



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

VOLUME 149 NUMBER 016

Thursday, February 6, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 6, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2018-19 annual report of the veterans ombudsman, entitled "Focus on Fairness".

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-203, an act to amend the National Defence Act (maiming or injuring self or another).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill that I had sincerely hoped to see adopted in the last Parliament.

The bill aims to remove a significant barrier to members of the Canadian Forces receiving the mental health assistance they need. It would do so by repealing subsection (c) of section 98 of the National Defence Act. This is the archaic section of the National Defence Act that makes self-harm a disciplinary offence in the military code of conduct.

The problem of death by suicide of Canadian Forces members is not going away. We are still losing more than one serving member per month to death by suicide, 17 in 2019 alone. We have lost 212 regular members over the last 15 years and of course the number is much higher when we include reservists and veterans.

Again, I am arguing that removing this section would send a strong message that self-harm is a mental health issue and not something to be addressed by discipline.

This is a matter I first brought forward in the last Parliament as an amendment to Bill C-77, the military justice bill. When that amendment was ruled out of order, I offered this private member's bill as an alternative way of taking the actions necessary to send a

positive message to Canadian Forces members struggling with mental health issues. Despite support for my bill by opposition parties in the last Parliament, the Liberals blocked it from moving forward.

Today, I am introducing the bill in a minority Parliament, once again hoping MPs will now listen to the voices of the hundreds of families that have lost loved ones to death by suicide, that MPs will join together in this Parliament to tackle the ongoing challenge of death by suicide in the Canadian Forces and that MPs begin by passing this legislation.

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

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition that was signed in the last Parliament in support of Bill S-240. That bill has been presented again in this Parliament conveniently under a similar number, Bill S-204. It is a bill that seeks to address the terrible reality of forced organ harvesting and trafficking and to end the possibility of any involvement by Canadians in this terrible trafficking.

The petitioners no doubt hope that the new Bill S-204 will be passed quickly through this 43rd Parliament.

SINIXT NATION

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to present a petition signed by 159 members of my riding. I have presented similar petitions numerous times in the past Parliament.

The petitioners point out that the Canadian government declared the Sinixt tribal group extinct in 1956. They point out that the group is definitely not extinct, that there are members very much alive and well, both in Canada and just across the border in Washington.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to reverse this wrongful declaration of extinction of the Sinixt tribal group and take immediate steps to recognize the Sinixt as an autonomous tribal group within their traditional and ancestral Canadian territory.

Government Orders

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here from members of my constituency who are very concerned about climate change and want to see real climate action with equality, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and a just transition for workers. They are calling on the Government of Canada to support Motion No. 1 for a made-in-Canada green new deal.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, a petition is often timely, as news reaches us that the RCMP have begun arresting Wet'suwet'en elders. The petitioners call for the respect for Canadian constitutional law and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They call on the government to halt all existing and planned construction of the Coastal GasLink project on Wet'suwet'en territory, ask the RCMP to dismantle the exclusion zone and stand down and move expeditiously to nation-to-nation talks between the Wet'suwet'en nation and federal and provincial governments.

The matter is urgent.

* * *

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

[*Translation*]

CANADA-UNITED STATES-MEXICO AGREEMENT
IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an act to implement the agreement between Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue has three minutes remaining before we proceed to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for your reference, I will start by reminding you of my interventions from yesterday.

First, our unwillingness to support the free trade agreement is largely due to the threat of outsourcing that mining industries are facing. The government talks about possible compensation for the industry as if this is something that would benefit the industry. Even if the industry does receive that money, 60,000 jobs could be

in jeopardy, because there is no guarantee that the money would reach Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean or the North Shore.

Second, this agreement does nothing to address the softwood lumber issue. Thirty thousand jobs are at stake, and we are struggling to save our villages. Many villages, especially in my riding, are depending on these issues and free trade deals, which do not protect the softwood lumber industry. This can be a difficult situation.

As for supply management, the whole issue of income stability is a major challenge for farmers. They need to be able to predict their income, but the loopholes that have been created in supply management are making things hard for them. We are increasingly seeing quotas being sold off.

When my speech was interrupted, I was saying that the United States is imposing limitations on our negotiations with other world markets. I think that if we adopted an amendment to change that penalty, we would at least have saved our right to trade with anyone we want and thus preserved our sovereignty.

There are 10,000 dairy farms in Canada, including 5,600 in Quebec. That is a major industry that employs 83,000 people, either directly or indirectly, and generates over \$1 billion in taxes for the Government of Quebec. The industry is not asking for any direct subsidies. It is a matter of pride, and unfortunately, the decisions on compensation will take advantage of that. Dairy producers do not want the government's charity. They want to be independent and successful. Their prosperity is essential to the vitality of the agricultural life of the small family farms scattered around Quebec's towns and villages.

In closing, in my opinion, Quebec is the big loser in this agreement. The compensation was provided at Quebec's expense. The Government of Canada says that it wants us to work together and that it is reaching out to us. That implies being open to Quebec's demands. It is therefore irresponsible to sign this agreement without adding protections for supply management and aluminum and without putting an end to the softwood lumber dispute.

Could Canada listen to the solutions proposed by Quebec? For now, it is obvious that the federal government has once again abandoned Quebec's economy.

• (1010)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague. I think we are on the same wavelength and that, for the most part, we have similar concerns about the new NAFTA.

However, Green Party members have decided to vote in favour of ratifying the agreement because of the improvements that have been made, such as eliminating chapter 11, which gave big U.S. corporations the right to bring arbitration cases against Canada. Our country has been on the losing end of most arbitration cases related to Canadian health and environmental protection laws.

I have a question for the Bloc member. Does he agree that, without chapter 11, the new NAFTA is much better?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

For me, being here in the House is certainly not about opposing trade or free trade. Quite the opposite. I wish I too could vote in favour of the motion.

The motion is unacceptable to me because of factors vital to industrial sectors in Quebec and its regions, such as aluminum and softwood lumber. Still, there are some positives, such as preserving Quebec's culture. I recognize those efforts.

When I weigh the pros and the cons, however, and I see that \$6 billion worth of investment in one industry is at stake, there is no way I can stand up in the House and agree to hand the government a blank cheque.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from the Bloc Québécois a question about our economic competitiveness, which I think very much relates to what we are discussing this morning. It is very important that we are able to develop our natural resources in Canada. Projects like Teck Frontier allow us to create jobs in the country and support the development of our energy sector so Quebec does not have to be reliant on foreign oil but can instead benefit from lower-cost, high-quality Canadian oil. I would think the Bloc Québécois members would be supportive of the principle of allowing provincial autonomy and supporting provinces in pursuing their own aspirations, even if they may be different from each other. In that spirit of provincial autonomy and co-operation, is my colleague willing to express his support for the Teck Frontier project?

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question.

The principle of provincial autonomy is at the very core of the Canadian Confederation, and clearly it is important to us, the Bloc Québécois. I respect the decisions that Alberta might make with respect to its economic development. However, Quebec has decided not to rely on the oil industry.

I made the personal decision to buy an all-electric car. Why? In my opinion, we must develop a green and circular economy. We have to transition away from an oil economy because of the inherent costs. There is always a cost to doing things.

Of course I am very sensitive to the issue of jobs in the energy sector. Moreover, we are creating a new economy by investing in research and development in electric vehicles, self-driving vehicles and the capacity of our batteries. That is much more promising for the economy of tomorrow. That is the choice I have made as a Quebecker, and my decisions will foster sustainable development.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his thoughtful and reasoned speech.

Government Orders

As my colleague pointed out, we see that the three key sectors of Quebec's economy—wood, aluminum, and supply management—were each sacrificed in trade agreements, one after another.

As we know, the Canadian economy is thought to run on two sectors, namely the auto sector in Ontario and the oil and gas sector in Alberta.

In light of such outrageous projects as Teck Frontier, I would like to ask my colleague his thoughts on this unacceptable situation where the Canadian economy is considered only on the basis of two major industries, the auto sector and oil and gas.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, the auto industry is a fine example of what has hurt Quebec. Many free trade agreements have been signed at Quebec's expense.

In regard to the difference between steel and aluminum in the current agreement, I will again refer to the quote by Jean Simard, president of the Aluminium Association of Canada. The day before yesterday, at the Standing Committee on Finance, my colleague from Joliette asked him whether he preferred an agreement like the one in place for the steel sector. His answer was unequivocal. I will rephrase it so as not to directly quote anyone. He said that the association was on the verge of getting what it had asked for through representations by his team and the Deputy Prime Minister. At the end of the negotiations, Mexico said yes to steel and no to aluminum for strategic reasons. That is what is at issue.

[*English*]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, four years ago the future of free trade in North America was in doubt. At the time, President Trump said that NAFTA was “the worst deal in history” and campaigned to tear it up. This presented an existential threat to the well-being of Canadians, as so many of our communities and workers depend on free and open market access to the world's biggest economy.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the hard work of the Deputy Prime Minister, her negotiating team and Canadians of all stripes and backgrounds, we stood firm against the largest economic threat Canada has faced in recent history. We even did pretty well. Extremely well, I would say, since we reached a better agreement with our partners and friends, the United States and Mexico.

[*English*]

Without a doubt, this is a better deal than the current NAFTA. This is a good deal for Canadians, no matter where they live.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Today I want to focus on the benefits this agreement offers to Quebecers. The benefits are many, because we stood up for Quebec. Allow me to share some examples. The new NAFTA retains the cultural exemption that allows so many artists and creators to succeed. It even covers the digital world. The new agreement retains the dispute resolution mechanism that was used to defend Quebec's softwood lumber industry. It protects our supply management system, including dairy farmers. It also gives manufacturing exporters and aluminum workers better access to the American market.

