me, because of my position on the team of the Minister of Finance, to tell me what they were hearing in their communities. We heard what people in different regions of Canada were reaching out to their MPs about, and those concerns reflected what I was hearing in my community.

This provided good examples of the areas we needed to be tackling: income support for people who lost income as a result of COVID-19; support to businesses, so they could keep their doors open; and, perhaps most importantly, a response to COVID-19 that spared no expense, because everyone knew that the best economic and social policy we could have was a strong public health response. That remains the case today.

Going back to shortly after this time last year, one of the first things we decided to do as a government was to figure out how we could replace lost income for Canadians who had been impacted by the pandemic. Initially, there was some consideration around the employment insurance system to help people in affected industries. However, we very quickly realized that the infrastructure of the federal government was not sufficient to deal with the sheer volume of people who would need to put in a claim, which was really the origin point for the Canada emergency response benefit. That program alone, up until it ended, serviced almost nine million Canadians between April and September. We are talking about close to half the Canadian workforce individually receiving a government benefit, which was designed in no time at all, implemented even faster, and nevertheless successfully reached the kitchen tables of nine million Canadians.

- (1050)

This was perhaps one of the most remarkable policy successes that I have been a part of, and may continue to be over my career in politics. I remember hearing from people at home that this was a godsend, and that this is what helped them keep food on the table. In my community, which has a comparatively lower household median income compared to much of the country, we have started hearing from people who work at food banks that there were fewer people attending the food bank because the government supports so effectively landed in those households. They could now afford to buy groceries rather than take them from the food bank.

This is not the case in every community across Canada, but I was very impressed that people, particularly at lower income levels,

were able to survive some of the most significant economic challenges that had ever faced.

We realized as well that there needed to be additional supports put forward for businesses. One of the great strengths of the government's economic response was not any one given policy, but the willingness to iterate responses so we could adjust to reflect the reality of what was going on in Canadians communities.

I will point in particular to the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which started out as a 10% contribution to employees' wages. We realized very quickly that was not going to be sufficient to allow many employers to maintain a connection with their workforce. That particular program has the advantage of not just keeping people on payroll, but also ensuring those employees still have access to the benefits they may have been entitled to, so they do not lose opportunities that are tied within their company to seniority. Most of all, it kept cash coming into companies that allowed them to keep their workers paid throughout the most difficult portions of this pandemic.

For small and medium-sized businesses, we created the Canada emergency business account. There have been over 800,000 Canadian businesses that have now been supported. We are looking at record numbers of Canadians who have been supported by these programs, including nine million with CERB, more than five million workers with the wage subsidy and nearly 900,000 businesses with the Canada emergency business account. That number is closer to a million if we include a similarly styled program offered through the Regional Development Agencies, the regional relief and recovery fund.

We were hearing loud and clear that businesses needed support to address the fixed expenses of staying open. The emergency business account has literally helped businesses in my community keep the lights on and deal with Internet bills, allowing them to maintain some cash flow during a time when revenue had completely dried up. We realized as well that we needed to establish further supports, which justified initially the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, which has transitioned into the Canada emergency rent subsidy. It provides more direct and accessible support to tenants, who can actually stay on their premises as a result of the federal support that has been offered.

In cases where public health measures have actually locked businesses down, this particular program can provide up to 90% of the cost of rent. We have looked at the fixed expenses that businesses were telling us they needed support for, and we came up with new programs to help support rent, keep the lights on, pay the utility and Internet bills, cover the cost of keeping workers on payroll. As well, when workers were laid off, we established programs that supported them in their time of need.

However, there are particular programs that were more specific to the areas they targeted. I know the motion discusses certain hard hit industries. I will draw attention to tourism and hospitality, the arts and culture sectors, and charitable sectors. Statistics Canada put out numbers recently that indicated Canada's GDP has returned to about 97% of pre-pandemic levels, and it has broken it down by industries. The shocking piece of the graphic it published shows the severe impact that remains on sectors that depend on getting people together or coming from different places to travel.

Tourism, hospitality, arts and culture in particular are still very much feeling the pain of the pandemic because we cannot gather in spaces in large numbers. We cannot travel from one jurisdiction to another safely without the potential to spread some of the variants of concern that have caused so much difficulty.

We did develop certain programs that were designed to help these industries over and above the fact that these industries qualify for the cross-sector support programs, which I have canvassed in my remarks today. We developed programs like HASCAP for highly affected sectors to make sure that there was liquidity support for businesses that have been hit particularly hard.

• (1055)

We developed the large employer emergency financing facility, or LEEFF, as a last resort program to ensure liquidity for large employers that had high operating costs to keep them in a position where cash flow enabled them to meet the expenses they would come across so they could remain open and keep Canadians employed.

I mentioned the regional relief and recovery fund, which was tailored to help businesses that may not have qualified for some of the other supports for various reasons. It was offered through the regional development agencies, which, at least in Atlantic Canada, I can say with confidence have an intimate knowledge of the people in communities, who are doing business and need help, and what the regional nuances may be.

Some of these programs have been very successful in their delivery. Others are still rolling out, and we are continuing to hear about how they can be improved, but more work needs to be done.

I want to draw attention to the comments of the previous speaker, who indicated that there was some great exercise in reimagining the Canadian economy in a radical fashion. To be clear, the path forward requires us to look at some very important strategic challenges facing the Canadian economy, which may have been made more apparent as a result of this pandemic. However, I see nothing radical about fighting climate change as part of the economic strategy for Canada going forward. I see nothing radical about investing in housing to ensure vulnerable Canadians have a roof over their heads. I see nothing radical about investing in transit, which disproportionately benefits seniors, low-income Canadians and Canadians living with disabilities, to create more livable communities. I see nothing radical about implementing a strategy to increase women's participation in the Canadian economy. To me, these are sensible and obvious things that the federal government needs to tackle if it wants to maximize our opportunities for success on the back end of this pandemic.

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We have learned things through this pandemic, such as social deficits we have accepted for generations at which we need to look, but addressing problems that have been made apparent is the job of government, not some radical agenda. I wanted to ensure that point was put on the record as part of my remarks.

Before I address some of the shortcomings of the motion, I want to provide a bit of context to those who may be listening. This motion is directed, when I read the language contained in its text, at supporting workers and families, and I have mentioned certain areas that have some common ground between different parties. However, when I look at some of the measures that have actually been advanced in recent weeks to support workers and families in various industries, the Conservative Party in particular has been implementing delay tactics and playing partisan games in the House of Commons to delay the passage of certain very important supports.

Bill C-14 and Bill C-24 are perfect examples. Thankfully Bill C-14 came to a vote at second reading and will go to the finance committee in short order. That bill would provide direct financial support to families through an increase in the Canada child benefit. It would enhance the quality of support for local businesses through the regional relief and recovery fund. It would allocate a billion dollars toward fighting the spread of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. I think my Conservative colleagues support those efforts. Nevertheless, they are trying to implement delay tactics to prevent us from getting these supports where they are needed, which is in Canadian communities and Canadian households.

Some of the tactics to delay this kind of bill have included forcing three hours of debate to concur with a report on the competence of the Canadian Tourism Commission president, which could have been dealt with in a second. These kinds of things have no place in our legislative deliberative body. We would be far better served if we could get on with it.

We have seen delay tactics implemented for Bill C-24, which includes the extension of very important supports through our employment insurance system. I would urge my colleagues of all parties to do this. If they have objections to the bill to raise them in debate, but to not use procedural delay tactics to prevent supports from reaching Canadian households, where they are desperately needed.

Substantively with the motion, although I support many of the areas it covers in spirit, there are some deficiencies that are important.

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First, the text of the motion ignores many of the programs I have canvassed in my remarks to date. It calls on the government to effectively do things we are already doing. When I look at the call to support the hospitality, tourism and charitable sectors, the motion forgets that we have advanced hundreds of millions of dollars to the charitable sector to date and are willing to look at other additional solutions. The motion ignores the fact that many of these sectors benefited immensely from the Canada emergency wage subsidy. For those who have been laid off in those sectors, support has come to them through the Canada emergency response benefit. It ignores liquidity support we have provided through the Canada emergency business account.

• (1100)

If we are going to be called on to support specific industries, it should be specified what we should be doing to incrementally improve the programs that exist today. The motion creates the impression that here has been no support for these sectors to date, which is patently not the case on the face of it.

Second, one of the problems I have with respect to the piece that deals with airlines, and I deeply value I think the all-party support for finding a solution for the Canadian aviation sector, is that by including what the solution may be in the text of a motion on the floor of the House of Commons could jeopardize negotiations that have been going on for months with the Canadian airlines. Declaring what outcomes should be will interfere with the negotiations the government is currently undertaking.

We have stated publicly that to secure support from the federal government certain conditions ought to be met, including the restoration of regional routes, the refund of passenger tickets that have already been booked and support for the Canadian aerospace sector. We have already established certain things, and prejudging the outcome of those negotiations in the text of an opposition motion is not the best strategy going forward.

Finally, although the motion highlights a few areas, if it purports to be any kind of comprehensive look at what the federal government's strategy ought to be to support Canadian workers and families, it falls woefully short, in particular in the strategy to support families that have been affected, that have lost jobs and that will need income support.

I expect there may be some ideological divisions within the House of Commons on whether the federal government has a role to provide direct income support to families. I can certainly speak for the government side of the House that we do believe the government has role, which is why we implemented the Canada emergency response benefit, why we are moving with certain reforms to the EI system and why we repeatedly state at every opportunity that we plan to be there for Canadians, no matter how long it takes or no matter what it takes, to see them through this pandemic.

We are accused sometimes of not having a strategy to deal with this pandemic. That is obviously not the case. The strategy, in simple terms, is as follows. First is to make every investment that is necessary to defeat COVID-19 as quickly as we can, because we know the best economic policy is a strong public health response. Second is to extend the support to Canadian households and businesses they need so they are still here on the back end of this pan-

demie, so we can limit economic scarring in the interim and ensure the recovery will be robust. The third phase, which we are not quite at because of the continuing impact of COVID-19, is to make investments that will be focused on job creation and economic growth that is sustainable and inclusive so we can ensure Canada's recovery will actually help ordinary Canadian families and ordinary Canadian communities.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the parliamentary secretary's recount of history and I almost expected a soundtrack of music to show up at the last minute. He was speaking of the past which made me think of the past.

We have an airport in Saskatoon, which I have been flying out of for 35 years. It has taken many years to build up the flights that come into that airport. I remember when Northwest Airlines first flew out of Saskatoon and gave us the ability to fly south, and then United Airlines did the same. Many other airlines have flown in and out of Saskatoon.

In one fell swoop, all of that was gone, 30-plus years of hard work of getting more and more flights and building up the airport. We are now faced with trying to rebuild that infrastructure and I would appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments on that. The infrastructure and the economic development provided by the airport in Saskatoon is massive, which is true in all cities across the country. I wonder what the parliamentary secretary feels about the lack of support and the impact it will have on the economic development in Saskatoon.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Madam Speaker, I had my first opportunity to visit his hometown just a couple of years ago. It is a beautiful city and I find there is hardly a person I have met from Saskatchewan with whom I do not get along. We Nova Scotians have a natural affinity for our friends in Saskatchewan.

With respect to the support for the aviation sector, including in his province and mine, I point out that \$1.8 billion has gone to the aviation sector through the Canada emergency wage subsidy. Another billion dollars for the aviation sector was committed to through the fall economic statement, but we know there needs to be more.

In the short term, we have taken steps for very good public health reasons to encourage Canadians not to be travelling, particularly internationally. There will come a time when we have a re-opened economy, where we will want to encourage people from around the world to choose Canada as a destination.

I understand the aviation sector is facing serious challenges. That is why we are negotiating with the airlines to find a long-term solution to the problems it is facing, including the cash crunch, and that is why we are insisting that if we are going to support the sector, those airlines will make good to compensate passengers for tickets booked and they will restore regional access to different airports, including in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

*Business of Supply*

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech.

When I hear the Liberals talk about their record before the pandemic is even over, and about the millions of dollars they have put directly into the pockets of Canadians and Quebecers, I feel like they just do not get it. That really drives home the importance of the opposition's role in the House because, without the work of the Bloc Québécois in particular, programs would not have been improved to the extent they have been. I shudder to think what the outcome would have been otherwise.

Targeted programs are needed for different industries. My colleague talked about tourism. The programs currently in place are not specifically designed to save the tourism industry. Specific programs are needed, and it took quite a while for the government to introduce measures for the tourism industry, for example.

Another example is the corporate sector, including franchises, for instance. Before the pandemic, in times of full employment, they had to bring in foreign workers to fill low-wage jobs. The criteria have changed because of the pandemic, and these foreign workers are no longer eligible. Meanwhile, no employment incentives have been created to encourage Quebecers and Canadians to take on these low-wage jobs.

Does my colleague not think it is time to create serious incentives so that, if we cannot bring in workers from abroad to fill these positions and save these companies, we can at least fill the positions with available workers from here?

[*English*]

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Madam Speaker, my colleague's question was bifurcated. It covered two specific areas: the role of the opposition and the tourism sector.

First, let me put on the record my appreciation for my opposition colleagues, who I have worked with recently, including the Bloc Québécois, on the issue facing sugar shacks in his province and for raising issues to educate me and my colleagues on our side of the House about some of the unique regional needs that have come up in their communities to ensure the government is aware of the challenges. I have spoken with members of every party represented in the House of Commons. Each of them has provided value to the government's process of deliberation in developing the emergency responses. I am very grateful for that kind of cross-party co-operation.

Second, on the tourism sector, the member is absolutely right. The sector is facing serious challenges. Let me be clear that those challenges come from COVID-19 which have prevented people from travelling, but the government's strategy has been to support businesses to get them through this pandemic. In a lot of ways, at the outset of this pandemic, everyone's revenue was lost and certain programs that may have been more blunt in nature were able to provide support to those sectors. As we look to the transition of a re-opened economy, we will have to look at strategies that will encourage people to visit communities where it is safe to do so, perhaps near where they live, and in the long term to encourage inter-

national travellers to choose Canadian destinations and destinations in Quebec as well.

I would be happy to continue to work with members of the Bloc or other parties to understand the regional nuances of the supports that will be required in their jurisdictions to ensure that tourism plays a meaningful role to help the Canadian economy not just get back on track but thrive for the long term.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is important for us all to remember that when the programs the parliamentary secretary went over were first put on offer, it was only through significant and sustained interventions by the opposition that we got to see improvements that were sorely needed. I am very proud of the role of the New Democrats in improving things like the emergency response benefit, the wage subsidy, ensuring there were increases to the CEBA and that the much-maligned commercial rental assistance program was changed into a subsidy. We have to remember that this was a collaborative effort.

I want to talk about the wage subsidy. Like the parliamentary secretary referred to in his remarks, I have spoken to a lot of small business owners who were struggling through some of the rules put in place to access the wage subsidy. Those small business owners were absolutely flabbergasted when they saw large corporations like Imperial Oil and Bell pay dividends to their shareholders while posting multi-million-dollar profits, but still receiving things like the wage subsidy.

My question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance is this. Does he think it is wrong at least that those companies were violating the spirit of the program and what will his government do to fix that? That subsidy was in place to help struggling businesses, not to give payouts to shareholders.

• (1110)

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Madam Speaker, again, I have a two-part answer to a two-part question.

I will be the first person to acknowledge the value provided by parties from all corners of Canada and different partisan persuasions to the development of the emergency programs. I have spoken with a number of the member's NDP colleagues, who certainly were adding their voices to calls from different parties, and to those within our own caucus as well, to ensure that the benefits targeted people and businesses in need.

I will remind the member that at the outset of this pandemic the goal was speed of delivery as much as the generosity of benefit, because we knew that if we did not get money to people quickly the consequences would be serious and long term. I appreciate his and his colleagues' feedback and the feedback of many of my colleagues within my own party who have helped us tinker with some of the parameters of these programs to improve the quality of the benefits we have delivered.

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On the wage subsidy, the member raises an important point. He suggested that the wage subsidy was a program to support vulnerable businesses. One of the things I will point out is that it was actually a program to support workers. Every penny of the wage subsidy delivered to a company has to go to the wages of the workers on the payroll. We have put certain parameters around that to ensure that the wage subsidy goes where it is needed.

On the issue of dividends, that is a serious issue that we need to look at to make sure that the supports provided by the federal government have been used exclusively for what the rules allow. I also want to point out that the issuance of dividends, in and of itself, is not necessarily a problem, but I do think there are cases the member has pointed to that raise serious concern that the federal government needs to continue to look at to ensure that Canadians have faith that the emergency programs—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary always does such a great job in delivering his points. I certainly look forward to seeing him back in the House.

He talked about some of the games he saw the Conservatives playing in holding up various pieces of legislation. In particular, I note he referenced Bill C-14, a very important piece of legislation for small businesses in Canada. As a matter of fact, Dan Kelly, the head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said that “Bill C-14 has some important measures.... CFIB urges all parties to ensure this support is passed quickly”, and yet the Conservatives voted against it.

Does the member have any thoughts on why the Conservatives would allow it to move as slowly as possible and then, when push came to shove yesterday, voted against it?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Madam Speaker, I will do my best to avoid impugning the motives of my political opponents, whom I view as friends and colleagues. However, I will register my disappointment with their approach of insisting on multiple hours of debate to affirm a unanimously supported report that dealt with the competence of the Canadian Tourism Commission's president; to extend debate on a unanimously supported motion on human trafficking; and to delay a vote on the passage of Bill C-14.

Let me remind the House that Bill C-14 would provide direct cash support to families and parents of young kids, and provide direct support, through the regional relief and recovery fund, to small businesses and—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** That is all the time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Today in the House, we are debating the motion moved by the Conservative Party, which is calling on the government to do a number of things, including introducing in the next federal budget a number of measures to support workers in the highly impacted hospitality, tourism and charitable sectors; providing repayable loans to airlines with certain conditions; and improving support programs for small and medium businesses to prevent bankruptcies.

The Bloc Québécois has looked at the motion and, generally speaking, finds that what is being proposed is rather interesting and positive. However, we did not find it particularly ambitious, but it is difficult to be against apple pie. We might even say that the Conservatives are working with and helping the Liberals.

The Conservatives are asking for certain measures to be included in the next budget. We have heard that the government is not in a hurry to table a budget. They have not tabled one in two years and the Liberals do not seem to be in a hurry, which is something we have not seen in 50 years.

Canada is the only G7 country that has yet to table a budget. The Liberals think that they can do whatever they want. They seem to think that they are accountable to no one and that they do not need to share their plans. They prefer to have carte blanche and announce flawed programs at the last minute that need to be adopted quickly every time, which we find problematic. We are pushed to ram through flawed programs and then come back to Parliament to vote on something else. It never ends.

Why not propose real programs, a real budget and a real process for analyzing things and asking questions? The Liberals always do things willy-nilly. We would do things differently, but the Liberals seem to like this approach since they keep using it.

The Liberals have also forgotten that they are a minority government. Quebeckers should beware because if the Liberals are acting this way when they have a minority, imagine what they would be like with a majority. It would be unbelievable.

Let us come back to the Conservatives' motion. One of the things that interests me in particular as transport critic is support for the airline industry. I think it is good that the official opposition party's motion calls for such support.

I repeat: The Liberals have forgotten that they are a minority government and act as though they have a majority. Today the Conservatives moved a motion that I am sure will have full support from everyone. The Conservatives are becoming increasingly less ambitious here in Ottawa, especially with respect to the airline industry. The Conservatives are calling for this industry to receive assistance, and we agree, as, I believe, do all of the parties.

Parliament has shown a willingness to provide similar assistance to the airline industry, but the problem is that the government twiddles its thumbs and does not follow through. This pandemic has been going on for almost a year, and the government has yet to do anything for this sector. We are one of the only G7 countries that has not helped its airline industry because our government is twiddling its thumbs.

We also agree with the conditions set out in the motion. However, the Conservatives do not seem to have tried very hard, as it once again looks as though they just copied what the Liberals said.

• (1115)

In November, the government finally announced more or less the same thing as what the Conservatives are asking for. In other words, it said that it might, in fact, provide support for the aerospace industry, but such support would be conditional on ticket refunds and the potential return of Air Canada or at least some other airlines to the regions. What we are seeing in the Conservative motion is basically the same thing. I will have an opportunity to talk more about the return of national airlines, such as Air Canada, to the regions later.

For now, let us talk about the announcement the government made last November. In November, we had been in the midst of the pandemic for eight months. We had been badgering the Liberals in committee and in the House of Commons for eight months. We tabled a petition signed by 33,000 people. We also introduced Bill C-249 to refund cancelled air service. Eight months had gone by, but Ottawa still had not done anything. The transport minister at the time, who has since been transferred because I think the Liberals had had enough of having him there, finally conceded and announced that he might do something, that it had come to that.

Here we are, March 9, and nothing has happened yet. We were already at wit's end in November. We thought they had finally gotten the message and that the whole issue would be resolved in a week or two, especially since they had already given some indication of where they were headed and what they wanted to do.

However, nothing happened in December. In January, they said it was in the pipeline, but still nothing happened. Nothing happened in February either. Now it is March, and we were treated to a big reveal last week. The Liberals set up a leak to let us know that Air Canada has finally agreed to refund tickets in exchange for government assistance. It is not a done deal yet, though. Today is March 9, and the pandemic has been with us for a year, but all we are entitled to is leaks. That is unbelievable.

This government does not appear to have any backbone whatsoever. Over the past year, it could have brought in the rules, conditions, programs and proposed assistance and insisted on refunds as quickly as possible. Instead, we are dealing with a government that is paralyzed and incapable of doing what needs to be done. The government should not have to beg Air Canada to do the right thing and obey the law. Refunding passengers is neither a favour nor optional; it is an obligation.

• (1120)

Instead of taking action, the government decided to leak information. Consumers are fed up; they have been waiting for a year. Air-

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lines have been getting an interest-free loan for the past year on the backs of consumers, who paid money for services that were never delivered. Meanwhile, consumers have had to pay the balance on the credit cards used to purchase those trips. Anyone who decided not to pay their balance in full will pay dearly for it, a lot more than the airlines, because balances climb quickly when the interest rate is 20% per month, and that is tough on budgets. Meanwhile, the government remains paralyzed and is basically doing nothing.

Beyond air fare refunds, we have our own set of conditions for helping the airlines, including some that are in the Conservatives' motion, namely, introducing restrictions on executive compensation, imposing a ban on paying dividends or share buybacks, prohibiting outsourcing and layoffs, and maintaining contracts with local businesses and workers. We have to stop laying off people here at home and sending our jobs offshore. We must also stop the recall of travel agent commissions. We believe these are basic conditions.

We do, however, have a problem with the last item. It does not make sense for Air Canada to abandon the regional connections. Air Canada has eliminated 30 destinations across the country, completely abandoning our regional carriers who had continued doing their job. When Air Canada was there, we know that it regularly did incredible things, temporarily dropping its prices before—

• (1125)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I must interrupt the hon. member because it is time for questions and comments.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, that was a very heartfelt speech by my colleague.

He talked a lot about the airline industry and said the government has not been there to support it and the people who do business with airlines. My question is about the related industry of aerospace and aeronautics, which is important in my colleague's province and in my province of British Columbia as well. I am thinking of Abbotsford airport, which is right next door to my riding, and the Langley Regional Airport, which is in my riding. Thousands of people work in the aeronautics industry and support the airline industry.

How does the government's lack of interest in helping the airline industry also affect the aerospace industry and other related industries?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very pertinent question.

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One element that I was unable to address in my speech was assistance for the aerospace sector. If planes are no longer flying, airlines are not going to buy planes. That is the bottom line. There is also the fact that the federal government has completely abandoned Quebec's aerospace sector.

I note that there is aerospace infrastructure in my colleague's riding. We stand united on this issue.

I will also add that the aerospace industry consists of more than just airline companies. It also includes airports, suppliers, airplane maintenance staff and all those working in this sector. The repercussions are serious and permanent. These are good jobs for the future.

It is disappointing to see a government abandon a sector with such good jobs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, one thing I think we will probably witness is the spreading of misinformation, as we see the Bloc work so closely with the Conservatives at times, which I often refer to as an unholy alliance.

Members are trying to give the impression that the Government of Canada has not been there for the airline industry. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have invested hundreds of millions of tax dollars to support the airline industry in a couple of different tangible ways. I have referenced the wage subsidy, with over a billion dollars going to that area, and the fall statement allocated hundreds of millions of dollars.

Does the member not feel that the Bloc has a responsibility to be more forthright with what is actually happening? The member says the government has not been there for the airline industry, but he knows that factually this is just not true. We have been.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's question.

The government often claims that it has supported the airline industry. That is true, but the problem is that the airline industry, like many of the industries hit hardest by the crisis, did not receive more assistance than the others. Why would the government provide the same level of support to an industry that is desperately struggling as it does to an industry that is not?

To use an example, the Liberals dipped into the wage subsidy to line their pockets and pad their election fund. The aeronautics industry was eligible for the same assistance program as the Liberal Party, which was not struggling. I do not think that is right.

Furthermore, the government gave money to these companies without requiring them to obey the law. People have still not been reimbursed for their plane tickets. Unbelievable.

This government talks out of both sides of its mouth but does not follow through.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention a story that made headlines today.

Apparently the Privy Council Office tried to submit thousands of pages of documents in English only to the Standing Committee on Health and thus to the House of Commons. Despite all their promises and talk, clearly the Liberals still could not care less about French and consider it a second-class language.

I think my colleague's expression applies here too. When it comes to respecting French and our official languages, does he feel that the Liberals are talking out of both sides of their collective mouth?

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for that great question.

I would take it one step further. I would say it is not just the Liberals. It seems to be consistent across all Canadian institutions.

That is one of the reasons we think Quebec would be better off governing itself, being a country. Unfortunately, Canada is an English country with French in Quebec and in small francophone pockets in other provinces.

The fact is that the country operates in English, while in Quebec—

• (1130)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the pandemic has changed people's habits and left many workers and their families in uncertainty. In order to maintain many jobs and promote recovery for various sectors, such as tourism, the federal government should make workers the focus of the recovery.

The next federal budget should provide for better, more flexible support programs that will help maintain good-quality jobs. The federal government should implement sector-specific measures to support workers in highly impacted sectors, such as charities and businesses in the tourism, hospitality, accommodation, arts, entertainment and major events sectors, which experienced major financial losses as a result of the lockdown and public health measures.

For example, the lockdown took a major toll on the tourism industry. International tourists stayed at home, and domestic tourists chose to be cautious. Revenues for seasonal businesses and organizations in the tourism industry are at an all-time low.

With regard to the hotel industry, the lack of international tourists means that hotels throughout Quebec, including those in Quebec City and Montreal, are sitting practically vacant. This was a very challenging season for thousands of inns in welcoming villages across Quebec, such as those along the St. Lawrence River.



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The socio-economic impacts on workers in Quebec's major economic sectors have been numerous, including job losses for many young people and students, jobs at small- and large-scale events, bars, restaurants and summer camps. Losing a job is tough. People and families sometimes have to relocate or change careers entirely. This causes stress, especially financial stress. It can even lead to depression. Companies can also lose expertise as a result, putting stress on managers and owners. The topic of bankruptcy is also unavoidable. The health crisis has not affected everyone equally. Some sectors have literally been wiped out, while others will take many months to recover. COVID-19 must not result in a bankruptcy pandemic. Individuals and small and medium-sized businesses that owe the government money because of the assistance they have received must be given time. They must be offered an interest-free deferral. It is also important to support all the local businesses being crushed by multinational e-commerce companies. Improved support programs are therefore needed.

For the past year, the government has been generous. However, its one-size-fits-all programs are costly and ill suited for those hit the hardest. Today, the programs are still plagued by problems with their design, accessibility and processing times.

Job losses and insecurity impact people and their families, our workers and business owners. To minimize job losses and eliminate inadequate programs as much as possible, we need support measures that are effective, targeted and flexible. They are essential for providing support to workers. We must act quickly, because many polls have shown a deterioration in quality of life since March 2020, which is cause for concern.

The future of our small businesses, which are increasingly burdened by debt and must face stiff competition from major chains and multinationals, is also cause for concern. We must support our businesses and organizations better, particularly by reviewing the terms of the assistance measures. For the sectors that have been hit hardest by the crisis and that will be among the last to reopen, the Bloc Québécois is demanding improved support programs, including lending supports for small and medium-sized businesses. The lending supports must be accessible within 30 days of the passage of the motion, to prevent a wave of bankruptcies and layoffs on the horizon.

We also have to consider subsidies and tax credits, without putting businesses further in debt. As they say, an elastic will only stretch so far. If we want to help companies hang onto their jobs and expertise, then subsidies and tax credits are essential. We need skilled employees for the recovery, and we will need intelligence, innovation and experience. Companies should not have to recruit new people, new talent. I am thinking of the tourism and cultural industries, which are currently losing talent, from managers to guides, because they are temporarily closed. The Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy, especially for the sectors that will take some time to recover, are necessary to enable tourism and cultural businesses to recover. These programs must be extended until at least the next tourist season to give the industry time to recover. That is an example of the kind of flexibility I am talking about.

• (1135)

This ecosystem has been gutted over the past year, and we will have to invest in human resources to help it rebuild. Tourism companies, festivals and other large-scale events will have to reinvent themselves and rethink the services they provide in the regions of Quebec.

To help Quebec's tourism and cultural businesses get back on their feet, the federal government should gradually move away from its one-size-fits-all programs and focus on programs that are better targeted and more flexible. These types of programs are more effective and promote innovation. For example, for this year only, the federal government should allow for a special \$200 tax credit, 80% of which would be refundable, to support cultural and community organizations with their recovery and help them get back on track as soon as possible. Another example would be implementing a generous tax credit to encourage experienced workers to keep working if they want to, instead of retiring.

Speaking of tourism, to go a bit further, what about the allure of the regions? Why not use tourism as a way to spur personal and regional development by and for young people who are looking to settle in the regions for the healthy lifestyle and great quality of life?

We need to ensure that young people, and those who are not so young, feel proud to live in the regions and contribute to the development of not only the land and its natural beauty, but also its expertise and innovative cultural and tourism projects. Let us allow the next generation to show us the regions of Quebec and Canada at their best.

In order for the next generation to be able to settle in the regions, we need to promote the development of certain sectors. I am thinking in particular of the next generation of farmers. Right now, farmers are better off selling their farms to strangers than passing them on to a family member. The Government of Quebec has once again led the way by changing its own tax rules to encourage the transfer of family farms. Let us put an immediate stop to this injustice. The federal government needs to amend the tax rules so that the inter-generational transfer of farms is at least as profitable as selling to strangers. Obviously, I am thinking about Bill C-208, which is currently being examined by the Standing Committee on Finance.

When it comes to agri-food, Quebec has known for a long time, since Confederation, that the federal government is hindering the development of Quebec's agricultural model, particularly today, when it is favouring other export sectors at the expense of Quebec agriculture.

In the agri-food sector, we have seen how fragile the globalized supply chains are. To ensure food security for our people, we must support our farmers and enable them to produce in a fair market that supports healthy products from local businesses that can again be handed down from one generation to the next.

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Then there are processors and temporary foreign workers. The federal government must help farmers, processors and businesses continue to bring in temporary foreign workers. We must improve the temporary foreign worker programs to make them more flexible and more tailored to business conditions, without overlooking regional businesses. It takes over eight hours to drive to Abitibi—Témiscamingue, which makes things complicated for a farmer who wants to personally pick up the foreign worker from the airport.

I will conclude with a few words about support for land use and local development. Obviously, the major issue is access to high-speed Internet and the cell network. To support regional economic development, we want the federal government to transfer the necessary funds to Quebec immediately so all Quebecers can connect to high-speed Internet. The delays are never-ending, and Canada has proven itself incapable of breaking down the biggest barriers to the competition that Quebec telecom companies large and small face to ensure accessible, affordable telecom service in Quebec. There are nine federal programs, each with its own idiosyncrasies. Doing business with the federal government is very complicated.

Quebec also needs the means to create a system that will help restore services to the regions. I am talking about airline service. However, Ottawa must not get in the way of financial support and regional connections Quebec has set up. I will come back to that. Air Canada cannot be subsidized forever. There are companies such as Propair in Abitibi—Témiscamingue that want to serve the regions.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion. The federal government has now gone nearly two years without presenting a proper budget. The last budget was presented in the spring of 2019, before the election and, of course, before the pandemic. We need action, and we need it now. A great many businesses, their workers and their families are watching. This has been a long wait. Support is needed quickly, so we must act quickly by adopting this motion.

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about tourism and the negative impact COVID-19 is having on cities, villages and towns along the St. Lawrence River. My question is about the impact of the shutdown by the federal government on the cruise line industry, which is so important to my home province of British Columbia and also to Quebec I am sure.

Does he have any comments about that?

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, the tourism industry was clearly the proverbial canary in the coal mine, as tourism companies were among the first to be hit by the pandemic.

Going back to the example of the cruise line industry, I helped countless constituents who were trapped on cruise ships, with all of the strict public health requirements. I am also thinking of the companies we have met with over the last year, like Croisières AML in Quebec City, which have some significant cash flow needs and will require flexible, tailored support. This past year was definitely not

the most profitable year, and this tourism company is in serious need, but I am sure that tourists will come back quickly after the pandemic. This company will need to be set up for success.

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there is a special nuance for the north regarding airlines, and I cannot support this motion unless something is put in it related to interline agreements. I hope the member will support me.

The northern airlines are the only ones that cover the various northern communities, but they get their revenue from flights to the south, such as Whitehorse to Vancouver. While the major airlines fly on that and refuse to do meaningful interline agreements, they are hurting both airlines. Although there has been significant support for the airlines already, unless they agree to stop hurting themselves and the northern airlines by not having meaningful interline agreements, this motion cannot be supported. This is happening around the world with Azul and Latam airlines in South America, in the U.S. with American Airlines and JetBlue, in Europe with Air Serbia and Turkish Airlines, in Asia with Malaysia Airlines and Japan Airlines, and with Finnair and Juneyao. They are all co-operating in this pandemic. We need the airlines to co-operate to reduce their expenses to help the northern and smaller airlines so we can support everybody.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Yukon for his question.

I have never been to Yukon, but I did go to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, in the summer of 2006, so I did have a chance to travel with these airlines. I myself live in a northern region of Quebec that cares deeply about these connections.

We have a problem right now, namely Air Canada's entitlements, which will have to be addressed in the context of this motion. Ottawa always puts all its eggs in this one company basket, at the expense of others.

Targeted support is needed for these businesses, which are willing to serve the regions and even provide service in French. I am referring specifically to Propair and Air Creebec, which provide a link with northern Quebec for the mining industry, Hydro-Québec and so on. They are willing to provide service links, and the federal government must offer relevant and appropriate assistance to ensure the sustainability of those airlines.

Air Canada practises dumping. The company goes into a region, lowers prices when it has competition, and then once the competition is eliminated, it raises prices. It used to cost about \$1,000 for a return trip between Montreal and Rouyn-Noranda before the pandemic. I cannot imagine what it costs today.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He spoke about sectors that have been abandoned by the Liberals, in particular the airlines and tourism. I would like to talk to him about culture, because I know that the cultural sector is flourishing in his riding, and the people of Abitibi take great pride in it. I recently met with the Conseil québécois du théâtre, which told me that Revenue Canada agents are not trained to provide good service and verify information for the self-employed workers and freelancers in theatre and the cultural sector in general.

Would he support an initiative that would have the government give training to provide service that is tailored to these workers?

• (1145)

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. His question has many elements.

There is one aspect that I find fascinating in the context of the pandemic. On the one hand, the cultural industry needs workers and, on the other hand, it has lost many jobs. This requires specialized support. If we implement measures that can quickly target and meet the specific needs of those in the cultural industry, it would be worthwhile studying and delving further into the issue.

There are significant gaps—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[*English*]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time this morning with the member for Courtenay Alberni.

I am pleased to speak today to this opposition motion which calls, in part, on the government to provide assistance for the hard-hit airline sector in our country.

This is a timely topic. If media reports are to be believed, we could hear any day now about the outcome of negotiations that have been going on for months between the government and the airlines. We have seen those negotiations stall in past months and we may again, so who knows how long it will take to hear about support for this hard-hit sector.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the tens of thousands of men and women who work in Canada's air sector and who have lost their jobs over the past year due to the pandemic's disproportionate impact on the air-travel sector: pilots and flight attendants, mechanics, ground crews, baggage handlers, air traffic controllers and all of those working in the many diverse aspects of air travel. I hope that if any of these folks are watching and listening to the debate today, they take heart in the fact that there seems to be broad agreement in this place that government help is needed.

The motion before us is from the Conservatives. While I agree with its substance, I find it interesting that on one hand, the Conservatives are hand-wringing over the magnitude of pandemic relief that this country has put forward, while on the other they are calling

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for billions of dollars in government help for the air sector. I will leave the Conservatives to sort that out among themselves.

The fact is that the air sector does need help. Prior to the pandemic, the aviation sector directly employed 241,000 people in Canada and supported close to another 150,000 indirect jobs in the supply chain. Very few of those jobs still remain. Month after month, we have seen new rounds of layoffs at the big airlines and, sadly, no action from the government.

It is good to see the Conservatives echoing very closely the points we in the NDP have been putting forward since the beginning of the pandemic. First, any assistance to the air sector must focus on maintaining employment, not on executive bonuses or dividends for shareholders. Second, assistance must come with a commitment to restore and maintain Canada's very important regional routes. Third, airlines must refund passengers the money they are owed for cancelled flights.

Many Canadians are rightly skeptical about government bailouts, which is why it is so important that strong conditions are put in place to ensure that public funds are spent in the public interest. Unfortunately, in the case of the wage subsidy, we saw a program that was not structured strongly enough to prevent layoffs. Air Canada, for example, received over \$500 million in the wage subsidy, making it one of the biggest beneficiaries of the program in our country, but it laid off over 20,000 workers with no financial assistance whatsoever. The company could have chosen to furlough those workers, utilizing the wage subsidy and allowing them to retain their benefits, their seniority and their pensions as many other companies did. Unfortunately, Air Canada chose otherwise.

Nor was the wage subsidy structured strongly enough to ensure it went only to those corporations that truly needed it. An analysis by the Financial Post, which I know my colleagues will be familiar with, showed that at least 68 publicly traded Canadian companies continued to pay out billions of dollars in dividends to their shareholders while receiving the wage subsidy. To ordinary Canadians, those facts just do not seem right. Thus, in the case of the deal being negotiated between the government and the airlines as we speak, it is essential that strong conditions are agreed upon that put employees first and prevent corporations from using public dollars to fund executive bonuses or dividends for shareholders.

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The second set of conditions relates to regional routes. As the pandemic took its financial toll on airlines, smaller regional routes were the first to fall. Though often less profitable, these routes are nonetheless vital lifelines for communities, especially smaller communities. Even during the pandemic, people still need to travel, whether for work as essential workers or for medical appointments. We also know that these regional routes often support mail services and carry freight.

• (1150)

With Canada's regional bus service much diminished in recent decades, cuts to regional air routes leave people with few options.

In Atlantic Canada, routes have been cut from 140 to just 29, with only nine of those connecting the region to the rest of Canada. The riding I represent in northwest B.C. experienced first-hand how the commercial decisions of the big airlines could leave communities high and dry. For months, my home community of Smithers was without scheduled air passenger service. It has since been restored, but scheduled flights remain suspended in Prince Rupert and Sandspit, as well as in other communities across the country.

Given the severe impact of the pandemic on passenger numbers, it was not surprising that these regional routes were suspended and reduced. However, airlines provide an essential service for small communities, and if the government is going to provide financial support to the sector, restoring these essential transportation links should be an integral part of the arrangement.

Supporting regional routes will not only mean people can get to their medical appointments in the city or commute as essential workers. It will also give tourism operators some certainty that their clientele will be able to return once it is safe to do so. It will give small municipally owned airports, which rely on the revenue from scheduled flights to maintain their infrastructure, some financial certainty. It will give rural regions some comfort in knowing the pandemic will not be allowed to further deepen existing geographic inequities and that, as the recovery takes hold, every part of the country will have a fighting chance.

In a country the size of Canada, maintaining a basic level of service to all corners of the country is not a luxury. It is a basic need. The restoration of regional routes must be a central component of any sectoral relief for the airlines.

Last, on passenger refunds, since the beginning of the pandemic New Democrats have been calling on the government to act and make passengers whole again when it comes to the money owed to them by the airlines. My colleague, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski first called for this in a letter to the minister on April 13, yet while we in the NDP spent months going to bat for passengers, the Conservatives were nowhere to be found until months later.

This motion today shows us that the Conservatives have finally located their boarding pass and made it to the gate in one piece on this issue, which is good news because the more voices in this place calling for refunds, the better.

It is frankly unacceptable that the government has left Canadian passengers waiting for over a year to receive money that is rightly

theirs. From the standpoint of basic consumer rights, this simply should never have happened. If people pay for a service and then do not receive the service purchased, they expect a refund. This applies to things we buy online as much as it should apply to a \$1,000 airline ticket.

The people affected are Canadian families, and I have heard from lots of these folks. In the midst of a global health emergency and the worst economic recession in Canadian history, these ordinary people have been saddled with unnecessary financial anxiety.

When he was pressed on this issue, the minister's response was totally unsatisfactory. On June 16, he said:

In the best of all worlds, we would like to make sure that all passengers are happy, but as you know, the airlines have been hammered by this pandemic.

In other words, corporations come first and the government will get to the people when it can. It does not have to be this way.

Other countries took very different approaches. In the U.S., the EU and the U.K., governments mandated refunds from the airlines. As a result, American passengers had the ability to claim refunds from Canadian airlines while Canada's own citizens were denied that right.

The hard-earned money of Canadian passengers has now become a bargaining chip in a high-stakes negotiation between the government and the airlines. With the issue of refunds so closely tied to the negotiations around financial relief, Canadians are going to rightly wonder whether it is the airlines or the government that is refunding passengers.

To conclude, when the public health directive is to stay home, the hardest hit sectors are the ones that move people around. In the air sector, the pandemic has cost tens of thousands of jobs and threatened services that are central to the functioning of our country.

Few question that the government has a role to play, but based on the history of bailouts, many are skeptical of the government's ability to structure support in a way that truly protects the public interest.

The motion we are debating today speaks to some of the conditions that could ensure public dollars are invested in the public good and not simply converted to private profits.

• (1155)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am so happy to hear that at least some air transportation links to northern communities like Smithers and Prince George have been restored.

How important are transportation links into northern Canada, though Smithers is not really that far north, to Canada exercising its northern sovereignty?

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Madam Speaker, of course, northernness is a bit of a state of mind, and with the population so concentrated in the southern part of the country, we do not have to go many kilometres north before it is considered northern.

The member raises a decent point about sovereignty. I would say the issue is more about the rural fabric of our country and supporting rural communities. These regional routes play such an integral role in that aspect of Canadian life. We have seen Canada become more urbanized over time and I am very concerned for the long-term sustainability and vitality of northern and rural communities. We need to keep that in mind as we look to support the air sector through the pandemic.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He talked a lot about the importance of transportation in the regions. I will refer to my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue who spoke just before him and also talked about the importance of transportation in the regions. The Bloc Québécois has raised concerns about the sale of Air Transat to Air Canada. These concerns have been echoed by several groups.

I would like to hear what the hon. member has to say about this and the danger of monopolies when it comes to the regionalization of transportation.

[English]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue that we in the NDP have spoken out about. The Commissioner of Competition was clear that the sale of Air Transat would result in a less competitive environment and higher prices for Canadian air travellers. We have seen the impacts of lack of competition in the air sector on smaller communities in Canada. When we have only one large carrier, the price of flights is demonstrably higher, which has a real impact on affordability and people's ability to travel to the places they need to get to. I agree very much with the member on this issue and was disappointed to see so little explanation from the minister as to why that sale was approved.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to take the floor to express appreciation to the hon. member for Abbotsford for his very good motion that is positive in its focus and one that I will personally support.

To my friend from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I share his concern about regional air routes and also about affordable ground transportation, particularly in light of the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which found that the proximate cause of their vulnerability and ex-

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posure to violence and risk as indigenous women and girls in remote areas of Canada had to do with the lack of affordable ground transportation.

Would he like to comment on that?

• (1200)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Speaker, it is something I touched on in my speech. In my former role as a mayor, we worked very hard with the province to put in place inter-community transit service, and we did so at a time when Greyhound still existed. While we gained a small step forward for northern communities along the Highway of Tears, we were left with a huge gap when Greyhound pulled out entirely.

Today I would say that things have never been worse when it comes to the affordability of and access to inter-city regional ground transport. It is something we need to improve upon if we are going to resolve these grave issues of murdered and missing indigenous women.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has been an extremely articulate spokesperson in making sure that Canadians get the refunds they deserve for travel cancellations and that our travel and tourism industry gets through this pandemic.

I am wondering what he believes the government should be doing in particular to help smaller airlines that serve a network in northern Canada and the territories. What should the government be doing that it is not doing now?