- (1020)

[English]

Allow me to begin with the cultural exemption. As the former minister of Canadian heritage, as a proud Quebecer and as a lover of arts and music, my province's unique culture is near and dear to my heart.

[Translation]

Quebec itself is near and dear to my heart. Yes indeed, we have a unique culture. Our culture, our way of life, our way of looking at things are what create our identity. We must protect this culture, this identity. It must be protected in traditional media and, especially today, in the 21st century, it must be protected online. The Americans wanted to get rid of this cultural exemption. They wanted to prevent us from being able to financially support and protect our culture, our linguistic duality. Not only did we preserve that right, but we even managed to get it extended to digital media. The Prime Minister drew a line in the sand, sending the Americans a clear message that Canada would not sign without this exemption. No exemption, no agreement.

[English]

This will help over 70,000 Quebecers employed in the cultural industry to continue to thrive.

[Translation]

We stood our ground for Quebec.

[English]

Second, I am sure members in the House will recall that the American administration sought to eliminate the dispute resolution mechanism known as chapter 19. We refused to concede to this, and I will explain why.

This mechanism is a critical equalizer in a trading relationship in which we are, frankly, the smaller partner.

[Translation]

It was under chapter 19 that Quebec was able to defend its softwood lumber industry against anti-dumping measures and abusive countervailing duties imposed by the Americans.

[English]

The Prime Minister said it was non-negotiable. We gave Canadians our word, and we did not budge.

[Translation]

Once again, we stood our ground for Quebec.

[English]

Third, I turn to the agriculture industry, and the supply management system in particular.

[Translation]

Supply management supports thousands of farmers, food producers and their families. Together, they export \$5.7 billion worth of agricultural products from Quebec to the United States every year. The U.S. President and his administration wanted to do away with supply management. We said no. Period.

[English]

While CUSMA provides incremental access to the U.S., our negotiators overwhelmingly maintained the supply management system of controls on production, price and imports.

The Prime Minister has been clear: We will fully and fairly compensate farmers and processors for any loss of market share, as we did under the trade agreements we signed with the European Union and Asia-Pacific countries.

[Translation]

This summer we announced \$1.75 billion in compensation over eight years for nearly 11,000 dairy farmers in Canada. Everyone who applied by December 31, 2019, has received their payments by now. The rest will receive theirs by March 31.

We protected supply management. This will allow Quebec dairy products to remain part of our kids' daily breakfast routine, in Quebec and right across the country.

Once again, we stood our ground for Quebec.

[English]

Finally, and more perhaps more importantly, CUSMA preserves and actually increases duty-free access for Canadian goods. For Quebec, this means that key exports to the U.S. will continue to receive duty-free treatment compared to the most favoured nation rate charged on imports that are not from the United States' free trade partners. It also means continued market access for nearly \$60 billion in Quebec exports to the U.S., and stability for workers in aerospace, heavy truck, agriculture and aluminum industries.

[Translation]

My Quebec colleagues like to say that the new agreement is bad for our aluminum workers, but that is completely untrue, because the new agreement requires 70% of the aluminum in vehicles to be North American in origin. That is 70% compared to zero. My Bloc colleagues would have us believe that is a step backward, but I see it as a clear win.

We have also increased the regional value content threshold for cars from 62.5% to 75%, which is a major step forward, as car manufacturers will be required to use more of our products, including our aluminum.

Manufacturers are using more and more aluminum in cars because it is lighter, which means that cars consume less fuel. These measures are helping our industry, and our workers benefit from increasing demand. The industry itself supports the agreement. Jean Simard, president and CEO of the Aluminium Association of Canada, said that the new NAFTA is the right way to go.

Quebec's economic community supports it too. Last week, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec called for it to be ratified as soon as possible to end years of economic uncertainty.

In December, Quebec's business sector signalled its support for the agreement. The Conseil du patronat du Québec, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, the Manufacturiers et exportateurs du Québec and the Conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec told us that they want all parliamentarians in Ottawa and all stakeholders to ensure that the agreement is ratified as soon as possible. This agreement is vital for economic growth and for all Quebec regions. Therefore, there is a consensus in Quebec, except for my Bloc Québécois friends and colleagues, who are not really listening. They keep repeating that the agreement will let Mexico import aluminum from China and pass it off as North American aluminum. The opposite is true, as the agreement will prevent that.

At the industry's request, we have put a system in place to track and monitor transshipments of lower-quality aluminum from countries such as China or Russia through Mexico. This will ensure that Quebec's high-quality aluminum is not replaced by cheaper, lower-quality goods.

Once again, we stood our ground for Quebec.

• (1025)

[English]

The benefits of the new deal do not stop here. There are also progressive, modern elements in this agreement that align with the values of Quebecers.

Some hon. members of the opposition mocked the government when we wished to include chapters on labour and the environment. Both of these chapters are in the new agreement, and they are not window dressing. Actually, they are both subject to dispute resolution. This means Quebec union workers will be on a more level playing field with Mexican workers, and it means that the environment we share will not be forsaken in the name of economic growth.

[Translation]

The Canada-United States-Mexico agreement is a good agreement for Quebecers and for all Canadians. We have made real gains that will help our families. As Premier Legault said, I believe that the Bloc Québécois must defend the interests of Quebecers, because it is in the interest of Quebecers for this agreement to be ratified and adopted.

Government Orders

As always, I am reaching out to my colleagues from all parties and urging them not to delay the process, but to work together and adopt this important bill.

[English]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Bill C-4, an act to implement the agreement between Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States, is referred to committee, could the government commit to supporting a proposal at committee to have other committees, in addition to the trade committee, study the provisions of Bill C-4 and the impacts within their respective mandates in the same manner that budget bills have been considered at committee in recent years?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, the government is supportive of adopting the process that has been used in the past for budget implementation legislation. Under this process, the chair of the Standing Committee on International Trade would write to the other committees and invite them to do a subject matter review of the relevant provisions of the legislation, as long as the motion contains a fixed date and time for the start and end of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Dumping has been condemned by all industrialized countries and by the WTO. Everyone knows that the Chinese dump products, meaning that they sell their products at prices below the production costs. China is banned from exporting aluminum to Canada and the United States because of this practice. The solution is simple. China exports aluminum to Mexico, and the Mexicans turn it into auto parts, which they send to the United States to be used in auto manufacturing. That is how this agreement sanctions Chinese dumping in North America.

My question is very simple, and I hope to get a simple answer. The agreement that the government is so proud of has a 70% rule for aluminum car parts. Could that percentage include car parts manufactured in Mexico from Chinese aluminum? Is it possible that Chinese aluminum alone could be used to manufacture 70% of a car's parts?

• (1030)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, the agreement would increase the use of aluminum in cars manufactured in North America to 70%. My colleague knows that this percentage used to be zero.

We can certainly look into different mechanisms that will allow us to ensure that the aluminum comes from North America, and largely from Quebec, where we produce excellent aluminum that is also very clean. We care just as much as the Bloc Québécois about standing up for our aluminum sector, our industries and our regions.

Government Orders

We can also look at working on border controls in Mexico, where we could, for example, develop enhanced traceability mechanisms that would allow us to track aluminum.

However, this can only be possible if the agreement is signed. I urge my colleagues and friends in the Bloc to support this agreement.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have some concerns with the agreement when it comes to our sovereignty. Clause 32 states that if we begin negotiations on a trade deal with a non-market economy such as China, we need to have the permission of the U.S. If we do not get that permission, we cannot trade and we get kicked out of CUSMA.

Does Mexico also have to get permission? Do the Americans have to get permission from us? If they do not, why not? Why is that clause in there only for Canada?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, we talk about sovereignty. Canada is a sovereign country that stood up for its workers, industries and regions. This is why we got so many good things out of this agreement. This is what allowed us to protect our cultural industries. This is what allowed us to protect the workers in the aluminum sector. This is what will allow us to be able to export more to the States and to protect our long-term relationship with and access to the United States of America.

Once again, this is a very good deal. It is a good agreement. I look forward to adopting this trade agreement with the support of my colleagues from all parties in the House.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to enter the debate on such an important bill.

I find it very interesting that my colleague across the way, the government House leader, said very emphatically that this is a better agreement. There are some very serious issues that need to be addressed in relation to whether that is, in fact, the case.

In the course of debate over the last number of days, some questions from the Conservatives and other parties have been brought forward. There are serious unanswered questions about the impacts this new trade agreement will have on Canada and our role in the integrated North American market.

I will emphasize that the Conservatives believe very fundamentally in the need for free trade. It was Conservatives who pioneered the first NAFTA. I am very proud that it is part of our legacy. Canada first built a trade agreement with the United States and it was expanded in the late eighties and early nineties to include Mexico. It has left a legacy: Trade with the United States went from approximately \$290 billion U.S. in 1993 to \$1.2 trillion U.S. in 2018. That is significant, and it affects each and every one of us and each of our constituencies, as jobs are directly affected.

I would suggest that this agreement is simply a reworking of the old agreement. It is referred to as CUSMA, USMCA in the United States, but I would more accurately describe it as NAFTA 0.5 or HALFTA, as I referred to it earlier. It is a bit like a car. The first one was a massive improvement and then one buys a new car. After

30 years, there have been changes and upgrades, but it is really just like a paint job on that old car. A few features have been added, but some pretty serious things, like the power steering for example, have been removed.

One of the big issues opposition members face is that some questions remain. The Deputy Prime Minister said that as soon as the economic analysis is available, it will be available to all members. Negotiating a free trade agreement without the proper economic analysis is troublesome. It shows that the government should have been ahead of some of these very important issues.

Many Canadians have reached out to me to say that it is important we have this agreement, as devastating consequences will happen if it does not go through. However, they are not pleased with the way the negotiations took place, the uncertainty that has existed over the last number of years and, in large part, the actions that left our minds boggled, quite frankly.

The Prime Minister stood up and almost insulted the President of the United States at a press conference, and the President responded quickly with some tweets that said he heard what the Canadian Prime Minister said. That set Canada back. The Deputy Prime Minister participated in some events in Washington as well. Having been a political staffer myself, it should have been the advice of professionals that we avoid doing things that would draw the ire of those we are supposed to find agreement with. However, we saw time and time again that the actions of the members opposite in the last session of Parliament led to some significant sacrifices being made.

I do want to give credit where credit is due. The members opposite asked some officials to speak to members of the opposition this past week in a briefing to give members of the opposition the opportunity to ask questions regarding the new NAFTA agreement. It was very much appreciated, but some of the answers to the questions led to more questions that still have not been answered.

● (1035)

In fact, I find it very interesting that the members opposite brag about the environmental provisions. It is my understanding that many of the environmental provisions that are included in the HALFTA are simply the enshrining of many of the bilateral agreements and trilateral agreements that have been negotiated, from the 1993 version to today. They are simply included in the new agreement. That makes sense, but I find it ironic that the members opposite would claim credit for those all being their part of the agreement when really it has been the concerted effort of not only the government across the way, but of the previous Conservative government and the previous Liberal governments before that, to continue the evolution of trade within the integrated North American market.

One of the members in the other party asked specifically about some of the environmental promises that were made. The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and other members of the government at the time stood up and said that these are their priorities. Our incredibly talented negotiating team has done lots of good work. When asked if the team had accomplished those objectives, the answer was pretty unequivocal in saying, hardly at all. I am not sure if “hardly at all” would represent, in the words of the government House leader, that this is a better agreement, when the lead negotiator is saying that the team did not get what it wanted.

The sunset clause is another great example. When the President's son-in-law, a core adviser, came out and said that the agreement would be reviewed after six years and it would expire after 16 years, it was, in the beginning, a non-starter for the members opposite. They said it could not happen. Suddenly, there are a lot of things that they said could not happen that have happened. Jared Kushner said in an op-ed that was published on CNBC earlier this week that it was imperative that the United States retain leverage in any of its trading relationships. They got the sunset clause, and that leaves the power of this in the hands of the United States.

There are many aspects of the deal that leave significant questions. We have examples time and again where there are questions of trust. Can the government be trusted? I would like to say yes, but many of my constituents remind me on a daily basis and I am pleased to have a very strong mandate to ask some of these tough questions and say that my constituents do not trust the actions of this Liberal government, whether it be on the environment or the caps on vehicle production.

There were not caps before, but there are today. The government members say they are so high that it does not matter. That is not a very optimistic outlook on the Canadian economy.

Regarding steel and aluminum, the Liberals say the 70% is there so it is better than it was before. My understanding is that there was not a need for those caps in the past because virtually all the aluminum specifically came from North America and they could not get the same protections on aluminum that they got on steel. Those are serious questions.

Serious questions are being asked by many of my constituents who are very involved in the agricultural industry, about the supply-managed industries. It drew the ire of the American President, yet many of the stakeholders, farmers and producers in my constituency are facing significant questions about the future of the compensation related to the increased market access and various questions around that. Real questions of trust exist.

I am proud to support free trade and I am proud that our party has been the party of free trade. However, it is important that Conservatives fulfill the democratic obligation that we have to ask the tough questions of this agreement and ensure that Canadians know exactly what we are signing and the long-term effects that this agreement would have on the current status of our country and also on future generations.

• (1040)

We are talking about the economic future of our country, and it is important that these difficult questions be asked.

Government Orders

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have talked to British Columbians and people in Surrey—Newton and they are very happy we concluded this agreement. It is very important that small and medium-sized businesses and workers have stability and predictability. It is not only for people in British Columbia, though. In fact, in the member's province, his premier, Jason Kenney, says he is very happy with this.

Will the member stand in the House this afternoon and support the agreement?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, it is important to acknowledge aspects of what the member insinuated in the premise.

Yes, we need this agreement. We need an agreement. However, we have a democratic obligation to make sure that the tough questions get asked. The question of trust, which I referred to a number of times throughout my speech, is absolutely key. Canadians do not necessarily trust that the government negotiated the right deal for Canada.

A deal is better than no deal, no question. However, there are many aspects to this deal, and in large part to the actions of the government, that have led to poorer outcomes compared to what we have. There are very serious questions.

I do plan to support the agreement, but it needs to be studied properly to make sure that all the outstanding questions can be answered. For the government to suggest that members should simply rubber-stamp a deal without asking those tough questions is, quite frankly, not an accurate representation of the job that each and every one of us has to do in the House.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his fine performance.

He pointed out that the government ratified the agreement without first analyzing its economic repercussions. We carried out an analysis for aluminum, and I can tell my colleague that the fact that aluminum did not get the same protection as steel is jeopardizing a \$6-billion investment, as well as 60,000 jobs. Between 2020 and 2029, the actions of the Liberal government will cost the aluminum industry a total of \$16 billion.

I have a simple question for my colleague. Given that no economic analysis was done, is he planning to vote for or against the agreement this afternoon?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that the government House leader committed to making sure that every aspect of the bill will be studied by the relevant committees. That is a positive step forward in ensuring that we get all of these questions answered. The question my hon. colleague asked can be clearly answered as well. We need to make sure we know what we are talking about when we conclude debate on this important agreement.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to hear the hon. member compare this to buying a used car.

Has the member heard the same things in his riding as I have in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap? I have heard that when this issue came up and President Trump was talking about renegotiating NAFTA with Mexico, it was our Prime Minister who jumped in and said, without even being asked, that Canada would be happy to renegotiate NAFTA. As an analogy, I would compare that to when people go to a car lot with a car that is broken down and badly in need of repair. They know they will not be able to drive it off the lot and the salesman knows the same, so they are put in a very bad negotiation position.

What we have ended up with is a forced deal instead of a good deal.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. I closely followed the last American election, and the President made a big deal of targeting NAFTA as one of the tenets of his platform. During the election, the target was NAFTA in relation to Mexico.

However, our Prime Minister stood up and made it very clear that he was pleased to jump into negotiations, no matter what the cost. I would suggest that the cost has had a significant impact on this country.

Unless some of the serious questions are answered that I and others have raised, it may have significant long-lasting impacts on the Canadian economy, which will ultimately affect each of the constituencies represented in the House.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating the new NAFTA, the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement, known as CUSMA in this country.

The original NAFTA was signed in 1994 by the Liberals. It was negotiated by the Conservatives. It promised more jobs and secure access to the largest markets in the world. Supporters of that agreement will point out that Canada's GDP and cross-border trade have grown since that agreement was signed, but those benefits have bypassed many Canadian workers.

In that time, Canada lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs. Its textile industry was devastated, because that agreement allowed those jobs to migrate to areas such as Mexico and the southern U.S. where there were lower labour costs. Canada just lost out.

Wealth inequality in Canada grew because the GDP benefits the trade agreement engendered went largely to shareholders and corporations instead of to workers. If we look at any graph comparing

GDP with the real wages of Canadians, the wages flatline while the GDP goes up.

The NDP has always supported fair trade, but in many of our free trade agreements there are provisions and clauses that are anything but fair. One of them in the original NAFTA was the proportionality clause, which gave the United States the right to demand a constant proportion of our oil and gas shipments.

If we produced oil and gas and the Americans were getting 60% of it, we had to make sure they got 60%. Whether we doubled our output or it came down by half, the United States could keep that proportion, even if we felt it was in Canada's interests to keep it to ourselves.

Another flaw in many of our trade agreements, not just NAFTA but also the trans-Pacific partnership and with China, is the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, or ISDS, which in NAFTA was chapter 11. As many people know, that allowed corporations to sue the government in Canada if they felt it had made changes to regulations that affected their profitability. Even if Canada was doing that as a way of protecting our environment and the health of Canadians, American corporations could sue the Canadian government to reverse those changes.

One of the most egregious examples of this was mentioned by the members for Saanich—Gulf Islands and Elmwood—Transcona in their speeches. I would like to say it again.

In 1997, shortly after NAFTA was signed, the American company Ethyl Corporation was making a gasoline additive called MMT. Canada was concerned because MMT was a suspected neurotoxin, and Canada worried about the effects it had on people. Car manufacturers did not like MMT because it gummed up the on-board diagnostics in cars, so Canada banned it.

Ethyl Corporation sued Canada and won, in one of the secret NAFTA tribunals associated with chapter 11 disputes. Canada was forced not only to pay Ethyl Corporation \$19.5 million in damages but also to reverse those regulatory changes and allow the use of MMT in Canada. We then had to get on our knees and apologize to Ethyl Corporation for doing that. Here we were, trying to assert our sovereignty with respect to the health of our people and our environment.

• (1050)

Canada has been faced with many of these challenges through NAFTA, far more than the United States or Mexico. When countries go into these so-called free trade agreements, they often give up their sovereignty.