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Speaker, the concerns of smaller airlines is something that I wish I had time in my speech to address more fully, because in many ways they have been left out of this entire debate, which has been dominated by the big carriers. We heard at committee from airlines like Air North, which have very specific concerns about the environment they operate in. We need some assurance from the minister that airlines like Air North and other smaller carriers across the country are not being left out of the ongoing negotiations and will be treated fairly in any package put forward by the government. They deserve support as much as the large carriers in this country.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour and privilege to rise to speak on today's motion. I want to thank my colleague from Abbotsford for tabling this very important motion today because we know that so many main street businesses have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Truly, we do not talk enough about small business owners being the unsung heroes of this pandemic. They closed their doors to protect public health. These small businesses and their workers are not just the engine of job creation in Canada in the important role they play in every community across our country, but these mom and pop shops also keep our communities running and need our support now more than ever.

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Small businesses need a government that helps them access the services and infrastructure they need to recover and thrive and expand while investing in a healthy, intelligent workforce. We know how COVID-19 has dramatically altered the environment in which our small businesses operate. Various provinces are going through different stages of lockdown. Experts are predicting that 181,000 businesses are at risk of closing over the next year. This would result in the loss of approximately 2.4 million jobs.

While many of the federal relief programs have provided much-needed support to both employers and employees, many small business owners continue to fall through the cracks. In fact, 76% of businesses have said that 2020 was the most difficult year they have ever had in business. CFIB data shows that only 51% of businesses are fully open and only 39% fully staffed.

I am really glad that are talking about tourism and hospitality because tourism was responsible for over \$105 billion in GDP and one in 10 Canadian jobs before the pandemic. Right now the tourism economy is in such crisis that there are 531,000 fewer Canadians employed in that sector than a year ago.

When we think about what the government has been doing, we know that the Prime Minister and the Liberals have been going to great lengths since the beginning of the pandemic to protect big corporations. I talked earlier about the big banks. The government offered only very little to workers at the beginning, only wanting to pay 10% of the wage subsidy initially. It was the NDP, working alongside labour and small business, that pushed back and forced the government to go to 75%. The government did not want to help with rent initially. It brought forward a proposal that excluded many tenants in a botched program, and we continued to apply pressure. The government did fix that program, but still has not backdated it for all of those small business owners who were not able to access it.

We see many small businesses struggling, but we still see big corporations getting access to these programs, like Bell and Imperial Oil, which have been taking millions of dollars in public COVID relief and paying millions in dividends to their rich stakeholders. The Prime Minister still has not fixed these gaps in the programs and has refused to do it.

The sense of urgency could not be greater. The government rolled out an extension and expansion of the CEBA given the extent of the lockdowns and the uncertainty impacting small businesses. We were glad to see the extension, but many businesses cannot get access to it. MPs' phones are ringing off the hook because small businesses cannot get answers on why they are now being excluded from the expansion of the loan program. These are businesses that received the CEBA loan program initially, and they need help.

I do not think the government understands the emergency part of its emergency programs. We hear now that it is not going to table a budget until possibly April or later. I am thinking about the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, which was just informed that it is going to get 83% less than it was expecting to operate on. This is an organization that delivered supports to over 800 businesses. It was a vehicle to get \$15 million out the door in the fastest growing, and most-at-risk sector in the tourism industry. They cannot wait until April or May. They are going to be laying off departments that

are critical to our recovery. I call on the government to get support to those organizations while it is dragging its feet on getting a budget out the door.

● (1205)

My colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley mentioned that the NDP has been calling on the government to make sure that we get refunds to passengers. We also have to make sure that we protect the travel agents who collected commissions. We want both to happen. We want the refunds to happen. We want to make sure that people get money, not just some promise down the road. As well, travel agents tend to be women, and we know that women have been disproportionately affected by COVID. They should not be hit with having to repay the large amounts of commissions.

I am glad to see that the motion included the aviation industry. We have been hearing Unifor call for a national aerospace industrial strategy to protect the air transportation industry, which has been absolutely decimated throughout this crisis. We want to hear what supports are coming forward there.

I am also glad that we are talking about bus transportation. We need to ensure that we have strong support for the bus industry. For example, Tofino Bus in my riding is critical to the transportation needs of our communities and for access to health care and other needs. The Coast to Coast Bus Coalition is calling for a national highway transportation board so that it can create an essential bus network in partnership with the motor coach industry. This really needs to happen. The government cannot continue to download this onto the provinces.

We are not hearing enough about start-ups. They cannot access the CEBA loans, the wage subsidy or the commercial rent assistance program. They have been completely forgotten. This is a generation of businesses that have been abandoned by the government. They can demonstrate they are genuine, through their leases and the wages they have been paying, and it is absolutely unfair that they have been forgotten. We need to provide support. The government needs to come to their aid and ensure that it expands these programs to help them out. Giving out more loans is not going to do it. They need access to the same programs that their neighbouring competitors are getting.

We also believe that big corporations that have profited from the pandemic should pay their fair share, so that we can support the backbone of our communities: our small businesses. I am not talking about the bike shop that might be doing well during the pandemic. I am talking about the Amazons, those big corporations that are making excess profits from the pandemic.

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We want the government to ensure that it is providing support into the future and that the wage subsidy is extended not just to June but to the end of the pandemic, which is what the tourism industry has been asking for. We were glad to see that the pressure we applied last week made the government extend this to June, but it needs to go further. As well, the government needs a hotline for small businesses to call to get assistance in applying for government supports, as I said earlier. This has to happen.

One thing we are not talking enough about is the critical importance of child care for small business owners and for our recovery. We know that women have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Child care is absolutely critical. We are not talking about a child care program that starts in 2028. We need the government to act now. The New Democrats understand how important child care and affordable housing are for supporting economic growth.

We also need a hard cap on credit card merchant fees. Australia, the U.K. and Europe pay less than one-third of the rates we are paying in Canada. Members heard me ask a question of the Conservatives earlier. They believe that government should get out of the way and that the free market will take care of things. Well, this is how it is playing out for Canadian merchants: They are paying exorbitant rates. The government needs to intervene, like governments have in the EU, Australia and the U.K.

Many employees have lost their pharmacare and dental care plans, as they have been disconnected from their employers. We need a pharmacare and dental care plan. It would save small business owners approximately \$600 per employee. It is absolutely critical that we provide this important social infrastructure to support these businesses.

To get back to the sense of urgency, we need the government to act with urgency to cover the gaps for start-ups. We should get the CEBA loans out the door for those who have not been able to access the programs. Huge economic leakages will be created if we do not save small businesses in our communities. They are critical to the survival of our communities and critical for our future and getting through the pandemic with a strong economic recovery.

• (1210)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we go to questions and comments, I see the hon. Minister of Transport rising on a point of order.

The hon. minister.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that Thursday, March 11, will be designated an allotted day.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—MEASURES TO SUPPORT CANADIAN WORKERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my friend from Courtenay—Alberni. In his speech he talked a lot about many aspects of small business and tourism. I am sure he is well aware of the Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors. Some women's dependence on their career has been depleted by the demise of the tourism industry. It has had a big impact on them. What a lot of people do not understand is that these independent business people depend on their commission fees to cover their income. There has been a huge impact on them, and they are obviously suffering a great deal.

The member mentioned a couple of things in this regard, but I would appreciate hearing some comments about this particular area.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague outlined, the travel agent industry is predominantly composed of women, who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Any bailout of the transport sector and the air sector has to be contingent on refunds to consumers who have bought tickets and have not been reimbursed. However, we must also ensure that the commissions collected initially by travel agents are not going to be taken from them, because that would be completely unfair. They are already feeling the brunt of the huge impacts of COVID-19, and the government absolutely needs to make sure changes are contingent on protecting travel agents, who, again, have been disproportionately impacted.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for his speech. I often find myself nodding along when my colleague talks about the situation with salmon in his region, as well as when he talks about small businesses.

I broached the subject earlier with the parliamentary secretary. I may have asked too many questions at once, and maybe that is why I did not get an answer. I would like to ask my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni about back-to-work incentives, which are somewhat absent from the Liberal government's management of the pandemic.

I spoke earlier about restaurant franchise owners in my region and how, in times of full employment, they hire foreign workers who agree to settle here and take low-wage jobs that are very difficult to fill with Canadian and Quebec workers.

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion about this. Does he also believe that employment incentives are needed to help small businesses, especially franchise owners, survive the pandemic?

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague brought up wild salmon, because where I live, if we do not invest in wild salmon we will not have a healthy economic recovery on Vancouver Island.

He talked about the importance of incentives for hiring people, and I think about the many people who have been disproportionately impacted, especially youth. They have been left out, and we need to make sure that we continue to work together to apply pressure on the government to create programs for youth, whether they are for relief regarding EI and the CPP or for hiring youth. We should expand the Canada summer jobs program, especially targeting groups that have been disproportionately impacted, such as indigenous and Black Canadians. We need to provide supports and training programs for them as well. Many businesses will not be able to rebuild themselves for years to come, so we need to ensure they get the training and support they need to feed their families and move forward as they transition to another career.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for all the great work he has done on this file. It has been tremendous.

A previous speaker mentioned the Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors and the importance of including travel advisers in the transportation recovery plan. Not only do they work completely on commission, but they are being told now that if the airlines have to pay back consumers, their commissions will have to be paid back. This work was done about a year and a half ago and the money has been spent. If they are not included in the recovery plan, it will create huge hardships on their families and will possibly result in thousands of personal bankruptcy cases.

Does the member agree with me that it is imperative for them to be included?

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his service, as I know he is not running again, and for the important work he has done for seniors and protecting workers' pensions. All Canadians and every member of the House are grateful for the work he has done.

As for travel agents who have been disproportionately impacted, I cannot believe we would support any agreement without protecting travel agents. That sector is primarily dominated by women and, as we stated earlier, women have been disproportionately impacted throughout this pandemic. We need to make sure that any support for the transport sector, especially for consumer refunds, which we support, also protects travel agents and ensures that they do not have to pay that money back. That is absolutely critical, and our support would be contingent on it.

• (1220)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I normally start my speeches by saying that I am pleased to be joining in the debate, which I normally am. However, although I support this motion 100%, I am not pleased that we are one full year into the pandemic and we require a motion such as this to get the Liberal government to act to support small businesses in tour and travel business. A year ago this week, we suspended Parliament be-

cause of the pandemic, and we are still begging for support from the government.

This motion includes three main parts: introducing sector-specific measures to support workers in tourism and charitable sectors; providing repayable loans to airlines, not subsidies, not a handout, to ensure they continue to function, but also so refunds to customers who have not been able to take their flights are made; resuming flights to rural areas and areas affected by airline slow-downs; and improving support programs, including lending supports for small and medium-sized businesses.

The Liberals' approach to the whole pandemic and their support for small business reminds me a lot of a *Seinfeld* episode called "The Engagement", when Newman and Kramer steal a dog to shut it up. Eventually the police come and arrest Newman and Kramer. Newman says, *à la* David Berkowitz, "What took you so long?"

What is taking the government so long to act? Of course, we had the CERB rollout very fast, supported by ourselves, the NDP, Bloc and independent members, but then we had the wage subsidy, originally starting out as a paltry 10%. It was months and months before it was rolled out to help small businesses. By that point, layoffs had happened. There were closures because of no revenue. They could not afford to sit and wait. As a result, we have lost jobs. The Liberals finally agreed with the opposition and moved up the wage support to 75%, but it was such a long wait.

It is the same with the rent subsidy. Why did it take so long? It was a flawed subsidy to begin with, one that put money in the pockets of landlords. Landlords applied for the subsidy, not the tenants. We heard about a lot of cases with landlords putting their foot on the necks of small businesses, retailers and restaurants, demanding money up front. The retailers, restaurants and small businesses, because they were not getting the direct support, were left basically helpless.

There is a wonderful business in Edmonton called Axe Monkeys. The owner, Dave, is a wonderful guy. They have axe throwing events. Even with a massive turndown and loss of revenues, he still has charity nights every week to help out local charities. He had a landlord who refused to go through the process of applying for the rent subsidy and told Axe Monkeys to cough up the full rent or all its supplies and goods would be seized. The rent subsidy was a complete failure. The Liberals eventually changed it, but, again, why did they wait so long?



*Business of Supply*

Who did not have to wait very long for the wage subsidy was Katie Telford's husband. As we know, Katie Telford is the chief of staff to the Prime Minister. Her husband's company got \$84 million pretty darn fast when the Liberals needed it to run this flawed program.

Who else did not have to wait for help from the Liberal government? WE Charity managed to get \$900 million pretty darn fast when they needed it. That is the same WE Charity, of course, that paid the Prime Minister's wife, brother and mother almost half a million dollars in fees; the same WE Charity that was employing then finance minister Morneau's daughter; the same WE Charity that paid then finance minister Morneau's \$50,000 luxury getaway. It did not have to wait. Did it have to wait for it to go through Treasury Board's rules? No. The Treasury Board president told us at committee that the WE grant did not even go through the Treasury Board process. The Treasury Board's rules are rules. They are not suggestions. For WE Charity, there was no problem. Money went out the door. Small businesses, sit and wait. Rent subsidies, sit and wait. Everyone else not connected to the Liberal Party, sit and wait.

• (1225)

Further, the Liberals violated the Official Languages Act, because the grants that were given to WE Charity had to go through an official languages assessment before they were approved. The Treasury Board president, who is from Quebec City, stated that the official languages analysis was not done. A couple of weeks ago in Parliament, the Liberals told us how the French language was under attack across the country. We heard about attacks on Premier Kenney and Premier Ford about not doing enough to protect the French Language. However, the senior Liberal minister from Quebec City purposely ignored the rules to give a grant to a Liberal-friendly group—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would remind my colleague that he may want to split his time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not recall the member for Edmonton West indicating he wished to share his time, but he can do so at this time.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Saskatoon West reminding me that I am splitting my time with the member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Guess who also did not have to wait for handouts from the Liberal government. Former Liberal member of Parliament Frank Baylis received about a third of a billion dollars for ventilators not even approved anywhere in the country. We have small businesses, restaurants and airlines all waiting for action by the government, but there is nothing. However, for those connected to the Liberal Party, the ATM is open and they can go on in.

I grew up in the hospitality industry. I worked from Victoria to Newfoundland, in northern Alberta and northern Ontario. The hotel and restaurant tourism industry is an incredible industry. It is larger than farming, mining, fishing and forestry. It is also the very first job for many newcomers to our country and many young people. Decades and decades ago it was an industry in which women had broken the glass ceiling, long before banking, government or any other industry. It was also a warm and welcoming industry for those in the LGBTQ community, where they could be accepted without

worry. It is an incredible industry. More important than just the finances this industry creates, there is also the social aspect as a first job. We need action from the government to support this industry.

A lot of things could be done right now, such as returning the HST-GST to hotels, supporting cities so they can grant property tax referrals to small businesses in the hotels and setting up tax credits for future conferences, when we come out of the pandemic, to help large employers and hotels. We could open up the parks for free stays and reduce fees at airports. A quarter of a billion dollars are collected in security fees, more than is paid out for security at airports. I heard the transport minister chime in earlier, and I hope this is something at which he will look. NavCan increased its fees. Airlines are getting wiped out. Their loads are down 90% and NavCan is increasing fees and security fees are going up. We could do a lot of things.

We hear numbers like 60% of restaurants could be shut down by the end of the pandemic. This is a perfect time for the Liberal government to eliminate the escalator fees for taxes. People may not know that these taxes go up every year and they are not approved by Parliament. They happen automatically. Now is the perfect time to eliminate them. We could get rid of the added carbon tax that is hurting small businesses.

The government should be doing a lot of things to help small businesses, hotels, restaurants, travel agents and the airlines. It is time for the government to stop leaving Canadians behind and to start looking after them, not just Liberal insiders such as at WE or other well-connected insiders. It is time to put Canadians first, which is why I support this motion 100%.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague two questions about the benefits of the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

First, how can my colleague boast that the improvements were proposed by the Conservative Party, when they were actually proposed by the Bloc Québécois at the Standing Committee on Finance? I should know, seeing as I was there.

Second, how can my colleague talk about how we need to pay the wage subsidy to struggling organizations while knowing full well that the Conservative Party, which, as far as I know, is not in especially dire financial straits, received almost \$716,000 from the program? Can my colleague tell me if his party is going to pay that money back and, if so, when?

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, if my colleague looked back at press releases and other things, she would see that the Conservative Party from day one was advocating for a faster and higher wage subsidy, well before the Bloc Québécois did.

As for the wage subsidy for the parties, we made it clear that when the other parties step up to return theirs, we will return ours as well.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague, for whom I have a lot of respect. His history of WE Charity is something I have been living very closely. He mentioned Frank Baylis.

Our committee studied the issue with respect to Frank Baylis and he was not found to have used his Liberal Party connections. It is important to be accurate on the record, because there is enough skulduggery going on with the Liberals that one could spend days and weeks working in the Liberal fields of corruption, but I do not think we need to go to areas where those deals were not made.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this. The Conservatives say that they are concerned about small business, but I have people calling me every day because their EI is running out. We know the Conservatives are blocking moving this legislation through the House. We need to get emergency measures out to people now.

Therefore, in a sign of good faith, would the Conservatives be willing to pass the motion to get the emergency benefits to people who are going to lose their EI now? Then we can talk about continuing help for other sectors as well.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry for bringing up WE. I am sure it sends shivers through his spine, like early PTSD.

If he wants to talk about Mr. Baylis, I will bring up another issue. When he was on the industry committee, that same Liberal MP lobbied a bit on a government contract. He lobbied the committee for more money for research. He ended up getting that contract about two months after he left. Sure the member can pass off one Liberal insider issue regarding ventilators, but others have to be looked at.

As for the subsidies, the Conservative Party has been there from day one supporting the government to get subsidies out fast. With Bill C-14, we have asked that the bill be split so we can get that part approved quickly, but that other issues, such as the \$1.83 trillion debt limit, be debated separately.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to hand it to my NDP colleague. Moments ago we heard him say that we should put the bickering and individual personal attacks aside and focus on a real question. What did the member for Edmonton West say in response? He diverted it right back to personal attacks on the individual, which the member from the NDP asked that he not do.

I will ask the member a very pointed question. If he is so interested in small businesses and getting them the supports they need, I will read to him a quote from Dan Kelly of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business regarding Bill C-14. He said, "Bill C-14 has some important measures...CFIB urges all parties to ensure this support is passed quickly."

His party held that up in here and then yesterday voted against it. What does he have to say to Dan Kelly and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business?

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, the height of irony is the member for Kingston and the Islands criticizing someone for a personal attack. I do not think that gentleman has once stepped into the House without spewing personal attacks on other members of the House.

Getting back to his question, Bill C-14 passed. However, where his government has been for two years without a budget? It could have put this support through at any time, perhaps in the summer, when it was not proroguing to avoid an investigation into a scandal. I suggest this gentleman look in the mirror and ask the question of himself and his party as to why it has taken so long, an entire year after the pandemic started, to get some of this support out.

• (1235)

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for more than a year now, I have been talking with women across my riding and across the country, many of whom are the main breadwinner of the family and have been faced with juggling the responsibilities of child care during imposed school closures with keeping their small businesses afloat. They have not been able to access income support because their industry does not qualify.

Particularly impacted are the many independent travel agents across the country, who worked tirelessly to assist travellers with repatriation flights at the beginning of the pandemic and later with attempts to get refunds for trips that would no longer be taken.

There are over 24,000 travel agents in Canada, over 75% of whom are women. Around 90% of travel agents are currently laid off. Many earn their income entirely by commission and are faced with commission clawbacks. These ladies worked long hours with no pay to ensure that they fulfilled what they considered was their responsibility towards their clients. They received no compensation for the hundreds of hours they spent working to re-book flights and attempting to get refunds for as many of them as possible. These travel agents did it because they are passionate about providing quality service from start to finish.

I have heard many on the government side reminiscing today about how we are now at the one-year anniversary of the pandemic. This serves to highlight the fact that they were not paying attention when this catastrophe actually started and why Canada has been consistently late from the very beginning.

As a matter of fact, it was clear that there was already trouble last year in January, not March, when my local Chinese dance association cancelled its New Year's celebration in Langley to protect our community—yet, following that clear warning cry, our health officials told us not to worry, that there was no need for masks and no need for travel restrictions.

The next clear sign that all was not well happened on the *Diamond Princess* at the end of January, not March. While the Liberals were busy twiddling their thumbs, independent travel advisers were getting frantic calls from their customers who were being quarantined on the ship. These courageous women worked hard to calm fears and get answers from wherever they could. We only need to look to them to understand how little the government was doing back when it could have made a huge impact on ensuring it was protecting our borders and our airports much earlier.

My sister is an independent travel agent with CruiseShipCenters. We have been struggling together with the impact of COVID since January, not March. She and her colleagues have moved heaven and earth to get their customers home safe. What did they get in return? Nothing. There was no support and no recognition, just dead air.

Just recently she was in the office celebrating her 20th year in the travel business. Her colleagues brought balloons and games to try to put a brave and cheerful face on what has been a horrendous year of incredible stress and no financial help. As they were about to cut the cake, the Liberal government announced that there would be no cruises into Vancouver until March 2022. Everyone burst into tears.

This was completely out of the blue and absolutely avoidable, had the Liberal government not been asleep at the wheel from the start.

There is another example: the many women entrepreneurs who run our local dance studios. They face the decimation of their industry despite their incredible efforts to pivot under the new COVID protocols, which changed without warning from day to day. They tried to encourage their thousands of students with the hope that their dance dreams would not be dashed. In the end, many of them have had to close their doors under the pressure of a year-long lockdown. Bills piled up, festivals and competitions were cancelled, student enrolment declined, staff moved on, and hope dwindled.

This week we are honouring these women in our communities who have fought to keep their small businesses open during a once-in-a-lifetime disaster. Their dedication to the health and wellness of our neighbourhoods is something more valuable than we can truly appreciate. However, they are reaching their breaking point. Help cannot be delayed any longer.

Today we have an opportunity to do more than just post something on social media in support of women. Today we can work towards providing solutions for those job creators who find themselves most impacted by lockdowns.

Lauren van den Berg, from Restaurants Canada, recently told the finance committee that thousands of restaurants are staring down the barrel of a gun. She said:

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Two decades of growth were erased in two months at this time last year. Essentially, our industry fell off a cliff and then broke both legs. The truth is, we're still struggling. Prior to the pandemic, the food service sector was Canada's fourth-largest employer. We directly employed 1.2 million people. However, our industry lost more jobs in the first six weeks of the pandemic than the entire Canadian economy lost during the 2008-09 recession. No other industry has come close to facing this level of shortfall. There are still more than 380,000 fewer jobs in the Canadian food service sector than there were in February 2020.

For restaurant owners and so many other small businesses, this motion for immediate sector-specific measures to help the hospitality industry cannot come soon enough. People are at the end of their rope, and it is starting to fray.

● (1240)

I cannot say how frustrated I was yesterday to learn that our Prime Minister had the gall to virtue-signal yet again with an announcement that his government's recovery plans will be crafted to help women bounce back from the shutdown. Here we are, more than a year into the pandemic, and only just yesterday we finally heard the government admit that in fact we are not all in this together. No, as a matter of fact: Women, and women entrepreneurs especially, have been hardest hit from the very beginning. How is it possible that only just now is it dawning on the Liberals that they need to focus their support programs on those who have been falling through the cracks from day one?

The report published Monday by the Labour Market Information Council states that women were more severely impacted in this recession than any other income group, and to this day they are the furthest away from recovery. I have been shouting this from the rooftop for months.

Another thing we were recently told at the finance committee is that the average small business owner has taken on \$170,000 in debt that is not even bank debt. Many of these businesses are small family-run operations. The owners have been struggling day by day to keep the doors open. Family members are called on to pitch in with busing tables, serving customers and washing dishes while caring for children and aging parents. They have been stretched to the maximum. They are losing sleep and they are losing hope. Now, on top of all that, they bear a heavy debt load as well. Through no fault of their own, this pandemic will stretch on much longer in Canada than in our other G7 partners. Slow vaccine procurement and a refusal to ensure a robust system of tracking and tracing have ensured that people will have to endure far longer than necessary. The government has failed miserably.

*Business of Supply*

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business stated that one in six independent businesses across Canada is at a significant risk of closing. That means there could be 181,000 fewer small, independently owned and operated businesses across the country, businesses that go bankrupt or wind down permanently, directly as a result of COVID and the damage sustained due to lockdown. That would represent 2.4 million Canadian private sector jobs being taken out at the same time.

We need to stop the bleeding now. Businesses need certainty. They need to know what they can expect. They need to be able to plan.

Then, without warning, the Liberals announced that they do not even plan to table a budget. Budgets are the most basic of planning devices that every entrepreneur knows they need to have. Without a plan, they are simply planning to fail. The current government has failed to produce a budget since 2019. That is two full years of spending chaos. We have been told by the PBO that the Liberals are spending so much so fast that they cannot even track it, yet they made sure to set aside extra funds for CRA audits of small businesses in the midst of this disaster.

I am begging the government to put itself in the shoes of small business owners, hard-working families who have sacrificed everything to keep their dreams alive. These desperate Canadians are looking to the government for real support, not another expert panel headed by a journalist turned finance minister who has no idea what it is like to build a business from scratch.

From the very beginning, the opposition has had to clean up these messes that the Liberals keep making. It blows my mind that more than a year into this pandemic, it takes another opposition motion to compel the government to do what industry leaders and small business owners have been calling for all along. I am assuming that the government has had the same stakeholder meetings with airlines, the tourism and hospitality industries, and organizations that represent small businesses that we on this side of the House have also had, and all they got from government was a complete lack of urgency.

It is this lack of urgency, the current government's catalogue of mistargeted programs, and its failure to give the provinces any options but lockdown that led to the prolongation of this pandemic for Canadians. We are going to be locked down for months longer than the rest of the world, and we need answers. Canadians deserve better.

• (1245)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that this member touched on cruise ships. My parents were on the *Grand Princess*, which was the cruise ship that was stuck off the coast of California for a number of days. They were quarantined in their cabin for five days before being led out of that ship by Canadian personnel, boarded onto a cargo flight that had been converted to have seats, and brought back to Trenton, where they went into quarantine.

Do you know what my father said about that flight, Mr. Speaker? He said that as that flight was taking off the ground on its way back

to Canada, the entire cabin of 150 passengers broke out into singing *O Canada*.

This government has been there from day one to support Canadians and has been there every step of the way, giving Canadians the supports they need to get through this pandemic. If this member is so interested in helping small businesses, why did she vote against Bill C-14 last night?

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, I also had a constituent and her husband who were on the *Diamond Princess*. She and her parents were stuck in quarantine for a long time. They had to stay in Japan because her parents both caught COVID, and in the end her father passed away. This was their anniversary gift to their parents. The incredible sadness they had to go through was enormous.

These travel advisers worked to help people get home and be repatriated, along with my own staff. Getting out of some of these countries was an absolute nightmare. We spent many nights working overnight, trying to get people onto planes. It was an absolute nightmare, and many people will say what a disaster it was just trying to get onto those planes.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I was very touched just a moment ago by the member for Kingston and the Islands when he was speaking of everyone on that repatriation flight back to Canada.

My experience as an MP, like the experience of my friend from Cloverdale—Langley City, was working around the clock to try to get people home from places around the world. If there was anyone working harder than all of us as individual MPs, it was the staff of the minister for global affairs and his hon. parliamentary secretary, who were all working very hard and diligently to get Canadians home.

I hate the partisanship that has entered into our debate on these issues. Everyone worked as hard as they possibly could. There were failings and shortcomings, but where we will agree is that there is a need for filling the gaps fast for small businesses that are still at risk. The highly affected sector program, with its cap on \$1 million for loans, will not meet the needs of a lot of our tourism sector.

Would the Conservative motion we are debating today cap the amount of help that would be going out? The motion suggests taking the same approach as the highly affected sector loan program.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important to recognize that we need to pull out the stops for small business. The numbers that I mentioned that we got from the CFIB as to how many small businesses are going to fail if we do not start helping right now and do it well is absolutely astronomical. We know that we will not be able to return from this disastrous situation of a lengthy lockdown without the maximum help possible for small businesses.

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**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very moved by the member's comments about small businesses and the struggles they have faced during this pandemic. As we see the government struggle with the procurement and distribution of vaccines, we are all very much concerned about the economy. If the Liberals have failed so badly in procuring and distributing these vaccines, how can we possibly rely on them to restore our economy and get Canadians working again?

What confidence does the member have in the current government to get this country returning to anywhere near its pre-pandemic status in terms of jobs for Canadians, the Canadian life we once knew and the quality of life we hope to achieve again as a nation?

• (1250)

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say I do not have confidence in the Liberals. When I saw they shut down the cruises into Vancouver until March 2022, I recognized they did not have Vancouver and British Columbia in mind. They are just not thinking ahead. They are constantly putting out fires and they are really harming our economy more and more by the day.

[Translation]

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Davenport.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their thoughts and contributions to this debate on the impact of the pandemic on Canadians, small businesses and various sectors of our economy.

This has definitely been a very difficult year for so many Canadians across the country. In recent months, and particularly in recent weeks, with the acceleration of vaccine deliveries to the provinces, we have reason to hope that better days are coming. I know they are coming, but until then, the federal government is committed to doing whatever it takes to help Canadians weather the crisis. That is what we have been doing since the beginning of the pandemic.

[English]

I am always pleased to discuss federal programs to support Canadian workers and small businesses. However, I am a little surprised that now, one year later, this is a new focus for my colleagues from the Conservative Party. After all, it was the member for Carleton, the then Conservative finance critic, who proudly proclaimed he and all Conservative members did not believe in “big, fat government programs” and that the COVID-19 pandemic's economic impacts could be addressed with just a few tax cuts.

In this light, let us then take a moment to appreciate just how far we have come and take stock of the Conservative motion before us today, which aims to broaden existing programs, increase government expenditures and even create new programs. In short, it sounds like now they are asking us to make our existing government programs even bigger and fatter.

Have no doubt, when it comes to our position and the position of the entire government, we knew from the very beginning, one year ago, that we had to intervene to ensure Canadians and Canadian small businesses had the supports they needed, and intervene we

did. We quickly put into place Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan. This plan continues to keep our economy stable, protect jobs and give Canadians the means to support their families.

One of the first measures we implemented was the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB, so folks could continue to pay their rent and mortgages, and feed their children, while doing their part to defeat the virus by staying home. Between March and October, as the House knows, the CERB alone supported nearly nine million Canadians.

As the situation continued to evolve, we put in place other critical benefits for Canadian workers. I am pleased to report to this House that, as of February 28, the Canada recovery benefit has supported 1.8 million Canadian workers. In addition, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit has supported close to 350,000 Canadian workers, and the Canada recovery sickness benefit has supported over 400,000 Canadian workers.

[Translation]

We recently introduced Bill C-24 to increase the number of weeks of benefits offered under those programs, but the Conservatives do not want to debate it. I will talk more about that later.

[English]

Of course I cannot mention our support to Canadian workers without mentioning the emergency wage subsidy. We are subsidizing the paycheques of over five million Canadian workers across the country through this subsidy. Every single day I speak to entrepreneurs who tell me that, without this program, they would have been forced to lay off employees. Their team, the essence of their business, would have been gone, and it is nearly impossible to recover from that.

In early April of last year we launched the Canada emergency business account, which is an interest-free loan that provides up to \$60,000 to small businesses, 33% of which is a grant. Close to 850,000 small businesses have already benefited from this critical funding. When businesses told us they needed additional help with their fixed costs, we introduced the rent subsidy program and the associated lockdown support, which is covering up to 90% of rent expenses for small businesses. There are 130,000 businesses across the country using this subsidy.

I am going to stray a bit from my remarks, but yesterday the Conservatives voted against Bill C-14, which would allow small businesses to claim the rent subsidy before their rent is due. Essentially, this measure would help businesses keep a greater cash flow and entrepreneurs weather difficult times, at no real extra cost to the federal government.

The Conservatives voted against something that would support small businesses with cash flow without allocating additional government funding. I cannot think of a more fiscally prudent way of supporting our business community, and Conservatives voted against it.

*Business of Supply*

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

The motion before us calls upon the government to provide new support for the hardest-hit businesses. We have already done just that. In January, we launched the highly affected sectors credit, which provides low-interest loans of up to \$1 million that are fully guaranteed by the federal government.

The motion also talks about providing specific support for the airline industry. My colleagues are well aware that we are currently in negotiations to provide support for this industry and that we are asking the industry to provide refunds for consumers and make certain commitments regarding regional transportation.

It is interesting that the Conservatives are proposing this motion now. Now that we are making progress on the negotiations and getting close to an agreement, the Conservatives have suddenly decided to make this their pet issue.

Our government recognizes the importance of our airline industry and will do what it takes to support it.

[*English*]

I am not going to sugar-coat it; all of these support programs cost money, and this government did spend a lot of money. It was money well spent. Personally, I consider myself to be somewhat fiscally conservative. We are the trustees of taxpayer dollars. We have a duty, in my view, to be prudent and wise in how we spend, but who in this House is willing to make the argument that families, workers and businesses should have gone deep into debt so that the government did not have to? Canada has a AAA credit rating, and we borrow at about a 0% interest rate. Small businesses cannot say the same.

As the parliamentary secretary responsible for small business and international trade, I am always willing to discuss with my colleagues opposite the ways we can support our entrepreneurs and business community, but there is simply no clear position being taken by the Conservative Party on how to do that. For example, the Conservative member for Steveston—Richmond East complained that we are spending like there is no tomorrow. The member for Souris—Moose Mountain said government spending was leading him to be disappointed in the current state of Canada, yet here we are today debating a Conservative motion asking for more spending. While I am aware that the Conservative finance portfolio recently changed hands, and some policy changes are normal, this is close to a complete U-turn.

It is hard these days to figure out what the Conservatives actually stand for. Is it more spending, or is it less? Do they agree that Canada should run a deficit to support Canadians, or do they not? Are they asking us to spend today so that they can attack us on the deficit later? Are they refusing to sit for extended hours in the evening to delay supports for Canadians?

Bill C-24 would substantially expand support for our workers. Unfortunately, our Conservative colleagues have refused to work through the evening to debate and pass Bill C-24. The member for Kildonan—St. Paul, the critic for future workforce development and disability inclusion herself, stated that Bill C-24 was straight-

forward and that time is of the essence to get this bill through, but that message does not seem to have made its way to the leadership of the Conservative Party.

It is a good thing Canadians know where we stand and where this government stands. They also know that we will continue to ensure Canadians and Canadian businesses are supported right through to the end of this pandemic, because protecting and supporting Canadians is, and will always be, our top priority.

• (1300)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the parliamentary secretary to address a point, because she touched on it when she talked about the government spending money so that families and individuals did not have to. Of course, one of the talking points I heard from the member for Barrie—Innisfil this morning was that it is not the government's money, but the people's money, which is obviously the case. I think most people are fully aware of that.

However, when the government chooses to do it, it is taking on that responsibility as a burden for society as a whole, as opposed to individual people, so that as the society can collectively get through struggles such as those we are facing right now. I am wondering if she would like to expand on that, particularly how important it is that society take on this burden, as opposed to individuals.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, not only for his question, but for holding down the House.

I would also agree with him that, yes, the government and all of the members in the House of Commons are trustees of taxpayer dollars. This money, I truly believe, belongs to Canadians, but I also think we are responsible for supporting Canadians with this money. If it were not for our government's many programs, and if it were not for the actions taken by our government, we would see families with credit card debt increasing at exponential rates. We would see families on the street, in some cases, because they could not pay their rent or their mortgages.

I am thinking also of the five million Canadians who we are supporting through the wage subsidy and how important it is, not only to their bottom line, that they are able to keep their job and their paycheques, but that they continue to be affiliated with their business, because when the pandemic ends we want businesses to be able to open their doors quickly, and they need to keep their staff on payroll. They need to keep—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will go on to the next question.

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we often hear them talk about helping Canadians. Nobody is against that. We all know there is a crisis.

All these speeches about their record suggest the Liberals are frozen in time. They seem to be stuck back in March 2020, whereas we are in the second wave of the pandemic and need to get out of it.

*Business of Supply*

The really sad thing is their lack of vision. We would like to know their plans for recovery. They have not tabled a budget in two years. Maybe they will do so in April. That is the point of the motion. Certain sectors need more targeted assistance.

They keep talking about the past, but what is their vision for the future?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

I completely agree that we need to be able to respond, and that is what we did in January. Just a couple of months ago we launched a new program for highly affected sectors. We saw how much this program was needed, for example, for our restaurants, the tourism industry and the hospitality industry.

Today we obviously want to debate Bill C-24, which gives the workers in Canada and Quebec who need it a few additional weeks of benefits.

We are constantly responding and adjusting our plan to meet the needs on the ground.

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on what the parliamentary secretary said about the wage subsidy and the way that is happening. Public reporting suggest that between the start of the pandemic and, I believe, September 30, Air Canada has received about \$492 million. That would make it one of the largest recipients of the wage subsidy in Canada. Despite this, workers who have been laid off have not been offered the wage subsidy.

This is happening not only at Air Canada but also at WestJet. Does the member know why this is happening, when the money was supposed to be going to protecting workers' jobs?

• (1305)

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Mr. Speaker, we received approximately 430,000 distinct applications for the wage subsidy. We did not discriminate on size because a worker who works for Air Canada is just as deserving of support from this federal government as a worker working for a small business. As much as I am obviously a huge proponent for small businesses right across the country, I believe that all Canadian workers, regardless of where they work, deserve the support of this federal government.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute honour for me to participate in today's debate on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport. Today's opposition day motion calls on our federal government to introduce new supports in the upcoming budget to help workers, families and small businesses struggling the most in this economic downturn and, in particular, those in industries most highly impacted, like arts and culture, hospitality and aviation, and to take some additional measures to prevent bankruptcies and layoffs as much as possible.

As we know, COVID-19 has had wide-ranging impacts in Canada. It has cost lives, jobs and the financial security of millions. This winter, we know, has been particularly tough on many business owners and their employees across the country, but Canadian businesses have shown tremendous resilience in adapting to these

challenges by adjusting their operations to keep Canadians safe, pivoting to new business models and scaling down their costs during times of weaker demand. I have seen that resilience right across my own riding of Davenport.

At the beginning of the pandemic, our government moved quickly and urgently to introduce comprehensive supports for Canadian workers and businesses impacted by COVID-19. As the pandemic has evolved, the government has monitored economic conditions closely and listened to feedback and made sure to continually bring forward more help and adjust our programs to address the issues that businesses and constituents have raised.

Let me run through some of the supports. Shortly after the pandemic started, the government introduced the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, known as CECRA, for small businesses, in partnership with the provinces and territories. This initiative was to lower rent by 75% for small businesses impacted by COVID-19. In the end, all told, CECRA provided over \$2 billion to more than 140,000 Canadian businesses across the country to help with their rent payments, supporting over 1.2 million workers. However, because the application proved to be challenging and many landlords were not persuaded to apply, in late 2020, the federal government transitioned to a new program that allowed small businesses to apply directly without their landlords.

The current rent subsidy provides a maximum base rate of 65% for businesses that have experienced a revenue drop of 70% or more. There is also an additional lockdown support, which provides an additional top-up of 25% for those forced to close under any mandatory local public health-ordered lockdowns. That adds up to a 90% rent subsidy for those under lockdown orders, such as in Toronto, although that lockdown was lifted earlier this week. To date, more than 134,000 small businesses have been approved for the rent subsidy and more than 54,000 have benefited from the 90% lockdown support benefit.

This government has also provided liquidity support to businesses and non-profits to help them with their operating costs. Last year, the federal government launched the Canada emergency business account, known as CEBA. This program provides zero-interest, partially forgivable loans to small businesses and other organizations that have experienced diminished revenues due to COVID-19, but who face ongoing costs that just cannot be avoided or delayed. By providing assistance and covering costs, CEBA is intended as a bridge until normal operations can resume after COVID-19.

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Initially, CEBA provided loans of up to \$40,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits, with loan forgiveness of up to \$10,000. Then we expanded the program to make an additional \$20,000 of interest-free loans available, with up to half of it being forgivable. This expansion effectively increased CEBA loans to a total of \$60,000 for eligible organizations, and if it is repaid by the end of 2022, up to \$20,000 becomes a grant. As of last week, CEBA loans have been disbursed to more than 843,000 Canadian businesses, totalling more than \$44 billion.

I travel across Davenport as much as possible outside of the lockdown periods, and small business owner Robin from Three Fates told me that “CEBA gave me the opportunity to keep my business open for customers, plain and simple, but providing me that influx of cash flow to cover my expenses when things got tough, I’ve been able to keep things moving for now and keep my store stocked for the neighbourhood traffic.” Our government has helped hundreds of thousands of businesses and their workers through programs like the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy, among many other programs that I do not have time to mention, but I always know there is more that we can do.

I also agree that there is always more we could do to support our small and medium-sized businesses because although the sad reality is that many of these businesses have closed during COVID-19, many are still in a precarious position and are not quite sure whether they will be able to survive. I have seen these impacts on the main streets in my riding of Davenport. I believe that our federal government must continue to do everything we can to prevent bankruptcies and layoffs, and to help Canadian businesses pivot to success as we come out of this pandemic.

• (1310)

The motion before us also talks about supports for the hardest-hit sectors, and I would like to talk about some of the additional supports that we have already put into place.

We know that the sectors that have been hardest hit are arts and culture, tourism and hospitality, which is why, last year, and actually more recently, we introduced the highly affected sectors credit availability program, or HASCAP. It provides access to guaranteed low-interest loans from participating financial institutions of anywhere between \$25,000 and \$1 million. This program is available to businesses that operate in those hard-hit sectors, such as tourism, hospitality, hotels, restaurants, arts and entertainment, and any that rely on in-person services.

The regional relief and recovery fund is another fund we have created for businesses in these highly impacted sectors that have not been able to access other supports. We actually have two tranches in that fund. The first time we introduced the fund, it was for \$1.5 billion. Then, in our fall economic statement, we proposed to top it up by \$500 million, because we know there are many businesses that for some reason or other have not been able to apply to some of the other programs, and/or they have needed additional supports they have not been able to get anywhere else.

Also, particularly impactful for my riding of Davenport, is the additional support that has been provided to the arts and culture sector. There is the \$500 million in emergency support that was distributed through Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the

Arts late last spring, and then, more recently, we announced \$181 million for arts, live music and live events, all of which have been absolutely devastated by COVID-19. This funding is going to provide support in many areas, including digital innovation. It will help with short-term contracts for new projects, and it will extend many of the existing programs in a safe way. I can tell members that this fund is particularly helpful to many of the businesses and groups within my riding of Davenport and right across the city of Toronto.

Finally, with the time I have left, I will address supports for the aviation sector.

My riding is home to many pilots, flight attendants and airline employees, many of whom have worked in the aviation sector for many years and who want to go back to work as soon as they can. I particularly care that we continue to have Canadian-owned airlines and continue to be able to support regional routes. Our federal government is working really hard to try to provide support for the industry, and I know that those negotiations and conversations are under way at the moment.

It is important to articulate that there has already been \$1.8 billion in wage subsidy support provided to the industry, on top of the additional \$1 billion given in support of airports and smaller airlines. However, any package that we are looking at must also keep Canadian customers whole. I know that many Canadians have had their flights cancelled without a refund, and I think that needs to be addressed. I also think that we need to be providing some support to independent travel agents and operators who have also been devastated by COVID-19.

In conclusion, the support programs I have discussed are just some of the programs the federal government has offered to those hard-hit businesses to try to minimize the impact on our economy and to set the stage for the creation of more than one million jobs. We know that financial challenges will persist for many organizations for at least the next few months, and that is why the programs I have outlined today are so critical.

If small businesses and non-profits are able to make ends meet with these additional supports, I know that they will be better able to pivot to a strong restart as more Canadians receive their vaccines and the Canadian economy fully reopens. We, the federal government, will not stop adapting and responding to the needs of Canadian businesses. Our message to them is that we have their back.



*Business of Supply*

• (1315)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that the member for Davenport seems to be aware of the challenges facing small businesses. However, from listening to Liberal members, they do not seem to understand that this is an urgent matter. In my riding, we have travel agents who worked 24-7 to get people home during the pandemic, but some of them have not had commissions for over a year.

From the day after International Women's Day, what we need to see from this government henceforth is certainty, but none of the Liberal members have come forward and said that they are going to be supporting this motion today, and that they will be delivering a budget on a certain date to give the small business community certainty in this country.

I am asking the member: Will she deliver for the tourism sector, and what date can we expect the budget to be tabled so that they have certainty to move forward? We do not want to see any more businesses lost.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I want to respond to in the member's excellent question.

First, I want to thank all of those travel operators, many of whom are independent and the vast majority of whom, by the way, are women who worked really hard to bring home Canadians from around the world just after the pandemic lockdowns started. I want to say a huge thanks to them.

As I mentioned in my speech, I do think that part of our support for the airline sector moving forward needs to be considered in terms of ongoing support. We appreciate that they have been disproportionately impacted. I fully support that as well.

As to whether or not our government is going to be presenting a budget, I am very privileged to be part of the finance committee. We have been holding pre-budget consultations. I am very assured that we will be presenting a budget sometime soon. I think it is just a matter of time. I think it is going to be in the coming—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are going to try to get two more questions in.

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

Earlier I asked my colleague opposite about the wage subsidies for struggling organizations and businesses. All of the political parties, with the exception of the Bloc Québécois, received wage subsidies. My colleague opposite said that they would pay that money back when the government does it. I realize they are worried, because every dollar counts in the economic recovery.

The following question is for my colleague opposite: Will you pay back the \$850,000 or so in wage subsidies? If so, when?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I remind the member that she must address her questions and comments through the Chair.

The member for Davenport.

[*English*]

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, I want to finish responding to the previous question, and then answer this at the same time.

I want to assure Canadians who might be watching that our federal government has urgently introduced programs to support small businesses, workers and all Canadians throughout this whole pandemic. I am very proud of all of the actions we have taken.

As for the last question on the Canada emergency wage subsidy, as of February 28, I know that our wage subsidy has helped protect over 5.1 million jobs, providing over \$68 billion in support in total.

Again, we are going to continue to support Canadians, to support our businesses and to support workers as we come out of this pandemic.

• (1320)

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last year during the COVID pandemic, the government has added debt equivalent to our entire nation's debt over the past 150 years, including two world wars and a financial crisis.

We have not seen anything from the government by way of a plan to deal with our economic future. How is the government going to deal with rising bond yields? How is the government going to deal with inflation that is above the 2% target? How is the government going to deal with business investment drying up in this country? How are we going to create the economic growth in the future needed to ensure that we can pay back this debt and provide a better future for future generations?

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, a top-of-mind question for many people.

I do want to remind the hon. member that at the onset of this pandemic we started with a very good financial situation, so we were able to put out very aggressive, very generous programs to support our economy, our workers and our businesses moving forward.

If members listen to any of the economists or thought leaders on whether we have spent too much or taken on too much debt, the vast majority of them say that if we had not spent the money we did, the costs would have been much greater to us.

We have put out a fall economic statement, and we have given an idea about how we intend to proceed. There will be more details and a much clearer game plan in the budget that is anticipated to be introduced this spring.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

Mr. Speaker, here we are a year later and I wish I had a different story to tell. I am starting to feel very much like a broken record, but the fact is we are having this opposition motion today because many Canadians feel left behind.

Despite all of the comments and the facts and the quotes given by my colleagues across the aisle in the government, we in the official opposition felt it was absolutely necessary to have this opposition day motion to recognize the hundreds of thousands of Canadians and workers who have been left behind. People who are listening to me know who they are. That is why we are having this opposition motion today.

To use the words of one of my favourite pop songs of 2005, from the artist JoJo, it is, unfortunately, *Too Little, Too Late*.

I recall, in December, being plucked from the House by my whip because it was announced on Reuters that a plan for the airline sector was coming. I was very nervous about this plan, but very excited. I led question period the next day, but the result was no plan.

Most recently, a couple of weeks ago, we saw in *The Globe and Mail* excitement that a plan for the airline sector was on the horizon and imminent. The word imminent has been used a lot. In fact, I am on my second transport minister, if I may say so, and still there is no plan. All of this conversation actually began back in November, but still there is no plan.

I could go on and on about the devastation, and I have before. We have seen jobs lost, routes lost, market share lost and leakage. These are a result of the government's inaction.

We have the gross domestic product for the tourism industry down almost 50% to 70% since 2020. Travel restrictions could also lead to significant losses in other industries, with the overall impact resulting in a 1.2% to 1.7% reduction in GDP.

The U.S. government, on the other hand, has provided \$7 billion in support already for its industry. As a result, it will have a significant advantage.

In October 2020, the main carriers for the United States, including Delta, United and American Airlines, were operating at approximately 50% of their typical capacity. In comparison, Canadian carriers were operating at 25% of capacity, so there is no comparison.

It is the same in Europe. In October 2019, Canadian carriers operated at approximately 64% of capacity, trans-Atlantic share, while European carriers held 36% only by Canadians. In October 2020, Canadian and European each held 50%, so it has changed significantly.

In addition, we have seen a significant loss of regional routes. In Canada alone, we have lost service to Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Fredericton, New Brunswick; Deer Lake, Newfoundland and Labrador; Sydney, Nova Scotia; Saint John, New Brunswick; Bathurst, New Brunswick; Wabush, Newfoundland; Gaspé, Quebec; Baie-Comeau, Quebec; Mont-Joli, Quebec; Val-d'Or, Quebec; Kingston, Ontario; and North Bay, Ontario. Air Canada is currently losing an average of \$15 million per day and it has had to lay off approximately 20,000 employees as a result of COVID-19.

As well, international carriers are able to indirectly access several Canadian markets through nearby U.S. airports. This is known as leakage. We see this at the three Bs, as I refer to Bellingham, Burlington and Buffalo.

We have asked the government on several occasions to take action. We have asked for rapid testing, testing on arrival and testing on departure. The industry took the initiative through many pilot projects. In my hometown of YYC, we saw the Calgary border testing pilot program, where there was a test on arrival, a second test on day six or seven and, if necessary, there was a third test. We saw the possibility to reduce the quarantine time by up to an entire week, and the government did not act upon this.

We also saw the McMaster project out of Toronto Pearson Airport, where there was testing upon arrival, a second test and then a third test, with 0.7% detected upon arrival, 0.3% on day seven and less than 0.1% on day 14.

● (1325)

YVR also had its own pilot project but unfortunately, with the implementation of the three-day hotel quarantine, we saw the dismissal of all of these projects. Looking ahead to what the future looks like for the Canadian aviation sector, it is grim with no routes, expensive fares and stopovers. As I mentioned, many regional routes have had service suspended. It will be several years before we see these routes reinstated.

Airlines are very concerned about the loss of market share if they are unable to connect to smaller regions. I am very concerned about pilots, and the tens of thousands of workers who are leaving Canada to work in other jurisdictions. We need to prevent their jobs from moving to countries with established aviation sectors, and keep them here in Canada where they should be.

I have mentioned before the conversation about sun destinations. Just two weeks ago I was able to go to the Expedia website and book a ticket from Vancouver, with a 31-minute stop in Seattle, that carried on to Puerto Vallarta. American carriers are, in fact, still able to take Canadians to sun destinations when our own airlines have been told that they cannot travel to sun destinations. It is not right and it is not fair. It is failing Canadians and Canadian businesses.

The future looks very grim for aviation, and I worry about the family in Sherbrooke, Quebec, who wants to go to Disney World. They will not be able to as a result of the cost, and because of the demand that supply will not be able to meet. I am very concerned about that as well.

The government has failed from the very beginning of the pandemic. It failed in many regards, including telling Canadians that there was no person-to-person spread of COVID-19, and that border control measures and masks did not work. It sent critical supplies of personal protective equipment to China when we had a shortage here in Canada. It failed to ensure that Canadians had access to rapid-testing at-home options. It shut down the federal pandemic early warning system just months before COVID-19. Those are all major failures.

We have known since November that Canada is well behind other countries when it comes to vaccine procurement. Justin Trudeau said this was because Canada no longer has any—

• (1330)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think the hon. member may have caught that already, but please refer to other hon. members by their title or their riding name.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

The Prime Minister said that this was because Canada no longer had any domestic production capacity for vaccines. Seven months prior, in May, the government announced tens of millions of dollars to increase domestic production capacity and said that two Canadian production facilities would have the capacity to produce 70,000 to 100,000 doses per month by summer 2020, with an even greater production capacity in the months to follow. In August, the government said that Canada would be able to make 250,000 vaccine doses by November. We know now that this did not happen.

The reality now is that Canada is behind the U.S., the U.K., the European Union, Mexico, Brazil, India and Indonesia for vaccine procurement. There are over 2.7 billion people, or one-third of the population of the planet, ahead of Canada for a vaccine. Where is the Prime Minister's plan?

What we have learned from the Liberal government is that it is entirely possible to spend billions of dollars and still leave millions of Canadians behind. Canada's unemployment rate is currently at 8.5%. This is among the highest in the G7, despite Canada spending more than any other country in the OECD. As of January 21, according to Statistics Canada, Canada now has 858,000 fewer jobs than it did in February of last year, before COVID-19 began.

Canada has now gone 460 days without a federal budget, and the Prime Minister has indicated struggling Canadians should not expect one any time soon. If the government has failed the airline sector, if the government has failed Canadian workers and if the government has failed during the pandemic, how can we possibly count on it to lead us out of the pandemic and save our economy?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there was a ton of information there I could get into. I would love to address all of it, but I know you will cut me off, so I will ask a quick question.

This motion is about spending more money, on top of what we have already spent, to support Canadians. I am in favour of supporting Canadians as much as we can. I asked a question of the member for Abbotsford who introduced this earlier today and he said, "Debt is not a bad thing." That is great. I am glad to hear the member for Abbotsford say that. However, then the member for

### *Business of Supply*

Sturgeon River—Parkland just moments ago was criticizing the government for how much debt it has.

Is the member in camp Abbotsford, that debt is okay, or is she in camp Sturgeon River, that debt is a bad thing?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we have seen the Liberals repeatedly putting the entire opposition in a very difficult position. Because of their lack of capacity and competence, they come up with last-minute legislation to try to help Canadians, but the result is that, first, there are many gaps for the opposition to address and second, the opposition is forced to support legislation because we really do not want to leave Canadians in a difficult position. If the Liberals had any foresight, any true consideration for Canadians or for the government working together in a team Canada approach, they would be more thoughtful in their consideration of the necessary policies and they would allow the opposition members time to consider and to respond, instead of having to continuously go along with whatever the Liberals cook up in a half-effort attempt to help Canadians.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that the Conservative motion today makes specific references to supporting workers and supporting small businesses, because that is very important in ridings right across this country.

I have heard from constituents who have had to pay massive dental care costs and pharmacare costs. Often these unexpected costs can throw a family's monthly budget completely out of whack and put massive pressure on their ability to pay other family bills.

I am wondering this: Will the member support efforts to broaden the Canada Health Act, and use the existing federal model to make sure that we can cover things like pharmacare and dental care? This would end up saving money for small businesses and individuals, and would help families recover from this pandemic in much better shape than they are in currently.

• (1335)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, the member and I both agree that the government is keeping Canadians in perpetual poverty. It is literally taxing them to death and then throwing out bread-crumbs while not creating jobs, not creating prosperity and not creating a future. Do Canadians ever look in the mirror and wonder what they are going to do when the CERB runs out? What jobs will there be for them when the CEWS is no longer there for them? They are catching on. They are recognizing that the government wants them to be under its control, under its finger, rather than allowing Canadians to create prosperous lives for themselves.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Calgary Midnapore for her comments and for her great work raising issues pertaining to the airline sector. In northwestern Ontario, obviously this is a very important sector not just for tourism, but to service many remote communities and the vast majority of the 42 first nations that I represent. I am wondering if the member could speak more to the frustration we have with the fact that Liberal inaction has continued to leave our airline sector in limbo.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, the airline sector feels completely left behind. There is not a day that goes by that I do not get a message from an airline worker who says, "I have supported the Liberals my entire life, but I am never voting Liberal again after their tossing aside of the airline sector." I get messages from mothers who are worried about their sons and daughters who have lost their jobs in the airline sector. I get the saddest pictures of pilots in uniform with their children hugging them, and that is the reason why we are having this motion here today. It is because all of these Canadians feel abandoned and left behind by the government.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak to this motion, which is so important for the regions of Quebec and for the entire country. I would like to thank my colleague for her impressive speech on the importance of supporting airline industry workers and, especially, of making sure that travellers can finally get their money back.

The question we need to ask, and the question that all Canadians are asking, is the following: What are the government and companies doing for us?

This is our first pandemic. Most of us had never lived through something like this before. Our main concern, first and foremost, is our health and that of our loved ones. Then, our priority is to ensure the safety of our loved ones and our ability to live our lives safely.

We are also concerned about how our families will be able to survive and keep bread on the table. We need a paycheque. It is very important that all Canadians be sure that they have the means to support their family.

It is also important that we be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel when we ask the government for help. We hope that the government will make the right decisions so that, after all this, we do not end up in a worse position than the one we are in now. What people are asking for is transparency on the part of the government and informed decisions to help protect as many people as possible with what we have, without going to extremes.

What Canadians are hoping, once we have dealt with the health and safety issues, is that we can focus on the economic recovery. After living in a difficult situation for so long, Canadians are wondering how they will get by in circumstances where, for many of us, the government has replaced income normally generated by entrepreneurship, work, self-employment, community assistance and fundraising. In short, what Canadians want is to get their lives back and not depend on the Canadian government for every decision.

Although the government set up numerous assistance programs, with the support of the opposition parties, because we could not let

Canadians down at such a difficult time, some people still fell through the cracks. Perhaps it did not happen at the beginning of the pandemic, because they had some savings or because companies with more cash and fewer expenses managed to get by, but now we are entering an extremely trying period.

I have heard from hundreds of businesses in my riding that have managed to get this far but are now wondering how they will get through the next few months. Many businesses, sectors and Canadians are going to have a hard time weathering the coming months.

The Conservatives introduced a motion today to show that it is important to think about these workers and to include measures in the next federal budget to help the workers and families who will have the hardest time in the coming months. Some are already in trouble.

Incidentally, we learned this week that the Liberal government has unfortunately decided to postpone its budget. According to media reports, it will not be tabled in March or at the beginning of April. We will have been without a budget for two years.

That means that the measures we are asking to be implemented as soon as possible will be delayed, and unfortunately, there will be more victims. More businesses will suffer. Workers will lose their jobs because the government did not act in time to help them.

This is a huge problem, and it reflects how this government managed vaccine procurement for Canadians. As the Prime Minister keeps repeating, we have a massive portfolio of vaccines. However, we are at the back of the pack when it comes to vaccine administration and vaccination rates.

● (1340)

If the government had planned ahead, if it had anticipated what was coming, as many people did, and if it had not dismantled Canada's small pandemic alert unit, which was the envy of all other countries, it would have seen the pandemic coming and could have planned for vaccines.

Unfortunately, the government was not on the ball in terms of vaccine procurement.

Few contracts have been made public, but we know that the government failed to ensure an early supply of vaccines. That would have allowed Canadians to keep their jobs and Canadian businesses to reopen as soon as possible, so that Canadians who need a paycheque could get one.

Instead, the government decided to postpone the budget for purely political reasons, and to “open windows”, as we say in politics, in order to make Canadians as happy as possible and keep buying votes by handing out money. It is not by scattering cash willy-nilly that we will succeed, but by investing money in the right places, where it is needed. That is what the official opposition has been saying since the beginning of the pandemic.

Our motion focuses in particular on tourism, hospitality and charitable organizations. As I mentioned, in regions like mine, tourism involves hotels and tourist attractions, but also events such as festivals, celebrations, public markets and activities in every town. The entire sector has been overlooked by the various assistance programs.

Unfortunately, if these events do not survive the pandemic, the tourism industry in our regions will suffer for years to come. These organizations are holding on by their fingernails thanks to volunteers. It is important to keep the charitable organizations that organize dinners, activities and brunches to fund their activities in operation. These are not recreational activities, but activities that help other Canadians who are in even more dire straits.

Unfortunately, these organizations are having to close their doors because they simply do not have enough money to pay their employees and are no longer able to hold activities because of the health measures in place. It is a tragedy for Canadian society when charitable organizations can no longer operate because there are no assistance programs to help them get through difficult times.

I would now like to talk about paragraph b) of the opposition's motion concerning repayable loans for airlines. I received several letters from people in my riding who bought airline tickets before the pandemic and who were offered travel credits. Unfortunately, they cannot travel, and they should not be travelling, but they would like to see their money back. Their money is still in the hands of the airlines, because the government is unable to reach an agreement with them about how it can help. What we are saying is that the next budget must include repayable loans for airlines provided they reimburse Canadians who bought travel tickets and were unfortunately unable to travel. Today, the airline is still holding vast amounts of money which, for most Canadians, represent a year's worth of savings.

Lastly, it is important to have a rapid response solution. Small and medium-sized businesses need access to quick loans. We cannot let all of the small businesses that suffered all year and were excluded from the various assistance programs close their doors. Most workers in these companies are women. They work in restaurants, stores, small local retail businesses and other small businesses. It is important that we think about them. We must put in place simple and quick means of providing assistance.

For all of these reasons, I invite all members of parliament who care about the economic development of our regions to support the Conservative Party's motion.

• (1345)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the member departed from the motion and

### *Business of Supply*

talked quite a bit about vaccines and other things. I hope he will do me the same courtesy and allow me to depart from the motion as well.

Why was the Conservative Party against the unanimous consent motion yesterday to continue debating into the evening so we could get Bill C-24 passed? This bill is about unemployment insurance for people who will have no unemployment insurance as of March 27, and it requires royal assent by March 21. These are people in need right now.

Why will the Conservatives not sit later into the evening to allow us to discuss this very important measure and get supports to people who need it through the employment insurance system?

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Speaker, it is pathetic to see the Liberal members trying to blame the opposition for their inability to manage the legislative agenda.

This bill could have been introduced and debated well before yesterday, and Canadians would have been entitled to assistance. Not only is this government unable to manage its legislative agenda, but it is also incapable of tabling a budget. We have been waiting for a budget for two years. We thought the government might table one in March, but now it looks like we might have to wait until April.

This government's only interest is to call an election in the midst of a pandemic. We will not take any lessons from the Liberals about legislative agendas.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I, too, am angry about the Liberal government's inability to help the airline and aerospace industries, which provide a lot of jobs.

I want to come back to what my colleague said about our inability to produce vaccines in Canada. Because of previous Liberal and Conservative governments, Canada has lost its ability to manufacture vaccines. Over the past year, we have seen how important this is because we have become dependent on other countries and on the goodwill of private companies that do not hesitate to move their operations elsewhere if they fail to make a profit.

What does my colleague think about the NDP's proposal to have a national public vaccine production capacity, perhaps even under the authority of a Crown corporation, so that when the next pandemic hits, Canada will no longer have to depend on foreign countries or private companies?

• (1350)

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

The Liberal government's management of vaccine procurement has been pathetic. It staked Canadians' fate and health on a deal with a company that provided no assurances that it would deliver on its promises to our people.

*Business of Supply*

It rejected proposals from Canadian companies that were willing to do whatever it took to produce vaccines here. When it comes time to take stock of this pandemic, the vaccine procurement strategy will be the biggest thorn in the Liberal government's side. The reality is that the government completely missed the boat and is 100% to blame for the vaccination delays prolonging the crisis.

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

I would like him to tell us about the real, undeniable, public evidence that Canada has spent the most money per capita but has the highest unemployment rate and the worst-performing economy. Moreover, according to that evidence, Canada is one of the few countries in the world that does not yet have an economic recovery plan.

In his speech, my colleague stressed that it has now been more than two years since the government last tabled a budget for Canadians and gave opposition MPs an opportunity to question the government and see what is what.

We now rank 56th in terms of vaccine deployment. Vaccines are what will get us out of this crisis, restart the economy and prevent deaths. We have to tell it like it is. Also, the aviation and aerospace sectors have been left to fend for themselves. I am sure my colleague, too, has been hearing from constituents about that, never mind the skyrocketing debt.

What does my colleague think about this government's performance in the accountability department?

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska really put his finger on the problem: Liberal incompetence in managing the pandemic.

This was a problem even before the crisis began. While we were in an exceptional financial situation and the economy was doing well everywhere, the Liberal government was taking us deeper and deeper into debt, to levels we never thought possible at the time. The Conservatives repeatedly warned the government that Canada would be in dire straits once the crisis arrived. However, the Liberals continued to govern in the same way, even during the crisis. They act as though there is no problem, because it is not their money. My colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska just listed all the consequences this will have.

We did not achieve the results we expected considering the amount of money invested. When we supported the government in its plans to help Canadians, we hoped that the money would go to the right people. Unfortunately, Canadians saw their incomes increase by 17% in the midst of a pandemic because the government distributed its assistance too broadly, rather than specifically helping those who really needed it.

*[English]*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Surrey—Newton.

The government is and has been working on the issue. Negotiations are currently under way. Even some of my NDP friends have acknowledged that up front. I suspect that is the reason we are having this discussion now. The Conservatives see what the government has been working on and quite possibly are trying to get a little ahead of what we are doing.

When we listen to either the Prime Minister or the minister responsible, there is no doubt what we are talking about with respect to further support for taxpayers. We have made three things a priority: refunding Canadians for cancelled flights; retaining and reinstating regional routes in Canada; and, the most important one for me personally, protecting jobs across the air sector. All of these are in negotiations right now. We know what the priority of the Government of Canada is. Therefore, I am not surprised the Conservatives chose to bring the motion forward today, recognizing, at least in part, some of the things we are doing.

I cannot support the motion for a number of different reasons.

We have recognized from day one how important this industry is to our country. Those regional airports and our airlines are absolutely critical to our future economic prosperity. That is one of the reasons why we have invested so much energy and resources.

I listened to the mover of the motion, the Conservative finance critic. The Conservatives are very good at spin. They like to give false information. For example, the Conservative finance critic said, and this is a direct quote from him earlier today when he moved the motion, "The Liberal government has been promising support for Canada's airline industry for over a year and still nothing. Today Canada is the only G7 country that has not supported its airlines."

We know the critic for finance is wrong. It is wrong for him to make that sort of a statement. The reality is that we have invested about \$1.8 billion toward the Canada emergency wage subsidy for the airline industry, not to mention the over \$1 billion in support for airports and smaller airlines in the fall economic statement.

The Conservative finance critic then went on to say that the charitable sector had been all but abandoned "unless one's name is Kielburger", who leads the WE Charity, because Liberal insiders and friends of the Prime Minister had a direct line to the Prime Minister's Office. What a bunch of crap. That is not true. Once again, the Conservatives are trying to give misinformation to Canadians. Two things I have noticed over the last while with the Conservatives are that they are a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons by continuously filibustering and not letting important legislation pass. They continue to give misinformation on the charitable sector.

Members should think about this. Canadian charities and non-profits have been playing a critical role during the pandemic and have done a phenomenal job. They should be applauded for their efforts. Canadian charities have been listened to, with \$350 million available through the emergency community support program; \$7.5 million for Kids Help Phone to help provide young people support for mental health; \$9 million through United Way Canada, which assisted seniors and others with the 211 phone line; \$100 million to food banks to improve access to food for Canadians who are facing social, economic and health impacts. Actions speak louder than words.

The member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who is the workforce development critic, tweeted that time was running out for Canadians with expiring EI benefits. Yesterday was a good opportunity to pass Bill C-24, to send it to the committee stage at least.

• (1355)

We know the Conservatives, as they did yesterday, will want to continue to filibuster as much as possible. In the last number of months, the Conservative Party consistently has played partisan party politics over what most, if not all, Canadians want us to be focused on, and that is the pandemic. We have seen tangible examples of that.

I am challenging my Conservatives friends to reflect on some of the things they are preventing from happening. They should think about the debates and the filibusters that take place. The Conservatives say that they support actions to combat the pandemic, but that is just not true. I will expand on how they are filibustering and denying Canadians the types of benefits we are trying to—

• (1400)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am going to interrupt the parliamentary secretary there. We are going to get on with Statements by Members. The hon. parliamentary secretary will have four minutes remaining in his time when the House next gets back to debate on the question and the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has shone a light on how we as a society treat our seniors. We saw and heard horror stories of seniors left alone with no food or water and not being able to see their families.

My constituents of Don Valley East are demanding that the federal government take a leadership role in developing national standards for long-term care. Seniors have contributed tremendously to building our great country and it is important that we as a society look after them.

I ask all members to work together to develop national standards for long-term care facilities. This can be done in consultation with seniors organizations and by adopting best practices from those provinces that have avoided such crises as well as ensuring front-line workers get paid a decent wage.

### Statements by Members

#### DAVID SCHINDLER

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has lost a passionate and tireless advocate for our most vital resource, fresh water.

Dr. David Schindler was not only a world-renowned limnologist who, in 1991, won the prestigious Stockholm Water Prize; he was also responsible for fundamental shifts in North American environmental policy through his pioneering field work, most famously at the Experimental Lakes Area, which he co-founded.

Dr. Schindler was in many ways a public intellectual. He made ecology accessible in the manner of Rachel Carson. His research sounded the alarm on acid rain and led to the banning of high-phosphorus laundry detergent. Dr. Schindler's work on the impacts of the oil sands on the Athabasca River watershed inspired a study by the House of Commons environment committee on the issue and led to changes in the way water quality is monitored in the watershed.

I ask members to join me in offering our deepest condolences to Dr. Schindler's wife Suzanne, daughters Eva and Rachel, and son Daniel.

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#### ALFIE FROMAGER

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to a country music icon, the great Alfie Fromager.

Alfie started his music career at the age of 12 on 560 CFOS. It was at the Owen Sound centennial in 1957 with his late brother Neil when his music career really took off, and by 1967 Fromager had taken over as the host on TV's CKVR *Make Mine Country*, which featured artists like Stompin' Tom Connors and Carroll Baker. In fact, Alfie was the first person to put Stompin' Tom on television.

Alfie opened for many famous country music entertainers over his career, including Hank Snow and Johnny Cash. Local musician Arnie Clark describes Alfie as a big, lovable music pioneer who was everyone's friend. He loved to joke, was down to earth and cared about people more than about being famous.

Fromager was one of the first inductees into the Bruce Grey Music Hall of Fame in 2015. Former MPP Bill Murdoch told me this morning that “Alfie was a generous easygoing guy to get along with who just loved to entertain. In fact, during one show after his induction, it was a challenge to get him off of the stage.”

*Statements by Members*

Though a music icon, Alfie was first and foremost a family man who loved his wife Gladys. To Gladys and the family, I give the deepest condolences.

Alfie will be missed by many. May he rest in peace.

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**PANINO CAPPUCCINO**

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Panino Cappuccino, a Humber River—Black Creek institution, for being awarded Top Choice for the best Italian restaurant in Toronto in 2021. Anyone who has had the pleasure of visiting Panino Cappuccino for lunch or dinner knows that this prestigious award is thoroughly deserved.

This family business has been a staple in the community for over a decade, and it brings me so much joy to see their hard work and dedication rewarded with this tremendous award. At a time when small businesses, especially restaurants, are hurting, I want to encourage all of us to patronize small businesses, such as Panino Cappuccino, so they can continue to serve our communities long after this pandemic has gone away.

I congratulate the team at Panino Cappuccino. I cannot wait to be back.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[Translation]

**LUC CORDEAU**

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to Luc Cordeau, who was devoted to preserving and enhancing the heritage and traditions of Saint-Hyacinthe. He passed away on February 23.

Born in Saint-Pie in 1959, Luc Cordeau was involved with the regional historical society for 36 years and served as archivist and executive director of the Centre d'histoire de Sainte-Hyacinthe.

His family describes him as a living library and meticulous perfectionist who never overlooked the slightest detail and valued hard evidence over gossip. Once he got going on the subject of history, it was hard to stop him.

Shortly before his death, Luc Cordeau said, "I am extremely passionate about researching our local and regional history. I love it when my research turns up people whose names have been forgotten but who did a lot for their communities."

The people of Sainte-Hyacinthe will never forget his name.

Thank you, Luc Cordeau.

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[English]

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the dream of home ownership, once achievable for most Canadians, is drifting out of reach for our middle class, espe-

cially young parents. House prices are simply quite divorced from reality. This should not be a surprise. Millennials have known this for years, but it was a shock to CMHC, which last June was warning of a 9% to 18% decline in house prices. Instead, prices jumped more than 17% nationwide.

Why are prices so high during the worst economic crisis in a decade? There are a number of factors, but chief among them is the Bank of Canada's use of quantitative easing with the Government of Canada. Printing money to buy debt has reduced mortgage rates and drastically inflated home prices in the interim.

When will the government get a handle on our nation's finances, publish a budget and make some sort of meaningful effort to support the ability of millennials to purchase a home? What are we doing to secure their futures? Do we want an entire generation of Canadians living in basement suites?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FRANCOPHONIE MONTH**

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, March is Francophonie month, and I encourage all francophones and francophiles to celebrate our language, our culture and our heritage.

We cannot forget the sacrifices our parents and grandparents made to protect our language, so we need to keep our traditions alive and pass them on to our children.

My aunt Florence Serré has written a new book called *Mon terroir à nous*, which is a tribute to the history of the francophone families and her childhood between 1940 and 1960 in the village of Desaulniers, near Sturgeon Falls, Ontario.

On March 27, Collège Boréal is hosting the 48th La Nuit sur l'étang via Zoom, bringing together participants and artists from all over. We must never forget our good old stories and folk songs.

Visit the Franco Ontariens du Nord de l'Ontario and the West Nipissing Facebook groups to help protect the French language.

Let us all be proud of our heritage.

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[English]

**TRUCKING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the important contributions that truck drivers across Canada have made to our pandemic recovery efforts.



Over the past year, truckers have ensured that our nation's supply chain continues to deliver the essentials we all rely on. Last week I met virtually with the United Truckers Association, an organization that represents over 1,100 independent operators in B.C. Hearing about the precautions their members are taking to maintain safe working conditions and the various pandemic challenges they have had to face was truly inspiring.

I encourage all members to join me in showing appreciation for truck drivers from coast to coast to coast.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### LAWRENCE COTTON

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, I want to pay tribute to Lawrence Cotton, a pillar of my community of Brome—Missisquoi.

[*English*]

After a long and distinguished career in the Canadian Armed Forces, Lawrence became a volunteer for his local chapter of the Knights of Columbus. He later became its grand knight through his tireless work in the community.

[*Translation*]

Lawrence's colleagues greatly admire him. They describe him as a man with an indomitable spirit who is not afraid to roll up his sleeves to help the people in our community.

For example, every year, Lawrence recruits volunteers and distributes Christmas hampers to those in need. Lawrence is also involved in politics in my region and campaigns tirelessly for the rights of our veterans.

I sincerely thank this man who makes a real difference in the lives of residents of Brome—Missisquoi, particularly during the pandemic.

• (1410)

[*English*]

From everybody in our community and from the bottom of my heart, we thank Lawrence for his hard work and sacrifice.

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#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberals claim to care about public safety, but they do not. With the PM gunning for an election, he is desperate to cover up his many failures on COVID and everything else, so he returns to the old Liberal playbook and flips to the page on targeting law-abiding firearms owners. Voila: Bill C-21 was born.

Canadians are not fools, though, and Liberal hypocrisy shone through when they introduced only a few days later Bill C-22, which lessens penalties for the real criminals who commit crimes with the real problem: illegal guns. Liberals are playing politics, and Canadians are paying the price. With last year's OIC and Bill C-21 and Bill C-22, Liberals have shown that they do not actually care about public safety, nor are they willing to get tough on crime.

#### Statements by Members

Canadians deserve better, and Conservatives are ready to respect responsible firearms owners' rights and deal with the real problem: smuggled guns and gangs.

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#### AWARDS TO WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ORLEANS

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this past Friday, I had the privilege to present the 2021 Orleans leading women and girls recognition awards to honour the exceptional contributions of 35 women leaders and community volunteers in Orleans.

Their hard work, passion and dedication have had a tremendous impact on our community, and they have been outstanding role models for women and girls in Orleans and beyond. As part of an annual tradition to mark International Women's Day, we held a virtual breakfast with more than 80 participants to present these awards and exchange experiences of service and leadership.

[*Translation*]

I was inspired by their story, their strength and their enthusiasm for making a difference in our community. I want to thank all of these women and girls, these leaders in Orléans, for their hard work and perseverance, as well as all women who are trying to make the world a more equal and inclusive place.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### AIRLINE INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has completely ignored the aviation sector, allowing tens of thousands of jobs to be lost with still no end in sight. With the lack of service to over a dozen airports and the loss of countless regional routes, our vast country is no longer as connected as it once was. Travelling to see loved ones or even for essential business now requires multiple layovers in addition to a lengthy drive.

Recovery will not be instant, and any supposed support from the government is coming far too late. Canada's airlines will not be able to compete internationally with the many carriers that received assistance back in May or June of last year, and the result will be a further loss of market share and unaffordable fares for Canadians.

*Statements by Members*

For a year now, the government has failed in its response to the pandemic, neglecting support to vital sectors and turning its back on Canadian workers. With its record of failure, neglect and incompetence, why should Canadians trust—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

\* \* \*

**WALTER GRETZKY**

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Walter Gretzky, a national treasure, left us last Thursday to be with his beloved wife Phyllis in heaven. His life was pure authenticity. Gratefulness and humility were his strengths. He touched the lives of millions, cheering on everyone equally. He was the world's greatest hockey dad and one of the greatest patriots of our time. Born of European immigrants in Canning, Ontario, his life was not easy and was full of adversity.

To Wayne, Kim, Keith, Brent, Glen and his grandchildren, the nation mourns with them and celebrates his life with them.

He would often say Brantford is the centre of the universe. If someone was in his company, he would lean over and quietly say in the person's ear, "You are the best." We can debate the centre of the universe, but there is no debate about who was the best: Walter Gretzky was and will remain the best of the best of the best.

Rest in peace, my friend.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

**CONVERSION THERAPY**

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government is dragging its feet on banning conversion therapy. The justice committee completed its study of Bill C-6 last December, yet we still have not seen it come back to the House for a final debate and vote.

While I am confident a ban on conversion therapy will eventually pass, this will be only the first step. We heard clearly that there needs to be systematic support for survivors of conversion therapy and support for those who are still faced with misguided and harmful attempts to get them to change their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

One tool the federal government should use to combat these homophobic and transphobic attitudes is to set public health standards for comprehensive sex education, sex education which, at its core, affirms and celebrates the sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression of all Canadians.

If we adopt standards for sex education that are affirming, comprehensive and in accord with our international human rights obligations, then we have a chance to stamp out not only conversion therapy but also the attitudes that cause it.

[*Translation*]

**TAIGA MOTORS**

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Taiga Motors on their success. This Quebec company is bringing out the first-ever electric snowmobiles and personal watercraft this year. Taiga Motors is aiming to be the Tesla of off-road vehicles and is projected to sell no less than 76,000 vehicles by 2025.

Congratulations to the three founders, Samuel Bruneau, Gabriel Bernatchez and Paul Achard, whose company will be going public next month with products designed, developed and built in Quebec.

What could be more quintessentially Quebec than using electric recreational vehicles to explore our massive territory and countless lakes? Taiga Motors perfectly captures the vision of economic development that the Bloc Québécois is working hard to advance in Ottawa. Focusing on green technologies to invent innovative and environmentally friendly products is our future. It is high time Ottawa realized that green initiatives are happening in Quebec and that we need to invest in ambitious new companies like Taiga Motors.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, firearms owners in my riding and across the country are deeply concerned about the Liberals' misguided gun confiscation scheme. This latest attack on lawful gun owners is just another way the Liberals are proving to be out of touch with rural and northern Canada. This plan will be costly to the Canadian government, it will create more hoops for hunters and sports shooters to jump through and it will do nothing to combat illegal activity. What is worse is that the Liberals also teamed up with the New Democrats to defeat a common sense Conservative proposal aiming to impose tougher penalties on those found in possession of smuggled firearms.

It is clear that only Canada's Conservatives will stand up for law-abiding firearms owners, and we will continue to be a voice for the rural and northern regions of the country that have been left behind by this government.

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**LAADLIYAN**

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in honour of International Women's Day, I would like to highlight the incredible work of Laadliyan, a not-for-profit organization in Brampton.

Since 2013, founder and executive director Manvir Bhangu and her team have created a space dedicated to empowering and celebrating women and young girls through education, mentorship and awareness. The mentorship helps young female students to connect with professionals in their desired field. Laadliyan also creates feminine care packages for women in need while helping to eliminate the stigma surrounding women's health. Laadliyan challenges the negative impacts surrounding son preference and helps to educate communities on how they can eliminate the boundaries of inequality against women.

This is the kind of selfless, behind-the-scenes work that shapes our society into a more compassionate, equitable and opportune place for everyone. As a proud father of two strong daughters, I am grateful for the work that Laadliyan has done and continues to do.

Congratulations to everyone at Laadliyan for their positive and inspirational work.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are two months from Michigan's May 12 deadline for Line 5. Government officials said it was their preference to have Enbridge fight for Line 5 before they had to get involved. The minister even said the government did not have a formal analysis of how many jobs were at risk.

What is it going to take for the government to stand up for Line 5?

• (1420)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is standing up for Line 5. We know that it is a vital source of fuel for homes and businesses on both sides of the border. We support its continued safe operation and we are advocating for that. We are explaining, as we did during the NAFTA negotiations, that Canada is a safe and reliable supplier of energy to the United States.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is more than just fuel; it is thousands of jobs in Ontario. The Deputy Prime Minister forgets about jobs in southwestern Ontario. Canada's ambassador to the U.S. said that discussions have broken down between Enbridge and the Government of Michigan, but the government's plan still seems to be to let Enbridge stand up for the jobs of Canadians while it sits on the sidelines.

How much longer will the thousands of Canadian workers the Deputy Prime Minister just forgot about have to wait before they have someone standing up for their jobs?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as our government demonstrated during the NAFTA negotiations, and as we demonstrate every day during the COVID pandemic with our support for Canadian workers and Canadian jobs, we will never forget about Canadian

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workers. We will never forget about Canadian jobs, whether they are in southwestern Ontario or anywhere else in the country.

Line 5 continues to operate and supply refineries in Canada and the United States, and we are going to continue to fight for Line 5.

\* \* \*

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of thousands more forgotten by the government, 58,000 small businesses have closed due to COVID-19. Only half of the small businesses in the entire country are fully open and less than 40% have full staffing levels. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the Liberals have no real plan for their futures.

As main streets across Canada go dark, when are Canadians going to get a real plan to save small business?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives need to pick a lane. Last spring, when asked about what support the government should offer Canadians, the member for Carleton said: "You might want to address [COVID-19] with big, fat government programs. We're Conservatives, so we don't believe in that." However, today the Conservatives are calling for support measures that our government actually created last year.

The Conservative leader cannot seem to decide what he believes in and seems ready to say anything to score cheap political points. We believe in supporting Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, and we are going to keep on doing that.

[Translation]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the last time the Liberal government tabled a budget was in March 2019, meaning it has gone two years without a budget and has continued to spend money with no plan and no oversight.

When will the Prime Minister come up with a plan for our spending and for an economic recovery in every sector and every region?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives need to pick a lane.

Last spring, when asked what type of support the government should be providing to Canadians, the hon. member for Carleton said, "You might want to address [COVID-19] with big, fat government programs. We're Conservatives, so we don't believe in that."

Our government understands that we must support businesses and workers. It is time for the Conservatives to explain what they believe in.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nearly 60,000 small and medium-sized businesses have closed because of COVID-19. Only half of our small businesses are fully open, and more than 60% have let employees go. Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy. They are in crisis, and they need a plan for the future.

Where is that plan?

● (1425)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the official opposition for that question because it gives me an opportunity to point out the Conservatives' cynicism and hypocrisy.

Yesterday, they voted against a bill that would support urgent financial assistance for small businesses. Today, however, they claim they support small businesses. Their actions belie that claim.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the mandatory hotel quarantine went into effect, there has been a drop in the number of travellers returning by air. Oddly, at the same time, there has been a rise in people arriving at land borders.

That is because everyone has realized that it is possible to get around the rules. People fly to Burlington, take a bus or their car, cross the border, save \$2,000 and return home without being subject to the mandatory quarantine. That is outrageous.

Why not apply the same rules to all non-essential travellers?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Canada has one of the strictest border control systems in the world. It is necessary. It is the right thing to do because we understand that we must protect Canadians against COVID-19. Furthermore, we have also protected essential trade between Canada and the United States. That is also important. We should all be proud of these two essential steps we have taken.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer my question, but that is okay, I will try again.

By creating two sets of rules, one for air travellers and another for land travellers, the government is only taking business away from airports. The fact that hotel quarantines can be avoided by crossing land borders is so widely known that some companies are even openly offering this particular service to non-essential travellers. Circumventing the rules has literally become a commercialized service.

Does the government at least realize what a laughingstock it has become?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's travel and border measures are among the strictest in the world.

With the new variants, we know that we need to take additional measures to protect Canadians against COVID-19. That is what we did.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have made it quite clear that no one should be travelling because that could endanger the traveller and those close to them.

\* \* \*

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, small businesses have been hit hard by the pandemic. They worry that they will have to close their doors.

The Liberal government gave \$750 billion to help and support the big banks, but there is no plan to help small businesses. Limiting credit card fees could help small businesses. Will the Prime Minister limit credit card fees to help small businesses?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that I agree with the hon. member and leader of the NDP that it is very important to help small and medium-sized businesses. That is what our government is doing.

That is why we urgently need to adopt Bill C-14. I want to thank all hon. members who joined us and supported this urgent and important bill.

Credit card fees are also an important issue and we are looking into it.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week I spent time with small businesses in B.C. They are worried and afraid that they will have to shut down their businesses and never open again.

We saw the Liberal government move very quickly early in the pandemic to give nearly \$750 billion of support to big banks, but there is no clear plan specifically for small business. A limit on credit card fees would help small businesses. They have said so.

Will the Prime Minister cap credit card fees at 1% to help small businesses in this difficult time?

● (1430)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that our government agrees with the leader of the NDP that it is absolutely essential to support small businesses. That is why I would like to call on all members of the House to join us in supporting Bill C-14. Small businesses need it.

*Oral Questions*

Let me say that we are here for small businesses, and let me point to just one program, the CEBA. Over 842,000 small businesses across the country have received CEBA loans as of March 4. Credit card fees are another important issue that we are looking at closely.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Dr. Richard Audas, a health statistician and economist at Memorial University, has published a COVID misery index, and the results for Canada are, well, miserable. In fact, Canada ranks 11th because of the government's poor performance on the health and economic side.

With the worst deficit, the worst unemployment and the worst vaccination rates in the G7, why is the government so miserable?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the misery on the other side of the House, but let me just say that on our side of the House, we are so grateful to Canadians for their hard work and resilience. Thanks to that hard work and the strong support from our government, let me share the great news with the House that in the fourth quarter of last year, our GDP grew by nearly 10%. That is higher than that of the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany or Italy. Well done team Canada.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are excellent grades for Canadians but terrible grades for the government. In the last quarter of the year, the Liberals had far more ground to make up because our economic downfall was far greater. In fact, after all the quarters are done, Canada still has the highest unemployment in the G7, which the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister have long said is the best measurement to determine the job market.

Now an independent scientific study shows that Canada has the highest COVID misery index out of 11 countries. We rank 11th out of 15, even worse than the United States. Why such miserable results?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me urge the member opposite to take a closer look at the international data. Canada has a higher labour force participation rate, at 64.3%, which is a higher rate than Germany, the U.S. and Japan. Canada has recovered 71% of the jobs lost in the wake of the pandemic. That compares with just 56% in the U.S.

Again, let me thank hard-working Canadian small businesses and hard-working Canadians. They are so resilient, and our government will be here to support them for as long as it takes.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, it was reported that the minister will not be tabling a federal budget this month. For over 700 days Canadians have been left without a plan for our economy. Canada is suffering from the worst unemployment in the G7 after spending the most among the major advanced economies.

Tourism, hospitality, charities and thousands of other small businesses are calling out for help. Is the minister listening? When will she finally table a budget for all to see?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is definitely listening to Canadians, and I would like to thank the Canadians who submitted 58,000 written submissions in our pre-budget consultations. I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Conservatives whether they are listening to small business and whether they heard Dan Kelly, who said, "Bill C-14 has some important measures for small business.... CFIB urges all parties to ensure this support is passed quickly".

Let me echo Mr. Kelly and urge the Conservatives to stop playing partisan games and support small business with a vote.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is really cute, because I have met with Mr. Kelly three times in the last month. It is utterly irresponsible for the Liberal government to go two full years without tabling a budget for Canadians to see. That is the longest period in Canadian history without an economic plan. Without a plan, we cannot reopen our economy, cannot get Canadians back to work and cannot help the hardest hit businesses to survive.

It has been two years. What is the date for the budget, or is the minister even listening?

● (1435)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are definitely listening. I am so grateful to the Canadians who have participated with such enthusiasm in our pre-budget consultations. We have received more than 58,000 written submissions. We are working hard with Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Let me just say that our priority today is to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to support Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, so let us get Bill C-14 passed so that we can do that.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the president of Pfizer said that the company does not support the Liberals' decision to move the time between the doses of their COVID-19 vaccine from three weeks to four months, and Canada's chief science officer essentially said that the Liberals' decision to do so was unethical. Today, Global News is reporting that numerous Canadian medical experts have penned an open letter to the Liberals with grave concerns about the decision to delay the dose.

Why are the Liberals advising a four-month interval between Pfizer vaccine doses when no one else is?

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, now that we have safe and effective vaccines in Canada, we need to vaccinate as many Canadians as possible. In order to maximize the number of people gaining some resistance to COVID-19, NACI, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, has recommended that second doses can safely be delayed by up to four months.

We will continue working with the provinces and territories to ensure that communities are protected, and we will still follow science and evidence.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the problem is that there is actually no science or evidence to support this decision.