This new agreement is better in two ways. One is that chapter 11 is gone, thank goodness. The NDP is very happy about that. We wish we could have gotten rid of it in the agreements that we have in the CPTPP and our agreements with China. It is a little better in CETA, thanks to the actions of Germany, which softened those provisions, but the NDP is very happy that chapter 11 is gone and that the proportionality clause is gone.

Those are two good things that New Democrats like about this new agreement.

I will move on to the things that maybe are not so good. For one thing, it extends drug patent protection in Canada from eight years to 10 years. That adds two years on to the time that Canadians have to pay drug companies full price for the drugs they develop.

Canadian drug companies were doing fine with the eight years, and we were benefiting. After eight years, we could use generic substitutes for those drugs, and it brought our drug prices down quite a bit. We are still paying some of the highest drug prices in the world, but now we are going to have to pay those very high prices for another two years. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said it will cost Canadians \$169 million for every year that Canada has to pay drug companies because of that provision.

This agreement also gives away more of our dairy market to foreign suppliers, and that is exacerbated by the fact that we have already done that in our agreements with the European Union and the trans-Pacific partnership countries. We have now opened up our dairy market by 10%. This agreement is for 3.6%.

Regarding the dairy products we are getting from the U.S., I hear concerns from my constituents that those dairy producers are allowed to use bovine growth hormone, something that boosts milk production in cows, but has unknown effects on humans and some serious effects on the health of the cows themselves. Therefore, people are very concerned that we are degrading the products that we are now forced to use.

I recently talked with a dairy producer in British Columbia. His company produces milk protein products, and this is another example of giving away our sovereignty. The United States now has the ability not only to control how much of our products such as those go to the United States, but also to control how much we export anywhere in the world. The United States has a say over that.

I want to cover a couple of points on trade that are very concerning in my riding but are not covered in this deal. One is the softwood lumber dispute, which is not covered at all. I am very happy to hear that the U.S. commerce department has decided to lower the illegal tariffs that we have been suffering through recently. We are anxiously awaiting the end to that almost unending dispute.

Another is with the wine producers in my riding, in the Okanagan Valley, which produces the finest wine in Canada. Other countries, the United States and Australia, are concerned because our wine producers do not have to pay an excise tax to the federal government if they produce wine from Canadian grapes.

That has really driven the growth in our wine industry. It has been a huge benefit. Now we are being battled on the international trade market, especially because of the automatic escalator in that

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excise tax. The finance minister tells me they are not really willing to negotiate.

• (1055)

The NDP looks forward to debating this in committee. We want to see if this agreement is a better deal than the old NAFTA. That is the big question.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to discuss one part of the deal.

The member wanted to know if this was a better deal than the old NAFTA. I want to talk about the automotive sector and what the U.S. first initiated in the deal.

It wanted 50% U.S. content on any vehicles. It also wanted a 25% tariff on vehicles that were exported to the United States. Under no circumstances did our government and the negotiating team cave in to this. We wanted to ensure that these tariffs were not imposed on the automotive sector, and I have a Toyota motor manufacturing company in my riding, as it is one of our biggest sectors. It employs 500,000 people. Therefore, we wanted to ensure we had a good deal for them. There also was a wage increase to \$16.

Does the member think this is a good deal for the automotive sector?

• (1100)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, it comes to the question of whether this is a better deal than the one we had.

The Canadian auto sector has really suffered lately. I am not an expert in the auto sector, but we need fair trade agreements that really protect Canadian jobs. The member mentioned the wage increase. That may well be another example of where this agreement is better than the old agreement, if those wage provisions slow down the movement of Canadian jobs to Mexico and the United States. We want to see the details.

The NDP really would like to see a new transparent process of debating trade agreements before we go into negotiations. We want the government to say that this is what it wants, that these are its priorities, that it wants to do this for the auto sector, etc.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have asked few members this question. One of my friends in the Green Party has sent me a link about it and has suggested I read it, and I will. My views having not yet changed, I want to ask my colleague about investor-state provisions.

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It seems to me to be a matter of common sense. If a Canadian company is operating in a jurisdiction like Mexico and we have an agreement that should give that company certain rights, then that company should be able to go to some kind of independent arbitration mechanism, not just the courts of that country, to ensure that its rights, which are supposed to be guaranteed under the agreement, are respected. This means the same could happen in Canada. A company from a partner country can seek a remedy if it feels its rights under the agreement have not been respected. Surely that is reasonable. Surely that is the kind of framework we would expect in any rule-of-law country.

It is interesting to hear my NDP colleagues, particularly, objecting to this kind of remedy, when I think they would accept, in principle, that we should have domestic courts that companies can take governments to if they feel the law or their rights have not been respected.

I am curious to hear the member's thoughts on what the difference is.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, if that is the fair way, then why are Canadian companies not allowed to take the government to court when environmental or health laws are passed which affect them? They do not have that avenue available to them. There might be egregious examples in other countries, but I do not think Canada would treat another corporation completely unfairly.

These are not the situations where we have been taken to court under chapter 11. It is companies that feel they have an avenue open to them, where they can get some money out of the Canadian government because it has changed the rules which may affect their profitability.

The point is that Canadian companies do not have those avenues available within Canada, so why should we give those avenues to foreign countries?

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I want to say something briefly about the question and comment period. Members must understand that this period is limited to five minutes and that there are four recognized parties in the House. Therefore, for each five-minute period, we will try to fit in at least three interventions. For that reason, every member who speaks during questions and comments must keep their remarks short, so that all members who wish to participate get enough time. I thank hon. members for their co-operation.

The 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 is rising on a point of order.

• (1105)

[*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, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, when no member rises to speak on the motion for the 2nd reading stage of Bill C-4, An Act to implement the Agreement between Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States, or at 1:59 p.m., whichever comes first, every question necessary to dispose of the said stage of the said bill shall be deemed put, and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until immediately after Oral Questions this day.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting, but for unanimous consent, typically it is important to ask every member in advance. Given that it would only be my objection, I just want it on the record that I will go along with this, but I would have preferred to have been consulted in advance.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The House gives its unanimous consent for the motion to be moved.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion moved by my colleague from Winnipeg North means that time is running out on this debate, but I want to point out how important free trade is to the Conservatives.

We are the free trade party. We want Canada to succeed on the world stage through free trade. We want to have a successful trade relationship with the United States and Mexico, but we want that to be a winning situation for Canadians.

We have some major concerns about this agreement, which some people have rightly described as HALFTA or the new NAFTA. Unfortunately, it is not a NAFTA that everyone is satisfied with. We have some very serious questions about it.

As I just mentioned, we want to have successful trade relationships with other countries, particularly the United States. That is why, during the previous Parliament, our political leaders, the Hon. Rona Ambrose and the hon. leader of the official opposition and member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, went to Washington to plead the case of trade between Canada and the United States.

Some of our members shared that responsibility. The members for Durham, Oshawa and Brantford—Brant also went to Washington to argue the case for trade between our two countries. We want that relationship to succeed, but we have some concerns. One of them is softwood lumber. There is nothing in the agreement to resolve the softwood lumber issue.

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How is it that this agreement includes absolutely nothing about the Buy American Act? We can see why the Americans would want to protect their Buy American Act, which favours American companies to meet the needs of American consumers. However, we also know that in a free trade agreement negotiation, that legislation has to at least be on the table. We have to recognize that this was not the case.

We also have concerns about what happened with aluminum, and I will have the opportunity to come back to that a little later in my speech.

[*English*]

We are the free trade party of Canada, and we are very proud of that. This situation got its roots in 1983, during the leadership campaign of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada.

Let me remind members that in 1983, the late Hon. John Crosbie, a guy from Newfoundland, as everybody knows so well, was a very strong when he talked about some things. He was the first politician in the House of Commons to raise the issue of a free trade agreement with America during the leadership race. It was in the interests of our country. However, he was alone at that time. Who was the first opponent of the free trade agreement with America? It was the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. However, Mr. Mulroney was elected as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1983, elected as prime minister in 1984 and was re-elected in 1988 because of the free trade agreement we had with the Americans.

I want to recall this history because sometimes we have to move forward. Even if we oppose something, things move on. When we realize that it is good, we have to walk on the paint, as we used to say in French. Former prime minister Brian Mulroney did that for the future and wealth of the country, with such success.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Five million jobs have been created in Canada since we concluded the free trade agreement with the Americans in 1988. In fact, Canadians showed their support for that agreement in the 1988 election. That election was practically a referendum. We will recall that other parties, like the current governing party, were fiercely opposed, but fortunately they too have come around. They now agree with free trade. That initial agreement was then extended to Mexico, our European partners and our Asian partners.

[*English*]

Let me pay all my respect to the hon. member for Abbotsford, who was my seatmate when I arrived in the House four years ago. I had the privilege of chatting with him many times. Yes, I listened to every speaker at the time, but I learned so much from my chats with my colleague from Abbotsford. More than that, the member for Abbotsford was the longest-serving international trade minister in Canadian history, and he achieved so much: agreements with European and Pacific partners.

Today, Canada is the country of free trade.

[*Translation*]

Canada has trade agreements with nearly 50 countries. We are the country of free trade, and we should be proud of that. That is why we still have concerns about NAFTA 0.5, which we are now debating.

When the negotiations began, the current government wanted to be the good guys, as they say, and purer than pure. It said that it was going to table a progressive agenda and put forward some concerns. I remember quite well that the hon. member for Durham asked the government to look after Canadians' jobs before talking about its progressive agenda. Those holier-than-thou people were not shy about calling us names and saying that we were against women, first nations, the LGBT community and many others, when all we wanted to do was talk about jobs.

What happened to that famous progressive agenda when they got to the table? The Liberals set it aside to talk about jobs. It was about time. When it came time to negotiate with real partners, these self-righteous people realized that we Conservatives were right.

Unfortunately, we have concerns about the forestry industry, among others. There has been no progress on this issue. It has literally been set aside.

We also have concerns about the fact that the Buy American Act is still in effect. The chair of the ways and means committee of the U.S. House of Representatives said that the current Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister had conceded to just about every point for one reason: enforceability. Our American partner said that. The U.S. is very happy for Canada to have capitulated, which does not bode well for the future.

It is important to acknowledge that the big loser in these negotiations is the aluminum industry. Even though the people in the aluminum industry and the unions are saying that the agreement must be signed and that we agree on that, we must recognize that the people most affected by this agreement are aluminum workers.

I am very proud of the work accomplished by my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord. Since day one, he has been defending the workers and citizens of his riding tooth and nail. We are here to represent the people in our ridings. I am very proud to represent the people of Louis—Saint-Laurent. They are not directly and negatively affected by the agreement. The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord's riding accounts for 60% of Canada's aluminum production. When his riding is the one most affected by the agreement, he steps up and works for his constituents. I am very proud of that.

According to today's issue of *Le Quotidien*, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord is satisfied with the discussions he initiated on the free trade file. He said that he discussed matters with the government and took advantage of pre-budget consultations to question various witnesses about aluminum. He detected enthusiasm for our party's proposals, which was good and showed that our approach is working.

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Our approach, the brainchild of the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, is to distinguish Canada's aluminum, which is clean, from aluminum produced abroad and shipped to Mexico before arriving here as auto parts, for example. We are very proud of our colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for his hard work and for proudly and passionately standing up for the people of his riding.

Conservatives are in favour of free trade. We want a positive trade partnership for Canadian industries. Overall, Canada did well here, but we would have liked to see more progress with respect to the Buy American Act, softwood lumber and aluminum.

• (1115)

[*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, over the last couple of years we have seen labour groups, businesses, non-profits, members of Parliament and political participants of all political parties come together and participate in a very great debate in order to ensure that all the different industries were represented in this final product, the bill we have before us today. The amount of support we have received is virtually endless.

Would my friend not agree that Canadians as a whole have been very much informed over the last couple of years as to how important this agreement, or an agreement, is between Canada, the United States and Mexico?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we worked for that deal. We worked for the best in these negotiations. Our leaders at the time, the Hon. Rona Ambrose, who was leader of the official opposition, paid visits to our partners in Washington, as did the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. It was the same thing with our colleagues for Brantford—Brant, Oshawa and Durham, who went to Washington to work for Canadians, Canadian businesses and Canadian workers. We did our homework for the goodwill of this country.

Unfortunately, the government failed to recognize what we had done and, more than that, failed to give us documents to study to make our homework better. Also, the government did not consult us during the negotiations. This is why we are very concerned with some issues. I talked about softwood and the Buy American Act, and I also want to talk about dairy farmers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech, even though it was not entirely accurate.

First, aluminum workers' unions never asked us to support the agreement. Quite the opposite.

Second, it is important to note that a delegation from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean came here but, unfortunately, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord did not participate in the press conference we held with them.

During yesterday's meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord asked a question that suggested the \$6 billion in spinoffs identified in the study might be illusory.

I have a simple question for my colleague. Nobody really knows where the Conservatives stand now. Do they think aluminum is worth fighting for or not?

• (1120)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my colleague that the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord participated in the meetings when stakeholders from Chicoutimi and the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region came to Ottawa. He met with them and always works with them. He is in direct and constant contact with them. It is very important to have that type of approach.

I will repeat what I said earlier. I am very proud to see the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord rise in the House and do his job on behalf of his constituents every day. That is why we are here.

We know that Quebec's premier, among others, has said that it is a good agreement and that we must move forward with it. We also know that the aluminum industry believes that we must move forward with this agreement. We know all that, but we have seen that the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord works every day on behalf of his constituents and we are very proud of that.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent and say that our Quebec caucus on this side has done a wonderful job on aluminum. It is the greenest aluminum in the world and it should be recognized as part of this trade agreement, but it is not. We are really worried on this side of the House that China is going to bring aluminum in through Mexico and then up, aluminum that is not as clean as Canada's Quebec aluminum. I would like the hon. member to talk about that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, we are now talking about green aluminum. We are now talking about the difference in our aluminum, which is one of the best in the world, if not the best. That is especially the case in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, because as members know, 60% of Canadian aluminum production is in the riding of the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

This is why we made the distinction between Canadian green aluminum and the others. This is why, thanks to the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and supported by the Quebec caucus and the Conservative caucus, we raised this issue and moved forward with it, as has been recognized by the international trade minister and the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today's debate is of course on the bill to implement the Canada-United States-Mexico free trade agreement, or CUSMA.

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Unfortunately, we found that Quebec was pretty much excluded from the discussions. Quebec's priorities were largely excluded. That is why there is a very good chance we will be forced to vote against CUSMA in its current form.

Some of the other parties are making up all kinds of stories about the Bloc Québécois. They want everyone to believe that we oppose free trade agreements, we are against the economy and we want to withdraw into a shell. All the prejudices and all the spin being spewed about us are completely false.

To illustrate that, I want to talk about two important figures in Quebec's independence movement. No one can deny the influence they have had on Quebec and, in a way, on the rest of Canada. I am talking about Jacques Parizeau and Bernard Landry.

Jacques Parizeau was the finance minister in René Lévesque's government, and was also premier of Quebec. He was a great economist who trained at the London School of Economics and Political Science, an internationally renowned school.

As for Bernard Landry, he was also a finance minister in Quebec and premier of Quebec.

They were two important champions of free trade, including the first free trade agreement, the first NAFTA, signed with the United States and Mexico.

They were among its main proponents. Mr. Landry toured Quebec to talk about how important it is for small nations to do business with other foreign countries and to open new markets.

We do not want to stay locked up inside Canada. We do not want to limit ourselves to doing business with Ontario. I am more than happy to do business with Ontario, the Maritimes and the other provinces, but why should we limit ourselves to this country, which has a somewhat limited population? Why not send our goods, our knowledge and our skills to other places and benefit from what others have to offer us?

We have absolutely nothing against that. On the contrary, it is a real benefit for Quebec to be able to take advantage of those different markets. However, there are some things that we care about. There are some things that we want to maintain. To the extent possible, we want to maintain control over our agriculture because we like being fed by local farmers who produce food that meets the highest health standards. Since we never know what might happen abroad, it would be good to be able to continue feeding ourselves.

The other thing we care about is culture. Quebec is America's Gaulish village. That is something we hear a lot. I think it is important for us to keep our culture strong in Quebec and that we ensure that agreements continue to promote and protect that culture.

This agreement does contain at least some worthwhile aspects with regard to culture. Some progress has been made and we are pleased about that.

Labour is also an important issue to us. A free trade agreement must contain attractive working conditions for workers in each of the countries, whenever possible. It is not about comparing apples and oranges. Attractive working conditions are necessary to ensure that people in other countries are not exploited and to ensure that

we do not lose any jobs here. Otherwise, the agreement leads to exploitation in other countries.

I think we must consider these issues when we sign agreements. Once again, I think some progress was made. The agreement is not all bad, but unfortunately there are a number of aspects that bother us. I will explain.

One of the things that bothers us is the Liberals' record when it comes to Quebec. Free trade agreements are useful, but free trade agreements are generally about gaining something. Concessions are made, there is some give and take, and we end up with a deal that benefits all parties. The problem in this case is that the Liberal government tends to sacrifice Quebec when it signs free trade agreements.

• (1125)

The gut reaction always seems to be to sacrifice Quebec a bit more and listen to Quebec a bit less than the provinces or the rest of Canada in its entirety. Finally, the government works for Canada and not Quebec. That is why we want to form an independent country. Then we could negotiate our own agreements, which would benefit us and respect our conditions. We would stop getting the short end of the stick, as is often the case with Canada.

Let's go back in time a bit and look at the Liberals' record of listening to Quebec. They are currently making up all sorts of things and saying that they listened to Quebec. If we go back less than 100 years, to the 1940s, the Liberals promised Quebeckers during the Second World War that there would be no conscription. Indeed, Quebeckers did not forget the conscription imposed by the Conservatives under Borden. However, once in power, the Liberals organized a neat little referendum to be able to go back on their promise and impose conscription on Quebeckers. This is just one example of many.

A little later, there were expropriations in Mirabel for the construction of the airport. Then, in Montreal, there were expropriations in the entire Faubourg à m'lasse neighbourhood, where my grandfather grew up, to build the infamous Radio-Canada tower. This was a tragic event in the lives of a lot of Quebec families. Ottawa, claiming to know what was good for them, told them their homes and neighbourhoods would be torn down. These families lost their livelihood, but the government washed its hands of it. I think it is horrible what the Liberals, who were in power at the time, did. It shows their inability to listen and their insensitivity to Quebec.

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I will go back in time again, this time to the 1970s, to the time of the War Measures Act. Yes, some people were causing trouble and doing things that perhaps should have been avoided. Let's agree, however, that the enactment of the War Measures Act was a complete overreaction on the part of the Liberal government. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police used the opportunity to enter the offices of the Parti Québécois and steal its lists. More than 400 people were put in prison. It was a national disgrace because, more than anything else, it was an operation that was designed to humiliate Quebec.