The parliamentary secretary's response gets to the heart of the matter. If we had more vaccine doses and if the Liberals had been on top of getting these vaccines delivered to Canadians, they would not be recommending this extreme measure that no other country in the world is taking.

Is he basically admitting that at this point, the Liberals are making vaccine decisions based on politics to cover for the fact they have put Canada in the worst position in the G7 for vaccine distribution?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start by mentioning that NACI is an independent organization, and I also want to go on to say that we are receiving eight million doses of vaccine this quarter alone, 36.5 million in the next quarter and prior to the end of September, 118 million vaccines, so that all Canadians will have access to a vaccine before the end of the summer.

We have a plan. It is called a diversified portfolio vaccine plan and it is working for Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it costs a lot of money to exclude Quebec from shipbuilding. The cost overruns on the federal contract for surface combatants exclusively awarded to Irving, in Nova Scotia, now total \$51 billion. The shipyard will not deliver a single vessel before 2030.

At the same time, the Auditor General of Canada confirms, in her most recent report, that the same is happening in British Columbia, where Seaspan is years behind in all its contracts. No one is delivering, except Davie.

Why not just award Davie its fair share of the building contracts?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I also thank the Parliamentary Budget Officer for his report.

As part of our defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", our government undertook to build 15 surface combatants that are fully funded. We are contributing \$1.54 billion a year to the economy. We will be prudent and adapt to the strategy. Davie is a fantastic partner. We are working with companies across the country, in Quebec and everywhere.

• (1440)

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government left one partner out of shipbuilding but not out of the refurbishing.

The shipbuilding strategy is a disaster because the federal government is doing everything it can to exclude Quebec. Ottawa is set to award a contract for a polar icebreaker and it refuses to award the contract to Davie, even though Irving is decades behind and \$51 billion over budget, and even though Seaspan's contract was withdrawn because the shipyard was unable to move forward. The Liberals are doing everything they can to exclude Quebec, even when it is the only remaining option.

When will the polar icebreaker contract be—

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

All Canadian shipyards responded to the request for information that concluded on May 13, 2020. The responses received and the information gathered in the process will enable the Government of Canada to determine how best to proceed. No decisions have been made.

We are still working with all of the shipyards, including Davie.

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**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his department, the Privy Council, could not care less about French. To date, the PMO has received nearly 8,000 pages of documents related to the urgent situation caused by the pandemic, including contracts between the government and pharmaceutical companies, but it is refusing to disclose them on the pretext that they are not available in both official languages. The Prime Minister is hiding important information from Canadians.

What is he waiting for? When will he provide us these documents in French?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as requested in the motion, we sent the documents to the law clerk in the language in which they were written. We also gave the law clerk all of the necessary support through the Board of Internal Economy. We all knew that this would take time. The committee requested a huge amount of information. The government is responding as quickly as possible and the documents will be sent as quickly as possible.

My colleague is well aware that the two official languages are a top priority for the government.

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when I order a piece of furniture from the Swedish company IKEA, I get the box and an instruction manual written in, as one might guess, French. However, official government documents about the management of the pandemic are not available in French. The Prime Minister prides himself on saying he defends francophones' rights, but he cannot even fix problems in his own department.

When will he stop talking, take action, and do what needs to be done to ensure that all documents are available in both official languages, French and English?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if they cared so much about respect for official languages, they would have called for that in their motion, which the government opposed. In their motion, they asked for all documents to be sent directly to the law clerk. They made the law clerk responsible for translation. Nowhere in the motion does it say anything about official languages. That was what they asked for, thus proving that, unlike the government, respect for official languages does not matter to them.

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[English]

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when speaking last week at the defence committee on the 2018 allegations of sexual misconduct by General Vance, former ombudsman Gary Walbourne said, "The only thing I ever wanted the minister to do was his job." However, rather than doing his job, the minister hid from the evidence.

It is clear that the minister misled the defence committee since he knew about this three years ago, and now official government memos confirm Mr. Walbourne's story. How can the brave women and men in uniform trust a minister who turned his back on them?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the member's assertions, and I disagree with the testimony that Mr. Walbourne provided at committee. I look forward to testifying at committee again. In fact, I welcome it.

• (1445)

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence refused the evidence of

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sexual misconduct offered by the former military ombudsman. Then he hid behind the non-existent investigation by PCO. Instead of doing his duty and convening a board of inquiry into General Vance, he did absolutely nothing. Yesterday, the minister said he used his police skills to tackle the problem. What kind of police officer and what kind of defence minister runs and hides from evidence of sexual misconduct?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, maybe the member himself, as a politician, wants to conduct an investigation, but I want to make a really big assertion here. No politician should ever be part of conducting any type of investigation. The immediate allegations were reported to the appropriate authorities. In this case, it was the Privy Council Office, which was in charge of Governor in Council appointments, and it followed up with Mr. Walbourne immediately.

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#### HEALTH

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the throne speech said that one of the greatest tragedies of this pandemic is the lives lost in long-term care homes, lives like the brother of my constituent Louise.

Last May, he died alone in a facility owned by Revera. Before his death, his meals were served in styrofoam containers and he was denied contact with Revera caregivers. This terrible treatment of a dying man cost \$5,000 a month, and if that were not outrageous enough, Revera demanded rent for the two months after his death.

Revera is part of a Crown corporation. When will the Liberals take the profit out of long-term care?

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the very important question. It is so important that we protect those living and working in long-term care. We provided \$740 million to provinces and territories to bring in measures to control and prevent infections, including in long-term care. On November 30, we announced an additional \$1 billion in the fall economic statement to create the safe long-term care fund.

We are working closely, and will continue to work closely, with the provinces and territories to protect those in care by providing guidance to prevent and address outbreaks, and work with them to set new national standards.

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#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this past month, two men from Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba died while in custody at Stony Mountain federal penitentiary.

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My condolences go out to the loved ones of Dwayne Simard and William Ahmo. We need immediate action to ensure that no more lives will be taken at the hands of this colonial justice system.

With the support of Chief Henderson, the families and the community are demanding answers. When will the minister provide answers for the families of Dwayne Simard and William Ahmo, who died at the hands of this system?

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the care and health and safety of all persons who are in the custody of Correctional Service of Canada is a top priority for us. We share in the concern of the community with respect to all who have lost their lives in a custodial setting.

I want to assure the member that Correctional Service of Canada works very closely with the local health authorities, and we take every step to keep inmates in correctional facilities safe. Particularly during the pandemic, extraordinary efforts have been successfully made to limit and control outbreaks in our prisons. We have prioritized, on the recommendations of NACI, inmates and corrections workers for priority—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

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### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have had an exciting few weeks in terms of vaccines being authorized for use and those arriving in Canada.

Could the Minister of Public Services and Procurement please update the House and Canadians on the total number of doses we can expect by the end of this month and the overall success of our vaccine procurement program?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora for his hard work over the past year.

For nearly a year, our government's top priority has been to assemble the most comprehensive and diverse vaccine portfolio possible, with a goal of 6 million doses of vaccine to be delivered to Canadians by the end of this month.

Canadians will be pleased to know that we are going to beat that target. By the end of this month, Canadians can expect to see 8 million doses of vaccine delivered throughout Canada, 36.5 million by the end of June and 117 million by the end of September.

We have a plan. We are following our plan. It is delivering for Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1450)

[Translation]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on March 1, 2018, the former ombudsman of the Canadian Forces, Gary Walbourne, met with the Minister of National Defence to inform him of allegations of sexual miscon-

duct involving General Vance. Mr. Walbourne wanted to share evidence with the minister, but the minister refused.

In response, the minister said that he disagrees with parts of Mr. Walbourne's testimony, without specifying which parts. What is more, he said that he looked forward to providing his version of the facts in committee. Why wait to testify in committee? Why not speak up now?

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I stated, I disagree with the testimony by Mr. Walbourne. I look forward to testifying at committee.

No politician should be in charge of any type of investigation. What needs to be done here, as always, is that information be passed on to the appropriate authorities, as should have been done by Mr. Walbourne. By Mr. Walbourne's own testimony, the PCO followed up with him immediately.

I look forward to testifying at committee as soon as possible.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals like saying that they are always there for the advancement and protection of women. We have a flagrant case that was brought to the attention of the Minister of National Defence. The defence minister says that some of the former ombudsman's assertions are erroneous.

Why is the minister unable to tell us here in the House what statements he disagrees with?

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to testifying at committee, but one thing we can agree on is that we do need to do more to make sure that we create an inclusive environment for all in the Canadian Armed Forces, especially when it comes to sexual misconduct.

We have passed Bill C-77, the declaration of victims rights. We have an independent justice review that is ongoing. We also have an independent panel looking at systemic racism and gender bias. We have a lot more work to do, and we are going to continue with that progress.



### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last spring the federal government faced a PPE shortage and desperately needed to respond to Canada's demand due to COVID-19. Last month, the Liberal member for Cumberland—Colchester stated on social media that her government had invested \$27.9 million to enable Stanfield's in Truro, Nova Scotia, to manufacture PPE for frontline workers. The fact is that no such investment exists.

Can the minister elaborate on what the member for Cumberland—Colchester falsely conveyed to Stanfield's and her constituents?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a person born and bred in Nova Scotia, I believe in Nova Scotia industry and its hard-working people. I want to also thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for her hard work and advocacy on behalf of her constituents and all Nova Scotians throughout the pandemic.

Since day one, our government has focused on efforts on expanding domestic manufacturing of PPE, including investing over \$27.9 million in Stanfield's Truro plant. On this side of the House, our government remains focused on helping small businesses that seek to retool to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not a cent went to Stanfield's, but it stepped up and made sure there was domestic production of PPE. It invested in itself and upgraded its facility to participate in making sure Canadians were not caught off guard again. It was assured by the local MP and others that procurement was interested in a more collaborative approach to domestic production of PPE. This also turned out to be false, as no contract was awarded to an Atlantic Canadian company.

Could the minister tell us why Atlantic Canada was left out of the most recent procurement of PPE?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, domestic manufacturing capacity has been a core element of our government's plan throughout the pandemic, with PPE produced locally being used to protect frontline workers throughout Canada. I find it interesting that the opposition raises this now simply because the facts are that our government has invested over \$27.9 million in Stanfield's Truro plant.

Again, on this side of the House, we are supporting small business. We are supporting Canadians across the country and, indeed, 40% of our PPE contracts by dollar value are with Canadian businesses.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

[Translation]

### PENSIONS

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Bloc Qu b cois convinced all opposition parties that seniors' pensions must be increased.

For the first time, the House of Commons voted to demand that the government increase pensions by \$110 a month for seniors aged 65 and up. The House recognized that seniors are hit the hardest by

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the pandemic and that we are indebted to those who built Quebec and Canada.

Will the government undertake to comply with the demand by the House and increase pensions of those 65 years of age and up starting with the next budget?

[English]

**Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my hon. colleague, as I said yesterday, that the Bloc motion failed to recognize the full range of challenges that seniors face and that we have been supporting seniors with direct financial support and enhanced programs. Our government recognizes the pressures on older seniors. As seniors age, their financial security often decreases and their needs increase. That is why our government recognizes this need and will help address it by increasing old age security by 10% for seniors aged 75 and up.

We have taken significant actions to support seniors, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will always stand with seniors.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government must stop mixing up one-time support provided during the pandemic and ongoing assistance that seniors have been waiting for since the last election campaign.

Old age pensions must be increased at age 65, not 75, because we do not have two classes of seniors. People aged 65 and up are just as affected by the pandemic as people aged 75. They are experiencing the same isolation, the same price increases, the same deterioration of mental health. They are also affected by the virus.

Every opposition party understands what seniors are going through at this time. Will the Liberals finally understand and increase pensions for all seniors 65 and up in the next budget?

[English]

**Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to address my hon. colleague's premise. She is also mixing up pandemic relief with future pensions for seniors. I want to identify that older seniors have different needs. They are more likely to outlive their savings. They have disabilities. They are unable to work and may be widowed, and all the while their health care costs are rising.

### Oral Questions

Of seniors, 57% are women, four in 10 are widows and 59% have incomes below \$30,000. Our plan will help address these pressures by increasing old age security by 10% for seniors age 75 and up. This will be the first permanent increase to the OAS pension since—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

\* \* \*

### COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government took two months to roll out the badly needed HASCAP to businesses in the hardest-hit sectors. As if this long delay was not bad enough, businesses such as Deerhurst Resort in my riding are being denied emergency support funds now that applications are finally open. The government's job is to help those who need help most, those like Deerhurst, their 600 employees and so many other tourism businesses that need help now.

Will the government actually make HASCAP accessible for the hardest-hit businesses?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I must be honest: It is hard to take my Conservative colleagues at face value on the importance of helping small businesses considering their weeks-long blockade and vote against Bill C-14, which would provide additional relief for our small business owners. It is hard to take them at face value when they refuse to work through the evening to debate and pass important legislation.

The member, for example, for Kildonan—St. Paul, the critic for future workforce development, said herself that it was of the essence to pass Bill C-24 very quickly, and yet that message has not gotten to the Leader of the Opposition.

\* \* \*

### AIRLINE INDUSTRY

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the aviation sector employs hundreds of my constituents and is a key economic driver. This sector is hemorrhaging, and B.C. residents are concerned that remote communities will lose the airports they rely on to transport people and critical supplies. Canadian airlines need a consistent and transparent recovery framework from the government. They need clarity to plan their offerings and seat sales.

When will the government scrap its failed mandatory hotel quarantines and implement an evidence-based post-arrival testing regime?

• (1500)

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a strong airline sector is vital for Canada's economy and the well-being of Canadians. I know the hon. member agrees with me that now is not the time for Canadians to travel. However, we know that the airline sector has been hit hard by the pandemic, and we must do whatever we can to help key players remain resilient and strong for the recovery phase.

This is why our government will invest more than \$1 billion to support those key players, such as airports and regional airlines, and we are currently in the midst of discussions with major airlines for a customized aid package.

\* \* \*

### WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has presided over the largest decline of female workforce employment and has set us back 30 years. There are 500,000 women who remain out of work. In fact, 10 times as many men than women have re-entered the workforce during the pandemic and 100,000 women have stopped looking for work altogether because there are no opportunities available to them.

It has been a year since the pandemic began, yet the Liberal government has failed to provide a plan to Canadian women. Where is the plan for jobs, and where is the plan for economic recovery?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear the Conservatives focusing on a central preoccupation of our government, which is the uneven impact of this pandemic on women. That is why I was so delighted to announce yesterday with my colleague, the Associate Minister of Finance, the creation of a task force on women and the economy that will focus on precisely this issue.

Let me say to the member opposite, if she is sincerely concerned, as I hope and believe she must be, about Canadian women in this pandemic, that I hope she will join us in voting for Bill C-14, which provides essential support to small businesses, workers and families.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### HEALTH

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for months, the Conservatives have been trying to score political points by claiming that Canada has no vaccination plan and that we are at the back of an imaginary line.

Our priority on this side of the House is to serve and protect Canadians, not to scare them. That is what real leadership is all about. My constituents in Vimy want the facts, not Conservative talking points.

Could the minister set the record straight on our plan and on how many vaccines we expect to get in the coming months?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vimy for her question and for her hard work.

Thanks to our government's aggressive procurement strategy, we have enough vaccines to vaccinate every Canadian who wants to be by the end of September, if not earlier.

We will be getting a total of eight million vaccines by the end of March, which is two million more than expected.

Since our agreements came into force, we have managed to move up delivery of about 14 million doses of the approved vaccines during the second quarter.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, “Canada is back” under the Liberals. Yes, Canada is back with deficits, a debt of over \$1 trillion and the highest rate of unemployment.

We just saw it. The Liberals are bragging about what they have done, but they are lagging behind because they dragged their feet on vaccines.

We, the Conservatives, are proposing a recovery plan to support workers who have been affected by the pandemic and to help businesses.

When will the Liberals present a real economic recovery plan to get Canada back on track?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking here about masters of obstruction.

My colleague said quite seriously that he wants to help Canadians. To help Canadians, we need to pass bills. However, day after day, the Conservatives are filibustering. All they do is obstruct.

They need to stop playing this game. We need to support Canadians. I am reaching out to the Conservatives and all the parties in the House so that we can pass these bills as quickly as possible. Let us do it for Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

[English]

### TOURISM INDUSTRY

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, \$1 million is what gets pumped into Vancouver's or Victoria's economy every time a cruise ship stops by on its way up to Alaska, but the government's outright, year-long ban will kill all of that. Right now Americans, who are miles ahead of us in vaccinating their citizens, are planning a workaround to avoid Canadian ports altogether.

Does the minister recognize the government's botched vaccine plan could do permanent and serious damage to British Columbia's tourism sector?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have stated before, we remain focused on the health and safety of Canadians. Our government has announced a prohibition of cruise vessels in Canadian waters until February of 2022.

### Oral Questions

With these prohibitions in place, public health authorities will be able to continue focusing on the most pressing issues, including the containment of COVID-19 and its variants.

We understand the impact this has on the sector. Our top priority is to continue to make decisions that are based on science and data.

\* \* \*

### TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our largest ally and trading partner, the United States, is now fully vaccinating its citizens at a rate 10 times faster than that of Canada. Many of those vaccinated are essential workers, such as truck drivers.

During the Prime Minister's bilateral visit with President Biden, was Canada given any assurances that our unvaccinated truck drivers would continue to be granted entry into the United States?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is vitally important for our economy and for Canadians' well-being that we maintain the movement of essential workers between the U.S. and Canada. We have had these discussions with stakeholders, with truck associations and in our bilateral meeting with our partners in the U.S. as well.

We will continue to be guided by public health advice, and we will continue to have these discussions with truck drivers and other essential workers who are crossing the border.

\* \* \*

### JUSTICE

**Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this past year we have seen institutions across Canada, including our criminal courts, face new and unique challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada tabled an important piece of legislation to address many of those issues to help ensure the efficiency of our criminal justice system as we navigate our way through this crisis.

Could the minister please update the House on this legislation?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for his tireless advocacy and his profound legal knowledge and wisdom.

This past year, our government heard from our provincial and territorial partners, who have had to work in creative and innovative ways to better serve our communities. To that effect, we have introduced a package of targeted reforms that will improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of the criminal justice system to ensure its ability to operate in a way that respects public health guidelines. These changes will help to modernize our justice system and better protect the health and safety of its participants far beyond the pandemic.

*Oral Questions***MARINE TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on April 1, fees and charges for Marine Atlantic ferries to Newfoundland and Labrador will go up yet again. High fees discourage travellers and visitors, increase food prices and the cost of living, and hurt struggling businesses. Tourism and transportation have been hard hit by the pandemic. People and municipalities are deeply concerned.

In 2015, the Prime Minister called the cost recovery formula used to set Marine Atlantic ferry rates “unreasonable”. This government has done nothing about it, and fees have been going up ever since.

Will the Prime Minister put an end to this and reverse these unfair increases?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I want to assure him and all Canadians that my colleagues in our Atlantic caucus have discussed this issue on many occasions. I have been listening to them. I have been hearing about the concerns they are raising with me and I have been reassuring them that we are listening to Canadians. We will examine their concerns and we will do what is best for Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1510)

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, Mi'kmaq chiefs, the national chief and senators, among others, have strongly condemned the fishery minister's so-called “new path” that unilaterally sets out conditions for a moderate livelihood commercial lobster fishery.

Why has the minister chosen to diverge from the true path of reconciliation based on rights recognition and co-operation that this government promised and as set out in the 10 principles and UN-DRIP?

Will the minister please respect the preferred means of the Mi'kmaq to exercise their treaty rights, uphold the honour of the Crown and get off this paternalistic path that risks a return to unrest?

**Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first nations have the Supreme Court-affirmed treaty right to fish, and we have never stopped working to implement that right. This is a new path for first nations to realize their right and will allow them to fish this season.

Seasons ensure that stocks are harvested sustainably. They are necessary for a predictable and well-managed fishery, and this approach respects the Marshall decision. Marshall II states that moderate livelihood fisheries may be regulated if those regulations can be justified on conservation grounds.

We will continue to work with first nations to make sure that this treaty right is implemented this year.

[Translation]

**CANADA-UNITED KINGDOM TRADE CONTINUITY AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC)** Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing or special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, be deemed concurred in at the report stage; that the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of considering Bill C-18 at third reading; that, when no further member rises to speak or at 12 a.m., whichever is earlier, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith and successively every question necessary to dispose of the said stage of the said bill; that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall stand deferred until the conclusion of Oral Questions tomorrow, Wednesday, March 10, 2021; and that the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. Any members opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Hearing no voices, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising out of question period. The Deputy Prime Minister was responding to a question from the member for Abbotsford and was talking about the need to talk to people like Dan Kelly, who is the head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

**An hon. member:** Debate.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** This is not debate, and if members want to hear the point of order, perhaps they will respect it.

The member for Abbotsford said “that is really cute” when responding to her question. I would like to think that he did not mean that comment to be sexist, although I am sure he could appreciate how some people would consider it to be that way, especially given that the issue is whether or not he would have said that to a man. Therefore, through you, I would ask the member if he could please retract that statement.

**The Speaker:** Did the hon. member for Abbotsford want to respond?

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to respond. Certainly I did not intend for it to be a slight against the minister in any way. In fact, what I intended to say was “too cute by half”, because I have also met with Dan Kelly on more than one occasion, who made it very clear that some 240,000 small businesses will likely be gone by the time this COVID pandemic is done unless the Liberal government steps up and provides them with the support they need.

That was the whole point of the response. It is very unfortunate my colleague across the way would actually play with that word and suggest that something was intended that was never intended.

\* \* \*

• (1515)

## POINTS OF ORDER

### PENSIONERS

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been consultations among the parties, and I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House recognizes that there are approximately 136,000 recipients of UK state pensions in Canada;

That it recognizes the UK government does not provide annual indexed increases to UK pensioners residing in Canada, effectively freezing their pensions at the levels they were at when they first claimed their pensions in Canada;

That it recognizes Canada provides annual indexed increases to Canadian pensioners who live in the UK;

That it recognizes UK pensioners living in the USA, Germany, Italy, Barbados, Bermuda, Israel, Jamaica and other countries receive annual indexed increases;

That it recognizes frozen pensions represent a combined loss of over \$500 million per year to the Canadian economy and to Canadian taxpayers, due to three factors: frozen pensions force thousands of UK pensioners in Canada to rely on Canada's social assistance programs such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the significant loss of CRA tax revenues due to the lower income of 136,000 pensioners, and the loss of sales tax revenues due to the loss of discretionary income;

That it recognizes frozen UK pensions represent an injustice to both UK pensioners in Canada and to Canadian taxpayers;

That it recognizes the UK government is currently negotiating new pension indexing agreements with EU countries due to Brexit, and that now is the appropriate time for the UK government to negotiate a pension indexing agreement with Canada;

That the House believes the government should press the UK government to open negotiations with Canada to remedy this situation as soon as possible and provide annual indexed pension increases to UK pensioners residing in Canada.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member's moving of the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

The motion is carried.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a point of order. The member for West Nova seemed to be saying that I was lying to my constituents and has sent out an email or a message to people in Nova Scotia saying so. I would like him to apologize for that, please.

**The Speaker:** I want to point out to all the members that the Chair is not in a position to intervene in interactions that happen outside the chamber. I will just leave it at that for now.

The hon. Minister of Justice is rising on a point of order.

## Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like clarification regarding our dress code. During Oral Questions, the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis asked a question, although he was not wearing a jacket.

**The Speaker:** That is a good point.

I would like to remind all hon. members that when they are participating in the debate, whether in person or virtually, they must respect the dress code. Male members who wish to speak must be wearing a tie. Male members present in the House must be wearing a jacket.

I did not notice that the member was not wearing one, and I apologize.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent is also rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud and delighted to know that the Minister of Justice is paying attention to the debate. I would invite him to join us in the House to advocate even more than from where he is right now.

**The Speaker:** I wish to remind hon. members of another thing they cannot do in the House. Members must not make reference to the presence or absence of another member.

\* \* \*

[English]

## PRIVILEGE

### ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF CONTENTS OF BILL C-22— SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on February 19 by the member for Fundy Royal concerning the alleged premature disclosure of the contents of Bill C-22, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

During his intervention, the member said that a CBC article posted online at 8:47 a.m. on February 18 described the details of Bill C-22 although it had not yet been submitted to the House. The member referred to the contents of the article, which he said discussed a number of the measures contained in the bill and boasted about the reliability of its sources. The Chair notes that the article had already been updated by the time the issue was raised. To be clear, with regard to this ruling, the Speaker considered the initial version of the article, which was published at the time of introduction and first reading of the bill.

• (1520)

[Translation]

After reviewing a series of precedents on the issue, the member said he also believed that the Minister of Justice's actions were contemptuous and that he had ignored the will of the House.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

In response, the member for Kingston and the Islands informed the House that the office of the Minister of Justice had not shared the contents of the bill with the CBC journalist before its introduction. The member explained that he believed that the ministers' mandate letters sometimes allowed journalists to deduce the contents of bills on notice. After reviewing the contents of the article in question and comparing it with Bill C-22, the member argued that the article was sometimes inaccurate and even incomplete. In his opinion, the article was written by using a government source who was not familiar with the contents of the bill or by making conjectures based on previous policy statements. Finally, the member for Kingston and the Islands, basing himself on a ruling made on June 8, 2017, said that it is a prima facie case of privilege in such cases when the government admits that the leak occurred, but not when the government does not acknowledge a leak. In this case, the member stated that if the contents of the bill were disclosed prematurely, the government was not responsible.

[Translation]

As the member for Fundy Royal pointed out during his intervention, it is a recognized principle that the House must be the first to learn the details of new legislative measures. That is why both government bills and private members' bills are confidential from the moment they are put on notice until they are tabled in the House. Speaker Milliken's ruling of March 19, 2001, which the member for Fundy Royal mentioned, provides a good summary of the importance of respecting this rule:

The convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only so that members themselves may be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent rule which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation.

[English]

That being said, when the Chair is called on to determine whether there is a prima facie case of privilege, it must take into consideration the extent to which a member was hampered in performing their parliamentary functions and whether the alleged facts are an offence against the dignity of Parliament.

In the case before us, an exhaustive review of the intervention by the member for Fundy Royal does not reveal exactly which aspects of Bill C-22 were supposedly shared with CBC for the article in question, nor did the member point out any similarities in language between the article and the bill to demonstrate that precise details of the bill were apparently disclosed to the media in a deliberate and premature fashion. The member for Kingston and the Islands pointed out inaccuracies in the article and differences from the bill.

When it is determined that there is a prima facie case of privilege, the usual work of the House is immediately set aside in order to debate the question of privilege and decide on the response. Given the serious consequences for proceedings, it is not enough to say that the breach of privilege or contempt may have occurred, nor to cite precedence in the matter while implying that the government is presumably in the habit of acting in this way. The allegations must be clear and convincing for the Chair.

• (1525)

[Translation]

As well, I believe it is important to mention that the distinction that the member for Kingston and the Islands wishes to make between questions of privilege that are a prima facie case of privilege and those that are not—simply because the government admits or does not admit that a leak has occurred—is not that clear. While there is indeed a well-established practice that a member must be taken at their word, the fact remains that the government's stating that it is not responsible for the premature disclosure of a bill is not in itself sufficient to convince the Chair. I would add that the source of the information is one factor among others and that it is important first and foremost to determine whether precise details were provided before the House was made aware of them. The Chair must thus take into consideration all the information before it and reach a conclusion based on the facts presented by the members.

[English]

The two precedents most like the current situation to which the two members referred are those that my immediate predecessor and I rendered with respect to Bill C-14 and Bill C-7 on medical assistance in dying. In these two cases, in light of the facts presented, it was clear that the information had been shared with the media before the bills were tabled in the House. In the case of Bill C-14, the Government offered no competing explanation. In the case of Bill C-7, it was clear that the anonymous source had spoken with the media despite the fact they were well acquainted with our customs and practices in the matter. That is not the case this time with Bill C-22.

Thus, in this case, in light of what has been presented, the Chair is not convinced that the question of privilege raised by the member for Fundy Royal is a prima facie case of privilege.

I thank the members for their attention.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—MEASURES TO SUPPORT CANADIAN WORKERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the first part of my speech, I talked about how the Conservatives continuously try to spread misinformation. I cited a couple of examples of the airline industry and of charitable groups using specific quotes from the critic for finance. He, and through him the Conservative Party, tries to give Canadians the impression that the government is not there to support small businesses in Canada. Once again, nothing could be further from the truth.

When we look at the initiatives we have put in place, whether the Canada emergency wage subsidy program, the Canada emergency rent subsidy program, the Emergency Business Account, the credit availability program or relief and recovery funds, the government has been there for small businesses and will continue to be there for small businesses.

The second problem I have with the Conservatives is frustration with how the Conservative Party continues to play a destructive role inside the House of Commons, on the floor of the chamber, by not allowing things to be done. Talk is cheap. Action is what we want to see.

I was encouraged when the opposition House leader indicated moments ago that the Conservatives were prepared to pass Bill C-18, which is a trade agreement. That means they support the legislation with no issues and they are going to pass it through. I suspect, as I indicated previously, that the only way to get things passed through the House of Commons is to shame the Conservatives so that they feel so uncomfortable that they feel there is more than an obligation to allow legislation to go through.

A good example would be the member for Kildonan—St. Paul. She is the critic for workforce development and she tweeted that time was running out for Canadians with expiring EI benefits. That is Bill C-24. It is one of the pieces of legislation that we want to see pass through the House of Commons. If the leader of the Conservative Party would actually listen to some of the members of the Conservative caucus, we might even see that bill pass.

I would encourage the opposition House leader to take the initiative and look at what that bill is actually saying and proposing to do. Maybe he could consult with his Conservative caucus colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, and recognize how that bill is going to help Canadians. As I indicated, actions speak louder than words when it comes to the Conservative Party.

On Bill C-14, another bill that ultimately helps small businesses, they have been filibustering, yet today there is a motion on why we are not doing enough to support small businesses. Do we see some irony there? I see a great deal of irony there. From the destructive force better known as the Conservative Party, we have seen that many issues are not being dealt with on the floor of the House of Commons because of the role that they have decided to play. It is politically charged, instead of serving Canadians by fighting the pandemic.

• (1530)

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, what struck me about the comments of my friend from Winnipeg North was that after speaking about what he calls misinformation, he proceeded to say that the government has supposedly done such a great job supporting small businesses throughout the course of the pandemic. I know many small business owners, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors, who would very much disagree with the member's way of framing the government's response. We know that many people have fallen through the cracks and have not been able to apply for many of these programs.

I am wondering if the member would agree that many people have been left behind by the government's programs and that he

### *Business of Supply*

should be working with the opposition to help create a more beneficial COVID response and more business support going forward.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, unlike the Conservative Party, since day one this government has been there for small businesses, medium-sized businesses and individual Canadians. Our program development and spending clearly demonstrate this, contrary to the misinformation that we witnessed even today. The Conservative finance critic, for example, said today, "The Liberal government has been promising support for Canada's airline industry for over a year and still nothing." That is a direct quote from the finance critic of the Conservative Party. That is just not right and it is just not true.

I would be using unparliamentary words if I were to explain exactly what the critic was saying. That is the reality. There is misinformation coming from the Conservative Party, and it is a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons day after day.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

Clearly, the Liberals think they have done enough to help small regional businesses. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Many of them do not meet the various program criteria. We know that large-scale programs do not always work. Targeted help is needed. I am thinking about the sugar shacks in my region, because maple syrup season is approaching. These businesses were unable to open their doors.

What does the Liberal government have to say to them?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, whether it is the Prime Minister, the government as a whole or members of Parliament, no one is saying that programs have been absolutely perfect. We brought in a suite of programs to support small businesses, and from the beginning we have made some modifications. It is one of the reasons follow-up legislation has been brought forward.

We continue to look at ways to improve and strengthen legislation and put Canada in a good position so that we will be able to build back better. That has always been a priority for this government. First and foremost, we will support Canadians from coast to coast to coast and, second, we will ensure that we are in a position to build back better. Because of the work with the different stakeholders, the government and the civil service, we have been very successful, I would argue, in putting Canada in a great position going forward.

*Business of Supply*

• (1535)

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, small businesses are the engine of job creation in Canada. I think we all agree on that. They are an important part of every community across the country. However, while local businesses are struggling, the Liberals are letting big companies like Bell and Imperial Oil take millions in public COVID relief and pay millions in dividends to their shareholders.

Does the member believe that the big corporations profiting from the pandemic, and profiting in a big way, should be asked to pay their fair share so that we can support the backbone of our communities, which is small businesses?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, it is absolutely critical for the Government of Canada to support people, real people, in all regions of our country. We did just that by introducing programs, such as the CERB program. Almost nine million Canadians in every region of our country were recipients of an increase in disposable income because of programming that was put in place by this government, which worked in co-operation with the civil society and other stakeholders. That, to me, is results. The member—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I speak today to oppose this motion, which is yet another display of political grandstanding on the part of opposition members across the way. It is another example of the Conservative Party being completely out of touch with the realities that Canadian citizens and businesses are encountering during the pandemic.

I would like to begin my remarks by saying that I understand the importance of opposition days in the House of Commons. I recognize that, at the end of the day, every member of the House works on behalf of their constituents to the best of their capabilities. Regardless of what party represents a particular riding, it is important that all constituents have the ability to have their voices, concerns, issues and ideas discussed and debated in the House.

While I find myself in disagreement with many opposition motions that come forward, I still have great respect for their importance within our democratic system. I recognize the urgency with which this motion was written, and it demonstrates the importance of offering workers, families and business sectors the supports they need during this pandemic. However, I am a little confused because it is such a rare occasion when the opposition endorses the measures the government is undertaking.

In the case of this motion, the call for such supports looks like little more than an opportunity to remind my colleagues across the way that their call is already being answered by our government. In fact, it has been progressively addressed by the Prime Minister every single day for almost a year now, making me wonder if the opposition has any idea what is going on right now with regard to our country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an example, the highly affected sectors credit availability program is open to all sectors mentioned in this motion and offers 100% government-granted financing and low-interest loans of up to \$1 million over 10 years. Some of the business owners I have spoken to since the program was introduced are very happy to have

this level of financing available in times such as these, when cash flow and available capital are stalled. This comes from the conversations I had consulting with my constituents, a practice I have always considered a fundamental aspect of being a member of Parliament. I can assure my opposition colleagues that if they did something similar with businesses in their own ridings, they would find entrepreneurs who have taken advantage of this program and, in many cases, have credited it with allowing their businesses to continue during the difficult economic climate of the pandemic.

The same thing applies to a program like the Canada emergency rent subsidy. For reference, as of February 28, over 134,000 organizations have received support totalling \$1.81 billion. There is also the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which to date has helped protect more than 5.1 million Canadian jobs.

The opposition is also undoubtedly aware, or should be if it reads the news, that our government is currently negotiating with Canadian airlines to see what additional supports can be offered to a sector that has been particularly hard hit by this pandemic. This is of course in addition to the over \$1.8 billion the airline sector has received through the wage subsidy program, which has directly gone to workers, and the \$1 billion that airports and smaller airlines received through last year's fall economic statement.

• (1540)

Finally, with regard to the opposition's ill-informed concern for bankruptcies and layoffs, there is the Canada emergency business account. It has provided over 832,000 businesses across Canada with over \$34 billion in support, reducing the expenses and freeing up liquidity for small and medium-sized businesses.

As I mentioned, at best, this is an innocent mistake from an opposition party that did not do its homework before presenting such a motion. However, at worst, which I fear is really the situation here, we have an opposition that is more concerned with playing political games and grandstanding than working collectively to support Canadians and Canadian businesses during the pandemic. This is the crux of why I must vote against the motion.

Misinformation is always harmful in a functioning democracy like Canada, but this is particularly the case during a global pandemic that we continue to battle our way through. The motion is nothing more than an attempt to deflect from what this government is already doing and, as a result, leads to confusion about what Canadians and businesses can access right now. Instead of doing their jobs and giving accurate information to their constituents to address whatever situations are arising, opposition members are more focused on electoral politics. That is the real story of today's motion, and it is one more reason why the Conservative Party should really do a deep dive into what it is trying to accomplish.



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Every week, we read articles about the disarray in the Conservative Party. We hear about the factions that are still fighting about issues like abortion, which was settled decades ago. We hear about a leader who is confused about which MP he wants to trot out to the media on a particular day. We hear about opposition members who are dissatisfied with the direction of their party and are avowing to take it back. Today's confused and baffling motion is just a by-product of this chaos.

In closing, I encourage all members of the House to vote against this frivolous, ridiculous stunt and to move forward on more pressing actions that will continue to assist Canadians and Canadian businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the beginning of my speech, I forgot to thank my hon. friend from Winnipeg North. I thank him for sharing his time with me and for his great work not only for the constituents of Winnipeg North but for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

• (1545)

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member seems to be saying that workers for Canadian airlines have never had it so good, that the government has already given all the support they need during this pandemic. I have talked to workers from the airline sector who, lacking 17 or 18 years of seniority, have been laid off and this member has the audacity to ask why they are not happy with the wage subsidy.

I went through Pearson airport on Sunday evening and there were six flights on the board. The idea that the airline sector has received all of the support it needs from the government and that tens of thousands of workers should just be glad they have been given the wage subsidy, or they should be glad to have been given the CERB or EI when they were laid off, is insulting.

When will this member realize that they have not given the airline sector and its workers the support they need to continue to serve Canadians during this pandemic?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Speaker, I did not say that we are trying to ignore members of the airline industry. In fact, for every Canadian, including the people who work in the airline industry, this government has tried to help those affected. We are not perfect.

Every day, the Prime Minister has received input from members and organizations on the ground. He has come out every day with different efforts to help workers and businesses from coast to coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. At the beginning, he gave the impression that everything was perfect, but he just qualified his remarks. My question picks up on that.

The government was quick to provide support for the oil industry, which had already received billions of dollars by April 2020. In contrast, nine months later, there are still sectors, such as the tourism, hospitality, arts and major events sectors, that need an assistance plan.

Does my colleague not agree that some industries need a targeted assistance plan?

• (1550)

[*English*]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Speaker, nowhere in my speech did I say we were perfect and have done everything perfectly.

Every step of the way, when I walk through my riding, I meet people who say that the Canada emergency response benefit has helped them or the Canada emergency business account has helped them. Other people will say that the business account benefited them, or the Canada emergency wage subsidy has helped them, or the Canada emergency rent subsidy has helped them, or the expanded business benefits have helped them.

The Prime Minister and this government have done everything they can to work with the grassroots, the opposition parties and organizations across Canada to help workers and Canadian companies to make sure that we are able to get through this pandemic.

That is what I have said. That is what we will continue to do.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Madam Speaker, while it is interesting to hear the hon. member say that the government has done everything it can do for small businesses, the small business owners in my riding are certainly waiting to hear if the government can do more because many of them are going to have to close their doors permanently.

One of the things I want to ask very specifically for, and that small business owners have been asking for for a very long time, is a cap on the fees that credit card companies charge them. Today in the House, the NDP leader was calling for a 1% cap on those fees. Why have the Liberals not moved to cap those credit card fees, which are so hard on small business owners during this pandemic?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for all the great work he does for his constituents. The issue that he raised is a genuine one. However, now during the pandemic, when it comes to businesses, whether it is the wage subsidy, the emergency rent subsidy or the Canada business account, all of these have tried to help business owners to make sure—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place to speak on behalf of the people of Chilliwack—Hope and on behalf of Canadians. We are here today debating a motion put forward by the Conservative Party. We are talking about things that we would like to see included in the next federal budget.

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Of course, it has been over two years since the government has deigned to present its financial plan through a budget to Canadians. It is the longest time in Canadian history that we have gone between the presentation of budgets in the House, and that is quite shocking. Yes, we are in a pandemic, but this is a country that has gone through two world wars. We have managed to have budgets presented in the House where the government laid out its plans, priorities and the fiscal situation in the country. We now have a situation where we are over two years, the longest time in Canadian history, where no budget has been presented.

I would submit to the House, and we heard today from the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, that it is because the Liberal Party holds this place in contempt. The way that it has operated over the last year has shown that it does not view what we do here as important, that it views the work of Parliament as a nuisance and that, when we are debating and trying to improve government legislation, we are filibustering, we are standing in the way and not doing what Canadians want us to do. If we look at the record of the government, from day one of this pandemic, it has treated this place with contempt.

The first bill the Liberals brought forward to deal with a crisis like we had not seen in generations gave Bill Morneau and the Liberal Party power over spending, taxing and all the rest of it. They wanted to strip Parliament of its power for 21 months. That was the initial foray of the government in this pandemic, to strip away the rights of members of Parliament to hold the government to account and to improve legislation that our constituents needed to see pass, but the Liberals knew best. They have known best this entire time. Any time we have raised any concerns, we have been condemned as standing in the way, because they view Parliament as a rubber stamp for the Prime Minister's Office.

We heard this from the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader when he accused the Conservative Party of filibustering a bill. The bill was introduced yesterday at about 3:15 p.m., debated for about three hours and that was enough time. That is too much time for the Liberal government to have scrutiny placed on its legislation. We are clearly not in it for Canadians, if we are not passing that bill. Why did that bill have to come forward? Because the government messed up the bill that created a loophole that allowed travellers who went to Hawaii to come back and collect \$1,000 from the government because they had to quarantine.

I got so excited at the beginning, Madam Speaker, I forgot to say I will be splitting my time with the member for Oshawa, and I know he has some excellent things that he too would like to say.

The Liberals brought in Bill C-2 late in September, after they had shut down the House. Members will recall that they shut down Parliament rather than face an ethics and finance committee review of their WE charity scandal. We have learned quite a few things about WE charity as a result of the studies that have happened at committee. The Liberals tried to shut that down. They truly did filibuster that. When they could not shut it down, they padlocked Parliament. They shut this place down for weeks and weeks on end as the deadline came for the Canada emergency response benefit. When that deadline started to come in October, they deigned to bring back the House. Then the Liberals said that we needed to pass Bill C-2 im-

mediately or else we would be putting Canadians out on the street. As we have done throughout this pandemic, the Conservatives have worked to get benefits to Canadians. We have expressed our concerns, and we got the benefits to Canadians.

• (1555)

We pointed out the problem with returning travellers getting \$1,000 from the government because they had to quarantine at home, and now we have Bill C-24, which seeks to address that. Another deadline approaches, March 28, and the government did not bring in the bill at the start of this session. It waited a month or so. Then after it brought it in, it told us, after three hours of debate, that if we did not pass it, we were the ones who were holding up relief for Canadians. What a joke. That is how the Liberal government is treating this Parliament. It has done it throughout.

The government should have learned its lesson. Every time it introduced legislation, it treated Parliament as if it was something that should receive the back of its hand, a nuisance that was not worthy of a response and was not worthy of sitting with its full powers. We can obviously do it in a hybrid format, but the powers were stripped away for months. I talked about that first bill that took away the rights of Parliament to scrutinize budgets.

We also had the original wage subsidy, which was only a 10% subsidy, not the 75% subsidy on which we had insisted. The government finally relented and provided it.

We talked about promoting the wage subsidy over the CERB, but the government took so long to get it right that it was less advantageous for employees to stay with their company right at the start of the pandemic, which was a huge mistake.

The original rent assistance program, which called upon a landlord to make the application directly for someone renting from them, was very poorly designed and had hardly any uptake, but the government did not care. It had not consulted with the other parties. It knew best.

That is what has happened here throughout. We just heard it again from the member for Surrey—Newton. People who raise concerns about their specific sectors should just be grateful for what they are getting, because the government knows what they need. If they are calling for more support, it must mean they do not understand the brilliance of the government. This is not as it should be.

We heard about the original CEBA accounts. That is mentioned in our motion. Those that had personal accounts with a bank, not a business account, were ineligible. A number of small businesses, farmers, etc. were not able to access those guaranteed loans.

Start-ups were not able to access the government programs because they could not show a loss of revenue. People who had just started, pouring their lifesavings into their work, were told, sorry, the government was not here for them.

All of these problems were identified, but the government did not listen because it knew best. It is time that it starts to put Parliament back to work, that it starts to take into account that there are 338 of us here who are all working for our constituents who have been devastated by this pandemic. We all have good ideas. We all represent people who are suffering, who want this to be over as soon as possible and who want the government, and expect the government, to be there for them when they need them.

We were elected to hold the government to account. When there have been good measures, we have supported them. However, we cannot just simply rush everything through. We cannot say that the new posture is that a bill is tabled and on the same day it is expected to be passed at all stages, no witnesses, no committee study, no one who will be directly impacted being consulted.

That is a folly of the government, and it is time that we start to put Parliament back at the centre of government in the country. We need to stop treating this institution with contempt. That starts, quite frankly, at the top. Press conferences have replaced Parliament for the Prime Minister since day one.

It is time that Parliament took the central role and that we all take back the roles that we have been given to hold the government to account, to scrutinize legislation, to propose solutions that will help our constituents. We are not a rubber stamp for the Prime Minister's Office. We are not an afterthought. This is an essential service and we should start to treat it like that. We should not be an afterthought for the Liberal government.