Let's now turn to the 1980 referendum. Once again, the Liberals made great promises. Trudeau senior, whose son is now Prime Minister, told us in the 1980 referendum that voting no meant saying yes to change and that it would make Quebec happier. In the end, he promised us all sorts of things and talked about honour and enthusiasm, a bit like Brian Mulroney did a few years later.

After all these fine promises, a constitution was signed by every province except Quebec. This led to the infamous "night of the long knives", when the others decided to do without Quebec's support.

There was also the sponsorship scandal, which happened under the Liberals as well.

I remember that throughout their last term, the Liberals vowed over and over to protect supply management. However, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement opened a breach in supply management. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership opened another breach in supply management. The Canada-United States-Mexico free trade agreement is opening yet another breach in supply management.

In particular, I remember a by-election campaign in Lac-Saint-Jean in 2018. The Bloc ran an excellent candidate, Marc Maltais. The Prime Minister of Canada went to Lac-Saint-Jean to assure farmers that supply management would not be touched. However, a few weeks after the election, a breach was created in supply management. The people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean remembered, because in the 2019 election, they voted in a Bloc member.

That is not the end of the problem. This much-touted agreement gives no consideration to forestry, which is important in Quebec. It has not been included in the agreement. More recently, we have learned that aluminum was being completely abandoned.

It is a real shame that I do not have more time to speak, because I would have had a lot more to say.

The important thing to note is that the Liberals keep saying ad nauseam that 70% of auto parts will have to be made of North American aluminum. That is completely not true. No, 70% is no better than zero, because 70 times zero is zero. The 70% is for manufactured parts, but the aluminum will not necessarily come from here. It could come from China and be processed in Mexico.

At the end of the day, we are losing out and it is really frustrating.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side, the Liberals will always defend our cultural sovereignty. We have always defended and stood up for cultural communities.

I remember one instance in the previous Parliament when the international trade committee travelled to the United States. A former member of Parliament, Linda Lapointe, was on that committee. She stood up for cultural exemptions when the United States was not that concerned. We made sure that this was protected.

Having this clause and protecting this clause certainly helps Quebec's cultural sovereignty, helps cultural sovereignty across Canada and protects jobs. Would the hon. member agree?

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague's question, I do think it was important to modernize the agreement and include the cultural exemption. We consider that to be a positive.

However, we are not looking at this agreement through rose-coloured glasses. When the time comes to make a decision, we do not look at one sentence or two lines only, but rather at the entire agreement. We have made proposals to the government to improve the agreement and make it acceptable to the Bloc Québécois and to Quebecers. Unfortunately, it is not acceptable in its current form.

Our hope is that, when this is all over, we will have an agreement that will hold up and that we can support.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with much of what my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères said in his speech around softwood lumber and the protection of aluminum in Canada. I want to mention the aluminum in Kitimat out in western Canada as well.

The member spoke about the sovereignty of provinces. It is very interesting that he would mention he is annoyed with the federal government about that. In Alberta, we are somewhat like that as well. What is really interesting to me is that day after day, his leader stands up and rails against the Teck Resources mine we are trying to get going in Alberta.

Is that stepping out of the lane? If he is so concerned about Quebec sovereignty, maybe he should stay out of Alberta sovereignty.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I do not think my colleague's question is particularly relevant to the topic we are currently debating, namely the free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico.

However, what bothers us about the Teck Frontier project is that it is using Quebec taxpayers' money to fund oil companies in the rest of Canada, at a time when we are striving to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and to do things better. In our view, it is completely counterproductive.

Moreover, as I see it, the fight against climate change has no borders and everyone has to work together. We have a duty to call out actions that harm the planet when we see them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to do my best to ask my Bloc Québécois colleague this question in French, although it is hard for me.

Like the Green Party, the Bloc Québécois is speaking out against Teck's oil sands project. However, I have many concerns about the agreement with China, in terms of investment protection. It contains the same thing as chapter 11 of NAFTA, which has been removed from the new NAFTA.

I am worried because we accepted the same type of agreement with China under the former Harper government and because Teck Resources has a lot of investments from China.

[*English*]

I am worried if we say no to Teck, we could have an investor challenge from China against Canada because of the close links between Teck Resources and the People's Republic of China.

[*Translation*]

My question is, do we have to work towards eliminating all investment agreements?

I would like to know my colleague's opinion.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her question and for asking it in French. Her French is excellent these days.

In answer to her question, I would point out that we had many concerns and reservations about some aspects of NAFTA chapter 11, which allowed companies to sue governments when laws or regulations did not suit them.

I think it is very important to be vigilant, knowing that such provisions could pop up in other trade agreements. We should try to eliminate them as much as possible, because they undermine state sovereignty and, at the end of the day, it should be the people who decide, not businesses.

The fact that this could indeed apply to Teck's Frontier project really worries me.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and privilege to stand up today in the House of Commons and talk about the new NAFTA or the HALFTA, as we like to call it on this side of the House.

Before I get into that, I would like to take the opportunity to thank my friends, relatives and volunteers who helped me get elected. As with all members who come to this place, we do not get here without a vast network of people back home. I want to thank all of those people. It would take too long to name all of them here. I had over 250 volunteers from across northern Alberta. Northern Alberta is a beautiful place. I like to call it the promised land. I had people in every community ready to carry the Conservative banner, help put up lawn signs, knock on doors and all those things.

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I want to reference a couple of people who really went above and beyond. Bethany VanderDeen knocked on several thousand doors for me in the election. I want to thank her for all her hard work. My sister is my financial agent, which causes her a lot of stress. I want to thank her as well. My campaign manager, Josh, went above and beyond whenever he was called upon to work. I want to thank him for that.

The new NAFTA, CUSMA, or HALFTA, as we like to call it, is an agreement we called on the government to do. We have been advocating for a free trade deal with the United States. In fact, it was the Conservatives in previous parliaments that brought NAFTA to the world, and we are proud of that record.

We asked for a good deal again when Donald Trump said he was going to renegotiate NAFTA. I do not think he considered Canada was the problem with NAFTA, so it was not necessarily wise for our Prime Minister to volunteer to renegotiate our portion of it. When the Liberals jumped into that, we asked them to come up with a better deal than the current NAFTA and one we would be happy with, but we wanted them to bring some stability to the business markets and a deal we could all be proud of. However, by every measure in the new NAFTA, the HALFTA, we have either stayed the same or gone backward. We have lost some sovereignty in a number of areas. We have lost our ability to produce or export in other areas, so we are not enthusiastic about this current free trade deal, but we will be supporting it.

It is very interesting how things sometimes get taken out of context. There is context to a lot of these things, such as when we talk about supply management, for example. There has been a lot of discussion around supply management when it comes to this trade deal. There has been a reduction in our ability to export. There has been a threat to some of the productivity that can happen here in Canada. I believe the Liberal government has paid out our dairy farmers across Canada recently for losses that have been incurred because of this trade deal.

When we talk about that, often the Liberals say they support supply management, yet a free trade deal is just one aspect of supporting supply management. The other aspects would be through some of the other things they have done. They have changed the Canada food guide, which has not helped supply management at all in Canada. They have changed the front-of-package labelling laws in this country, which is very detrimental to our supply management. It is very interesting that in the trade deal they say they are supportive of supply management and then in other parts they do not seem to understand what the impacts are.

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Also, in many cases in this trade deal we would be competing with our major competitors, whether it is with respect to agricultural, forestry or energy products. We have watched the government put in place a free trade deal that would have us compete in the same marketplace as the rest of the North American market. At the same time, it put in big impediments and essentially shackled us here in Canada when trying to compete with our competitor to the south.

● (1140)

One of the things I want to talk about as well is the carbon tax. We see a lot of defence around aluminum right now in the House of Commons. I want to reference western aluminum in Kitimat, northern B.C. I have been there before, it is a beautiful place. One of the things that comes along with defending aluminum is considering the impacts of the carbon tax. No jurisdiction in the rest of North America has the same carbon tax on aluminum production, so that puts us back as well. It is very interesting how we will say one thing in the context of defending a free trade deal, and yet in other areas we do not necessarily see the government having the same defence.

We see the same thing happen in Alberta with the oil patch investment. We hear that the Liberals are going to expand markets for Canadian products, and then they are going to just kneecap one particular industry in Canada and not allow it to get any access to other markets around the world. What I am trying to point out here is that the logic is used in one direction on a certain bill and then in another direction on another issue. On CUSMA or NAFTA or HALFTA, they are saying we need to gain market access and we need to improve our trading relationship and all these things, and we need to do this so we can get Canadian industries competitive around the world. The next time they are saying that we have to keep the oil in the ground, we have to phase out the oil patch. The logic of that does not jive.

The other thing that is concerning to me are the caps on automotive production. I have made no secret of the fact that I have been an automotive mechanic for most of my life. I worked at a Chrysler dealer. I am very passionate about automobiles, and my family heritage has been with Chrysler, so I follow the sales trends and that kind of stuff on a regular basis. I am proud of the Canadian heritage that we have of building some of the most amazing automobiles on the planet. It is frustrating to me to see that Canada might be taken out of the cutting edge of building automobiles in Canada because of the caps that have been imposed. Everyone tells me not to worry about it because the caps are very high compared to where we are right now, so it will not be a big problem. We are currently talking about the caps being high, but 16 years from now we could be dealing with a clause that says we have to renegotiate this. At that point, we might be very close to that cap, and at that time we might already have seen significant investment that could have been made in Canadian auto manufacturing being made south of the border because the industry there is not limited by a cap.