There is a number of things we have identified in our motion that call for sector specific changes. If the government had listened from the start, programs would have been better, more Canadians would have been better served. It is time for the government to start treating Parliament with the respect it deserves.

● (1600)

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, when I go back and look at the text of the motion, it talks about tourism-related businesses, it talks about the aviation sector and it talks about small business. If I had more time, I could certainly rhyme off things like the wage subsidy supporting five million people and CERB supporting nine million Canadians at the height of this program along with the emergency business account. We have put in the HASCAP. Almost \$1.7 billion have been put toward the aviation sector. We have had the regional relief and recovery fund.

Will the member at least recognize that the text of this motion seems to be blind to the fact that the government has put significant programs in place to support small businesses?

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Madam Speaker, there it is again. The government has done everything right. It has all the solutions. A small business, whose very existence is threatened, should be grateful for the government having given it the benefits that it has had so far. We should not mind the fact that its doors are about to close or that it has not received the type of support it needs or if it has been left

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out altogether, as new businesses have, as have people who have recently acquired a business and cannot show that decline in revenue.

Again, the Liberal government is arrogant. It always believes that it has the solutions. It disregards other parliamentarians. Whatever comes out of the PMO is perfect. It is time that Liberals listen to their constituents who are calling for the very specific things that our motion addresses today.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

One point of the Conservatives' motion that really speaks to me concerns the repayable loans to airlines. This industry has been hit hard by the pandemic. I should point out that the motion proposes that these loans be issued in exchange for consumer refunds. There are many Quebeckers and Canadians who still have not received refunds for their plane tickets.

However, we must also ensure that airlines restore regional routes. My region was unfortunately among the ones abandoned by Air Canada last summer. There are no longer any flights between Mont-Joli and Gatineau. We must get these routes restored.

I also think it is important to help the smaller airlines. Do the Conservatives envision giving money to the major airlines that are seeking to turn a profit in addition to supporting the smaller airlines that truly aim to serve the regions?

● (1605)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Madam Speaker, it is extremely important that we support our airline sector. I am simply saying that this is the same approach that the government has taken with the energy sector, which was promised help within hours by Bill Morneau after his first bill came before the House. It was told that sector-specific support was on the way and to standby. Of course, it never happened. All the government says now is that those workers should be grateful they got employment insurance, or the CERB or the wage subsidy, as if that addresses the specific concerns of those sectors.

What we have seen with the airline sector is that their competitors around the world have been given those repayable loans by their governments. If we want to have a competitive airline sector that will be there when the pandemic is over or managed better, we need to support the airlines now or else they will continue to have to shrink their operations and continue to abandon routes like the one that serves my hon. colleague's community. We on this side of the House do not want to see that happen.

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**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanchi—Sooke, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am a bit confused by the Conservative rhetoric, which rails against large government programs, but then the Conservatives bring forward a motion like this that calls for government programs to support sectors. However, I do not want to digress. I want to be fair.

I asked the last Liberal speaker a very simple question about small business and the severe situation that most small businesses find themselves in during the pandemic. The member for Burnaby South asked the government today if it would support a cap of 1% on the fees charged by credit card companies to merchants to help out small businesses.

I want to ask the same question of the Conservatives. Will they support a cap on credit card fees being charged to small businesses?

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Madam Speaker, that is certainly something we need to look at as part of a full suite of programs that would help small businesses come out the other side. We have some measures in our motion that will address that and we would certainly work with the NDP on anything that would support small businesses.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak on behalf of my constituents in Oshawa. I want to thank the Conservative team for tabling this motion as we look forward to the post-COVID era and the countless challenges that must be solved for Canada to build back stronger.

I first want to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Canada's tourism industry and why the federal government must move to provide specific supports for those who work in tourism. The time for dithering is over, the time for uncertainty is over. There is no more time for platitudes or excuses. Canadians deserve a plan, they deserve certainty, and our country, now more than ever, needs action.

Today we are talking about specific supports for the workers hardest hit by the pandemic. In Oshawa, some of the hardest-hit people are those in the tourism and hospitality sectors. One of the hardest-hit subsectors of the tourism industry has been independent travel agents. For example, Tracy Turberfield, one of my local constituents, has not had access to any federal government support programs for her business throughout COVID-19. Between the lack of people travelling and the rigid eligibility requirements for government support, her business has ground to a halt.

Tracy has been hard at work for 15 years and does not want to see some utopian reimagining of the Canadian economy. What she needs and wants is an economic recovery that enables her to rebuild her company. Imagine being in Tracy's position, being asked to pay back commissions for trips cancelled due to the pandemic and a near halt to all travel, and yet the government has offered no direct support. How can she rebuild her business? How on earth is she supposed to contribute to our economic recovery? Tracy has even shared that between the pandemic restrictions and being left behind by the government, it has caused a huge toll on her mental health, a toll that could be mitigated by direct sector-targeted support for independent travel agents.

Another constituent left behind by the government is Amber Derby, a former employee at the Holiday Inn in downtown Oshawa. Despite support being provided to businesses in the hospitality industry, Amber was still laid off. The fact is that much of the funding made available to businesses has not trickled down to the workers. While it is important to ensure that businesses can stay afloat, workers and those who are the bedrock of our economy cannot be left behind.

Even now, despite looking to expand her skill set, for Amber the training programs available are just not affordable for her. The Prime Minister promised that no one would be left behind, yet Amber and hundreds of thousands of Canadians in the hospitality industry have endured just that, being left behind by the government. Like Tracy and many other Canadians, the effect of being left behind has had adverse consequences for Amber's mental health.

Another of the top tourist attractions in Oshawa is Parkwood Estate. The site is the former home of R.S. McLaughlin, the first president of General Motors Canada. It is one of the top venues for high-budget movie sets in Canada. The attraction is managed by its wonderful curator Samantha George, and it is still suffering from lack of visitors.

As any tourism expert will say, the presence of quality restaurants is key to any economy looking to attract visitors. Last week I had lunch at the Bulldog Pub & Grill, an Oshawa favourite, where I had a chance to speak to owners Julie and Victor. They have been trying their best to support their workers throughout the pandemic, but have not been able to qualify for government programs like the emergency wage subsidy since they bought the business mere months before the pandemic hit. They had no prior year's information available to qualify for the programs even though the business was a viable for more than a decade under the previous owners.

The government has to provide more flexibility to small and medium-sized businesses like the Bulldog so they can continue supporting the local economy, as well as employing workers who rely on the wages and tips from their jobs. With the government's incredibly slow procurement of rapid testing and rollout of vaccines, those working in tourism are going to continue needing help. If the government had done its job, perhaps workers in the tourism sector would not need support at this time, but that dream is not the reality. The government must act now to support those in these industries.

Another industry we have to talk about is the charitable sector. This is another sector the government must target with specific supports, as laid out in our motion.

• (1610)

In Oshawa, we are known for having one of the biggest hearts in the GTA. Our charities are busier than ever helping our communities and those in need.

For example, Lianne from the Back Door Mission right across the street from my constituency office in downtown Oshawa has been working hand in hand with Simcoe Street United Church to provide food, medical services and financial assistance to Oshawa's vulnerable. I was happy to drop by last week and donate some essential items.

Sherry Denesha from St. Vincent's Kitchen in downtown Oshawa wants to reopen and continue serving low-cost meals to the less fortunate. However, the pandemic has ground the kitchen's work to halt and it needs to \$200,000 in funding to continue serving the less fortunate, as St. Vincent's has been doing for 30 years.

Rita Nave, just down the street at Simcoe Hall Settlement House, helps thousands of Oshawa residents every year with its food bank and after-school programs for kids.

Just last week, I attended the Coldest Night of the Year walk at the Oshawa Refuge Youth Outreach Centre, led by Clarence Keesman. The refuge has helped homeless youth and other low-income, at-risk youth since 1999 and its work has not stopped because of the pandemic.

We also have a strong history of supporting our military and our veterans in Oshawa. People like Brian Wilkins from the Oshawa Naval Veterans' Club and Mike Gimblett from the 420 Wing Oshawa provide an essential service to our veteran heroes. Because of the slow rollout of government funding for veterans, those who have stayed afloat are still hanging on by a thread but are in dire need.

These are people who define Oshawa for what it is: one of the most caring communities in Canada. They form the foundation of Oshawa. If the people working at these charities that provide life-saving assistance to our communities do not get the support they need, those who are at risk or have low incomes or anyone else who reaps the benefits of these great organizations may be forced to face a future without the necessary support.

With respect to our airlines, now that we are moving into the post-COVID era, it is expected that more Canadians will be looking to travel both domestically and internationally after travel restrictions at home and around the world are relaxed. Not only will this serve to boost the struggling tourism and airline sectors, it will also provide an opportunity for everyday Canadians to bring back some semblance of normalcy after living through a global pandemic that has been quite traumatic for many.

Ensuring that airlines can stay afloat through repayable loans is not just critical for the future of the Canadian economy, but also for the health of everyday Canadians. Travelling has been shown to be of significant benefit to both physical and mental health. For example, studies have shown that travel reduces the risk of heart attacks and heart disease and death. A recent Cornell University study found that merely planning travel increases overall happiness.

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While these facts may seem a bit disconnected from the primary objective of building back a stronger economy, we also need to consider the impacts of support on the physical and mental health of Canadians. Providing repayable loans to airlines is a key to the recovery of the economy and thus, as well, the health of everyday Canadians.

I cannot end my speech without talking about the effects of this motion on women. If this motion is passed and the government adopts its provisions moving forward, it is obvious that the economy itself will benefit. However, in my eyes, one of the most critical aspects of the provisions in this motion would be its effect on women. Yesterday, we celebrated International Women's Day, and while it is good to look to the time and to celebrate the contributions of women in our world and our country and communities, it is also a time to reflect on the challenges women still face on a daily basis, challenges that have been amplified by COVID-19.

The sectors that this motion proposes for specific targeted support, mainly in tourism, hospitality and the charitable sector, are all heavily dominated by women in their respective workforces. Over 50% of employees in tourism are women, and 60% in hospitality and 80% in non-profits. These statistics show the disproportionate impacts of this pandemic on the economic status of women in Canada, making it all the more important that the government consider the interests of women from coast to coast to coast as we move forward with the economic recovery.

If the provisions of this motion are applied, the women who have been negatively impacted by the pandemic would receive greater support and the risk of their being left behind during the economic recovery would be dramatically reduced, especially for those working in the specific sectors mentioned in the motion.

• (1615)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have heard a number of Conservatives today talk about the Liberals not being able to get their legislative agenda in order and saying that this is the reason the Conservatives have not been willing to participate in making sure this gets moved along as quickly as possible.

Basically, they have been blaming the government for not allowing enough time for this debate and, therefore, somehow, as a result of that, they have decided they will not sit longer into the evening to get these important pieces of legislation through to support Canadians. They are basically saying that because they are upset with the federal government's inability to deliver and its failure to do a good job, they are going to hijack Canadians' payments and supports to express their displeasure with the government.

Would this member like to comment on why the Conservative Party, the opposition, is using these delaying tactics at the expense of Canadians who need these supports?

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**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Madam Speaker, it is hard to dissect that rambling question and its ridiculousness. We are sitting even later tonight to debate the Canada-U.K. free trade agreement, which, by the way, is another example of total incompetence and irresponsible behaviour by the Liberal government. It is happening over and over again. It is consistent, it is bumbling and it is dithering.

The government has the ability to set forth a legislative agenda of priorities, and it is the opposition's role to challenge and improve these pieces of legislation. I would submit to the member and the Liberals across the aisle that if they had listened to the opposition in the first place, we would not have to redo a lot of these bills the Liberals bumbled in the first place.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Oshawa.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion. My colleague spoke about the impact on mental health and on women, but I would like to hear him talk about the fact that many workers are self-employed.

Does he believe that defining self-employment could prevent discrimination between self-employed workers and salaried employees, depending on the type of business?

• (1620)

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for her question.

I think it is a good idea. It is very important to look for new opportunities for self-employed workers.

[*English*]

I sincerely appreciate the comment from my Bloc colleague because she is listening to the people on the ground. So many Canadians are hurting right now. They are falling through the cracks because of the Liberals' ineptitude of putting forth legislation that would actually work to support the majority of Canadians. I am absolutely open to discovering and looking forward to new definitions that might help Canadians, especially women, who are independent entrepreneurs on the ground.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the credit card companies have made billions of dollars during this pandemic, as the amount of cash being used has dropped, while small business owners have lost the most, which is what we are debating today. Even before the pandemic, I was hearing from small business owners in my riding that one of the main things hurting them was the high merchant fees they pay to credit card companies. Canadian merchants pay the highest fees in the world.

I am just wondering if the member and his Conservative colleagues would support the NDP initiative to stand up to the credit card companies and cap merchant fees for small businesses.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Oshawa has 20 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Madam Speaker, of course these ideas have to be looked at in their entirety to help support businesses. It is un-

fortunate, though, that the NDP seems to want to control all the financial sectors. We, in the Conservative Party, believe in trusting Canadians.

Canadians utilize their credit cards most of the time very responsibly. We have to make sure we do not interfere with the market and actually make things worse. We do not want to become a socialist country that controls every single—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will now resume debate. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise in the House, even if it is virtually, to bring remarks on behalf of the good people of Kings—Hants. I will be splitting my time today with my hon. colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge.

It is a privilege to speak to the opposition motion brought forward from the member of Parliament for Abbotsford. For those who are listening from home and might be tuning in, I think it is beneficial to read the different provisions of the text. I can certainly speak to why I was excited to have the chance to speak here today.

The motion indicates the need to, in part (a), introduce sector-specific measures to support the highly impacted sectors such as hospitality, tourism and charitable sectors; in part (b), provide repayable loans to the airlines with the condition that it includes consumer refunds, job guarantees, restrictions to executive compensation and the maintaining of regional routes; and finally, in part (c), to improve support programs, notably lending supports to small businesses within 30 days of the motion being adopted, presumably as part of the budget process.

The reason I jumped at the opportunity to speak here today is that I agree with the elements of the motion. These are priorities I have heard from my constituents in, for example, sectors like tourism. I am the member of Parliament for Kings—Hants in the Annapolis Valley where tourism is extremely important to our economy. We have an emerging wine sector that draws people from around the world, and indeed from around the country, to visit our shores. That is a sector that has been obviously impacted because of the pandemic.

I will quickly go on record also talking about the importance of an excise replacement program for the wine sector. I hope that it is something we will see in the budget because it is extremely important for our Canadian wine producers.

I live in an area in East Hants which is about 40 minutes outside of Halifax. It is only about 10 minutes away from the Halifax International Airport. We have almost 5,000 direct jobs in the community that I live in that are tied to the aviation sector. We know the challenges that sector has gone through. Those jobs and that industry remain important not only to my constituents, but also to many of my colleagues' and indeed the whole country moving forward.

*Business of Supply*

The last would be small business. We would be hard pressed to find a member in the House who does not believe in the importance of small business, what it means to the economy, particularly rural economies. Before I was a member of Parliament, I was a lawyer, but I was heavily involved in my community through a lot of non-profit initiatives. It was small businesses and their contributions to the community that helped ensure a lot of the community events that went on were possible. Whether it is employment or their contributions to communities, our small business owners are the backbone of the economy across the country and in my riding.

While I agree on the principles of the motion, what concerns me is the fact that the motion really does not give any credence to some of the work that has gone on. With due respect to my esteemed colleague from Abbotsford, it is almost as though when he tabled the motion he had not been watching some of the work the government had been doing since the start of the pandemic to support Canadian businesses and individuals. A lot of those different elements are included in the text of the motion.

I will take the rest of my time to talk about some of those programs that have come in place. We know that there remain challenges. I do not think anyone is going to suggest that everything the government has done indemnifies the challenges that people are facing across the country, but we have certainly done our best to put a robust suite of programs in place to support Canadian businesses and individuals.

I will start with how this relates to the tourism industry and some of those most highly impacted sectors, really speak to part (a) of the motion. The member for Abbotsford could have been writing about the program we have already announced, which is HASCAP, the highly affected sectors credit availability program. This program insures government-backed loans up to \$1 million for businesses, particularly in those sectors that have been hardest impacted.

That has been in place for a couple of months as part of what the government has rolled out. That is in addition to the measures that began at the beginning of the pandemic, which include the wage subsidy. Almost five million Canadians have been able to have their jobs maintained with businesses that are going through challenges as a result of the pandemic because of the wage subsidy.

• (1625)

We can look at the regional relief and recovery fund. As a member of Parliament from a rural area, the monies that were put out through this program, through the regional development agencies, but specifically through some of the local community business development organizations, have been extremely important to provide liquidity to small businesses, notably those in our tourism sector. I know there are businesses in my own riding that have been able to take advantage of those programs.

We talk about the emergency response benefit from the start of the pandemic. I talked to many micro-business owners who might not necessarily have a big staffing complement, such as those in small B & Bs that just have a couple individuals, maybe family members, who help operate them. That was an extremely important program, as is the response benefit since then, to make sure these individuals are able to continue to operate their businesses, move

forward in good faith, and have that backstop to support them in the short term.

I will also talk about the emergency business account, the \$40,000 loan that was originally extended to businesses, \$10,000 of which is non-repayable if the remaining \$30,000 can be returned within two years' time. We have, of course, extended that up to \$60,000 and included another \$10,000 as part of the non-repayable amount.

These are all investments the government has taken on. I would agree with my colleagues that it does not necessarily indemnify all businesses. It does not necessarily ensure that every business is successful. However, it is a robust suite of programs that is meant to try to support individuals and businesses through some of the challenging times we have seen in this pandemic.

I will talk about the airlines and aviation sector. As I mentioned, there are almost 5,000 direct jobs in my community tied to the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. We know that the government, since day one, has been sitting down with airlines and having discussions about how best to move forward. It is really important that, when we are dealing with public funding, to ensure we get it right. It cannot be a blank cheque to the airlines.

I think we all agree as parliamentarians that we need to support our airlines, and the government is committed to that and will do so. It is also committed to ensuring that consumers are able to get their refunds. That has already been publicly announced by our government on multiple occasions. At the end of the day, that negotiation that is going on between the department of finance and airlines has to accomplish some of these measures that are in the Conservative motion right now.

This is something we are already working on. This is something we are going to achieve. There has been almost \$2 billion in wage subsidies provided to the sector. There was \$1 billion provided under the fall economic statement to support airports and regional airports, which is extremely important for some of my colleagues from smaller communities.

When I look at the text of this motion, it seems devoid of some of the measures that the government has taken on. I am sure some of the Conservative members, or members in this House who take pride in being fiscal conservatives, would not suggest that the government should just simply open a line of credit and provide that liquidity without some assurances that some of these objectives that are indeed in the text of their motion should be met. We are not at the table. That is going on right now. I am confident that our government is going to be able to meet those objectives.

The final piece that I will say is on small business. I just listed a litany of different programs, showing how we have worked to support small businesses. I have heard stories in my community about how these programs have helped. I did not even mention the rent subsidy, for example. It is a significant amount of money that we have put on the table to support businesses through these challenges.

*Business of Supply*

What I find interesting and what troubles me the most is that in one breath the opposition party will say that we have done too much and spent too much, and that they are worried about deficits and too much spending. I will be honest, my own ideology as a parliamentarian is that I think we need to be fiscally prudent. I appreciated the Minister of Finance's speech before Christmas, in the fall economic statement, about making sure that we have fiscal anchors and are being mindful of how we spend in the days ahead. That is certainly appreciated.

However, they cannot talk out of both sides of their mouths. They cannot say we are spending too much money, and then have motions before this House that say we are not doing enough. Canadians, certainly the constituents I talk to, recognize that in one sense Conservatives are saying we are not doing enough, but in another sense saying, perhaps as an example the member for Carleton, we are spending far too much.

This is part of the challenge. I think it is something that needs to be noted. I would be interested in hearing my colleagues' perspective. I am happy to take any questions.

• (1630)

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member speak about the programs the government has rolled out and all of the help it is trying to provide, but this week my office has been working with a constituent who is unable to access the emergency rent subsidy program because of the limitations that have been put around it. The program is not for people who rent through a family relationship. In this case, the father owns the building and the daughter and son-in-law pay the rent and have for years. It is a business transaction, but they are unable to access the program because it was not designed properly. Its limitations are putting small business at risk.

When will the government come up with a plan that really helps the small business owners who are falling through the cracks?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite for bringing forward this particular concern.

Since day one, our government has been building these programs to meet the needs of Canadians across the country. Have there been issues with particular business circumstances? Of course there have been. That is why I mentioned the regional relief and recovery fund in my speech. That program was specifically designed for businesses that, for whatever reason, because of their circumstances were not able to take advantage of certain programs. It was a federal backstop being administered by some of the regional development agencies and the local community business development corporations.

I am sure if the member opposite brings his issue forward to our government through our Minister of Finance, it can be looked at. However, the member should be, as I hope and trust he is, reaching out to make sure those businesses are connected to some of the other programs I mentioned.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, our maple syrup producers had to close their sugar shacks last spring.

This year, they have found creative ways to operate, but they do not have access to the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

Does my esteemed colleague not feel a little embarrassed that his party received at least \$850,000 from this wage subsidy program when maple syrup producers cannot access it? Will he put pressure on his party to pay back this money, and will he help us make our sugar shacks eligible for the subsidy?

• (1635)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I think we can all appreciate the importance of the maple industry, in Quebec in particular. However, I am not familiar with the circumstances the member is raising. He certainly has access to the Minister of Finance.

We sit on the public accounts committee together. If he wants to raise this with me offline and thinks that I am able to be an advocate, I am happy to take the case on and see what can be done. However, I do not know anything specifically.

We need to be mindful that we can all point to at least one situation or circumstance where the program has not completely fit the needs of a business. However, that would negate the fact that a lion's share of Canadian businesses and individuals have been served very well. We are certainly working on ways to tailor programs to meet the needs of all businesses across the country.

If the member wants to follow up, I am happy to speak with him.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member talked about his concerns with respect to the opposition bill, so I want to tell him about my concerns.

There has not been a budget in two years. In fact, the member has not even experienced a budget since he has been elected.

The other thing I want to raise is a comment of his colleague from Surrey—Newton. He said the opposition has misinformed concerns about bankruptcies and layoffs. We have a 9.4% unemployment rate and hundreds of thousands of businesses are going bankrupt.

Can the member tell me what is misinformed about these concerns, or does he not care?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, what is important to note is that throughout this entire process, when we look at the measures we have put in place, including some of the ones the member and his party have criticized, we have always gone through the parliamentary process to have spending measures approved. They were approved by the majority of the House.

I know the budget is important for setting the stage for Canadians, so we are going to have one shortly. We have been in the middle of a global pandemic, but at the end of the day, the spending measures that were needed have always passed in the House. We have always consulted with parties and made sure we had a majority to support Canadians.



*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is great to see you and all my hon. colleagues this afternoon. It is wonderful to represent the very entrepreneurial and hard-working folks of my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. I know many of them have started going back to their normal lives. Traffic is getting busy again in the city of Vaughan in the York Region and people are working, which is great to see.

[Translation]

I would like to thank my hon. colleagues for sharing their thoughts on the impact of the pandemic on Canadians, Canadian businesses and the different sectors of our economy.

[English]

The COVID-19 global pandemic has had wide-ranging effects in Canada, from dangers to public health to business restrictions and closures, causing grief, job losses and hurting the economy.

[Translation]

Nearly a year ago, we asked Canadians to do their part so that together we could stop the spread of the virus and flatten the curve in order to protect our neighbours and friends, especially the elderly, the most vulnerable and people living with certain health conditions.

[English]

During that time, Canadian businesses have shown tremendous resilience in adapting to the challenges posed by the pandemic by adjusting their operations to keep Canadians safe and scaling down their costs during times of weaker demand.

[Translation]

From the beginning, we have taken a whole-of-government approach to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and ensuring the safety and security of Canadians. We are working with our municipal, provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as our international partners, to mitigate the risks to Canadians.

[English]

Our government has done everything in its power to combat the virus and mitigate its harm, using every tool available to safeguard the health and livelihoods of Canadians, help businesses weather the storm and support the various sectors of our economy.

Last year, we put in place Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan to provide immediate support for Canadians and Canadian businesses. This plan is a broad, wide-ranging approach that continues to keep our economy stable and protect jobs. Through this plan, we have put forward numerous measures to ensure that Canada's sectors have the support they need to recover from this crisis and, for that matter, Canada's workers do as well.

Let me now provide members with some examples of our broad-based industry supports.

For highly affected sectors, such as tourism and hospitality, hotels, and arts and entertainment, that have struggled to access sufficient financing, we have launched the highly affected sectors credit availability program. This program offers government-guaranteed

low-interest loans of up to \$1 million to eligible businesses to help them with their day-to-day operating costs during the COVID-19 crisis. It enables them to invest in their longer-term prosperity.

In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, the city of Vaughan is known as the event centre capital of Canada. There are many event centres where weddings, bar mitzvahs and celebrations happen. I know these centres have been impacted significantly during the pandemic, and we have assisted them to the best of our ability so they will reopen when the time comes and it is safe to do so.

For the businesses in the agricultural and agri-food sector, we have provided \$35 million through the emergency on-farm support fund to prevent and respond to the spread of COVID-19, improving health and safety on farms and employee living quarters. We also enabled Farm Credit Canada to provide an additional \$5 billion in lending, offering increased flexibility to farmers who face cash flow issues and to processors who are impacted by lost sales, helping them remain financially solid during this difficult time. Businesses in the agricultural and agri-food sector and businesses in the aquacultural and fishery sectors have benefited from this measure.

Businesses in the aquacultural and fishery sectors have also benefited from \$62.5 million of new assistance to the fish and seafood processing sector through the Canadian seafood stabilization fund. This new assistance has helped them add storage capacity for unsold product, comply with new health and safety measures for workers, support new manufacturing and automated technologies to improve productivity and quality of finished seafood products, and adapt products to respond to changing requirements and new market demands.

For the cultural, heritage and sport sector, we have created the short-term compensation fund for Canadian audiovisual productions to compensate independent production companies for the lack of insurance coverage for COVID-19-related filming interruptions and production shutdowns within the sector. We recently increased the fund from \$50 million to \$100 million to allow more productions to make use of the program during the busiest time of the year for the audiovisual industry. We have also established a \$500-million emergency support fund to help alleviate the financial pressures of organizations in this sector facing significant losses because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Business of Supply*

Right now, oil and gas workers and their families are struggling because of things beyond their control. As a result, companies have had to slow down or pause their operations, leaving too many people out of work. Thankfully, recently we have seen a run-up and increase in the price of oil, whether it is WTI or WCS. This is a net overall positive for the Canadian economy.

• (1640)

To support businesses in the energy sector, an important sector for our economy, we have provided up to \$750 million to create a new emissions reduction fund to support workers and reduce emissions in Canada's very important oil and gas sector, with a focus on methane. This fund is providing primarily repayable contributions to conventional and offshore oil and gas firms to support their investments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Of this amount, \$75 million was allocated to the offshore sector.

We also provided up to \$1.72 billion to the Governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, and to Alberta's Orphan Well Association, to clean up orphaned and inactive oil and gas wells. This has helped maintain thousands of jobs while creating lasting environmental benefits.

To support infrastructure projects across the country, we have adapted the investing in Canada infrastructure program to better respond to the impacts of COVID-19, adding a new COVID-19 resilience stream. This new stream, delivered through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories, provides added flexibility to fund quick-start short-term projects that might not otherwise be eligible under the existing funding streams. We also accelerated \$2.2 billion in annual federal infrastructure funding for communities, through the gas tax fund, to help communities quickly move forward with infrastructure projects.

For many Canadians, COVID-19 has had a major impact on daily life, as they work to pay their bills, put food on the table and take care of themselves and their families. More and more Canadians have been turning to community organizations for assistance as a result of the economic conditions of the pandemic. To ensure that Canadians get the support they need, the government has made significant investments in shelters, food banks and community organizations, including \$300 million distributed as of January 12 for charities and non-profit organizations across Canada that deliver essential services and an additional \$200 million in total support for nearly 3,000 food banks and local food and service organizations to address emergency hunger relief across Canada.

To support hospitals and keep our nurses, doctors and frontline health care workers well equipped in the months and years ahead, I am proud to say the government has committed over \$9.1 billion to support the procurement of personal protective equipment. This funding is in addition to the \$3 billion for the procurement of personal protective equipment provided directly to the provinces and territories through the safe restart agreement.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

As we have said from the beginning, our government is there for Canadians. We promised to do everything we could to support

Canadians, Canadian businesses and all sectors of our economy. That is what we are doing today and what we will continue to do.

[*English*]

We will be here with Canadians and will have their backs for as long as the pandemic is here with us. We have had them from day one. We have been there with emergency programs like the CEBA, the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the rent relief program and the regional relief and recovery fund. We will continue to invest in Canada, we will continue to invest in Canadians and we will continue to grow and strengthen our middle class.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the truth of the matter is that we are where we are today because of decisions made by the current government. I mean the level of isolation, the impact on mental health and the loss of productivity in our nation, which was already going down the tubes before COVID hit us. The government chose not to close borders and allowed people from overseas into Canada when we should have been shutting our borders. Our rapid tests are not the best in the world and did not become readily available so that people would not have to stop going to work and going to school. PPE was sent to China. We were working with China on a vaccine when we have Canadian companies and other options, which then appeared to move more slowly because of the lack of interest from the government in working with them.

Where is the information on a means to strengthen Canadians' immune systems? Where was the transparency in the contracts the government created? There are so many things that caused us to be in a circumstance now in which Canadian businesses need that type of assistance that we have been pleased to hand out to them, but what they want is not to be on oxygen; they want to be back to work and functioning in a fully functioning economy. All of this has caused us to be where we are right now.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, first of all, we have deployed millions of rapid tests to the provinces. It is in their purview, then, to use those rapid tests. They are being used within the schools and so forth here in the province of Ontario.

With regard to personal protective equipment, we have procured literally billions of dollars' worth of PPE and distributed it to industry sectors and provinces. We have worked exceptionally well with all provinces at the table. We continue to work well with all provinces to ensure that Canadians are protected during this time and that we move through and get out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have also obtained the largest diversified portfolio of vaccines of any country in the world. They are coming. We are going to exceed our targets, with eight million by the end of March and almost 36 million by the end of June. Canadians are being vaccinated. My family members are being vaccinated in the 80-plus age cohort here in the York region. It is great to see they are happy. Needles are going in and normality is slowly returning. It is going to take time, but we are going to get there.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my distinguished colleague said his government was there for the people.

Why was his government not there for Émilie Sansfaçon? Why does my colleague think that giving people with a serious illness 50 weeks of EI sickness benefits is unreasonable? Why does he not think that would be the most compassionate thing to do? What would it take to convince him?

• (1650)

[*English*]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, I believe the member is referring to EI sickness benefits with his question. I will say that we will continue to invest in Canadians. We will continue to strengthen our social safety net, which we have done since the beginning by making changes to the Canada child benefit, for example, and by lowering the age of retirement for seniors. We will continue to be there for all Canadians, including our most vulnerable.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, there are many areas in which the government has helped people in dealing with COVID-19, and as an opposition member, I have contributed to pushing the government to do the right thing.

One thing I like about this motion is that it adds restrictions on executive compensation. It does not go far enough in terms of restrictions on shareholder compensation and shareholder dividends. We have seen how the big three telecom companies have taken almost half a billion dollars in wage subsidies. Imperial Oil has taken money and private long-term care homes have taken millions of dollars and then paid out shareholder dividends.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he learned anything from what the Conservatives did with the GM bailout. They lost hundreds of millions of dollars and did not have any rules or any kind of package to keep GM in the country, so GM closed its plants and left. Is the government—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will have a very short answer from the hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, I will say this: It is great to see General Motors making strategic investments here in the province of Ontario, both at the GM Oshawa plant, which will employ thousands of workers in the coming weeks and months, and also down in Ingersoll, where GM will make an electric vehicle to be distributed across—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Before we resume debate, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

*Business of Supply*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I would like to ask for unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate on Bill C-18 tonight, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. Any members opposed to the motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voices, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—MEASURES TO SUPPORT CANADIAN WORKERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Huron—Bruce.

Oscar Wilde said that a cynic is someone who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing, and that perfectly encapsulates this government. The Liberals knows the price, the very high price, that they have made Canadians pay, but they confuse that high price with value. Instead of judging our performance in government during COVID based on the mortality rates, the unemployment rates or the vaccination rates of our country, all of which are among the worst, they think that they should be rewarded just because their programs are the most expensive. Today they were literally bragging that their programs are big and fat—not smart and effective, but big and fat, and not as a means to an end but as ends in and of themselves.

One would think that we would judge the value of the government's actions by, for example, the percentage of people who have been vaccinated, but if the Liberals did that, of course, we would find that Canada is the worst in the G7. They might want to judge the performance of the government on jobs on the basis of the unemployment rate, but of course if they judged the value of their actions on that basis, they would again find Canada worst in the G7, so instead the Liberals tell us not to worry about the value of their performance but to congratulate them simply because they have delivered this bad performance at the highest possible price. They are literally like a used car salesman's dream. They show up and they say, "Give me the most expensive car on the lot. The make, model and condition do not matter. I want whichever one will add the biggest bill to my credit card, because that must be the best one."

*Business of Supply*

What if other countries thought like this? Taiwan, for example, has a COVID mortality rate of 0.04 per hundred thousand. We have a mortality rate of 59 per hundred thousand. In other words, our mortality rate here in Canada is more than 1,400 times higher than in Taiwan, but that does not matter, because Taiwan has a smaller deficit. Taiwan's deficit is 4% of GDP, whereas ours is about 17% of GDP. The Liberals would say that their plan and their performance is three times greater because it is three times more expensive. Can members imagine the Taiwanese people holding a protest and saying, "Sure, you kept our mortality rate down, and sure, fewer people died, but you were not as expensive as the Canadian Liberals, so you obviously do not care as much as they do." That would be how the Taiwanese people would look at their success in managing COVID if they were judging simply on the basis of how expensive their government could be. However, this is the approach the Liberals have taken on everything.

Let us take infrastructure. The Parliamentary Budget Officer found, when he looked, that the \$180-billion infrastructure program that the Liberals have been bragging about has no associated plan. Now, we know it is the best, because it is the most expensive. The government brags all the time that it is twice as expensive as the previous government's infrastructure plan, and therefore it must be twice as good. When I asked how we could spend \$180 billion without a plan, the then infrastructure minister stood up and said something to the effect that "Well, we got 20 buses in Halifax", to which I replied, "How much does that work out to per bus? Are they all made out of solid gold?"

Then we went over to the finance committee, and I asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer if he had seen a list of the projects that had been funded through this \$180-billion plan. He told me that, yes, they had a list, but it only accounted for half the money spent. I said to him that if I came home after spending a lot of money for groceries and said, "Honey, I want you to congratulate me; I have spent more money on groceries than anyone in the history of the world", and if she asked what I had bought and I said that I only had receipts to account for half of what I had spent, I can tell members that I would be sleeping in the doghouse that night.

• (1655)

The reality is in most human existence, people do not judge their performance by how expensive they can be. They judge it by what they get for their money. They judge their success by the value they obtain, not just the price they pay. Only in government would we advertise ourselves as the most expensive product around and expect to get more business. Imagine a restaurant operating that way. Come dine with us: the service is terrible and the food is not very good, but we charge more than anyone else, therefore we must be the best.

It is not just in infrastructure. In housing, for example, the Liberal member for Spadina—Fort York stood in the House and said, "We have a \$70 billion housing plan," as though we were supposed to congratulate the Liberals because it was really expensive, not because of what it does. What has it actually delivered? Vancouver is now the second most expensive place on earth to buy a house, if we compare average income to average house price. Toronto is number six. We are one of the most sparsely populated nations on the planet. We should be the most affordable place to buy a home but some-

how, under the government, housing right here in Canada has become one of the most expensive things to buy anywhere in the world.

Think of this. Singapore has a life expectancy over a year longer than Canada. It ranks better than us on the United Nations Human Development Index. Its government costs 14¢ for every \$1 of GDP. In Canada, it is 41¢. Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Australia, the U.K. and New Zealand all outranked Canada on the United Nations Human Development Index even though the cost of their governments, as a share of GDP, is less than here in Canada.

In other words, they delivered some combination of longer life expectancies, more schooling and/or higher GDP per capita for their populations at a lower cost. That is because they judge success based on value, not on price. They do not go around bragging that they have the most expensive programs around. They work to make their programs successful in delivering results for people.

Here in Canada, we could do the same if we would stop bragging about the billions we can push out the door, saying, "My program has more billions than your program", for example, and start talking about the good the programs could do. We should unleash the power of our free enterprise system to deliver more for less and make life more affordable for people, including for taxpayers. That would be a new and different approach by which we could judge success in this place. Perhaps when we judge things by the right metric, which is to say value, rather than the wrong method of price, then we would get better results and a higher standard of living for people.

For a house to be affordable, it cannot take up more than one-third of a family's income. The average house takes up 50% of the average family's income in Canada. In other words, the average house is two-thirds more expensive than the average family can afford here in Canada, one of the most sparsely populated places on earth. We have more spaces where there is no one than we have places where there is anyone.

According to a leading poverty group, in the home town of the member bragging about the \$70 billion worth of spending the Liberals have done on housing, there is 98% occupancy in homeless shelters, and 330,000 people are on waiting lists for affordable housing. Ten thousand homeless people are in that member's home town. Where did the \$70 billion go? Maybe if he doubled that budget, there would be twice as many homeless people. That is what happens when success is judged not based on what is done, but on what it costs other people to do it. If we think it is impossible to get more for less, look at other countries that do exactly that.

*Business of Supply*

• (1700)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I enjoy the interventions by this member. They are quite entertaining. I am just glad he does not charge admission, because I would probably keep coming back and paying more and more to see this all day.

His problem with talking about the mortality rate is that he had to dig all the way down to Taiwan to find an example that would fit his narrative. However, when he talks about the unemployment rate and everything else, he always compares us with the G7.

My question is as follows. Why will the member not compare the mortality rate in his example with the countries in the G7? It is obvious that it is because we have the second-lowest mortality rate in the G7.

Would the member at least recognize that through the great work of Canadians across the country, and through the work this Parliament has done by working together to provide programs for Canadians, through unanimous consent quite often, we have achieved so much for Canadians, and indeed helped the quality of life during this pandemic?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, I will remark that the member said he would keep paying more and more for my speech. That was exactly the point of my speech: Liberals will pay more and more for anything. Luckily, I believe in free speech, and that is why my speech was free today.

On the question of the stats, the member talked about mortality rates. New Zealand, South Korea, Australia, Japan, Iceland, India, Norway, the UAE, Denmark and Finland all have lower unemployment and lower COVID mortality rates. They did a better job of protecting lives and livelihoods. That, and not how expensive we can make it for present and future generations, is how we should judge success.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

We have not had a federal budget since the spring of 2019. Quebec, the provinces and the territories all tabled a budget in 2020. What is more, Quebec has decided to table another one soon, in March. All of the G7 countries except Canada have presented a budget.

As my colleague quite eloquently pointed out, the Liberals went on a spending spree and now they are congratulating themselves for it. However, that is not necessarily the way to help people. In regions like mine, there are still people and businesses that are falling through the cracks, which is why sector-specific help is important. That is what I like about the Conservatives' motion, because needs differ from one sector to another.

I would like the member to tell us why sector-specific help is important.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her good question.

First, the government did away with balanced budgets. Second, it decided to do away with all budgets, not just balanced budgets. Why does the government not want to table a budget?

Usually governments love budgets because they present an opportunity to publish all the results, all the promises and all the work they are doing for Canadians. Usually, surveys show that there is a major increase in support for governments that table a budget, but this government does not want Canadians to see how it is ruining our public finances and what kind of trouble our country is in. That is why the government does not want to table a budget.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, I was particularly interested in the section of the member's speech about affordable housing and how Vancouver had become one of the most expensive places to live in Canada.

I would note that it was during the Conservative government's time that tax loopholes and the use of real estate as a tax haven and as a place to launder money drove up real estate prices in Vancouver, and we are feeling it here in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. We also have predatory investors who are investing in affordable housing through real estate investment trusts that pay a very low tax rate.

Does the hon. member think we need more regulation in the housing market? Does he think we should have rent and vacancy—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to give the hon. member an opportunity to answer.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, I would simply point out that far left politicians at all three levels of government have been driving up housing costs in all our big cities for a very long time to the advantage of the very rich and at the expense of the very poor. The last thing we need is for those very same far left politicians to do any more of that.

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we have limited time and debate will come to an end pretty quickly, but I have a few key points to summarize the debate. Maybe the riding I represent best exemplifies some of the realities. It really has been the best of times and it has been the worst of times.

The riding of Huron—Bruce, the entire western shore, borders on Lake Huron. During the COVID pandemic we have had a tremendous uptick in tourism. People have come from all over the place to rent cottages, buy cottages, develop real estate and stay at hotels. It has been one of the biggest booms of all times, with four wheelers, boats and RVs, a very prosperous times.

*Business of Supply*

On the other side, some restaurants are forever damaged financially as well as banquet halls and subsidiaries such as rental shops that support weddings. Also, different companies provide shuttle services to the airport in my area and tour bus operators, all of which have been damaged permanently. Years and years of toil and hard work have been obliterated in the matter of a year.

In northern Ontario, tour operators who maybe have a resort or a fishing lodge have been decimated. I talked to a tour operator today, who said that they would be able to make it through this year, but that it would be game over at the end of 2021 for many if they did not receive support. We need to be mindful that for some it has been very good times and for others it has been absolute desperation. This is why we will need further supports.

There has been a lot of talk today about airlines and support. We need to look no further than what is going on at Air Canada to see all the moves it has made to try to stay alive. The money from the wage subsidy is called survival. Air Canada did a stock issue, debt, did all sorts of different things with airplane deliveries, but the airlines will need some financing to re-establish routes and rebuild the 10 years worth of networks or their business models will be forever changed. For example, we heard earlier today about two airports in Saskatchewan, one in Saskatoon and one in Regina, and about all the flights that had left.

The CEO of Porter Airlines made something very clear, and it really highlights one of the huge failures of the Liberal government. The United States vaccinates more people every day than have been vaccinated in our entire country. That is absolutely unacceptable. That will forever be a mark on the government going forward and when the next election comes, there definitely will be a focus on what happened. Another thing he mentioned was the head-scratcher going on at our major airports regarding quarantine, but being able to cross at land border crossings.

Porter was going to start flying March 29, but because of this, it will be the middle to the end of May, maybe, because of the actions of the government, not ours, and these were his words and not mine. Anybody who has been to Toronto can see those airplanes taking off from the island airport what seems like every two minutes, but it has not turned a propeller in almost a year. These are the things we are talking about today.

Air Canada has let go 20,000 people. There is not one town in my riding that has 20,000 people. That is 20,000 people who do not have a job and would love to get back to work.

The other issue is around financing. If we go back, we will remember that the government left out credit unions. It is as if it had not even heard about credit unions. The credit unions and the opposition parties had to fight to ensure they were able to also offer CE-BA loans to their customers. They had calls from all sorts of colleagues, from chambers and business improvement areas, wondering why the big chartered banks were able to offer these loans but credit unions were not. Going forward, we have to ensure we fight for credit unions.

The other thing I wanted to mention was Community Futures. It is a government-backed organization and there are two offices in my riding, Bruce and Huron, and just over in Grey, there is

Saugeen. They provide tremendous loans to small businesses and quite likely to those who need it the most and they are the fastest and most effective.

● (1710)

If we think of the motion we have presented today, I do not really look at it as a political motion. It is not meant to drive a wedge between one another. To me, it is a summation of things that we need to do to help not all businesses, but those that need it the most. We cannot do that if we do not have a budget. The businesses know, the associations know, the chambers know what needs to be done.

Last, on charities, I would suggest, and a lot of people would support this, that we look at the deductibility for people giving to charities. A lot of people across the country have a charity they love. They want to support them and maybe even give them some lifetime savings or inheritance. Maybe if there were a little extra enticement to give, they would do it. The great thing is that the money stays local. It stays in their community. Instead of having a large government decide, it would allow them to direct it to their food banks, to women's shelters or to wherever they feel it would do the best.

We all need to work hard in the House to support and defend those people who put their finances on the line each and every day. We need to do something to ensure they are supported, not just for survival but for the revival of their businesses.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

● (1715)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 10, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so we can start Private Members' Business.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

### CRIMINAL CODE

#### NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I unfortunately need to give notice that with respect to the consideration of the Senate amendments to Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), at the next sitting of the House a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

### DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed from November 24, 2020, consideration of the motion that Bill C-216, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has moved six motions in the House since 2005. Those six motions were not adopted on division; they were adopted unanimously. That means that everyone was in favour of those motions, which had to do with protecting supply management. However, there have still been breaches in the system.

All of the agreements that have been signed recently have created breaches: the agreement with Europe, the Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and CUSMA. Every time, the government tells farmers that this is the last time and that this will not happen again, but then the next agreement creates more breaches.

Every time, the government promises farmers that it will properly compensate them for their losses. However, every time, farmers either do not receive any compensation, they are late in being compensated or they receive only partial compensation, and all that after they have already spent several years fighting for it. That is unacceptable and it has to stop.