I am concerned about that cap because of patriotic Canadian pride. I would like to see us building the best automobiles in the world, and we have in the past. One of the great ones that I am very proud of right now is the Chrysler Pacifica, which is built here in Canada and is a beautiful vehicle. I am not sure if it is the only ve-

hicle in the world that has this, but it comes with a built-in vacuum cleaner. As a guy with little kids, that is the most amazing idea ever in a minivan. The Cheerios and the little Goldfish can get everywhere, and a built-in vacuum cleaner is what everyone needs in a minivan, I will say that for sure, especially with four kids. That cap is one of the major concerns.

There is also the national sovereignty piece. If we are going to enter into a trade deal with particular countries around the world, we would have to get the Americans to sign off on that trade deal before we enter it. We are a sovereign nation. The Bloc Québécois members always stand up and say that as well about Quebec and I share that sentiment. We are a sovereign nation and we ought to be able to pursue trade deals with anyone in the world, and not to hive that off as well.

With that, we will be supporting bringing this bill to committee. We look forward to hearing what stakeholders around the country have to say on this bill, and we will move forward from there.

● (1145)

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 share the passion of the automobile industry with my colleague. I am more of a Ford guy. I like the Rangers and the Mustangs. I give Chrysler full credit on the K-car and the Caravan. My family history also is very much tied to the automobile industry.

Trade agreements go back to the sixties with the Auto Pact. It was led by the automotive industry in many ways. If we look at the trade agreements since the sixties, we see exceptional strength coming from Canada on the automobile side. I believe this agreement is going to add further value and strength overall to an industry that is not only important to myself and the member opposite, but to all Canadians.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, it sounds to me like the member is more a fan of Lee Iacocca, because the Mustang, the K-car and the minivan were all his ideas. It is great to share a common interest with the member.

I agree that Canada has been a leader, particularly with the North American Big Three, but we also see many of the import brands now building factories here in Canada. I would like to see that continue.

The trouble that we are going to see, if I can be a prophet looking into the future, is that as we approach that cap, that is when we are going to see that investment. If people are going to build an expansion on a plant, everyone is going to be looking at each other and playing a game of chicken. As they approach that cap, they might say we are not sure if they are coming online with their plant first or we are coming online with a plant first, so they will not build in Canada. They will build somewhere else to prevent them from being the company that goes over the cap.

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• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am a sovereigntist, and in the past several days of debate on free trade, I have been hearing many concerns expressed about Canadian sovereignty on trade issues. My colleague talked about it again earlier.

Obviously, when it comes to defending Canadian sovereignty in trade agreements, there is always something called state strategic industries. Energy and aluminum are two examples. Trump used the national security clause, for instance. There needs to be a clear definition of what is sacred and inviolable for the security and prosperity of a typical country. Take, for example, industries like the high-value-added, high-tech aerospace sector.

Is my colleague not concerned about the government's *laissez-faire* approach to dealing with Washington and other powerful nations in these trade agreements? Is he not concerned about how easily the government gives in and sacrifices certain key sectors?

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concerns around Canadian sovereignty and national interest projects. We need to look at how to compete as a country on the world stage.

I would also reference supply management. Often when dairy farmers visit me, one of the things they say is if they do not have supply management, we will not have milk production in Canada, and that would be a national security issue. If we were ever at war, we would not have milk production.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, the Liberals promised an entire chapter on gender equality in this trade deal. According to sources, the renegotiated deal originally included provisions for improving conditions for working women, including provisions around workplace harassment, pay equity and gender equality.

However, these provisions disappeared in the scrubbing process. Do the member and his Conservative colleagues wonder what happened to these provisions? Will he be standing up and speaking out about the need for provisions that improve conditions for women in the workplace?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, yes, we called for this deal to be a better deal than the previous deal had been. We said that we needed to have a deal and were adamant about the fact that a deal needed to be signed. What was very interesting though is that as negotiations went along, Canada was more and more cut out of the negotiations and at the 11th hour signed the deal, without being able to see what was in it.

I have stood in this place and advocated for good labour laws around the world to ensure that human trafficking does not happen, and I am happy to stand up to defend the labour laws of Canada to ensure we have comparable labour laws across North America.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in the debate today with mixed feelings. I certainly recognize the need for ratification of this treaty, but I also recognize the need to do the due diligence required to look at a treaty that, by all measures, can be considered as deficient.

We in the official opposition have made clear since the beginning of this debate that Canadian business and industry desperately need the certainty and predictability that ratification of the new NAFTA will provide. Granted, much of the certainty and predictability is that this deficient, retrograde agreement has negative overtones in many ways and many places and it will touch many corners of Canadian society. It will be seen in the dairy and poultry industry, in the aluminum sector and in a number of areas that were not even discussed in the negotiations over the past couple of years by the Liberals and their negotiators, areas such as the softwood lumber problems and of course the American challenges to free trade with regard to the buy America process. These were not even addressed by Canadian negotiators as they were forced to accept an agreement that contains considerably less than the original NAFTA.

I would like to recall the debate that took place in 1988, not in this new House but in the original House of Commons just across the way, when Liberal Party members, led then by John Turner, were vociferously in opposition to the original NAFTA proposal brought in this House by then prime minister Brian Mulroney. John Turner said that he would tear it up if he became prime minister.

The New Democratic Party, in opposition at the time under Ed Broadbent, was also very strongly opposed to the agreement, as it is today, saying that Canada would effectively become the 51st American state of the United States if it was implemented. I regret I have no historic quotes from the Bloc Québécois, because at that time Lucien Bouchard sat in the cabinet of the Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney. The Bloc was still at that point only a spark in the back of Mr. Bouchard's mind.

Looking back at 1988 and the final ratification in 1993, I think we can agree that this new NAFTA is nothing like its predecessor, the original North American Free Trade Agreement.

My colleagues have reminded the House on all sides since the beginning of this debate about the imperfect negotiating process that the Liberals pursued, such as sitting at the table, leaving the table, procrastinating, consulting and then rushing back to the table to be the third party and given a "take it or leave it" trade agreement. I remind the House that Canada's Conservatives support today, and have always supported, free trade with the United States. After all, as I have reminded the House, NAFTA was a Conservative legacy.

Members will recall that when this began, the Prime Minister promised his trade negotiators would come back with a deal better than Canada had before. He spoke of a win-win-win outcome for this negotiation. We know it was certainly a huge win for the United States and a big win for Mexico, but this is definitely not anything like a win for Canada.

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• (1155)

When the deficiencies of this backsliding new NAFTA agreement were first presented to Canadians, we in the official opposition asked for, and were assured by the Liberals that they would provide us with, impact analyses of the agreement on the various sectors in Canada with which we saw reason for great concern.

Anyone who ever served in government knows that every department touched by this new agreement, this new treaty, has done a cost-benefit analysis. They have measured the impact in the short term and the long term.

The Liberals promised an analysis statement, and we are still waiting. We hope that the government, which proclaims its commitment to transparency, accountability and evidence-based decisions, will provide this impact data in the days ahead when this debate and study go to committee.

We know that in committee we will get some impact statement, if not from the professional and sectoral associations that desperately want certainty and predictability, even in a negative context. This will address the concerns and fears of the workers, the people and the communities that are about to be impacted by the negatives that this agreement would impose on them.

Of the many deficiencies in this agreement, I mentioned a few at the outset. My colleagues have looked across the spectrum of shortcomings, and I would like to address one that is of great concern to many Canadians. That is the impact on Canada's aluminum sector.

Members will recall that at the beginning of December, when details of the agreement were revealed, we found to our dismay that the deal included a last-minute change to the requirement calling for 70% of the steel and aluminum used in auto production to be purchased in North America.

One of the rules for the steel sector was that the steel must be melted and poured in North America. There was no provision for aluminum. The initial response from the president of the Aluminum Association of Canada has changed in the last few weeks. When Jean Simard discovered the fact that there was diminished protection for Canadian aluminum, he said, "They fought, Canada fought, but they lost....At the very end Mexico said, 'This is my red line. That's enough.'"

That is the reality, although the Aluminum Association today, again desperate for certainty and desperate to cut its losses, said that yes indeed, it is a good deal, a necessary deal.

I would like to sympathize with those in the sector. In the Côte-Nord, the Lac-Saint-Jean area, Sept-Îles, Alma, Bécancour, Baie-Comeau, Deschambault, Laterrière, Grand-Baie, Arvida, Shawinigan Falls and, of course, on the west coast, in Kitimat, I would like to sympathize with the workers and unions that now see this 70% rule.

The Liberals think this is a great new improvement. They boasted that there was no guarantee for the Canadian aluminum sector in the original NAFTA, and they were right. There was no need for the rule in 1988, in 1993 or until the end of the last century, because until the end of the last century, Canada was a very competitive producer of aluminum. China was an up-and-coming, but still limit-

ed, threat to the Canadian market and certainly to the North American market. Under NAFTA, under the Auto Pact, Canada effectively had close to 100% of the aluminum content in the auto production industry.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

I understand the negative impact this is having on this major sector of the Quebec economy and the Canadian economy as a whole. Of course, Canadian aluminum is the cleanest.

[*English*]

It is the cleanest around the world.