Today, every single party here is solemnly swearing to protect supply management. One simple way to prove that is to vote in favour of Bill C-216. There are members and political parties in the House that promise to defend supply management, but then they go and say things like, "This does not mean we have to support a bill that would close the door on any future opportunity for growth." In other words, they are promising to protect supply management, but

### Business of the House

they are still keeping it handy as a wild card they might choose to play in future negotiations. That is not cutting it any more. People are sick of these promises.

Farmers are asking us to look beyond the political party that introduced the bill and focus on whether it is good for people. I, too, am asking for a non-partisan approach. That is what folks in the agricultural sector want us to do.

Last week, we toured the regions of Quebec and met with farmers from each region. They spoke to us passionately, from the heart, and told us that they needed this kind of legislation. At the same time, we released a video featuring representatives of all the federations under supply management: Mr. Gobeil of the Producteurs de lait du Québec; Mr. Loyer and Mr. Bilkes of the Canadian Hatching Egg Producers; Mr. Chalifoux of the Conseil des Industriels laitiers du Québec; Mr. Fontaine of the Chicken Farmers of Canada; Mr. Leblanc of the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec; Mr. Bouchard of the Fédération des producteurs d'œufs du Québec; Mr. Ference of the Turkey Farmers of Canada; Mr. Pelissero of the Egg Farmers of Canada; and Ms. Cloutier of the Conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec. It was fairly unanimous.

Also last week, Mr. Groleau of the UPA wrote a letter to every party leader in the House of Commons, pleading with them to pass Bill C-216, which is fundamental and very necessary.

I am making this humble request on behalf of regular folks who are not here to speak for themselves. I am speaking for them. They are at the end of their rope. They are sick of promises, of having to fight, of having to push, of struggling to keep their head above water for years just to get a small cheque that will not cover all the losses they have suffered.

Farmers are proud, strong and reliable. They want to do decent, honourable work feeding people. They have no use for compensation cheques. What they really want is to keep working under the wonderful system that they set up and that is working very well.

• (1720)

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak to Bill C-216, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act on supply management. I am speaking from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. minister is rising on a point of order.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I apologize to the member for Yukon, a dear friend and an amazing, hard-working MP.

*Private Members' Business*

I wish to inform the House that Thursday shall not be an allotted day.

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**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-216, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this bill proposes to amend section 10 of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, which sets out the powers, functions and duties of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. More specifically, the bill proposes the addition of a provision that would prevent the Minister of Foreign Affairs from making any commitment in an international treaty that would have the effect of:

- (a) increasing the tariff rate quota, within the meaning of subsection 2(1) of the Customs Tariff, applicable to dairy products, poultry or eggs; or
- (b) reducing the tariff applicable to those goods when they are imported in excess of the applicable tariff rate quota.

For those watching at home, basically what that means is that we would not grant any further market access to dairy products, poultry or eggs in future trade negotiations.

I appreciate the opportunity the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel has provided me to reaffirm the government's support for supply management. Supply management is the pillar of Canada's rural and economic prosperity that our dairy, poultry and egg producers rely on. We have heard them clearly, and we want to keep our supply management strong and sustainable well into the future.

Faced with the difficult economic situation created by price instability and fluctuation in their incomes nearly 50 years ago, a Liberal government established with farmers this system that now sustains farming families and rural communities across the country. Canada's supply management system has since ensured fair prices for farmers, stability for processors and high-quality products for consumers at reasonable prices. The system contributes significantly to rural prosperity.

The dairy, poultry and egg sectors generated almost \$12 billion in farm-gate sales in 2019 and accounted for over 75,000 well-paying jobs in production and processing activities. For these reasons, our government continues to vigorously support Canada's supply management system. Looking forward, our government has made it abundantly clear that Canada will not provide any new market access for supply-managed products in future trade agreements.

In fact, we demonstrated this commitment recently when the government announced the conclusion of the negotiations on the trade continuity agreement with the United Kingdom. This agreement would ensure continuity of access to Canada's third-largest export market, but would provide no new access for imported dairy, poultry or egg products.

Moreover, we believe that protection for supply management is strengthened through enhanced transparency in the conduct of trade negotiations. We welcome the involvement of the public, stakeholders and parliamentarians in Canada's trade agenda provided by the updated policy on tabling of treaties in Parliament. The updated policy enhances reporting obligations to Parliament for new trade agreements and provides additional opportunities for members of Parliament to review the objectives and economic merits of new trade agreements.

With respect to the impact of recent agreements, in the Speech from the Throne this government renewed its commitment to fully and fairly compensate producers and processors of supply-managed commodities, including dairy, poultry and egg farmers. We are delivering on this as well.

Over the past two years, our government has invested \$2 billion in support of Canadian dairy producers. Of this, \$1.75 billion has been made available to compensate supply-managed dairy farmers across Canada and \$250 million to help producers prepare for market challenges through the dairy farm investment program, including modernization of their installations and improvement of animal welfare. Because dairy producers depend on strong dairy processors to market their milk, we also invested \$100 million to help processors invest in new technology and stay on the cutting edge and increase their capacity. We have also allocated \$691 million for 10-year programs for Canada's 4,800 chicken, egg, broiler-hatching egg, and turkey farmers. Responding to sector demands, these programs will drive innovation and growth for farmers.

With the ratification of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, we will take the same approach. We are committed to working in partnership with supply-managed stakeholders to address the impacts of the new NAFTA on their industry.

● (1725)

During the negotiations of CUSMA, Canada faced strong American calls to completely dismantle the supply management system. They applied intense pressure, but we succeeded in preserving the system. I congratulate our negotiators and ministers for succeeding in preserving the system with its three pillars, namely, production control, pricing mechanisms and import controls, and in concluding the agreement.

This success is further evidenced by our government's commitment to preserving the integrity of the supply management system so it can continue serving future generations of hard-working Canadian farmers.



The government knows the value of supply management. We were the party that put in place supply management in Canada 50 years ago, and we are defending it from those who want to see it dismantled. Supply management supports Canada's dairy, poultry and egg sectors. We will keep delivering for agriculture, while also continuing to pursue our ambitious, inclusive trade agenda.

Prior to the pandemic, trade accounted for nearly two-thirds of Canada's economy and supported more than 3.4 million jobs. Trade can help our economy rebound from the pandemic. Indeed, Canada is the only G7 country with a free trade agreement with every other G7 country. Every day Canadian companies benefit from the trade and investment opportunities created by 14 trade agreements that cover 51 countries. As a result of these agreements, Canadian businesses and exporters have access to 1.5 billion customers worldwide. In particular, I am excited by the work we are doing on egg quotas for Yukon and other provisions to ensure our egg export ability.

These comprehensive and inclusive deals protect our interests while levelling the playing field internationally, helping Canadian businesses in all provinces and territories compete and succeed in global markets. For example, the Canada-U.S.-Mexico agreement provides continued market access security for \$58.9 billion in annual exports from Quebec to the United States. In addition, it provides stability for workers who rely on well-paying export-dependent jobs, including in the aerospace, heavy trucking, agricultural and apparel industries.

Similarly, by eliminating tariffs on nearly all of Quebec's exports to the European Union and key markets in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan and Vietnam, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, CETA, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, CPTPP, have created new opportunities for key sectors, including metals and minerals, which is so important for my riding; agriculture and agri-food; and forestry.

This is in addition to other trade agreements with Latin America, Europe and Asia-Pacific that give our farmers and businesses tariff-free access to 1.5 billion consumers in some of the world's fastest growing economies.

To conclude, the government continues to ensure that our businesses and import supply chains remain resilient by diversifying who trades, where people trade and how they trade while preserving Canada's supply management system, including its three pillars.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade have repeatedly assured Canadians that the federal government will not provide any new market access for supply-managed products in future trade agreements.

Let me finish by reiterating the government's unequivocal commitment to maintain supply management as a pillar of strong and sustainable rural prosperity into the future.

• (1730)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on Bill C-216.

### *Private Members' Business*

We are debating this legislation because the Liberal government has not treated supply-managed sectors fairly. They have not supported farmers or producers, and not followed through on their commitments. However, this legislation does not address the issues of farmers and producers.

Conservatives have been strong and vocal supporters of our supply-managed sectors and will continue to be. In fact, Conservatives have a policy declaration that says the following:

...it is in the best interest of Canada and Canadian agriculture that the industries under the protection of supply management remain viable. A Conservative Government will support supply management and its goal to deliver a high quality product to consumers for a fair price with a reasonable return to the producer.

Our leader, our party, and our policy have been clear on this. The Conservative Party is an ally, supporter and defender of supply management in Canada. I will talk about these important supply-managed sectors.

When I met with the Chicken Farmers of Canada, they were clear about their priorities. Through correspondence and an appearance at committee, we know that their priorities are new investment programs to support producers as they improve their operations, a market development fund to promote Canadian-raised chicken, a tariff rate quota allocation methodology designed to ensure minimal market distortions, the enforcement of Canadian production standards on imports and the resolution of import control loopholes undermining this sector. One of these is the fraudulent importation of mislabelled broiler meat being declared as spent fowl. There are reports of chicken meat imports being mislabelled in order to bypass import control measures.

When this situation first became apparent in 2012, Canada was importing the equivalent of 101% of the United States' entire spent fowl production. According to the Chicken Farmers of Canada, these illegal imports have resulted in an estimated annual loss of 1,400 jobs in Canada, \$105 million in contributions to the national economy, \$35 million in tax revenue and the loss of at least \$66 million in government revenues due to tariff evasion.

These illegal imports also raise important food safety concerns relating to traceability for recalls. This issue not only affects our economy and hard-working chicken farmers, but the lives of Canadians are on the line in the case of a food-borne illness.

Where is the action plan to deal with this?

*Private Members' Business*

When I spoke to the Egg Farmers of Canada, an industry association that represents over 1,000 family farms across the country that support over 18,000 jobs and \$1.3 billion in GDP, they were clear that they wanted the government to stop claiming to support the industry and actually start defending it. I learned of the innovation occurring in this industry.

The egg industry is tired of being strung along by the government. They had to fight tooth and nail for clarity on promised compensation. They expressed their desire for investment in their industry, which is the backbone of rural communities, and for market development support when it comes to the Canadian egg brand.

Where is the desire or action plan to defend our egg industry?

When I spoke to the Dairy Farmers of Canada, they told me how hard it was for the industry to plan for the future due to the government's lack of transparency, not the least in regard to the disbursement of promised compensation.

Where is the desire and action plan to defend the dairy industry?

These same concerns were raised by the Turkey Farmers of Canada. When I first spoke with them, they were going into year four without any payments of promised compensation by the government.

The Conservatives are the only party who can and will be able to ensure that our world-class producers of dairy, chicken, turkey, and eggs have a partner in government. The Bloc Québécois will never have to negotiate a trade agreement for Canada and be the partner in government that the supply management businesses in Quebec and across the country can rely on. The Conservative Party is the only party that can and will put an end to the failures of the Liberal government when it comes to trade agreements and compensation.

Conservatives will faithfully defend supply management. We were in the House of Commons pressing the government over and over again to fulfill its compensation promises to the supply-managed sectors. We have also raised in the House the meaningful actions that we can take now to protect and support farmers and producers, including in supply-managed sectors. These actions would include modernizing and improving agricultural risk management programs, asking the Competition Bureau to investigate the impacts of abusive trade practices in the grocery industry by the grocery giants, or providing flexibility and clarity on how compensation for supply-managed sectors is allocated.

Why have we seen no plans on these important topics?

● (1735)

I have spent a lot of time talking with businesses and industry representatives. They want consultation, understanding and transparency from the government. They want support from the government, which has been sorely lacking. After all, our agricultural sectors do not compete fairly with other countries that subsidize, both directly and indirectly, their own products.

Creating legislation such as we are debating today, which could target farmers and producers right from the onset as bargaining chips in future trade negotiations, is not a wise strategy. Canada could be out-negotiated and forced to agree to concessions and pay

compensation. This would mean more workers losing jobs, and it would do nothing to drive investment, spearhead innovation or protect jobs.

In my home province of British Columbia, supply management is an important part of our economy. B.C. has over three million egg-laying hens across over 140 farms in the province. Chicken farmers in B.C. produce 87 million dozen eggs annually and account for 14,000 jobs, contributing \$1.1 billion to Canada's GDP.

B.C. is also the third-largest dairy-producing province in Canada, with 500 farms.

It is the Conservatives who are putting forth private members' bills that are meaningful to the agriculture sector. Conservative private member's bill, Bill C-206, would exempt farmers from paying the carbon tax on gasoline, propane and natural gas. From heating barns to running farm equipment, farmers face steep energy costs, and these have skyrocketed in many parts of the country due to the increasing federal carbon tax. It is a practical measure to help alleviate the financial strain on the agriculture sector. Supporting our food security is more important than ever.

Conservative private member's bill, Bill C-208, would allow the transfer of a small business, family farm or fishing operation at the same tax rate when selling to a family member as when selling to a third party. I was happy to jointly second this bill in the first session of this Parliament. This was a poor tax policy change brought in by the government. This policy bothered me so much when it first came out. It was one of the factors that prompted me to run to become a member of Parliament.

Succession planning is a challenge at the best of times for small businesses, in particular farmers, and it is unfair that it is more financially advantageous to sell to a stranger than to one's own children, who have often grown up around the family business and contributed over time. I have many communications regarding this bill from my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country on how positively it will affect their businesses and future planning.

Conservative Bill C-205 would amend the animal health act to address trespassing onto farms, into barns or other enclosed areas where the health of animals and safety of Canada's food supply is potentially at risk. Entering a farm without lawful authority or excuse would become an offence under the act.

We will always support the hard-working farmers and producers in our supply managed sectors who ensure quality foods for Canadians. Dairy products, chicken, turkey and eggs are core staples on our dinner tables, and the pandemic showed us how important it is to protect our supply chains, supply management and food security.

The legislation we are debating today does nothing to address any of the concerns I have outlined. There are more meaningful, productive and long-lasting ways we can stand up for supply management without supporting Bill C-216.

Canada's Conservatives will continue to support our supply managed sectors and ensure that dairy- and poultry-farming families and producers are consulted and engaged in any trade negotiations in the future.

We will continue to support all farmers and producers in meaningful ways.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here today and to speak to this very important bill. I am rising today both as the Bloc Québécois critic for international trade and the member for what is likely the most agricultural riding in the country.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been promoting buying local. We have been realizing the importance of producing and consuming local. That guarantees economic benefits, jobs and quality products, and it enables us to express our solidarity with and appreciation for our artisans.

Supply management is the basis of Quebec's agricultural model. It is a tool for preserving our food self-sufficiency and guaranteeing land use. It is a program that is based on a number of interdependent mechanisms. If one pillar is weakened or disappears, it disrupts the system, which becomes less effective overall. One of the pillars is border protection. That is likely the most important pillar of the supply management system because it helps protect our market from foreign products that are quite often subsidized and cost less to produce.

The idea behind supply management, which has many obvious benefits, is that agriculture cannot be treated as just one of many markets under the conventional rules of international trade.

After the Second World War, this was made clear in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, better known as GATT. This was the beginning of international trade liberalization. Agriculture was off the table in those discussions. It was explicitly excluded. They said that the sector would not be treated in the same way as other markets. Agriculture puts our food on the table. It is what feeds us at breakfast, lunch and supper.

### *Private Members' Business*

Over the years, successive Canadian governments, no matter their political stripe, have passed the buck, promising to never touch supply management in any future free trade agreement negotiations. Each government said it would not touch it, unlike its predecessor. They said that one's word is one's bond, even though others had said the same thing before. These were in fact just empty words.

In the case of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and Europe and the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement, we learned at the end of closed-door negotiations—which I would even describe as secretive—that supply management had not come out unscathed.

Our borders were compromised. Free trade agreements forced Ottawa to allow more imported products onto store shelves and substantially reduced penalties levied on countries that exceeded the limits. Canada lost the tools that enabled it to protect our markets from competition.

They said it would be a tiny little opening. They told us not to worry. They tried to reassure us by saying it would be a tiny little opening. Try telling producers and processors whose losses are mounting daily that the cause of their problems is just a tiny little opening. I am sure everyone will agree that all those so-called tiny little openings add up to a pretty massive hole.

Government after government has tried to make up for these openings with compensation. They told people not to worry because there would be fair compensation. We think there should be compensation and we have applied constant pressure to ensure that farmers who get shortchanged by Ottawa's diplomatic screw-ups get their cheques, of course. The problem is that it takes a very long time to get that compensation, which never really makes up for the holes in what was a proven system.

The Bloc Québécois has moved six motions since 2005 calling on the government to recognize and fully defend the supply management system. Every one of these motions passed, and they passed unanimously, at that. After seeing supply management gouged in each of the last three free trade agreements, we felt it was time to introduce a bill. Promises are not enough. We need legislation to fully protect our agricultural model. We must prevent this system from being undermined in any way in the future. Any minister negotiating a future trade agreement must be mandated to keep the supply management system as is. That is why we introduced this bill to prohibit any future breaches of supply management in any potential free trade negotiations. Members must support this bill. The Bloc Québécois and the Union des producteurs agricoles held a national press conference in November calling on everyone to do just that.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1745)

That was the message that the member for Berthier—Maskinongé and I delivered last week, when we did our tour, virtually of course, of all the regions of Quebec. That was also the message of the letter sent by the Union des producteurs agricoles to all the party leaders in the House. Farmers and processors are clear that we must pass this bill. When I vote on this bill I will be thinking about the people in my riding and throughout Quebec.

Since every party has already voted to protect supply management, we have to wonder why some are now refusing to support Bill C-216, which would do exactly the same thing. The parties are all in favour so they should all vote for the bill. The answer is very simple: Canada's two major parties, which like to pass the buck and rightly blame each other for betraying our agriculture sector, want, once they are in power, to keep the door open to negotiating and putting supply management on the table if an interesting opportunity presents itself in another sector.

Last week, a Conservative member from Quebec confirmed his party's so-called clear support for supply management. He said they were 100% behind it while stating that they should not be forced to support it if, in future, there would be opportunities for growth. That is revealing. I like it when things are clear. Yes, they stand up for supply management, but above all they are not obligated to defend supply management. The reason my colleague gave for rejecting our bill is the main reason why we should support it. Oral commitments are no longer enough.

As we heard during this debate, some people think that the bill is unconstitutional. That argument does not hold water. We, too, closely examined that aspect, and we believe that the bill passes the test. We could discuss that.

Furthermore, we are not talking here about the final passage of the bill but about passing the bill in principle. Once the bill is sent to the Standing Committee on International Trade, of which I have the honour and pleasure of being a member, we will study it and hear from witnesses, experts and groups affected by it. We will also have the opportunity to amend it if there is something wrong with it. We could therefore hear from constitutional law experts and, if necessary, change the few lines that need to be changed to ensure this bill is more compliant with the Constitution. In short, there is absolutely nothing to warrant a negative vote in the House at this stage.

Let us pass the Bloc Québécois's Bill C-216. The dismantling of our agricultural model needs to stop. The future of our rural economy is at stake.

Madam Speaker, how much time do I have left?

• (1750)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The member has one minute and forty seconds left.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** In that case, I will finish up by just repeating my message. Let us pass Bill C-216. It is time to walk the talk. Farmers are sick of hearing governments promise that, unlike their predecessors, they will not touch supply management. They are sick of being told not to worry.

That door needs to be shut, because farmers have sacrificed enough and the supply management system cannot take any more damage. The boat is sinking, and this has to stop.

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be joining today's debate on Bill C-216 as the NDP's critic for agriculture and agri-food. Of course, I am following our other critic, the critic for international trade, the member for Elmwood—Transcona, who spoke on behalf of our party during this bill's first hour of debate.

I am here to offer my full support for Bill C-216 and for getting this bill voted on, so that it does proceed to the Standing Committee on International Trade. That committee, through its expertise, would then be able to take a look at this bill in finer detail, bring forward some substantive witnesses and make any possible changes that they see fit.

I do believe at this stage that the House of Commons, as the people's elected representatives, have to make that strong statement in principle through Bill C-216 that we support supply management. Too often those words defending supply management have been quite cheap, and this is an opportunity to put words into substantive action.

I am proud to belong to a party that has long stood in defence of supply management. Indeed, I can remember during my first term in the 42nd Parliament, we were often the ones who were leading the charge on defending supply management when it came to the successive trade deals that were signed by the Liberal majority government during the course of their first term.

When we talk about supply management we, of course, are talking generally about the egg sector: chickens, turkeys and dairy. I would like to talk a little bit about my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. We have a long and storied agricultural history. We have many family farms here on this part of Vancouver Island that are multi-generational. They were set up here to take advantage of our beautiful climate, the fact our winters are not terribly severe, an abundance of rainfall and some beautiful sunshine. We have an amazing agricultural climate here on Vancouver Island, and many farms have taken advantage of the unique climate conditions that we have.

I think of Lockwood Farms and the local egg farming operation of Farmer Ben's Eggs, which is quite a bit larger. I have visited several dairy operations throughout Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Time and time again, I have heard about the security that our supply management system is able to give these farms because it relies on three important pillars. It relies on price control and production control, which allow farms to basically plan for the future.

Farmers have a pretty good idea of what they are able to produce, but also the price that they will be able to fetch in return for those goods. These pillars are an important part of local food security and of how we build resiliency into our system. I think that is an important part of the conversation, especially in light of what we have gone through with COVID-19.

Looking at other sectors of our agricultural community that do not operate under supply management one can see wild price fluctuations. Farmers really are at the mercy of the markets, and they can have terribly tough times when those prices crash through the market floor. Even in goods that are supply managed here in Canada, we only need to look across the border at states such as Wisconsin for an example of this. One single state produces as much dairy as our entire country, but because of the crazy price fluctuations they have had, farmers have really been bouncing around. Sometimes they have benefited from high prices, other times they really had to scramble to try to find ways to save the farm. Indeed, many have gone under.

Our system gives farmers that kind of certainty and an ability to pay attention to their future. They can also make huge investments in their farms. They are much more likely to have agreeable financial institutions when they are coming forward with their plans for upgrading their farm because a financial institution can look at what their quota is, what the price is and make an extrapolation on what their earnings will be in future years. It is a bedrock of stability for so many small communities across Canada.

I have talked about the production control and price control elements of the system, which I have to emphasize are incredibly important for local food security. We do want to have prices that are manageable, both for the consumer and for the person who is producing it. I think that it is very important that farmers are paid an adequate amount for the work that they do.

• (1755)

The third pillar, which is also very important and especially pertinent to the debate that we are having here on Bill C-216, is import control. When we look at these three pillars, reference has repeatedly been made to a three-legged stool, and if we remove one of those pillars, the stool is going to fall over. Import control is incredibly important, because our system is carefully designed to look after the needs of the domestic market.

Whenever we have a trade deal come into effect that opens up more and more of our supply-managed market, we are bringing in those foreign products and, in some cases, those foreign products are not farmed to the same standards we Canadians are used to. For example, in the United States, bovine growth hormone is used in cows to increase the production of milk, which may not have an impact on the end product, but it does have an impact on the health, safety and well-being of the cows that are producing the dairy product in the first place. I know that Canadians have a very real interest in seeing that farm animals are treated well and humanely.

This is a huge issue, and trust me, I have been here now for almost six years, so I have heard all of the promises from the Liberals in government about how they brought in supply management and are the defenders of supply management, but if we look at the record, at successive trade deals that were set up, first with CPTPP, then with CETA and now with CUSMA, it is like a death by a thousand cuts. Each one of our sectors has seen increasing percentages of its domestic market share slivered off and given away to foreign competition. Products that had tariff rate quotas are now coming in tariff-free as a result.

### *Private Members' Business*

Now when consumers go to market shelves, they see they might have more flexibility in buying European cheeses. However, when it comes to homegrown products, we hear repeatedly from Canadians, whenever we survey, that there is a very real interest in supporting local farmers. However, suddenly we are seeing products in there like American milk products, and we do not know how many miles the product has travelled or what kind of processes were put in place during its manufacture. This is a very real concern to people, and it is a very real concern to the family farms that operate in small rural communities right across Canada, just like those in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

I have mentioned the three trade deals, and Bill C-216 is proposing to amend an existing statute, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, by adding a new section under the existing section 10, which would basically make sure that whenever the minister is negotiating trade agreements our supply management system is exempted. The new section 2.1 would read:

In exercising and performing the powers, duties and functions set out in subsection (2), the Minister must not make any commitment on behalf of the Government of Canada, by international trade treaty or agreement that would have the effect of

(a) increasing the tariff rate quota...or

(b) reducing the tariff applicable to those goods when they are imported in excess of the applicable tariff rate quota.

Essentially, the bill would spell it out in legislation and put action behind the flowery words that we have heard repeated in the House of Commons so many times.

To conclude, I personally will remain a strong supporter of supply management, not only for the farms in my area but also for the farms across Canada. As the NDP's critic for agriculture and agri-food, I am pleased to give my full support to seeing Bill C-216 proceed to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking everyone who participated in this debate, which is wrapping up tonight and will conclude tomorrow with a second reading vote.

I would especially like to thank my leader for his support for Bill C-216 and for always putting agriculture at the top of his political agenda. I would also like to thank our agriculture critic, the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, for the time and effort he put into supporting this bill. He and the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot even travelled around all the regions. At the end of their tour, they came to one conclusion: support for Bill C-216 is crucial. That is what they heard from every leader in the agricultural sector.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Mr. Groleau, president of the Union des producteurs agricoles, who sent a two-page-long letter to all party leaders in the House, asking them to support the bill. Here is part of that letter:

### Government Orders

It is time to face the facts. Giving up guaranteed Canadian market share to foreign markets in exchange for potential, and sometimes unlikely, gains is not sustainable. Parliament must take a clear position that reflects your respective commitments in favour of supply management. It is very important to us that you support Bill C-216.

Will this letter, which was sent to all party leaders, be tossed in the trash? No, we must take this message into account and reflect carefully before voting, because it is important to all farm production in Quebec and Canada.

Essentially, the bill simply asks to respect the fact that Quebec and Canada have different agricultural models, based more on agricultural autonomy than on milk, egg and poultry exports. Under international trade rules, certain sensitive products can be protected. All countries have sectors whose products are kept off the table in international negotiations. Why should it be any different for Canada? Why could we not do the same? Supply management is a perfect case.

We are not asking the export sectors to stop exporting. We are simply asking that supply management no longer be used as a bargaining chip at every round of international negotiations to expand market opportunities for certain products. Today we are asking parliamentarians to do something non-partisan that is good for farmers in western Canada, Ontario, Quebec or the Maritimes, and would allow thousands of families to earn a decent living and support thousands of others.

Let us not forget that every farm represents several families. Across Canada, more than 20,000 family farms are supply managed; we are talking about 20,000 businesses and quite a few families. Are we going to jeopardize so many lives and livelihoods? I do not think so.

I know that everyone in the House is appreciative and proud of the work that our farmers do across Canada. Voting for Bill C-216 does not mean voting against the other producers, who are not losing anything, but voting for the farmers and processors who chose a different farming model. It means voting to defend their values and their way of life, which represents rural living and respecting our agriculture.

Therefore, I humbly ask my dear colleagues to act without partisanship so that our regions will no longer have to fight their government to prosper, develop and, above all, to feed us.

Tomorrow, let us stand together to support our supply-managed producers. Let us stand together to support responsible and sustainable production. Let us stand together to preserve our family farms. Let us stand together so that our farmers get a fair price at the farm gate. Let us stand together to encourage our next generation of farmers to invest with confidence in agriculture. Let us stand together to ensure our food sovereignty. Finally, let us stand together and say loud and clear that there will be no more breaches in supply management.

• (1805)

We ask a lot of our producers. Tomorrow, they deserve our support.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The question is on the motion.

[English]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to order made Monday, January 25, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 10, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CANADA—UNITED KINGDOM TRADE CONTINUITY AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the third reading stage of Bill C-18.

**Hon. Bill Blair (for the Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion)** moved that Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, given that I am the first speaker on this topic tonight, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with my colleague from Surrey Centre.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to share his time?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, tonight we are debating Bill C-18, which is the continuity agreement of the relationship between Canada and the United Kingdom. It is always a privilege to bring a voice from the people of Kings—Hants to Parliament, but this agreement in particular is important to Nova Scotia. As a member of Parliament from the east coast, the United Kingdom's proximity geographically makes this an important trading relationship for agriculture producers in my riding and also businesses writ large. The basis of my remarks tonight will be how this continuity agreement is so important to maintaining those open relationships and that business relationship, as well.

*Government Orders*

Canada is a trading nation. We have what the world wants, whether it is our natural resource products, our services or our ingenuity. We are an important player in serving countries' needs around the world. It has certainly been a focus of our government to establish trading relationships to be able to provide our products to the world. As has already been established, this bill is relatively straightforward. The government had already established a strong trading relationship with the European Union through CETA. This is a confirmation ensuring those provisions that had been established, and that included the United Kingdom, which has now gone through the Brexit program, would continue. Our government has also illustrated its desire to make sure that we can sit down with the United Kingdom and look at a comprehensive agreement to establish even greater ties between our two countries, if there is room for them, which I presume there is.

I want to talk a bit, as a Nova Scotia parliamentarian, about how I see our future trade agreement, whether it be further in scope or as this existing continuity agreement, and what it means to our businesses. I will say again that agriculture is the backbone of our economy in Kings—Hants. There are supply-managed farms such as poultry, eggs and dairy, about which we have heard a lot tonight with Bill C-216, but we are also world-famous for our apple products. There is a long history, in the Annapolis Valley particularly, about our particular apple species, and it has been a source of pride shipped around the world.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the Kentville research station, funded through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. It has over 100 years of history in our riding, and a lot of the research that goes on through the Kentville research station supports our farmers by making sure they have varieties the world really wants.

For the benefit of the members in the House here tonight, every apple sold in London during World War II, and certainly for a period after that time, was produced in the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia. I think that signifies the trading relationship our region has with the Commonwealth countries around the world.

I talked to our apple producers specifically about what this continuity agreement means. We have a huge reliance on the United States, as do many other places across the country, but they see this as an opportunity to re-establish some of those prior trading relationships with the United Kingdom, because of our proximity. I do not expect that overnight 100% of the apples sold in London will be from the Annapolis valley. We have diversified our markets globally, but there are opportunities to build on those existing relationships and our cultural ties.

I also want to speak a little about our wine sector. We have a quality wine sector that is gaining international recognition, and I am one of the biggest proponents of reducing our interprovincial trade barriers, such that our Nova Scotia producers are able to sell their product across the country to Canadians who want it. At the federal level, our government has removed any impediments to that. We have a lot of work to do with some specific provinces, and it is something I continue to call for, both within this House and outside. There is also an opportunity to make sure that our world-leading product can find its way to consumers around the world, and with the fact that our sector has seen significant growth we have an opportunity to have these products find their way to con-

sumers in the United Kingdom, who I am sure would be happy to pick up a Tidal Bay, one of our destination originators in the Annapolis Valley.

• (1810)

I will be interested to see where some of my colleagues on the other side of the House go with this particular piece of legislation. Sometimes, of course, there is criticism, when we are forging trade deals, that there can be repercussions to the agriculture sector. This is an example in which our government stood firm. I cannot speak to the Minister of International Trade's dialogue, because I am not at the table.

I am quite confident that the United Kingdom would have been looking at gaining access to our supply-managed sectors. That was something our government was unwilling to do because of how important that sector is to rural communities across the country, including mine in Kings—Hants.

Part of the discussion here tonight will be comparing and contrasting. I heard some colleagues trying to suggest that our government had been unwavering or not necessarily supportive of this sector. Nothing could be further from the truth. When we look at the past United States administration under President Trump, it seemed that every second word was focused on the dairy industry. We knew that this was not going to solve the issues related to the American dairy industry and its oversupply. In fact, many U.S. producers actually talk about trying to implement a system similar to Canada's, in the sense that we have some ability to control supply. It is becoming even more important, in the world of low carbon emissions, to be mindful of climate change and producing product that is not going to be used. It was something that the President really wanted to push.

We maintained the integrity of the system. I have heard members from the Bloc talk in the House about Bill C-216. I believe they supported the implementation of CUSMA. I believe the Premier of Quebec was calling on all parliamentarians to support this provision. In fact, the former interim leader of the Conservative Party, Rona Ambrose, talked about how it was the best deal that Canada could strike.

I am proud of how the government responded to protecting that system. I contrast that with, for example, the previous government. We talk about CETA. We were really down the road by the time it was implemented, but the member for Abbotsford could probably speak to it. It was a different situation politically, in terms of the pressure and expectation of our government to give up access to make that trade deal happen. That is something I highlight to my dairy farmers when I have the chance. They seem to appreciate that nuance.

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Any suggestion, whether in tonight's debate or otherwise in the House, that this party is not committed to supply management is false.

Finally, I want to talk about the cultural ties between the United Kingdom and Canada, but specifically Nova Scotia. We have a lot of shared history. For example, in Nova Scotia we have the largest Gaelic-speaking population outside of Scotland. There is a long history of immigration from the United Kingdom, and Scotland specifically, to Nova Scotia. My great-grandfather has ties to Wales and a Welsh background. My fiancée has ties to Scotland.

As I mentioned, this trade deal presents an opportunity not only to the economy and to business relationships, selling services and goods back and forth, but also to further integrate and ensure that we have opportunities, whether for tourism or research between institutions academically, to strengthen the ties that we have with a country that we are still a dominion of, to make sure that we can support our businesses and individuals, and make sure those cultural ties are strong and remain robust.

I would be happy to take any questions from my hon. colleagues.

● (1815)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am proud of our position in the NDP against this trade deal which poses real concerns, including for jobs in supply management. We are also very concerned about Canadian sovereignty that is ceded in other ways. I would add that we know from our recent track record that a number of the trade deals we have signed have actually seen the loss of good Canadian jobs, including in the part of the country I come from here in western Canada.

I understand that the member is in full support of this bill, but what does he say to people who have seen trade deals cede ground and lead to the loss of good jobs here in our own country? When will the Liberals stand up for Canadian jobs?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I will start by correcting the record. The member suggested that somehow this trade continuity agreement was giving up access to our supply-managed sector. That is certainly not the case. I do not know exactly what the member was alluding to, but absolutely I believe in its importance. As I mentioned, Canada is a trading nation: we have services and resources the world wants. At the end of the day, we have a lot of good jobs, such as in the horticulture and apple sector in Nova Scotia. If we were insular and did not deal with and were not able to engage with countries around the world to get our products to markets, some of those good-paying jobs she mentioned would not even exist, and so I am in full support of this bill. It protects supply management and will ensure that we have that continuity and strong relations with key countries whose values we share.

● (1820)

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, to allow more voices to contribute to this debate, I would first like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the member for Calgary Midnapore.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to share here time?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-18, an act that seeks to implement the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement. Since the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement was negotiated and signed by the Mulroney-led Conservative government in the 1980s, free trade has played a vital role in the Canadian economy. Canada is now party to more than a dozen trade deals with over 50 countries in total. These deals have knocked down trade barriers and given Canadian businesses better access to the global marketplace.

One such trade deal, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, is between Canada and the European Union. With the United Kingdom having separated from the EU, it would be natural, or so one would think, that Canada would sit down with the U.K., with whom we share historic ties, values and a trusted intelligence partnership, to work out a new comprehensive trade agreement that is specific to the needs and desires of both countries.

The U.K. is one of Canada's biggest trading partners. It is in fact our third-largest export market and the fourth-largest source of foreign direct investment in Canada. Looking specifically at my home province, B.C., in 2019 nearly half a billion dollars worth of exports to the U.K. originated in British Columbia. This includes wood, lumber, fish and more. B.C. exports to the U.K. have been trending upwards over the past decade. Of Canadian provinces and territories, only Ontario, Newfoundland and Quebec export more to the U.K. than B.C. Clearly this trading relationship is an important one for B.C. and all of Canada, a relationship that I certainly hope will continue to thrive and generate prosperity for small businesses from St. John's to Victoria.

What I do not understand given the obvious importance of this trading relationship to the Canadian economy is why the Liberal government was not better prepared and more willing to sit down with one of our closest allies to negotiate a trade agreement that would best satisfy the interests of our country. We know that the Liberal government walked away from the negotiating table in March 2019, only to return to the table in July last year with only five months left to negotiate and legislate a new trade agreement before the existing deal expired.



At that point, there was not enough time to do this properly. Instead we are left with the status quo. With the clock expiring, the Liberal government agreed to a trade continuity agreement that replicates the terms of CETA. It is that placeholder, copy and paste agreement that the Liberals now seek to enact into Canadian law. One might think, what is so bad about the status quo? Let me be clear: CETA is a good trade agreement for Canada, but it is a multi-lateral trade deal between Canada and the European Union, some 27 countries, each with its own unique economy, goods and services.

CETA was never intended to serve as a bilateral deal between Canada only and the United Kingdom. This duplicate deal does nothing to address trade issues that have emerged since CETA was negotiated in 2014, nor does it address existing challenges with non-tariff barriers. Stakeholders rightly want a “U.K.-1” agreement, not a “CETA-2” agreement. It is mystifying that the Liberal government did not even leave enough time to enact this placeholder deal before the December 31 deadline. Recognizing that the clock was about to run out, the government signed a memorandum of understanding on December 22 to buy some more time, 90 days to be exact. However, even that extension, as we debate the bill at third reading today, leaves only until the end of the month to complete third reading in the House and pass all stages in the Senate. What happens if we cannot meet that revised deadline? There will be more uncertainty for Canadian businesses at a time when they are in trouble and need certainty more than ever.

• (1825)

What we should have before us today, had the government done its job in the four and a half years since the U.K. decided to exit the EU in 2016, is a tailored, modern and comprehensive trade agreement based upon rigorous consultations with businesses and labour organizations from across our great nation. They should have consulted our lumber exporters in B.C., gold miners in Ontario, fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador, and beef producers in Alberta and Quebec. Instead, the Liberal government dragged its feet and left Canadians in the dark.

While we were told this was merely a temporary fix, like duct tape on a leaky pipe, the reality is that there is no sunset clause in this agreement. This means it has no end date. While the deal sets out that we are to begin negotiations on a successful agreement within one year of its ratification and finalize a new deal within three years, there is no specific penalty for the failure of either side to come to the bargaining table.

Clause 4 of Article IV of the trade continuity agreement states, “The Parties shall strive to conclude the negotiations...within three years of the date of entry into force of this Agreement.” This duty to negotiate is effectively not a duty at all. This trade deal could literally last forever, never to be replaced with the complete, well-informed deal that Canadians deserve.

The Liberal government has made a dangerous habit of rushing through significant legislation without appropriate consultations. I have seen it too often as a member of the justice committee, by way of example, and we are seeing it here again. The United Kingdom voted to leave the EU in June 2016, yet here we are in 2021 relying

### *Government Orders*

on a memorandum of understanding that is set to expire in three weeks.

Because the Liberal government did not take this trade relationship seriously, Canadians are left with an MOU that is serving as a placeholder for a placeholder trade agreement with our fifth-largest trading partner. In doing so, the Liberal government has caused unnecessary uncertainty for the countless businesses across Canada that import, export or rely on foreign investment from the U.K.

The last thing Canadians need right now is more uncertainty, yet time and time again that is what they get from the Liberal government. Between the Liberals' failures to negotiate a new tailored deal and their unwillingness to present a federal budget for two years, it is becoming clear that the economy, jobs and trade are afterthoughts for the government. Some questions remain: How much longer can Canadians afford these failures and how much longer before normally resilient Canadians break?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech outlining the weaknesses of this proposition.

I am very fortunate to be in the caucus of the official opposition with the member. She was a member of the previous administration, under former prime minister Harper. When we look at the current administration and the previous administration, on many issues we see some considerable differences. Certainly those related to foreign affairs and international trade come to the top of my mind.

As a member of the previous cabinet, could the member address the key differences she sees between the two?

Former prime minister Harper and our current shadow minister of finance really have an incredible legacy in Canada of free trade agreements. They were and continue to be the masters of that. There is a lot to be learned from Conservative history and the Conservative caucus, and the member was indeed a big part of that, so I would like to get her thoughts on that.

*Government Orders*

● (1830)

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, times were very different then, I have to say, because we embarked, in the former Conservative government, on an aggressive trade agenda. We understood that we needed to open up markets around the world to Canadian businesses, Canadian exporters and Canadian importers. We understood the strength in expanding markets for Canadian businesses and therefore made it a priority. When we make something a priority, we also put the time, energy and thought behind what negotiations will look like and how thorough they have to be. Also, for something like CETA, because we were dealing with so many countries, all of that had to be translated into many languages. There was a lot to do, but I think the biggest difference is the thought and prioritization behind it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

We are talking about international trade and about maintaining economic ties, which is, and will always be, important. That is why the Bloc Québécois supports this bill.

Since this is a temporary agreement, is the member not worried that, in the coming years, Great Britain will ask us for new quotas on cheese, for example, since they produce a lot over there? We were just debating Bill C-216, which would prevent these kinds of restrictions.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

[English]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, when it comes to protecting supply management, Conservative governments and the NDP have stood up for it and the Liberals are standing up for it now. It is very important that certain sectors in Canada are protected.

When the CETA was being negotiated, it was a hard and fast bottom line for the Conservative government that we would not compromise on supply management. We were very aware of the dairy sector, which of course is alive and well in my province of B.C., as it is in Quebec and other provinces. We will always stand up for that and will always fight for it and protect it. Given what they do on the other side, we need strong negotiation at the table.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am concerned about the fact that under CETA, imports from the EU have increased while the trade deficit has increased for Canadian exports. This has obviously hurt a lot of businesses, so the fact that we are ultimately adopting the same agreement causes problems. What does the member have to say about that?

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, in my speech I addressed the fact that this is a placeholder agreement. It should have been negotiated specifically for the new entity, which is the United Kingdom, separate from the EU. We have a certain amount of time to negotiate, but there is no sunset clause. Again, it has to be a priority and a continuing objective to negotiate an agreement that is specific.

● (1835)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will begin my speech, as I do with so many of my speeches, with an anecdote. I am privileged to have the opportunity to be here in the House to represent the good people of Calgary Midnapore and be their voice, and I am going to tell one of my favourite stories.

Several years ago, when I was a younger and fitter woman, I won the gold award from the Duke of Edinburgh. I was very excited to achieve and receive this award. I know that many young Canadians from coast to coast to coast strive for this award and the many different levels that can be achieved. I was very motivated by this gold award. It had numerous components. It had fitness, outdoors and community-service components. I undertook going after this award with great vigour and went on to achieve it, and it was presented to me by Prince Philip. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to meet him. I wish him and his family well at this time. That was one of my major introductions to the United Kingdom and all that it has to offer.

Of course, my interest in foreign affairs and diplomacy would continue, and in the early 2000s, when I wrote the foreign service exam and fortunately was accepted, I went on temporary duty to Argentina. I then went on to be the chargé d'affaires to El Salvador, which was a very proud moment for me.

It was a wonderful time to represent Canada abroad. As the chargé, when the head of mission is out of the country, I had the honour to act as Canada's representative. My accreditation ceremony was in El Salvador at the presidential palace. We had taken the motorcade through the nation, and when I received my accreditation along with my ambassador, I was told to always remain behind the ambassador except when she was out of the country. I was very proud to take on that role.

On one occasion I had an interesting bit of fortune. When Bill C-4, the Central American four agreement, was being negotiated with Canada, one round of negotiations was going to take place at a time when the head of mission was out of the country. As such, I became the representative. I was very excited and nervous. I went to the secure room, as a diplomat did back in the day, where a fax was printed out. I took the fax and read the notes over and over again about the positions on pork and sugar. I prepared and prepared.

The big moment came and I went off to the trade minister's office in El Salvador with my papers and my positions ready. The trade minister approached me, took the envelope out of my hand and told me to tell my government that El Salvador would get back to it in two weeks. The big moment I had prepared for had come and gone.

My point here is that diplomats only do what their governments ask them to do. I would later go on to speak about this in the chamber when our current leader of the official opposition asked me to respond to a situation that unfortunately took place at our high commission in India, after the government's administration organized an event and an accused terrorist was there. I went through the process of responding to this in the House. I walked the caucus through what goes into vetting a list of individuals who are invited to an event and what that looks like.

• (1840)

I still remain true to the fact that a diplomat and a trade negotiator only do what their government asks them to do, as was my experience with the Bill C-4 negotiation, which unfortunately did dissolve, and I believe ended up being a unilateral agreement with Honduras. Nonetheless something came out of it.

My sentiments right now in regard to the response of the government on so many things, but also in regard to this agreement as well, is disappointment, because so much more could be done. I think about what could have been the potential response for this pandemic in terms of trade opportunities. Certainly, it has been a very difficult year. We are coming up on the one-year anniversary, when we were all sent home from this beautiful chamber.

When this was occurring and we were seeing world forces shifting, I was considering the fact that it would be an incredible time for Canada to re-evaluate its position in the world. Were I the prime minister, I would have done a complete evaluation of our inventory from coast to coast to coast of natural resources, from energy, minerals, agriculture and textile, and really looked at how markets were changing and emerging, perhaps with less reliance on China and Europe turning inward to evaluate those opportunities.

We see opportunities missed within this legislation. This is a theme, unfortunately, with the government. What I am pointing to with the unfortunate situation that happened in India and with this trade agreement is that the government has had no guiding values for foreign policy. We have seen this time and time again. We have seen this with how it is handling the situation with China and the two Michaels who remain incarcerated. We saw this with the government's lack of will and gumption to stand up to China in regard to the Uighur motion. We saw this with the current deputy minister's tweets regarding Saudi Arabia. We saw this with a stance I wish would have been more firm regarding Venezuela.

All of these indicators have shown that the government has no foreign policy values. Again, this trade agreement is just a by-product of the government's inability to have a coherent strategic foreign policy that looks out for the best interests of Canadians and for Canada.

What makes me the most sad is when I think of the opportunities missed, comparably to the previous administration, of which the previous speaker belonged, and of the greats, of Harper and Kenney and Baird. I was very fortunate at the time to be a policy adviser. I took one year away from my foreign service career to serve the current member for Thornhill who was minister of state for the Americas at the time.

### *Government Orders*

We had principles that guided us. Those included among them democracy. Are we really standing up for democracy here in Canada and acting as an example to the world currently? I do not think we are. Are we standing up for justice? I do not think we are. Are we standing up for the prosperity of the world and the prosperity of Canadians right now? I do not think we are. I am certainly not seeing it within this trade agreement.

I extend this beyond this trade agreement. As I said, I feel as though the Liberal government has been a government of missed opportunities. We have seen this with the pandemic, the opportunity to prepare better, to prepare Canadians better, to avoid so much of the hardship, illness and death that we have seen as a result of this terrible last year, a result of not preparing better for the economy and missed opportunities here. I would include this trade agreement within this the inability to look forward.

This is the crux of the opposition motion that we have had here today, the inability to think forward for Canada's economic prosperity. Finally, it is the opportunity missed for foreign policy, to stand up for strong values, Canadian values, and that includes with this trade agreement.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech, in which she had positive things to say about international trade and took a strong stance on things that are unacceptable.

I want to ask her a question that I asked earlier. As members know, this will be a temporary agreement, and we have about three years to replace it with a new agreement.

Is the member not worried about any future demands from Great Britain on imports of cheese, for example, and the other products under supply management that we are trying to protect with legislation? Her party seems to be opposed to this bill, and I would like to understand why, because for years they have been saying they want to protect supply management. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

*Government Orders*

Of course I have a lot of concerns about this bill, this agreement. I think that what the hon. member said complements my position that the government currently does not have a firm position on values. I think that the key to foreign affairs is to have values. I think the government currently has no values when it comes to foreign affairs in general, but also with regard to this agreement. I have many concerns about the government's positions. This government has been in power for almost five years, and quite frankly, I do not hold out much hope right now that it will embrace any values for foreign affairs. It has yet to do so for foreign affairs in general or for this agreement.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the United Kingdom negotiated trade agreements with several other countries, but Canada did not. We came to a memorandum of understanding, but we did not finalize that agreement. What does say about the Liberal government's priorities when it comes to negotiating free trade agreements?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, as I said, I am very disappointed in the government's performance in looking out for Canada's interests comparative to the those in the previous administration, who were the masters and recognized the importance of looking for synchronicities and win-win situations with other nations. I definitely feel as though the current government has not done that. Once again, everything just seems to be last minute and thrown together, and it is very upsetting.

The member for Langley—Aldergrove also reminds me of another incredible opportunity, which I forgot to mention in my speech, and that is CANZUK. I know the leader of the official opposition is a big fan of it this. This is another example of another incredible opportunity beyond the U.K. to other nations that have similar values to Canada. As I said several times over both in English and in French, unfortunately the government lacks a moral value compass not only with which to govern, but with which to govern foreign affairs.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I am rising as the Bloc Québécois critic for international trade.

As we have said, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-18 on the Canada-United Kingdom trade continuity agreement, but not enthusiastically so. Our position is and always has been clear. We support trade openness, which is necessary for our SMEs, and we support market diversification. Given our history, it is particularly interesting for us to see that it is possible for a country that is becoming independent or regaining its independence and trade sovereignty, like the United Kingdom is after Brexit, to quickly reproduce the agreements that were previously signed by the large bargaining group it is leaving.

Of course, the new country then has to renegotiate the agreements on a more permanent basis, but there is no black hole. There is no period of limbo when the newly independent country has no trade partners or international agreements. As Quebec separatists, we find this quite interesting, and we are taking notes. We have tak-

en notes about this process, and we will be ready to address the issues and dispel the fears that Parliament is sure to raise next time Quebec's future is up for discussion.

We are in favour of open trade, but we will never give free trade our complacent and unconditional support if it compromises our agricultural model, harms the environment, supports the privatization of public services or makes it harder for our businesses to get contracts, nor will we support agreements that could undermine sovereignty and democracy for the benefit of profit-driven multinationals.

If we look at the Canada-United Kingdom trade continuity agreement, or CUKTCA, it looks like the worst was avoided. Supply management has not been chipped away at, thank goodness. Sadly, that job had already been done with the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union, or CETA.

In the end, this agreement is not particularly bold, but it does allow us to maintain access in the short term. I say "short term" because this agreement is supposed to be transitional. Let us not forget that we must reach a permanent agreement later.

When we talk about free trade, it always sounds very abstract, but in reality, at the grass roots level, it ends up feeling quite concrete. This bill is very likely to pass in the next few hours, and there is nothing stopping us from looking ahead now.

There is something frustrating about this kind of process. It has to do with the fact that we, as parliamentarians, always end up rubber stamping an agreement as it is presented to us. The text is there, here it is, there is nothing more to say. We are never consulted beforehand, when we should be consulted before the negotiators even go to negotiate. We should be able to give them mandates. We are parliamentarians; we are here to represent the positions of our constituents. We should be consulted far more often. We should be given reports at different stages of the negotiations. Unfortunately, we do not get any of that.

That is why one of the first things we need to do right now is demand more transparency. The provinces and parliamentarians need to be more involved in future discussions. The elected members of the House of Commons are responsible for protecting the interests and values of their constituents. They are not just here to rubber-stamp agreements that have been negotiated in secret. We are not just puppets.

*Government Orders*

Between 2000 and 2004, the Bloc Québécois introduced a number of bills on this matter in the House. With the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, our colleagues in the Liberal Party and the NDP came to an agreement on sharing more information with elected members. The Deputy Prime Minister made a commitment at the time. Unfortunately, although this seemed like a step in the right direction, the government asked us before Christmas to study the agreement with the United Kingdom without letting us see the agreement itself. We heard from witnesses like the Minister of International Trade, but we could not read the agreement.

• (1850)

That was when we needed it. Can members imagine how ludicrous and absurd this was? The Standing Committee on International Trade had to study this agreement without having a copy of the text. I do not think members realize the absurdity of it all.

As parliamentarians, we must be kept informed at every step of the process, even before the negotiator steps on a plane or prepares for the virtual meeting. This would prevent parliamentarians from having to speak to an agreement without having the information needed to make a well-thought-out decision. The negotiations would be more transparent.

With regard to the provinces, members will recall that during the negotiations with Europe, which led to the ratification of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement in 2017, Quebec was able to send a representative when talks were held. However, Quebec was not invited to attend by Canada, but rather it was invited by Europe, as the European Union had to go through the parliaments of its member states and therefore requested that the Canadian provinces be present.

The Canada-United Kingdom trade continuity agreement contains elements that the Quebec representative fought for. As a result, under the grandfather clause, the Société de transport de Montréal has a local content requirement of 25% in the procurement of railcars, buses and so on.

That is a step backward from what we had before the agreement with Europe, but we can still say that we managed to salvage something in this new agreement with the United Kingdom. That did not happen because Canada fought for it, but because it was copied and pasted from CETA. That will be obvious when there is a permanent agreement, which is one more reason why the provinces and parliamentarians should come to an agreement before the negotiations in order to be able to give the negotiators clear mandates.

Quebec and the provinces can officially refuse to apply an agreement on their territory. We are taking a strong stand on extending Quebec's jurisdictions beyond its borders, something that the Privy Council in London acknowledged decades ago in a decision that led to the adoption of the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine, which is very important in Quebec.

In the end, independence is the only way we will be able to advocate for ourselves on the world stage. The Canadian negotiator will always be predisposed to protect Canada's interests at the expense of Quebec's. Until then, we have to do whatever we can to have our voice heard.

It is time for Parliament to look at procedures to give elected members more control over agreements. We have no choice. The minister responsible for ratifying an agreement should be required to table in Parliament an explanatory memorandum and provide a reasonable time frame for obtaining the approval of parliamentarians before any ratification. This should be the bare minimum in the Parliament of a so-called democratic country. This should go without saying.

Let us also talk about what we might anticipate. I gave the example of awarding contracts and there has been much talk of buying local since the beginning of this pandemic. Fortunately, supply management currently remains protected, but we know that the United Kingdom would like to export more cheese. We dodged a bullet for now, but the permanent agreement could be worse and cause us problems in the future. I would say that is why we must adopt Bill C-216, which protects supply management and our agriculture model in its entirety. It would spare us from any new bad surprises. Our dairy, poultry and egg farmers have given enough. Enough is enough.

Another very important element, and this is one of the reasons we support the bill, is the infamous investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, which will not apply for at least another two years. In fact, it may not come into effect in two years if there is no agreement within the EU.

• (1855)

Let us imagine a political fiction scenario. Imagine those two years have gone by and there is an agreement with the European countries, that kind of mechanism is in place, and there is no further discussion about a permanent agreement. The parties would have to use something such as an exchange of letters for it to apply. Furthermore, this cannot be part of any future agreement. Most fortunately, the Canada-U.S.-Mexico agreement eliminated that possibility.

This is a very serious issue. Chapter 11 of the 1994 NAFTA included protection of foreign investors in a given state and enabled those investors, if expropriated, or the victims of what is known as the equivalent of an expropriation, to sue the state in an arbitration tribunal created for this purpose.

### *Government Orders*

On paper, this seems to make sense. When a company invests money somewhere, it obviously does not want to fall victim to the policies of the local government. However, when we look at what it means in concrete terms, we realize that what is in there is extremely serious. There is a real risk of applying the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism to all rules or laws of an economic nature that could be detrimental to private profit. Could this open the door to the potential dismantling of national policies? It is certainly becoming increasingly difficult for governments to legislate on issues related to social justice, the environment, working conditions and public health, for example. If a given transnational corporation believes it has been hampered in its ability to make a profit, it will have recourse. My colleagues may be wondering exactly what that means. First of all, I would point out that trade litigation generally take a long time and is therefore extremely lucrative for law firms. A document from two non-governmental organizations has already demonstrated how eager large firms specializing in trade law are to engage in complex litigation.

Over the past few years, fewer multilateral agreements have been signed, but this does not change the fact that there are more than 3,000 bilateral investment protection treaties in the world. I will give one example and I will again be asked what this means in concrete terms. I will give a list of the trade actions against states resulting from these mechanisms. It is chilling.

In 1997, Canada decided to restrict the import and distribution of MMT, a fuel additive, which was believed to be toxic. Ethyl Corporation filed a suit against the Canadian government for an apology and \$201 million.

In 1998, S.D. Myers Inc. filed a complaint against Canada concerning the ban on exporting waste containing PCBs between 1995 and 1997. PCBs are synthetic chemical products that are extremely toxic and used in electrical equipment. Canada lost before the tribunal established under NAFTA.

In 2004, under NAFTA, Cargill, a producer of carbonated soft drinks, won \$90.7 million U.S. from Mexico, which was convicted of creating a tax on certain soft drinks that caused a serious obesity epidemic in the country.

In 2008, Dow AgroSciences filed a complaint after Quebec took steps to prohibit the sale and use of certain pesticides on lawns. The case was settled amicably once Quebec, which wanted to put an end to the challenge, agreed to acknowledge that the products posed no risk as long as users read the label.

There are many other examples. In 2009, the Pacific Rim Mining Corporation sued El Salvador for the loss of potential profits. El Salvador had refused to issue a permit for a gold mine because the company was not complying with national standards. El Salvador finally won the case in 2016. At least the government won, but the plaintiff only paid two-thirds of the defence's legal fees. El Salvador is obviously not rolling in money. The \$4 million U.S. that this struggling country lost could have gone towards social programs.

- (1900)

In 2010, AbitibiBowater closed some of its facilities in Newfoundland and laid off hundreds of employees. The provincial gov-

ernment responded by taking over its hydroelectric assets. Abitibi-Bowater did not accept that and filed suit. To avoid a lengthy legal battle, Ottawa offered the company \$130 million. There was an amicable agreement with a cheque on the way out.

In AbitibiBowater there is the name Abitibi. Abitibi is in Quebec, which unfortunately is still part of Canada. Considering that its headquarters are in Montreal, how is it a foreign investor?

This goes to show all the schemes that are at play. The company is registered in Delaware, a tax haven, in order to present itself as a foreign investor.

Let us look at other examples. In 2010, Tampa Electric got \$25 million from Guatemala, which passed legislation to put a cap on electricity rates. The complaint, which dated to the previous year, was made under the Central America free trade agreement. In 2012, the Veolia group went after Egypt because of that country's decision to increase the minimum wage.

There are many other examples, but it would take a long time to list them all. The most recent case dates back to 2013, when Lone Pine Resources announced its intention to sue Ottawa because of Quebec's moratorium on drilling in the St. Lawrence.

It all goes to show that the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism allows democracy to be hijacked by powerful multinationals whose only goal is to make a profit.

As I was saying earlier, it is important to note that many companies were suing their own country, when there was a way to register or incorporate elsewhere. Fortunately, the transnational corporations did not always win these cases, but they continue to multiply. States must provide the financial and technical resources to defend themselves. This mechanism is one-sided. The government is always the defendant, while the multinational corporation is always the plaintiff.

According to a 2013 report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 42% of the cases were decided in favour of the state and 31% in favour of the business. The rest were settled out of court. That means that the plaintiffs were able to fully or partially rebuff the states' political and democratic will in 60% of cases.

These numbers are enormous, but they do not reveal an unquantifiable factor: the permanent pressure of this mechanism on states. Public policy-makers are censoring themselves. Behind departmental doors, they are deciding not to apply such-and-such a policy because they do not want to be sued. This pressure and self-censorship is real. A 2014 report by the Directorate-General for External Policies of the European Union said this clearly served as a deterrent during policy decision-making.

*Government Orders*

I will give an example. In 2012, Australia imposed plain packaging for cigarette packs, banning the use of logos. The tobacco company Philip Morris International, which had also sued Uruguay in 2010 for its tobacco policies, sued the Australian government based on a treaty between Hong Kong and Australia. As that was going on, New Zealand decided to suspend the coming into force of its plain packaging policy, and the United Kingdom decided to postpone the debate that was supposed to begin on the matter. As we can see, there is an atmosphere of self-censorship. France waited three years before implementing this policy within its borders.

Multinational corporations are sometimes more powerful than governments, and if the will of the people, or even their safety, might affect profits, the people are pushed aside. This is extremely serious. Especially in these pandemic times, we do not need this mechanism in future agreements. If it does not apply in the short term in the agreement with the United Kingdom, that is even better. We will do everything we can to ensure that it never applies. We demand that Canada oppose it in future negotiations with the United Kingdom for the permanent agreement.

• (1905)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I spoke a lot about values in my speech. My colleague spoke a lot about transparency.

I would like to know if he can give more examples about this government's lack of transparency, especially with regard to the pandemic.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Madam Speaker, there are many examples. I gather from my colleague's question that we are not just talking about the issue of trade and free trade, but about things in general. We know that the government does not like committees that study its role. We saw this with several proposals where parliamentarians were to closely examine COVID-19 spending.

The government had to spend in the context of COVID-19, but we are retroactively entitled to have a very high standard of transparency, especially in light of certain matters such as the WE Charity or the respirator scandals, and when contracts or spending of that magnitude are involved. It is understood that the opposition has a duty to show good faith in a crisis. That also applies to the government, which must open its books.

• (1910)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for his speech.

One of the things I find odd about this agreement is that representatives of the current government have repeatedly condemned investor-state dispute resolution provisions even though 20% of the agreement, which is only five or six pages long because it references the agreement with Europe, relates to keeping the investor-state dispute resolution mechanism option open.

In the member's view, why has so much time been spent on this resolution mechanism, which the government says it does not want in free trade agreements?

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Madam Speaker, that is very hard to understand and justify, especially since this provision was removed from the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, even though it had originally been in the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, with the United States and Mexico. It is hard to understand and explain how a government can want to censor itself so much or set back democracy and political sovereignty in favour giving for-profit companies the right to make money. That is very hard to understand.

At the Standing Committee on International Trade, my New Democrat colleague and I pressed the government in an attempt to understand. The minister is very good at avoiding our questions when she appears in committee. This has happened many times. As my colleague knows, when it came time for the clause-by-clause study of the bill, the NDP and I voted against the investor-state dispute settlement system. He can count on me to fight any such potential provisions in future agreements, including the agreement with the United Kingdom that will replace this temporary agreement.

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I very much appreciated the comments from my esteemed colleague, who expressed concerns about matters such as transparency and the future of national sovereignty. It should come as no surprise that I want to pick up on this, but he also expressed concerns about our supply-managed sectors and Great Britain's ambitions.

Could my colleague comment on the government's negligence, given that here we are, on March 9, discussing an agreement that has theoretically been in effect since the beginning of January? What does he think of possible future concessions or breaches in supply management? What solutions could be used to avoid all this?

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Madam Speaker, I suspect that my esteemed colleague is not disinterested in the issue. That said, I understand his total devotion to agriculture and supply management.

Agriculture is a jewel, and our model is based on food sovereignty and land use. We must protect and defend it. Farmers have heard enough empty promises.

I am very concerned about what comes next, not just a potential permanent agreement with the United Kingdom, but also the fact that the United Kingdom could join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP, and then hold quotas. The same goes for the United States, which withdrew from the CPTPP and did not get its hands on the quota that had already been released. That could happen with both the United Kingdom and the United States. I am quite concerned about that.

Because we toured Quebec together virtually last week, my colleague obviously knows that we have to pass Bill C-216 and never touch our agricultural model again.

*Government Orders*

• (1915)

[English]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about the investor-state dispute resolution chapter and gave a number of interesting examples of lawsuits where things went wrong. Any time that parties, corporations big or small, or countries are doing business with each other, there is the risk of commercial disagreement that could lead to litigation.

Therefore, we need a dispute resolution mechanism. If not this, then what? We could be sued in a foreign country's court system. At least here we have a recognized dispute resolution mechanism. What would be a better way to do it?

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Madam Speaker, the mechanism in question was removed from our main agreement, the one we signed with the United States and Mexico that covers 80% of our exports.

No one has died so far. I understand that there needs to be a way to resolve disputes. However, it must not be limited to for-profit companies and the state. There should also be clauses to protect the public when their environmental and social rights are violated by the multinational investors.

As for a dispute between a corporation and a state, just look at the agreement with the United Kingdom. Our two countries are governed by the rule of law, and our highly developed legal systems are even quite similar in many respects. I think that we could just use the existing legal systems to handle any disputes.

[English]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am so happy to hear my colleague speak. One of the things he mentioned was supply management. Under CETA, dairy farmers lost quite a large percentage of their supply-managed sector in the market, but they were provided with compensation. Under CUSMA, the government has not provided compensation. I spoke to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario a few weeks ago and they are terrified about what will happen under this new U.K. trade agreement and the further chipping away at the supply-managed sector.

Could the member talk about why it is so important to not give away any more of that market share, and not just to promise compensation but to hold firm?

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Madam Speaker, that is quite the question.

First, I believe that my colleague clearly showed us that the compensation process is quite long. We are in favour of compensation and will fight to defend it. There is no question about that.

The fact remains that this process takes a long time and does not fully make up for the breaches in every case. We have a system that works. If the breaches are offset by providing compensation, which does not last forever, only for a few years at most, the supply management system is transformed into a subsidized agriculture sys-

tem, which is something else entirely. It is not true that the compensation just makes up for breaches in the system. Compensation transforms the system. This system makes it possible to buy local, which is a cherished value that results in jobs and quality products, generates local economic spinoffs and lets us stand in solidarity with our fellow citizens.

[English]

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again to speak to the question of how Canada trades with our counterparts in the United Kingdom. I think I would do well to begin by talking a bit about what we are not debating here. We are not debating whether it is a good idea to have a trade relationship with the United Kingdom; everybody is on board with that. Obviously there is a long-standing trade relationship with the United Kingdom going right back to the very origins of Canada.

The question is what the terms and conditions will be for our trade with the United Kingdom. I appreciate very much the extent to which some of the debate so far has focused on the question of the investor-state dispute settlement chapters in trade agreements, because these have been a long-standing irritant for many Canadians and which the NDP has been very proud to give voice to over the years.

The member who just spoke went through the list I know many MPs, including many New Democrats, have gone through in the past of all the ways in which Canada has been taken advantage of and lost money and opportunities to implement good public policy as a result of investor-state dispute settlement clauses. When we are talking about the terms of trade, just as any business would, we want to talk about at which the terms and conditions of trade make sense or when we are paying too high a cost for a particular kind of benefit.

The fact of the matter is that investor-state dispute clauses have had a chilling effect on good public policy, whether in respect to the environment, workers' rights or public health. When we consider the impact and what Canada has received in return, these clauses have never been worth it and are not worth it now.

I have had the honour of sitting on the trade committee in this Parliament, and what we have heard in one breath from groups is that they are very keen to have Canada sign the next free trade agreement, but then they turn around and talk about all of the problems with the trade agreements and why they are not getting the market access they are so excited to get on paper but are not realizing, including the cattle industry under CETA, which is very frustrated not to get the market access it wants. Canadian manufacturers, despite being advocates of free trade, will tell us they are not able to take advantage of the opportunities that exist for them on paper through these deals. A recent report shows that Canada's trade deficit with Europe has grown considerably since CETA was signed.



These are all things that we eventually have to take a look at and ask if these deals are working rather than our just inhabiting the kind of ideologically blinded position of, frankly, the Liberals and Conservatives. There has been a consensus between those two parties and the mainstream media in Canada for a long time now that whatever is in a trade agreement is good.

I have had opportunities to ask business representatives at committee what empirical evidence, not just currently but in principle, could ever convince them that a free trade deal might not be in Canada's best interest, and on more than one occasion I have heard them say there is none. There is none, so as long as we call it a "free trade agreement". As long as there is lipstick on that pig, they are going to think it is a good idea. It does not matter if it is a pig. As long as we put the right lipstick on it, they are going to go full bore, if the House will forgive the pun.

What New Democrats have been trying to make a case for over the years, which one would think we would hear from a prudent business person, is that the terms of trade matter. What do we have before us? We have a so-called trade continuity agreement, which is sometimes referred to as a "transitional trade agreement", which of course is an untruth. I have made that case here before.

I just want to go back to the slow train wreck that this process has been. I recall in the last Parliament that we were debating CETA, and of course at that time there was a pending referendum in Britain about whether it would remain a part of the European Union or leave it.

• (1920)

We thought, on the New Democratic benches, that this made a difference in whether CETA was a good deal or not. Given that 40% of Canada's trade with Europe was with the United Kingdom, we might think that whether the U.K. was in the deal or out of the deal would matter. We were told that New Democrats do not understand trade or business. Again there was that same theme that it did not matter what was in the deal. Apparently it did not even matter who was a party to the deal: As long as it was called a free trade deal, it must be a good thing. We did not even need to know what was in it. Who cares? We were just being told by business magnates that this was a good idea, so sign us up. Where do we sign? It was ridiculous.

Nobody was pretending to predict the outcome of the Brexit referendum. We were just saying that it mattered how the referendum would go and that maybe using time allocation to force the ratification of CETA before we knew whether the United Kingdom was in or out did not make sense. We were told no, we have to ratify it right away. All of that was signed, sealed and delivered before we knew the outcome of the referendum, and then, of course, the referendum did not go the way many people hoped. It went the way many other people hoped, and the whole Brexit saga kicked off.

The disadvantaged position that Canada found itself in was in having already signed up for a deal, and not long afterward, the fundamental terms of that deal were already changing. It was clear for all to see, before Canada ratified that deal, that there was a very real possibility that we would find ourselves in the position that we ultimately did.

### *Government Orders*

What happened next? Not much. A couple of years ago, there were some initial conversations around trying to get to a deal. There was a lot of fanfare about how excited the Liberal government was to be one of the first to sign a deal with the U.K. It did not end up being one of the first to sign a deal with the U.K., of course, because it walked away from negotiations for over a year. Then it was all this eleventh-hour stuff that we have seen from the government on many other files.

The government finally decided to come back late last summer to the negotiating table. What we got was a carbon copy of an agreement, and it was quite misleading. All along what we were being told was that the opportunity for a substantial agreement had passed. The opportunity had passed to try to have a model agreement for progressive trade, not just one to hand over the keys to public policy-making to multinational corporations. The opportunity to have a trade agreement with terms and conditions modelled on the needs of everyday people and workers, rather than just multinationals, had passed.

We ragged the puck until that opportunity passed us by, but we were told not to worry, because we would just have a transitional deal. I think any reasonable person would have thought it was a temporary deal, a stopgap measure or something that carried on the status quo for a certain period of time so that eventually we could get back to the table. We would then know that we were going to have either something new and different and hopefully better, nothing at all, or maybe an agreement to extend things.

This agreement turns up, and no meaningful consultation happened at all. We know that this is true because we have asked people at committee if they were consulted about this deal, and they told us they were not, some very clearly and loudly, others somewhat sheepishly, but nobody has claimed that they were well consulted when it came to this agreement.

The government, quite disingenuously, has tried to pretend that the consultations for CETA were somehow adequate for this agreement. The CETA consultations were for a deal that was going to include 26, 27 or 28 different member states; this is nothing like a bilateral deal with the United Kingdom. In a bilateral deal with the United Kingdom, there are clearly a very different set of considerations. The possibilities, risks and rewards are different from what there are in a deal with the entirety of Europe. That is a point that the Liberals did not appreciate in the last Parliament with the pending Brexit referendum. The same mistake occurred again when they said that the consultations for CETA were essentially good enough for a deal with the United Kingdom. It is that same blindness that we see.

*Government Orders*

● (1925)

However, that notwithstanding, the Liberals do not recognize that much of that consultation on CETA also happened—in fact, the entirety of it happened—when the U.K. was part of Europe, so even the nature of CETA has changed considerably. Therefore, to tell anyone that the CETA consultations—when companies and others were giving their feedback on a trade agreement with a Europe that included the United Kingdom versus a Europe that did not—were also adequate for a bilateral deal with the United Kingdom is just false.

We find ourselves now with a last-minute deal to perpetuate the terms of an agreement that I do not think were very good in the first place, frankly. The agreement was trumped up on a supposedly temporary basis, and lo and behold, when it is announced, no, it is a permanent agreement. When this agreement goes through, this is it. These are the terms and conditions of trade between Canada and the United Kingdom unless a new agreement is started. These terms do not expire at any time.

We tried at committee to at least amend the enabling legislation so that something would have a hard deadline, but that did not go through. The government was very much opposed to that. We now find ourselves in a deal that was made for an entity that does not exist anymore, a European Union that included the United Kingdom. It is dictating the terms of trade with two important trading parties: what is left of the European Union and the United Kingdom. We have a deal that was never conceived for either of these trade arrangements that is going to dictate the terms of trade with both. It does not seem to me to make a lot of sense. I am not a business guy, but it does not seem to make a lot of sense to me.

It seems to me that Canadians ought to have had the opportunity to have a conversation about this agreement and to have been consulted about it, except they were not. The government went ahead and signed this permanent deal, and as far as I am concerned, it had zero mandate to do so, because as the Liberals talked about it in the lead-up, it was to build a mandate for a temporary agreement, not a permanent one. However, when they finally had the reveal, it was a permanent agreement. They were saying not to worry about the fact that they had pissed away all that time that could have been used to consult, that could have been used to negotiate a deal that was actually made to fit the entity that we are trading with, like a real bilateral trade deal and not a carbon copy of a multilateral deal. They said, “Do not worry about it. There are three reasons we are going to get a new deal, and you do not have anything to worry about, Mr. Blaikie, thank you very much.” Okay, what are they?

There are some issues around rules of origin for certain products that recognize the European supply chain in order to facilitate getting U.K. goods into Canada. Fair enough. That is one reason the U.K. might decide that it wants to come to the table, but I do not know that it is enough on its own. I do not know that anybody does, frankly.

The other reason, which I would get a kick out of if it were not such a serious issue, is that the Liberals say that the way the United Kingdom cheese producers are able to trade cheese into Canada is under some World Trade Organization TRQs right now, and those are going to expire, so the United Kingdom is going to want to

come to the table. For what? Is it to get access to the Canadian cheese market that it does not currently have?

Government members have sworn up and down many times at committee, in this very House and anywhere anyone will listen to them that they are not going to sell out dairy farmers even one more time and that dairy farmers should not worry, because there is no Canadian market share on the table. Well, then, why would the U.K. come back to the bargaining table to get a different deal if the reason it is supposed to be coming back is to get market access for cheese?

It is one or the other. Either it is a leverage point to get the U.K. back to the table, which very clearly implies that there will be concessions on dairy, or it is not a reason for the U.K. to come back to the table. Which is it? We do not know. I have asked the question, but I have not had an answer. It would be nice to have that before we vote, but I will not hold my breath.

● (1930)

The final reason is that there is a good faith commitment in the agreement. It is not legally binding. It does not say a new agreement has to be signed, it just says it is going to commit. That is great. That is very nice. That is how things start and that may well turn out to be a success. I cannot say that, but what I can say is that there may well be another government in Canada before then, preferably a social democratic one. We are working to make that happen and I would like to see it happen. Maybe it will, maybe it will not. There may well be a new government in the United Kingdom. It may be that the two governments, even if they are the same governments, sit down and start talking about what a bilateral deal would look like. Just one of the parties, because this is a permanent agreement, has to decide that it cannot get a better deal.

Maybe this deal is not perfect for either side, but the sides just have to feel that they cannot get a better deal and throw in the towel. We all know that trade relationships and considerations can change on a dime. We just lived that over four years with the Trump administration in the United States. There is nothing to say that something like that, or even a far less extreme case of that, might come to pass between Canada and the United Kingdom going forward, such that one or the other party decides that it is not content with the terms of trade.

Look at what CETA has been producing for Europe. Canada's trade deficit has doubled under that agreement. If things are going that well for the U.K. under this agreement, it may decide that it is good enough, thanks very much. We have all heard that in order for the U.K. to accede to the trans-Pacific partnership, it needed to have a permanent trade agreement with at least one of the parties. This does that. It was not supposed to do that. We have been told from time to time that the U.K. will be incentivized to make a new agreement with Canada because it needs to have an agreement with at least one other country in order to get into the TPP, but this does that. There is no clause in this agreement that says it does not count for the purposes of a permanent trade agreement that could get the U.K. into the TPP.

The fact that this ended up being a permanent trade agreement, as opposed to a temporary stopgap measure, does not mean a short timeline. It does not mean inherent and cyclical uncertainty for Canadian or U.K. business. It could have been a three-year timeline. It could have been a five-year timeline. It could have been whatever timeline was chosen for those two governments to get together, hash it out and feel pressured to get a deal. Instead, the option taken was to absolve future governments of that pressure and hope for the best. I just do not think that is good enough, particularly when, if we look at the trade continuity agreement itself, the infrastructure for CETA is already there.

The agreement itself is very short. It is about five pages. Fully 20% of that agreement is about how to have a mechanism to keep the investor-state dispute settlement clauses of CETA alive. A lot of Canadians are concerned about those provisions, and they have a right to be. Canada has been the biggest loser on the international stage when it comes to having to pay out to multinationals for trying to make good public policy. What a farce it is that governments should have to back down from good public policy, apologize to some multinational company and then pay them damages. What a farce.

We know it is, because the Deputy Prime Minister has stood in the House, in Parliament, and said as much: that she is really proud that there are no longer any ISDS provisions in CUSMA. Why was fully 20% of this TCA dedicated to keeping ISDS clauses alive and who was asking for them? We do not hear from Britain that they are part of its global trade agenda, or that they are a priority to negotiate it into the deals that it is doing around the world, so who is asking for them? Why is it that the Liberal government swears up and down it is proud that ISDS clauses are out of NAFTA or CUSMA, whatever we want to call it now, and why has so much effort been expended to keep ISDS clauses alive in this agreement that was never envisioned for a bilateral trade relationship between Canada and the United Kingdom?

• (1935)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for this member. We sit on the PROC committee together. I think we get along great.

One of the issues that it is difficult for NDP and Liberal members to see eye to eye on is trade. It would appear as though the NDP members are against all trade, even though they say they are in favour of it, if it is a good agreement. However, in order for it to be a good agreement for the NDP members, they have to get absolute-

### *Government Orders*

ly everything they want. That is just not how a deal is made. A deal is based on compromise and negotiation, understanding that parties have to give a little sometimes in order to get something on the other end.

My question for the member would be as follows. This agreement is literally just to keep us going. It is to continue on. It says in the name of it that it is a continuation agreement to continue going with the agreement had from the former set-up when the U.K. was part of the European Union.

Why would the NDP, at the very least, not just support this continuity agreement in order to then have a discussion about what is to be expected in a new agreement?

• (1940)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I have a few things to say to that.

One is that I would remind the hon. member of an instance earlier in this Parliament when we voted in favour of CUSMA in exactly that spirit, a spirit of trade-offs. Getting rid of the investor-state dispute settlement clause in NAFTA was important to us, as was getting rid of the energy proportionality clause, negotiated originally by Conservatives and later signed by the Liberals. We hear a lot about energy sovereignty in the House, but the fact is that Conservatives and Liberals sold out Canadian energy sovereignty under NAFTA for 30 years when they signed that deal.

Those were things that were important to us. It is not because we liked everything in CUSMA. If the member would like to have a conversation about the deficiencies of the agreement, I am happy to do that. We recognize that there have to be trade-offs.

The question is, on ISDS for instance, the member speaks about trade-offs, but who was asking for it? The British government was not asking for ISDS. Canada says it does not want it anymore, purportedly. Who is asking? Who are we negotiating with?

Are we negotiating with the other country, or are they just going, cap in hand, to multinationals and asking, "What is it you want in this agreement, and how do we please you?" That is a very different kind of negotiation.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his intervention. We sit on the trade committee together. We are able to question witnesses there, and that is what I wanted to ask the member about.

*Government Orders*

When we were having witnesses come and present on this initially, I think all of us who were not in government were quite surprised to hear about the lack of consultations with stakeholders. We heard from a number of organizations and labour groups that there was not a rigorous consultation. Government officials were there to answer questions, but that was about the extent of it.

Can the member maybe speak to that, on his experience of hearing from stakeholders at committee?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, it really was a surprise, particularly given that this is a permanent trade agreement with the United Kingdom, that there was not more consultation.

I was only somewhat joking in my earlier remarks. We heard pretty widely, sometimes somewhat reluctantly from folks who I think were trying to protect their relationship with the government, that there was no real consultation. Some were pretty clear about it. Nobody was clear that they had really been consulted and felt really good about it.

I respect that organizations want to try to maintain good relations with the government of day, but I think it came across pretty clearly that there really was not a lot of communication.

The member may remember that when the deal came out in late November or early December, we were studying not the deal itself, because it was not public, but the issue of Canada-U.K. trade relations. We had witnesses the next day at committee when we all kind of found out that there was no sunset clause on the agreement.

I remember a lot of those witnesses being quite baffled and frankly unsure of what to say. I think the way that this was talked about in the lead-up was very much as a temporary transitional agreement, and suddenly it was a trade continuity agreement, which meant it was going to be permanent. That is a big difference. It is a difference that makes a difference. It is an outrage that Canada is getting a permanent trade agreement without a better process.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the question that he asked me earlier.

Why does Canada keep leaving the door open for multinationals to take governments to court? Why do public decision-makers always want to reduce the scope of their decision-making?

[*English*]

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, it is a tough question to answer, particularly if we take the government at its word.

One worry is that there may be a sincerity issue here. I raised that issue on the point about cheese. The Liberals say it is going to be a leverage point to get the U.K. back at the table, yet they are not going to make any concessions on that. They are swearing up and down that they do not like investor-state dispute settlement clauses and that they are glad to see them gone, yet they somehow keep popping up in Canada's agreements. Somebody has to be advocating these things, so who is it?

Whose interests is the government really representing and fighting for at the international bargaining table? If we look at the evi-

dence, one has to draw the conclusion that Liberal and Conservative governments for the last 30 years have been there to represent the interests of multinational corporations far more than the interests of everyday working Canadians.

• (1945)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I always love hearing my hon. colleague speak. He does it so well, and he is so concise about all the different issues. I really appreciate that.

One of the things that he so brilliantly talked about was, again, the corporate agenda, and the defence of Liberal after Conservative after Liberal after Conservative governments negotiating trade agreements that are not good for workers, women, dairy farmers, or so many people.

We obviously know that these past governments defend their friends against reform on taxables, wealth taxes, and ISDS and ICS provisions within trade agreements.

Can the member talk about what the NDP vision is for trade and what we would do differently? Even though past governments have all these condescending beliefs that we do not know what trade is, could he talk about some of the ideals we want to bring into a better trade agreement?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I would say that topic is a speech in and of itself, but, first and foremost, it is about democracy and the protection of democracy. One of the things that is important to name and combat is this pretense that somehow free markets go hand in hand with democracy. It is something that Liberals and Conservatives in this House do and have been doing for a long time. It has been done on the world stage by neo-conservatives and neo-liberals in other countries as well.

Often what ends up happening in free-market scenarios is that we get a serious accumulation of private power that subverts the power of democratically elected governments to make decisions in the public interest. Where there are some really free-market situations in the world outside of Canada, places where there is less regulation, we do not see a lot of freedom. Instead, we see a lot of exploitation.

If markets are going to work, they have to be regulated in an appropriate sense. Far too often, what these kinds of trade agreements have done is deregulate, and try to consolidate that deregulation by keeping democratically elected governments from imposing any kind of future regulation. Sometimes it gets in the way of regulating new types of things, and we are seeing that with the Internet. There are some pretty draconian provisions in CUSMA—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We can have time for one more question.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is really well versed in these trade issues. I agree with him on so many points, in particular the need for a sunset clause.

I looked at a lot of the transcripts, but I was there for one of the witnesses from the manufacturing sector who said that Canada's manufacturing base has been hollowed out. We are not getting the exports into the EU, but we are exporting a lot of raw resources. That is one of the things we did not like about CETA.

What are some of the things that the hon. member does not like about the CETA that he does not want to see carry on with this agreement?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I would say quickly that one would be ISDS, which we have talked a fair bit about so far.

There were also a number of intellectual property provisions in CETA that are putting upward pressure on the cost of drugs, when Canadians already pay among the highest prices for prescription drugs in the world, so it does not make sense to be pursuing that. There is more to say about the WTO and TRIPS, vaccines and all that, but that is certainly part of it.

There are also some of the restrictions on the ability of local governments to make sure that the money they are investing actually goes to companies in their communities, so that that money stays and is part and parcel of building up local communities. America is doing that, despite our trade relationship. We are upset about that. We want access for our Canadian companies, but we are giving that away without reciprocity from our trading partners, and it does not make sense.

Canadian companies are not making tonnes of money on infrastructure projects in Europe, but European giants are here. In some cases they are sending their work forces here to take the work of Canadian trades people, for example, who could be doing that work. We need to consider these things when we are signing the agreement.

● (1950)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House tonight to talk about the benefits of Bill C-18, an act to implement the Agreement on Trade Continuity between Canada and the U.K.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. It is probably the first time I have ever split with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, and I daresay it will likely be the last time. I am here in two capacities: as the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, but also as a chair of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association. I am interested in all matters pertaining to Canada and the U.K.

All companies stand to benefit from the predictability and stability that this agreement would provide. The U.K. is one of Canada's most important trading partners. The U.K. is Canada's largest market in Europe. It is a key source of foreign direct investment and of science and technology partnerships. Two-way partnerships between Canada and the U.K. amounted to \$29 billion in 2019, mak-

ing it Canada's fifth-largest trading partner after the U.S., China, Mexico and Japan.

The trade continuity agreement before the House today would ensure that Canada could sustain and build upon those relationships by preserving the main benefits of CETA, the trade agreement that Canada had entered in place with the European Union in 2017, the benefits of which are just rolling out.

Replication of the CETA benefits would mean that 98% of products would continue to enter the U.K. duty-free. These include key exports from Quebec and Ontario such as manufactured goods, metals and mineral products. As of January 1, 2024, we are hoping that will increase to 99% of goods receiving duty-free treatment. The Canada-U.K. TCA would also preserve preferential access, established under CETA, for agriculture and agri-foods to the U.K. market, further strengthening the bilateral Canada-U.K. trade relationship. At the same time, this agreement would fully protect the dairy, poultry and egg sectors and would provide no new incremental market access for cheese or any other supply-managed products.

The U.K. is Canada's second-largest services trade partner, behind only the United States, with services exports totalling nearly \$7.1 billion last year. Under the Canada-U.K. TCA, just as in CETA, service suppliers would have preferential access to, and greater transparency in, the U.K. services market, which would result in better and more secure and predictable market access for things such as environmental services.

In terms of investment, the U.K. is Canada's fourth-largest foreign direct investor, valued at \$62.3 billion in 2017. Canadians are also key investors in the U.K., to the tune of \$107 billion, making the U.K. Canada's second-largest direct investment destination. As in CETA, the Canada-U.K. TCA before us today would guarantee access to investors to and from Canada with greater certainty, transparency and protection for their investments, while preserving the rights of those governments to legislate and regulate in the public interest. Just as in CETA, the Canada-U.K. TCA would create more favourable conditions for exporters from Canada and Quebec through important commitments to address non-tariff barriers and establish mechanisms under which Canada and the U.K. could cooperate to address and seek to resolve non-tariff barriers as they may.

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While I believe that the House will support this bill, but not necessarily unanimously, I wanted to bring to attention one element of the negotiations that could be either a unifying point or a sticking point.

• (1955)

Most Canadians will not knowingly purchase goods produced by slaves. Britain has been a world leader when it comes to legislative response to supply chain slavery. In the U.K., all major companies are expected to publish a statement on their websites saying they have examined their various supply chains and are satisfied that no element of slavery exists anywhere in their supply chains. This has proved to be a popular initiative with both the public and legislators. It is likely to undergo some revisions shortly to strengthen the resolve and impose more significant consequences. Inevitably, this will be a point of some negotiation, maybe not in this agreement, but in subsequent negotiations. Britain will likely ask for a commitment to parallel legislation so the U.K. is not put at any trading disadvantage. It would be preferable, therefore, that Canada have similar legislation so there is no discrepancy between the two countries.

Currently languishing in the Senate is Bill S-216, formerly my bill, Bill C-423. It is stronger than the current British legislation and would be a complete answer for any issue raised by the U.K. I have had some very positive conversations with the very able and distinguished British High Commissioner, Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque. Regrettably, she is leaving this year. She has represented her country brilliantly these last three years. She expressed great interest in Bill S-216 and was quite willing to support the bill in whatever way possible.

Canada imports more than \$34 billion worth of goods annually that are tainted by slavery. This includes everything from garments to shrimp, tomatoes and possibly even some high-tech items. It is a competitive disadvantage if one country is governed by strict legislation and another is not. Just as Canadian companies and workers cannot compete with slave labour, also one country cannot disadvantage itself in a trade agreement by allowing the scourge of slavery in the other. I would therefore urge the Government of Canada to adopt this legislation sooner rather than later so that any trade irritant can be reduced and Canada and Britain can form a common trade barrier to slave labour.

The agreement also carries forward from CETA trade facilitation measures designed to reduce red tape at the border, including some of the costs prohibiting companies from doing business.

Diversifying trade has the potential to increase Canadian wealth. SMEs are looking to us to provide market opportunities for their exports. By ensuring there are accessible opportunities abroad, and by maintaining attractive conditions within these markets for SMEs, we are supporting their prosperity and the creation of new jobs in Canada. The Canada-U.K. TCA furthers the same.

As we look to turn the corner from COVID-19, and Lord knows we cannot turn that corner quickly enough, it is even more important that we continue to provide Canadian businesses with as many options and opportunities as possible. The Canada-U.K. TCA maintains crucial ties and preferential trade terms with one of Canada's key trading partners and ensures Canadian businesses do not face yet another disruption at this time. Indeed, if this agreement were

not in place this would be yet another setback that businesses could ill afford.

Successful trade provides good employment opportunities. With one in six Canadian jobs linked directly to exports, we remain committed to growing trade and providing opportunities for all Canadian SMEs. That is why I encourage all hon. members to support Bill C-18. Their support will help SMEs continue to succeed in the U.K. market.

I look forward to questions from colleagues.

• (2000)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his enlightening speech on Bill C-18, the Canada-U.K. trade agreement. Could he comment on the inherent advantages of Canada entering into a trade agreement with a country with whom we share common law, common parliamentary tradition and common contract-negotiating strategies?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question. He is a very able and helpful member of the public safety committee, and I appreciate the opportunity to work with him.

My view is that this should be the easiest trade agreement in the world to negotiate. We share a common language, a common set of laws, a common heritage, a common understanding of the world and we are both part of the Five Eyes, so this is a natural for us. This should be a relatively easy sign-off for our trade officials. I would hope they delve into some of the more problematic issues regarding social issues. If they did, I think it could end up being a model trade agreement for the rest of the world.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the transparency of the negotiations.

He has extolled the virtues of the agreement and free trade, but he surely heard the same comments I did from people who had to work in committee without being able to see the text of the agreement. I would think someone in the government would at the very least feel somewhat uncomfortable, if not embarrassed, working on a bill without seeing the agreement. What does he think about that?

I would also like to hear his thoughts on the government's negligence. It is March, but the agreement was supposed to come into force as of January.

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Lastly, I would like to know whether he personally thinks that we should improve the mechanism for consulting and involving elected members in all stages of the negotiation of trade agreements. Why not also ask the provinces and Quebec for feedback on matters involving selling goods on the international market?

[*English*]

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, what precipitated this agreement was the Brexit deal, which only took effect in January. To be talking about a continuing trade agreement in March and actually moving legislation forward is lightning speed in trade terminology. As for the contents of the text, the hon. member simply needs to read the CETA and he will have 99.9% of the text because this is, in fact, a continuing agreement.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his speech but also for his important work with the parliamentary association for Canada-U.K. He talked about irritants with this trade deal. He heard earlier from my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith about the 136,000 recipients of the U.K. state pension who live here in Canada, many of them in my riding. Their pensions' annual indexes have been frozen since they arrived, unlike those of U.K. pensioners living in countries such as the U.S., Germany, Italy and Barbados.

Pensions are deferred wages. This is theft as far as I am concerned, and it is a significant irritant. Many of these folks are veterans who served Britain. They have been school teachers, nurses and doctors. I am wondering if the member agrees that this should be discussed when we are talking about trade deals, and it certainly is his important role in leading our group. Again, I want to thank him for his service.

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question because it is an important issue and it is an irritant. I would not describe it as a trade irritant, but it certainly is an irritant. There are literally tens of thousands of people who should be entitled to a full pension as opposed to the frozen pensions that they receive.

I encourage the hon. member to be active in the Canada-U.K. parliamentary group because this is something that is regularly raised with our British colleagues. At this point, it cannot be said that our British colleagues or the British government are prepared to engage, and it is pretty hard to do any kind of negotiations or make any kind of progress without a dance partner. We do not have a dance partner, but I agree entirely with the hon. member's observation that this is grossly unfair to British pensioners.

● (2005)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join tonight's debate. I understand that my friend from Scarborough, in splitting his time with me, anticipated that it would be the last time ever that he would do that. If he does eventually follow his heart into the Conservative caucus, I would be happy to split my time with him many times in the future. That is saying something, given how little I like sharing the limited time I have in this place.

● (2010)

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, that is a point of order all by itself.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, my support for virtual heckling is well known because it allows these kinds of substantive exchanges.

I also want to recognize the excellent work of our shadow minister from Kelowna on the bill. I had the opportunity of door knocking with her a little during her campaign and was amazed by the three- and four-storey driveways we had to walk up and down in certain parts of Kelowna. That is quite a feat to get here. She has had to tread much greater heights than many of us in the flatter parts of the country, and she is doing great work leading our response on the trade file.

We see the government's approach to trade unfortunately characterized by delay and challenged by its inability to manage and prioritize its legislative calendar. We have been pushing in the House, specifically around a timeline coming up at the end of March where it was critical for the government to move things forward. We are having this debate tonight because it was the leadership of our Conservative caucus pushing forward on the need to prioritize this legislation in light of that timeline.

The government is very clearly trying to position itself for a spring election that it seems to want, but nobody else in the country seems to want. Therefore, it is calling these different bills for short periods of time, at a time, without any sort of focus on specific legislative items, especially ones that clearly are a priority.

In the interests of addressing a real need for Canadians, the Conservatives proposed that we have this debate tonight, at a time when we do not normally have debates, to try to move these things forward. Unlike the Liberals, frankly, whose approach to the legislative calendar seems entirely informed by politics, the Conservatives were thinking about the public interest in the process of really the urgency of moving things forward before the end of March.

As one British politician observed, "even the turkeys won't be able to prevent Christmas." The timeline was coming and that is why, thanks to the leadership of our shadow minister as well as our House leadership team, we are moving this legislation forward. It follows naturally from our party's deep commitment to the importance of our ties with the U.K., of our ties with other CANZUK partners and recognizing the importance of Canada's position as a global trading nation.

Our leader has from the beginning championed the benefits of strengthening our ties with like-minded CANZUK countries, our relationship with the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, four out of five of our Five Eyes partners we collaborate with on security. We have expanded our trading relationships through the TPP, for example, which was negotiated under the Conservatives and gave us trading access with Pacific Rim nations.

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There is more work we can do to further expand and strengthen our trade ties. I am very proud of the record of our previous—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We seem to have lost the connection. I will pause momentarily to see if we can regain that connection. Following that, we will decide on the next steps.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is back online. We were at the five minute and 20 second mark, so he can pick it up from where he left off.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I am on an irregular device, unfortunately. I am using my phone because my computer crashed. As long as members can hear me and the interpretation is functioning, then I will proceed.

I was speaking to the importance of the trade ties that had been pursued by the previous Conservative government. We dramatically expanded those trade ties. It will be continually important for us to make the case for a robust international trade system even in light of the new challenges that we face.

One of the major challenges we face in the world today is how to respond to human rights abuses linked to unfair trade practices in certain countries, the use of slave labour and how we respond to that in certain countries in a way that is consistent with our values and does not allow our workers to be put in a vulnerable position in addition to that. That is why we should be focused on free trade with like-minded free nations like the U.K., with whom we know there are shared standards in terms of labour commitments, human rights commitments, environmental commitments and so on, that our trade is mutually beneficial, reflective of shared values and that we will not be undercut or undermined through human rights abuses or abuses of intellectual property.

One of the frustrations I have with the government with respect to its lack of focus is that it has not seen or prioritized these opportunities associated with free trade with free nations. In fact, the Prime Minister seemed reluctant about the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement initially when he came to office. In fact, he missed key meetings. At the same time, he was talking about wanting to have free trade with the People's Republic of China, with all the problems associated with that. Frankly speaking, we saw just how far down the government's list were the obvious advantages of the Canada-U.K. free trade opportunity. This is really the missed opportunity by the government failing to prioritize this issue. It has taken constant pressure on the government, pushing it to recognize these benefits and to prioritize this issue, to get us even to this point.

I would encourage the government, seeing the opportunities that exist, to look for ways to go further and expand trade co-operation with like-minded nations. There are many other opportunities among our Commonwealth partners throughout the world where we can look to expand trade ties in a way that is beneficial to Canada and Canadians as well as other countries.

I suggest that Canada should do more to look at the opportunities for economic partnerships with countries in Africa. Africa is a continent where dramatic economic growth has taken place in recent years. There is major demographic growth. Too many people do not

yet perceive Africa as a continent of economic opportunity and a mutually beneficial partnership. There are many countries with whom we share history and languages and can collaborate with on the next step in our trading infrastructure. As we do that, we should have a focus on building a trade system that reflects our values and a commitment to the rule of law. When we see the Government of China expanding neo-colonial projects in Africa, it underlines the importance of us being engaged there, along with our partners, looking for ways to expand our trade ties and really recognizing the economic potential that flows from those partnerships.

● (2015)

To summarize, the Conservatives are supportive of this trade agreement moving forward with Canada and the U.K. It is frustrating to see the government behind on putting these things forward and not prioritizing important legislation like this. However, the Conservatives have always been prepared to lead, whether it is from government or from opposition, on issues of trade. We were pleased to put forward the motion to have this debate tonight to move this legislation forward. It reflects our desire and our commitment to work constructively in this Parliament when there are areas of legislation and priority that overlap between different parties. We are keen to seize those opportunities in the public interest, obviously not agreeing with all aspects of the government's legislation but seeking to lead and push forward in priority areas like this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for adjusting on the fly so quickly. I think we only lost about a minute, because of his quick reaction and adjustment to get back to debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the most difficult times I spent was on the door step of a woman who was a senior. She was unable to afford her medicine. She was making a decision on whether to buy food or fill her prescription. No one should have to deal with this in Canada. We know that over 30% of single women over 65 are living in poverty.

Is my colleague concerned that this agreement, like CETA before, might put upward pressure on the price of pharmaceutical drugs for Canadians? Is he concerned about that? What can he propose to ensure that this woman and others do not have to make those difficult decisions?



**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important to ensure that people are not in the vulnerable position that the member described. There are different kinds of steps that can be taken to address the situation of somebody who is struggling to pay for his or her prescription drug needs. I know the NDP has some proposals along those lines. We have put forward some proposals that try to work collaboratively across jurisdictions, identify where those gaps are and work to fill those gaps. That is a large and important debate and one we are prepared to have.

• (2020)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member and I have talked in the past about sanctions, particularly against China, Magnitsky sanctions, trade sanctions and things such as that. I put forward in my speech an opportunity to join with Great Britain with respect to supply chain slavery legislation. I would be interested in my hon. colleague's thoughts on the utility of supply chains slavery legislation, particularly in the context of a trade agreement with Great Britain which already has similar legislation.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, Canada is seen as a laggard when it comes to addressing supply chain slavery. We need to do so much more on that front. I am very supportive of a legislative proposal that is in the other place that would start moving us in a stronger way toward achieving those objectives. I do not think, in particular, that the measures the government has proposed with respect to East Turkestan are at all adequate, but steps need to be taken for countries throughout the world.

I will point out that the benefit of collaboration with other countries, the U.K. and the U.S., in response to supply chain slavery can be assistance in monitoring, in reporting and in enforcement. These issues can be difficult to track with respect to identifying the precise risk of slave labour being part of the production of a product in a particular case. If we did a better job of working with our partners, we could find this data and have more effective enforcement as we seek to protect vulnerable people around the world.

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not echo my colleague's invitation to the member for Scarborough—Guildwood to cross over and come to the bright side. I do appreciate his welcoming comments to me when I joined the House just over a year ago.

My hon. colleague mentioned trade with Africa. Could he expand on some of the benefits and dual purposes of an expansion in that area? I know that all three of us share a heart for others around the world, so I wonder if he could expand on that, as it is similar to our long-standing relationship with Great Britain.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague did extensive work on international development with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank prior to coming to the House, and I think he would understand very well that our relationship with developing countries should include both development assistance and trade, recognizing the economic opportunities that come from those kinds of partnerships.

I spoke with an ambassador recently who made the point to me that developing countries need investment. They need trade and development assistance as well, and it is private sector growth

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through trade that can help build long-term economic growth for those countries as well as for Canada. We need to start trying to do both in the case of developing countries, whether it is in Africa or elsewhere. Certainly, there is explosive economic growth happening in parts of Africa, and there are some real opportunities for Canada and for mutually beneficial partnerships.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

It is a pleasure to rise today at third reading on Bill C-18, an act to implement the agreement on trade continuity between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, or the CUKTCA. I want to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for unanimously agreeing to debate Bill C-18 tonight and to help move it through Parliament.

The United Kingdom is our fifth-largest trading partner and our third-largest export market, and we need to ensure that our exporters and importers, and all businesses and workers who rely on trade with the United Kingdom, have certainty. I want to take time in the first part of my speech to lay out some of the timelines and talk about the reason we are here now, in March 2021, debating the Canada-U.K. trade agreement, which should have been completed and in place months ago.

With the United Kingdom set to leave the European Union, we knew that our trade agreement with the EU, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, would not be applicable to trade with the U.K. once this happened on January 1, 2021. Throughout the last year, on many occasions the Conservatives asked questions of the government on the status of trade negotiations with the United Kingdom and whether we were going to see it meet its timelines and have a new agreement in place by the end of 2020. We did not receive many answers, and when we did they were quite vague or had little detail.

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It also did not help the Liberals shut down Parliament and several committees, like the international trade committee, during the spring and summer of 2020. The international trade committee met only once between April and September of last year. This was at a time when it could have been doing important work, just like the committee that I was previously sitting on, the industry committee, which met virtually twice a week on critical issues. When the international trade committee finally resumed last fall, the Conservatives brought forth a motion to begin a prestudy on a potential trade agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom and to hear from stakeholders who would have been affected by this agreement, or lack of one, as well as to study what impacts could arise if an agreement was not in place.

While this study was occurring, we found out that the Liberals had walked away from trade negotiations with the U.K. in March 2019, to return to the table only in the summer of 2020. Other countries were negotiating and striking deals during this time. Finally, at the end of November 2020, after years of working on the agreement, just as one month before the CETA's application to the EU was set to expire, the government announced that it finally reached a trade agreement with the U.K., the CUKTCA, which was simply a rollover of the previous CETA. Four years of on and off talks led to a rollover.

The Liberals did not take our trading relationship with the U.K. seriously and mismanaged the process. I have heard and met from many organizations, workers and businesses about the trading relationship between Canada and the United Kingdom. They were hoping that a new trade agreement would be Canada 1, not CETA 2. They were looking forward to addressing emerging issues, whether it was non-tariff barriers preventing goods from being exported to the U.K. or seeing measures to target trade imbalances between our two nations. Some were looking for new provisions, such as better measures to connect small businesses to trading opportunities, or a chance to address long-standing issues, such as inequalities of frozen pensions. None of this was done.

While the Prime Minister in the fall of 2020 publicly and patronizingly stated that the United Kingdom did not have the "bandwidth" to negotiate a trade agreement with Canada, the U.K. government was working to negotiate with other countries and secure comprehensive trade agreements. Trade ministers in the U.K. denied these claims from the Prime Minister. Such comments about the U.K., one of our longest-standing allies, surely was not helpful.

Furthermore, we heard from many stakeholders in business and labour that the government did not consult with them. I heard Liberal MPs say that they did not need to consult widely, as the consultations were already done during CETA. However, those consultations were years old by the time it finally came to negotiate this agreement, with newer and emerging issues that really needed to be looked at.

Finally, on December 9, 2020, just two sitting days before the House of Commons rose for the year and just weeks before CETA's application to the U.K. was set to expire, the government introduced its enacting legislation for the CUKTCA, Bill C-18. The government literally waited until the final week of the final month of the final year to introduce enacting legislation on a bill to continue trade with one of our most important allies.

To no one's surprise, the government did not get Bill C-18 through Parliament before the end of 2020 and before CETA expired. This was even though the Conservatives had been pressing for months so that we would not have uncertainty for Canadian businesses.

● (2025)

Because the government mismanaged the timelines of the Canada-U.K. trade deal by not getting legislation through Parliament and the Senate by the end of 2020, it had to announce bridging measures through a memorandum of understanding, or an MOU, in the last week of December as a stopgap measure to give them more time. Otherwise, Canadian businesses would have been facing tariffs. The MOU was to last for 90 days, until the end of March.

Bill C-18 passed through the trade committee, and we were very surprised not to see it on the government's agenda this week considering there were only two sitting weeks of Parliament in March 2021 and the bill needs to go through the Senate. What was on the agenda instead this week was legislation so that we could have an election during the pandemic. That was the priority of the government. Now, with us being here on March 9, weeks away from the MOU ending, we do not know if Bill C-18 will go through the parliamentary process before the MOU expires. The answers from the minister were déjà vu, as we heard them last year before the last looming expiration deadline. They were vague and noncommittal. Was the government preparing transitional measures for a transitional memorandum of understanding and another extension?

This is why Conservatives sought unanimous consent to get Bill C-18 through third reading in the House of Commons tonight, despite the Liberals mismanaging their legislative agenda. When were the Liberals planning to bring Bill C-18 forward for debate, if we were not doing it tonight? Businesses, workers and exporters would have been left in the dark again.

I want to be clear. The Conservatives have heard from exporters and they support Bill C-18, as it would provide continuity in trade between Canada and the United Kingdom. We are grateful for the hard work of our negotiating team in getting this done, despite the parameters that were left to them by the Liberal government.

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The Conservatives have expressed concerns about some aspects of the agreement, which we believe could have been done better. For one, the Liberals claim that the agreement is an interim agreement, but we see lots of signs that this is not the case. The agreement states that the Governments of Canada and the U.K. could get back to the table to negotiate a successor agreement within a year of ratification, and that within three years the Governments of Canada and the U.K. must finalize their successor agreement. However, there is no sunset clause and this interim agreement could very well become a permanent one.

We have also learned through questioning of trade officials at the committee stage that the portions stating that Canada and the U.K. must get back to the table to negotiate a successor agreement are not binding. A successor agreement is important to better reflect the Canada-U.K. trading relationship, but I am disappointed that stronger language is not in it to ensure that this happens. The agreement does not address trade imbalances of specific sectors, such as the beef sector, and does not address any non-tariff barriers.

Once the agreement is ratified and in place, the Conservatives will be holding the government to account on the priority to get a successor agreement. Our Canadian citizens, workers and businesses deserve this.

Right now, at a time of so much uncertainty, we know that businesses need predictability, and they have told us this, which is why we do not want to delay Bill C-18. This is why it is really important for us to move forward with this legislation. We want to give certainty and predictability to businesses at a time when there is so much they are unaware of around the corner. While the pandemic is still occurring, businesses are still in jeopardy and are still hurting. A lot of the businesses that export from Canada are in agriculture, and it is really important that they have stability right now.

I am really glad that we are debating Bill C-18 this evening, that we can move it forward and that we can put it on the legislative agenda. Businesses can rely on the fact that Parliament is working for them and that we can meet the deadlines.

• (2030)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

She raised several concerns about this government's management and negligence before negotiations began.

Faced with such a government, we have reason to be concerned. Is my colleague not worried about what will happen next, particularly with respect to supply-managed commodities? Earlier, she spoke out against Bill C-216, but considering the government we are dealing with, would she be willing to pass a bill that would give people a little security?

• (2035)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, we know that this agreement does protect supply management. It was very important for us to have it in there. One of the first announcements the government made was that the supply-managed sectors were supported in this

agreement. We were very happy to see that once we saw the legislation for this.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I hope that my colleague will not find this question difficult to answer because I really wanted to ask it of the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. It is about the issue of slavery in supply chains. I am really encouraged to see how much discussion we are having. It is tangential to the Canada-U.K. trade agreement, but given that the U.K. has tackled this issue of slavery in supply chain, I am wondering if I could take it up with her as well. We have Bill S-216 sitting in the Senate. We need to move ahead with these measures to help Canadians know that the goods we are consuming here are not produced with slave labour.

We do have a problem, though, that the general agreement on tariffs and trade and the World Trade Organization generally has identified these kinds of concerns as what it calls “PPM”, process and production methods that are outside the scope of government action. I am wondering if the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country would agree that we should grab the momentum toward taking action against slavery in supply chains while we have the chance and try to move Bill S-216 ahead as quickly as possible?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member. It is actually very timely because I am not sure if the member might be aware that at the international trade committee yesterday, the Conservatives put forth a motion dealing with forced labour in supply chains. We put forth a motion to look at government measures and their effectiveness. There are a couple of measures in place right now. We wanted to look at how effective they are with forced labour and human rights in Xinjiang and region and call the Minister of Small Business and a number of officials and look to see where there are gaps. That motion did not go through. The Liberals voted against it, as did the Bloc. Unfortunately, that study will not be happening despite the fact it would have been a very good and very timely study.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I also salute my colleague, with whom I have the pleasure of sitting on the Standing Committee on International Trade.

I would like to come back to her exchange with my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé. She said that she was pleased to see that the agreement with the U.K. would not result in new breaches in supply management. We are also pleased, and it is one of the fundamental conditions for our support, which we are providing.

However, we know that the United Kingdom wants to export more cheese. That means the problem will crop up again. My colleague rightly told us that the government was negligent. That being the case, why not protect supply management through legislation and prevent this negligent government from making the same mistake again?

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's work on the committee as well, where we work collaboratively. Supply management is very important. We are staunch supporters of supply management, so as I said earlier, we were very happy to see it in Bill C-18, so that all of those sectors can have certainty and stability during this time. That was one of the first questions that we posed once we heard there was an agreement coming forth. We were really happy to see that in this agreement, as we are discussing today.

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member of Parliament for Kelowna—Lake Country and official opposition shadow minister for export promotion and international trade for sharing her time with me. I know her constituents of Kelowna—Lake Country are well served by the member. She has done great work on this file and on this bill, so I would like to thank her for that.

I rise today virtually as the shadow minister for agriculture and agri-food to speak to the importance of maintaining and growing Canada's post-Brexit trading relationship with the United Kingdom as it leaves the European Union and is no longer covered by the Canada-European Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA.

To begin with, the linkages between Canada and the United Kingdom may be obvious, but they are worth pointing out. First and foremost, Her Majesty the Queen is sovereign of both Canada and the United Kingdom. She is also the head of the Commonwealth of Nations, of which both countries are founding members. Canada's Constitution Act, 1867, was originally the British North America Act, an act of Parliament at Westminster.

Until the Statute of Westminster, 1931, the United Kingdom led Canada's foreign relations. The former British Empire, which Canada was part of, was the world's largest trading and customs union. When he was prime minister, the late Right Hon. John Diefenbaker wanted to revive this trading and customs union. Therefore, today, Canada's trading relationship with the United Kingdom is among its most important, including for the agricultural sector.

According to Industry Canada, in 2019, Canada's overall exports to the U.K. were valued at \$18.9 billion, while imports from the U.K. were valued at \$9.2 billion. Combined, the two-way trade between Canada and the U.K. in 2019 was valued at over \$28 billion. This makes the U.K. Canada's fifth-largest trading partner.

In the same year, agriculture and agri-food imports from the U.K. were valued at more than \$404 million, and Canada's agriculture and agri-food exports to the U.K. were valued at more than \$344 million. That included agricultural implements valued at more than \$13.4 million and distilleries products valued at more than \$3.6 million. All other agricultural products exported by Canada were valued at \$326 million. Therefore, as an agricultural export market, the U.K. is Canada's seventeenth-most valuable in the world. The U.K. is Canada's third-most valuable agricultural export market in Europe, after France and Belgium.

Canada produces and exports some of the highest-quality food products in the world, and our farmers are proud of what they produce. In 2019, Canada's exports of wheat to the U.K. were valued at \$116.3 million, and customers in the U.K. recognize that Canadian durum wheat is a premium product in the production of flour for bread and semolina for pasta. The demand for other grain, pulse and oilseeds crops is high because of the virtually unrivalled quality of our Canadian products.

Let me expand on the agriculture commodities that we trade most with the U.K.

Corn exports totalled \$42.8 million. Dry pea and bean exports totalled \$104.7 million. Soybean exports were valued at \$338 million. Oilseeds, apart from soybeans, totalled \$3.2 million. Non-citrus fruit and tree nut exports were \$1.7 million. Miscellaneous crops, including other grains, totalled \$18 million. These products are all grown by farmers who pride themselves on the quality of their product and appreciate the relationship that they have with the U.K., including farmers from my own riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

The U.K. is an important market for a wide variety of farm products and services. This agreement protects Canada's dairy, poultry and agriculture sectors and the viability of produced-in-Canada suppliers of these products. It offers no incrementally increased market access for supply-managed products. However, the U.K. market is effectively closed to other Canadian farm products, including beef.

Because of this, any future trade negotiations between Canada and the United Kingdom should look at the following points of discussion. The first is what Canada must do in order to restore the United Kingdom's market openness for Canadian beef exports. The second is to look for an opportunity to promote Canadian agricultural products to achieve a greater share of the existing United Kingdom market.

● (2040)

For example, the United Kingdom exports of distillery products to Canada in 2019 totalled just short of \$270 million, compared to \$3.6 million from Canada to the United Kingdom. Discussions should be pursued to create what would effectively be a new market for other Canadian products, including canola. As well as serving as a high-quality cooking oil, canola is used as a feedstock for the production of biodiesel. Sadly, at present, the United Kingdom is not a significant market for canola. Is the Government of Canada doing all it could to promote Canadian agricultural products in the United Kingdom?

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Further, and according to the Minister of International Trade, if this bill failed and Canada's trading relationship with the U.K. were to revert to most-favoured-nation provisions, subject to the World Trade Organization regime, food exports would be among the most negatively affected. At a time when Canadian producers have seen markets reduced or closed to their agricultural products in China and elsewhere around the world, we must keep open and expand all existing markets for Canadian producers.

Our consideration of Bill C-18 and trade continuity with the U.K. post-Brexit should not be taken as a be-all and end-all. This should be taken as a new starting point for an enhanced, friendly, fruitful and prosperous trading relationship between our two countries and our respective producers and service providers.

I want to turn now to where the performance of the Liberal government has fallen short of what Canadians expect. As my colleague, the shadow minister for export promotion and international trade, has pointed out, the Liberals introduced this bill at the last minute to replace a trade agreement that they had known for some time was expiring at the end of 2020.

Again, as my colleague pointed out, while we are pleased that Canada and the United Kingdom have secured a trade agreement that re-establishes provisions under CETA, we are not pleased that the Liberals waited until the eleventh hour to introduce the implementing legislation. This is yet another example of Liberal mismanagement and incompetence.

Make no mistake, Conservatives have been the party of well-regulated free trade. Sir John A. Macdonald sought trade reciprocity with the United States immediately following Confederation. As I have already mentioned, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker sought to revive free trade in the Commonwealth. The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was initiated and implemented by former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his international trade minister, the late John Crosbie. The Right Hon. Stephen Harper negotiated over 30 bilateral trade agreements, as well as CETA and the trans-Pacific partnership. The Conservative Party understands that Canada's prosperity and job creation hinge on Canadian producers' access to international markets for their goods and services, including agricultural goods and services.

Let me say again that the Conservative Party is the party of well-regulated free trade. On a more personal note, as with so many communities across all regions, provinces and territories of Canada, my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is heavily dependent on having secure and reliable access to markets for the agricultural products that they produce. As with ridings served by my colleagues on this side of the House and also by colleagues on all sides of this chamber, our constituents' jobs and livelihoods, and their ability to provide for their families and loved ones, depend on both local and global markets for agricultural products. They cannot afford to lose any market, including the United Kingdom, as a market for agricultural products.

Let me summarize by again pointing out the obvious. Canada's relationship with the United Kingdom is a long and warm one. Even apart from our commonalities, Canada's trading relationship with the United Kingdom is too valuable to lose. It is too valuable to lose for Canadian farmers and agricultural producers of goods

and services. Canadian agricultural producers are ready to supply top-quality products to the United Kingdom and the rest of the world.

● (2045)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things I cannot help but think about is the fact that this trade agreement is touted as a temporary or transitional deal. Does the member believe that we should include a sunset clause to ensure that negotiations lead to a successor agreement? I think that would provide a lot more stability and I would like to hear what the member thinks about it.

● (2050)

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Mr. Speaker, what is important in this agreement is that we have continued trade with the United Kingdom for our farmers and producers and can continue to open markets for them. While this is an important bill before us today that will help all sectors, including our supply-managed sectors, we need to make sure to continue to press for such access going forward for commodities such as beef, and even more so for canola in the U.K.

**Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have had years to work on a new trade agreement with the United Kingdom and yet they waited until the last minute to restart trade talks and failed to negotiate any improvements in the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement over CETA. What are the member's thoughts on that?

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Unfortunately, Justin Trudeau failed to negotiate this trade agreement with the U.K. He failed to take it seriously and waited until the eleventh hour, again putting people's livelihoods and our trade with the U.K. at risk, and potentially closing markets for the U.K. It was simple. We could have had something earlier and, unfortunately, he waited until the last hour.

It is important to point out that if the Prime Minister had not prorogued Parliament when he did, in the middle of the WE scandal, this bill would already be in the Senate. We have seen nothing but delays from the government, and this is just another example of Liberals not standing up for Canadian producers and farmers, as we have continually seen. They fail to stand up for farmers. This is just another example of where they are falling behind and hurting our agriculture sector.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind the hon. member to reference other hon. members by their titles or ridings.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. She gave a very powerful speech about the incompetence of this government with respect to its foresight and reaction time.

She mentioned that she wants to protect supply-managed commodities. Yes, there are many commodities destined for export, but there are also some supply-managed commodities that should not be sacrificed. Does my colleague not think she should support our bill tomorrow?

[*English*]

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have always said, and the leader has been very clear, that the Conservative Party understands supply management and how important it is to our farmers in the supply-managed sectors of eggs, poultry, dairy and our feathered friends. Supply management is important and we will always stand up for it. We have shown that we will support our farmers and I have been very vocal in saying that I will support supply management. We will continue as a party to support our farmers and the supply-managed sector.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the dairy farmers on Vancouver Island are very concerned because every single time a trade deal is negotiated, it chips away at supply management. If we add up the Trans-Pacific Partnership, CETA and what has been happening in other trade deals that were negotiated under both Conservatives and Liberals, there is less protection for supply management than there used to be, just as there is with this adoption of the CETA rules for our dealings with the U.K.

I wonder how we are going to explain to dairy farmers the compensation they might receive down the road for the loss of supply management or how any member can say that we stand up to protect supply management when we enter into trade deals that chip away at it quite substantially.

• (2055)

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Mr. Speaker, I represent a riding that is very rich in agriculture, including many supply-managed farms. I will always stand up to protect supply management, as will the Conservative Party.

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

On another practical housekeeping item, my kids are getting ready for bed right now, and so to Matthew and Emerson: Good night and love you guys. I will also tell them to listen to their mother.

It is just about 9 p.m. on a Tuesday, and generally the House would have adjourned hours ago, but Conservatives have made it clear that we are willing to work with the government when it is willing to be a good partner. I think that is demonstrated by us wanting to make sure that two things happen tonight. The first is that legislation before the House has the scrutiny that it deserves. As a legislator, I take seriously my obligation to review, debate, discuss and dialogue about the most serious issues facing our country. Tonight, we are talking about an important trading relationship,

which is representative of how important it is that we have that dialogue. The second is that people, and their perspectives, from across our country have their voices heard.

I often am asked why there are so many empty seats in Parliament. Certainly during normal times there would be one explanation, but as of late there is a different reason, which is making sure that there is safe physical distancing so that we can stand together in the fight against COVID. However, for the first time in our history, we are seeing members of Parliament join in debate in this place virtually, which is a significant milestone. It is so important that we can have these very important discussions.

When it comes to trade overall, one of the most serious obligations of Canada's Parliament, as laid out in the founding documents of our country, is that this place would be responsible for navigating global trading relationships, whether 150-some years ago as a new country as part of the British Empire, or today. We share a system, and the first words of the British North America Act talked about how we have a structure similar to that of the United Kingdom. We share much of our history, legal systems and structures. In fact, the green carpet we have the honour of debating from represents the foundation of democracy, not just in Canada, but some of the earliest democratic structures in the modern world. It is within that context that we enter into debate here tonight, and it is good to be able to ensure that there is stability in one of Canada's very important trading partners. We will certainly work with the government.

I will get into the substance of the bill in a moment, but during question period today I heard about how the Liberals were blaming the Conservatives for all of these delays on different things. I find that ironic, because the Liberals control the agenda of the government. It seems that whenever it is inconvenient for them, they will simply blame the opposition. They are inserting tactics and politics into the debate, not to mention prorogation, when we lost approximately 35 legislative days. We have had to debate many bills multiple times to fix mistakes made in previous bills. As well, there were many months where the House did not sit in a substantive capacity, although there are practical reasons for that. Certainly, democracy is an essential service, and I was proud to stand and debate that coming up a year ago as we enter into the second year of COVID-19.

Regarding the debate at hand, I find it very interesting. Although just elected in 2019, I had spent a little bit of time in Ottawa and was a staffer prior to getting elected.

• (2100)

It is always great to see the legacies of good governments, and when it comes to what we are debating today, in substance it is actually a Conservative legacy. If we go back to the beginning of the CETA negotiations, we see that the signatures on the page took place after the 2015 election, but the substance of that agreement, one of the largest agreements signed in Canadian history, was negotiated by a Conservative government, acknowledging fair and free trade and how important that is for a resource-rich country with great expertise in products and manufacturing capacity, secure supply chains and technological innovation. Conservatives led the charge in ensuring that we had a wide variety of trading relationships. There was massive growth in the number of countries that Canada had trade agreements with over the close to 10 years that Stephen Harper was prime minister, and it is an honour to sit in caucus with the member for Abbotsford and hear some of the war stories of some of those trade negotiations.

As for the substance of the bill we are talking about today, although the United Kingdom's position in the European Union has changed dramatically over a number of years, when we get into the nuts and bolts of the continuity and the recent history of that trade agreement, it really comes back to Conservative expertise in getting us to this point. Although I was not elected at the time, I saw news articles about how the Liberals almost dropped the ball on CETA, yet were able to get what is largely a Conservative legacy across the finish line. I am thankful for that. Good, strong, free and fair trade is the right thing for our nation.

What we are debating today is a little unfortunate, because it was a comedy of errors that got us to the point where we are now. It was about a year and a half ago that the negotiations broke down between Canada and the United Kingdom. The Liberals were quick to say that it was bandwidth issues with the United Kingdom, and in fairness, the United Kingdom is faced with a myriad of significant challenges associated with its exit from the European Union, but that did not stop the Australians or other jurisdictions from negotiating good, strong improvements to their trade deals.

It is unfortunate that negotiations broke down between our two countries and that it was not until the eleventh hour that this interim agreement was brought forward. The agreement lacks clarity. Trade and global investments and commerce depend on certainty, and that is what is required. This is a good step in the right direction, but it is unfortunate that the bill lacks a definitive timeline to ensure that there are concrete steps taken toward a long-term agreement. Some of the things that such an agreement should include are our tremendous expertise and tremendous resource capacity. I am proud to come from an area where net-zero oil comes from the region that I represent. It is a proud legacy that we have the most environmentally sustainable and ethically produced energy in the world. We have such a strong legacy of that, as well as so many opportunities to develop agriculture. I come from a strong agricultural region with so many opportunities.

As I see my time is almost up, I want to say that it should give Canadians pause to see that ideology seems to have got in the way of the Prime Minister and the Liberals negotiating with a Conservative government from another jurisdiction. It is unfortunate that it is truly Canadians who end up paying the price for the ideological

### *Government Orders*

blindness, I would suggest, that sometimes takes place on the Liberal side.

It is an honour to discuss this important bill and to support continuing the development of a strong trading relationship with the United Kingdom as it undergoes significant change. I am looking forward to taking questions from my colleagues.

• (2105)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague talk about trade and agriculture. I know that he will reiterate that he is here to defend supply management, but why refuse to do that through legislation, if only to protect ourselves from the negligence of certain leaders?

I would also like my colleague's perspective on ways to improve transparency and negotiations in these agreements, instead of presenting parliamentarians with the final agreement that they have to simply rubber-stamp.

[*English*]

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer both parts of the member's question. I will answer the second part first.

I did not get a chance to talk about this in my speech, but it is interesting that the House, Canada's democratic institution, actually required the government to keep it informed of the status of negotiations. Certainly, there was not a lot of information provided, and that is a shame. In fact, it verges on contempt. Often, we see the government make grand statements about how it is the most transparent government in the history of the universe, but the evidence is certainly the opposite of that.

To the member's point on protecting our supply-managed sectors, that could be a valid discussion, but I would simply turn it around and ask the member this. He is worried about the agricultural industry in Quebec, but I certainly find it very, very troubling how the Liberals seem to be quick to target the energy industry in Alberta. It is unfortunate that there is no reciprocity in building a Canada that works for all Canadians.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate how the member had some comments about what this side of the House has been saying about the Conservatives holding up bills, the fact that they are very much interested in this bill and supported having it on the floor tonight. That is great to see and I am glad to see that we are able to make progress on this one.

One of the other bills that would really affect Canadians right now is Bill C-24, which deals with EI benefits, in particular for those who have been affected by the pandemic. If that bill does not receive royal assent by March 21, there will be a lot of Canadians without EI benefits.

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Now the Conservatives will say, “Well, it’s the Liberals’ fault because they didn’t set the agenda properly to allow that bill to be put on the floor and to have enough time for debate,” and so on and so forth. However, by saying that they are effectively saying to those people, “We are going to hold you hostage because we’re upset with the Liberal government and their legislative agenda.”

We asked the member, all Conservatives, and everyone else in the House, to vote to have debate on that bill extended last night until midnight. The Conservatives voted against it. Does the member not think that Bill C-24 to support EI recipients is just as important as this free trade bill?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, it bears pointing out a simple number and a simple word: 35 days of prorogation. We would be in a very, very different sort of scenario had the government not decided to try to cover up its scandalous ways. I think that is the unfortunate context. It is unfortunate for all Canadians, the context that we were in.

When it comes to Bill C-24 and a lot of other very important legislation, Conservatives have worked with the government. In the midst of a global crisis, we have seen that when we work together, things get done. It is unfortunate that the Liberals continue to play politics with this issue and blame the official opposition when, in many cases, they have had to bring legislation back numerous times to fix the errors that would have been remedied had the legislation been debated properly in the first place.

• (2110)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is a first for me too. I have never shared time with a Conservative member of Parliament. I want to thank, in the spirit of co-operation, the Conservative member of Parliament for Battle River—Crowfoot.

I welcome the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak to the investment chapter and the investment dispute resolution mechanism in the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement. I will begin by emphasizing that maintaining the robust investment relationship Canada has with the U.K. is a top priority for our government. As we are all well aware, Canada and the U.K. have historically enjoyed a mutually advantageous trade and investment relationship. Our bilateral investment relationship, which was already strong, has grown rapidly under the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade agreement, or CETA.

The U.K. is Canada’s largest market in Europe and is a key source of foreign direct investment. Indeed, the U.K. is Canada’s fourth most important source of foreign direct investment. In 2019, the FDI stock from the U.K. was valued at over \$62 billion. Canadians are also seeking investment opportunities in the U.K., with our FDI stocks in the U.K. valued at over \$107 billion in 2019, making the United Kingdom Canada’s second-largest direct investment destination.

The trade continuity agreement that was signed by Canada and the U.K. on December 9, 2020, would ensure that both parties can sustain and build upon this important relationship by preserving the benefits of CETA in a new bilateral agreement. More importantly, as this trade continuity agreement is based on CETA, an agreement Canadians are already familiar with, it provides continuity, pre-

dictability and stability for Canadian businesses, exporters, workers and consumers. This stability is more important than ever as we grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once the trade continuity agreement is ratified and fully implemented, it will continue to maintain predictability and protect Canadian investors as well as preserve CETA’s high-standard provisions on dispute settlement. Canada’s businesses have told us that what they want most at this time is stability, and the continuity agreement would provide that as we continue to work toward a new comprehensive bilateral free trade agreement with the U.K. that best serves Canada’s interests over the longer term.

I will elaborate on two very important parts of the trade continuity agreement: the investment chapter and the investment dispute resolution mechanism, the purpose of which is to protect Canadian investors.

As stated by my colleagues, the trade continuity agreement is an interim agreement that replicates CETA’s provisions to ensure the stability of Canadian businesses during the unique situation Brexit has presented. As such, the comprehensive investment chapter of CETA was effectively replicated in the trade continuity agreement to ensure a smooth transition and provide predictability for Canadians. This will ensure that Canadian investors, as well as Canadian financial institutions with investments in the U.K., receive the same high standard of investor protection under this agreement that they were provided under CETA.

I will elaborate on the investment dispute resolution provision.

The trade continuity agreement replicates the CETA investment dispute resolution provisions, including CETA’s permanent investment tribunal and appellate tribunal, with only minor technical changes to reflect the replacement of the 28 EU member states with the U.K. However, the investment dispute resolution provisions will be temporarily suspended upon entry into force of the trade continuity agreement, pending a review by parties. The purpose of this review is to consider the approach to investment dispute resolution that best reflects the bilateral relationship between Canada and the U.K. The review would be set to commence within three months of entry into force of the trade continuity agreement and should be completed within three years, unless extended by agreement of both Canada and the U.K. If Canada and the U.K. do not agree on an approach to investment dispute resolution, or to extend the review process within three years, the CETA-like investment tribunal and appellate tribunal would apply, provided that equivalent CETA provisions have entered into force.



While this trade continuity agreement would protect Canadian investors, it would also maintain Canada's right to regulate in the public interest. As in CETA, the trade continuity agreement would require both Canadian and foreign investors to abide by Canada's laws and regulations in areas such as the environment, labour, health care and safety.

● (2115)

Through the unprecedented Brexit transition process our government strived to provide Canadians with certainty and security. This objective was made all the more important with the added economic consequences and uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our government takes great pride in achieving this trade continuity agreement with the United Kingdom. The objective in negotiating this agreement has always been to create a temporary measure to ensure stability for Canadian businesses during the Brexit transition process. To be clear, the trade continuity agreement is good for Canadian and U.K. investors and for the strong mutually beneficial trade and investment relationship our nations have built over 150 years.

While CETA will continue to govern Canada-EU trade, this trade continuity agreement will provide predictability and remove uncertainty for Canadians doing business with and in the U.K. This agreement is not only about ensuring continuity and maintaining the status quo, but is also essential in setting the stage for our future trade relations with the United Kingdom.

It is critical that the trade continuity agreement be ratified and implemented as soon as possible to ensure certainty for businesses. Therefore, I urge all hon. members to support Bill C-18 and allow the government to move ahead and implement the Canada-U.K. continuity agreement in a timely manner.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with the member for Surrey Centre's riding, having spent my whole professional career working there.

Can the member comment on the significance of Canada's entering into a free trade agreement with a country with whom we share so many commonalities, such as common law, respect for the rule of law, our parliamentary traditions and so many other values? Is this a model that could be carried to other English-speaking, common-law tradition countries, like New Zealand and Australia?

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the member of Parliament for Langley—Aldergrove. I hope I am serving his previous place of work well. I commend him for his public service as well.

I take that point very seriously and not just with respect to other English-speaking places with Commonwealth traits, although that obviously helps because our legal systems are very similar in the Commonwealth, including India, New Zealand and Australia. There are opportunities to grow our trade with those countries, and many in Africa, based on our similarities rather than our differences. That is key. Our government will always strive to create fair, responsible trade and open up markets for Canadians wherever we can.

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[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the agreement is important and it needs to be signed. We all agree on that.

I would like to ask my colleague how we could improve elected members' participation in the negotiation process for these agreements, so that they are not presented with a fait accompli. My colleague is a member of the government and might be able to enlighten us on that.

[English]

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I had the good fortune of being on the trade committee this year when it was hearing from Mr. Verheul and other trade negotiators for Canada.

In this case, it is a transitional agreement, so there is really not much new to it. It is really protecting what has already been debated in the House and existed previously with CETA. It is basically cutting and pasting that agreement and making sure there are legal compatibilities for the two countries to adhere to.

I think trade is one of those things that are very difficult to negotiate in a public forum when dealing with foreign countries, but there are very good ways in the future to create transparency where perhaps people from the trade committee or the trade critics of the opposition parties might be brought in to look at those trade deals to see if there are comments or suggestions they want to make before the trade agreements are negotiated. To some degree, transparency as a principle is always great, but as a practicality, when one is negotiating with other countries, it might be a lot more difficult than we think.

● (2120)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am not entirely clear on where the Liberals stand anymore. Maybe I was not clear before.

I would like to hear some clarification from the hon. member. He was talking about the amazing wonders of investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms, yet we had the Minister of International Trade work really hard to make sure that ISDS and ICS, which are ultimately the same thing, made it into CETA. Then she negotiated in CUSMA the removal of ISDS, and we heard what an incredible contribution that was to that trade agreement.

Therefore, it is very confusing to me where the Liberals stand, but that is usually the case. I wonder if the member could clarify the back and forth, and why they keep flip-flopping on this issue.

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**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Mr. Speaker, the investor-state dispute mechanism and principle is, in my own opinion, actually a really great initiative. However, when they handicap governments for the purpose of just simply trade or their own personal interests, or they inhibit them from creating environmental laws or labour standards, that is where the challenge is. Many times, states have used the opposite to inhibit trade so that they can give advantage to local trade. That is where that challenge has been.

It is one of those things that has grown. As we have relationships with countries like the U.S. where we have had free trade for a long time, we have seen some of the negatives of perhaps the investor-state dispute settlement system. There has been a cry from the public, as well as industry, not to have it. In other cases, such as starting fresh with CETA being new or when we are doing new trade agreements, it is sometimes very important to have those benchmarks and those safeguards to ensure that it works well.

One of the reasons we are working with the U.K. to see where we can reduce this or change that is because the legal systems in the U.K. and Canada are very similar. Therefore, we are safeguarded. This is in opposition with the European Union, where it is a cosmopolitan mix of different frameworks and, therefore, we need more protective measures for when our investors go and invest in that space.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate.

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division, that the motion be adopted on division or, for that matter, that it be carried, I would invite them to rise and indicate so to the Chair.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote on this motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to an order made earlier today, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 10, at the expiry of time provided for Oral Questions.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:25 p.m.)

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