In conclusion, we will support the bill, but we support it with heavy hearts.

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, over the last couple of years I have heard Conservatives say that we should never have even attempted to reopen the trade agreement. I have heard Conservative MPs say that we need to be able to modernize the trade agreement. The Conservatives have challenged the government, saying that to sign any deal would be good.

Over the last couple of years, we have had stakeholders of all forms, including premiers, non-profit sectors, labour organizations and businesses, come together to create a final product today. This agreement is better than what was there in the past. It provides for things such as culture and the environment and makes guarantees for the aluminum industry. These things were not there in the same fashion.

I am wondering if the member sees all of those as positive. Is there anything specific in the agreement that he believes should not be in the agreement?

• (1205)

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and the opportunity he has given me to conclude a couple of thoughts with regard to the deficiency in this agreement, as it applies to the aluminum sector.

We see in this agreement that Canada is protected. There is the 70% rule. However, until recently Mexico did not have an aluminum sector. It did not produce aluminum. China is now by far the largest producer of aluminum in the world. China produces 10 times the Canadian metric tonnage of aluminum every year.

As its economy has slowed in recent years, China has been dumping that aluminum around the world. Much of it has gone to Mexico, where it is then transformed magically into a Mexican product, which is being further dumped in Thailand, Vietnam and India. This will certainly have an impact on the Canadian aluminum sector in the automotive industry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for his speech. That is the first time that I have heard a well-reasoned speech in the House from anyone other than a Bloc Québécois member.

I would simply like to clarify a small point. As you very rightly pointed out, when NAFTA was originally signed, Canada was the major player in the aluminum industry. Now Mexico produces 15 times more aluminum than Canada. I would like to make a minor distinction. You said that all workers would be affected—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that he must address his questions to the Chair and not to a specific member.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I got carried away in my enthusiasm.

I would like to point out to my colleague that he was talking about workers in Kitimat, but the agreement will not really change anything for them because their primary market is Asia.

The North American aluminum market is Quebec's domain. I do not know whether my colleague shares my opinion. Quebec is once again the sacrificial lamb in this deal.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am well aware of the threat China poses to Canada's aluminum industry.

[*English*]

Indeed, it is something that the Liberals are trying to pass off by saying that 70% is such a great guarantee. However, 70% is not a great guarantee when it used to be 100% and it was defended by the Government of Canada, the Province of Quebec and the Province of British Columbia, and workers were guaranteed a bright future for what is the cleanest aluminum produced in the world today.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to rise today on this debate. As an agricultural producer, and someone who had an export business that shipped to the States and to Mexico, the importance of free trade is something I am proud of as a Conservative. It is our legacy as the Conservative Party. It was a former Conservative prime minister, Mr. Mulroney, who negotiated the first NAFTA deal. Before that it was the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

Having that big vision and making sure that we have trade in this country are parts of a core value of being a Conservative and being a member of our party. I am also proud of our record under former prime minister Stephen Harper. Our former trade minister, the member for Abbotsford, did a phenomenal job in negotiating all sorts of free trade deals.

In particular, I look at the over 40 countries that we negotiated deals with, and at the Canada-European Union free trade agreement that is in place, which was negotiated by the member for Abbotsford. I am just glad that the Liberals showed up and actually signed on the bottom line at the end of the day.

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We know that the trans-Pacific partnership was negotiated by the agriculture minister at the time, Gerry Ritz, as well as the member for Abbotsford when he was the trade minister. The terminology and articles of the agreement were all done under his leadership. Again, I just appreciate that the Liberals showed up and signed it. We take full credit for those two major agreements and the 40 countries that we now have free trade with.

The Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement is another one that we negotiated. Luckily, the Liberals showed up and signed it at the end of the day, so that agreement exists now.

However, I will say this. The first time that the Liberals had a chance to start the ball from a scrimmage and tried to carry it to the goal line, they fumbled over and over again.

When they were dealing with the White House administration and our colleagues down in Mexico and developed a new NAFTA, which a lot of people call NAFTA 0.5, the Liberals fumbled the ball on numerous occasions both by attacking President Trump in various venues and walking away from the table. We had to play catch-up time and time again.

We have some of the best trade negotiators in the world. Steve Verheul is world renowned and very competent, but with weak leadership he was put into a box that was tough for him to get out of. With Mexico and the United States sitting at the table, we took their deal. We did not take Canada's deal. That is what is really concerning. After talking to people in various industries who are getting the short end of the stick with this new NAFTA deal, we might as well call it "shafta".

As we sit here and look at what has happened, we have softwood lumber mills across this country, particularly in B.C., that are shutting down left, right and centre. Did the Liberals put a softwood lumber agreement in this deal? Not at all, and jobs continue to bleed and communities suffer because of that lack of leadership.

Looking at various sectors, such as auto, dairy and poultry, the Liberals are actually restricting growth or giving away market access. I am going to go into more detail. I look at the aluminum sector, which the member for Thornhill was just speaking about, and how we have gone from having 100% control of the industry within the former NAFTA framework, to now only having 70% control.

This deal allows backdoor access to China through other aggregators who can bring in aluminum nuggets and remanufacture them, which will hurt our aluminum-producing mills, the greenest mills in the world. Again, the Liberals failed to stand up for them.

The biggest private employer in my riding is Gerdau steel. Although we like to talk about steel having control and protection within the framework of the auto industry, we do not talk about how it can get into the buy America protectionist measures.

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The Liberals' inability to move on government contracts in the U.S. because of the buy American restrictions could have been negotiated away if we had stronger leadership from them. They failed to have the buy America policy removed in this new NAFTA deal.

• (1210)

I just met with the dairy industry, and farmers in my riding are upset. They understand the need for free trade. My grain and oilseed producers and my cattle and hog producers are all exporters. They know that what we grow leaves the country, and a lot of it goes south of the border.

However, when we start limiting or giving away market access, it hurts farm families. It is removing income potential and growth from those communities, as well as from those farms. Now over 18% of the domestic milk market, in particular, is already supplied by imports, and the Liberals are eroding that market even further.

The most egregious thing the Liberals did, and not just not negotiating in good faith and not consulting with the dairy industry, the chicken industry or our egg producers, is that they are actually allowing the United States to have a say over how much we can export in dairy products globally.

Currently Canada exports over 55,000 tonnes of dairy products around the world. Under the new NAFTA, or “shafta”, deal, exports are now being limited to 35,000 tonnes. The Liberals are giving up market access in Canada to the extent that 3.6% of the market is now accessible to U.S. dairy producers, and now the U.S. says we can only export 35,000 tonnes.

This is supposed to be a free trade deal. We should be able to access more. One would think that we would be able to go into the U.S. and sell more dairy, but no. The sad part is that it is not just that we are going down from 55,000 tonnes to 35,000 tonnes, a 20,000-tonne reduction, but it is global exports as well.

How can we go out there and sell our fine cheeses, our ice creams, our milk proteins and other products around the world when the Liberals are allowing the United States to say that we cannot export them anymore? That is ridiculous, and it is hurtful. It is something we have to talk about at committee and here in the House.

My colleague, the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, has been leading the charge on what is going to happen in the aluminum industry. I know he is extremely upset that the Liberals have failed to protect aluminum production in Quebec, in British Columbia and across this country. The Liberals are failing to recognize how China can use backdoor shell companies to move their cheap and government-controlled aluminum into our markets. They can use that back door through Mexico in particular. That is something we have to be incredibly concerned about.

The other thing we can look at is the auto sector. Free trade is supposed to help make us more prosperous and create more jobs. The Liberals have a terrible record in the auto industry. We have watched plant after plant shut down and production lines move south of the border. The Liberals have also put in place a cap on how much growth we can have in the automobile industry, a cap of 2.6 million cars and \$32 billion in auto parts.

If we look at it, we see that it is only about \$20 billion and that we are not producing anywhere near the 2.6 million, but where is the incentive for investors or car manufacturers to set up plants to grow their industry when there is a cap in place, especially when we look at the value of \$32 billion? Inflationary pressure alone could eat up that cap within a decade.

Again, it is a disincentive to invest and to expand our manufacturing base, especially in southern Ontario but also right across the country. It is a disincentive for attracting that foreign investment. It is a disincentive to expansion and to an increase in high-paying jobs.

I am very disappointed in the way the Liberals have handled the negotiations. I am very disappointed in what they gave up and by the very little that we got. I am very disappointed that today we have to accept a flawed deal.

• (1215)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really do appreciate the comments from the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. Coming from Windsor—Tecumseh, which is home to 40,000 manufacturing jobs, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and a Ford engine plant, we appreciate the comments and concerns about the auto industry. However, the perspective from the workers and unions that I have spoken to is that this is a very good deal for the auto sector.

The fact is that under the new rules of origin, car makers would be required to source 75% of their auto content from North America, which is going to translate into more jobs and greater job security. As was mentioned in the House today, certainty is an important aspect, which is exactly what this agreement will provide.

I want to read a quote from the president of the association—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member is running out of time.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, would the member not acknowledge that for workers, for the auto sector, this is a good deal? It would increase production and job security.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I hope that the member for Windsor—Tecumseh is being honest with his auto workers and telling them that there is a cap to how big Canada can get. There is a cap on how many jobs will be available.

Let us keep in mind that the increase from 62.5% to 75% involves all automobile manufacturers in North America. Therefore, those jobs may not happen in Canada. Those jobs could be created in Mexico or the United States. When we have caps in place that would limit how big the industry can become, whether the cap is on units of cars or on values, then we are also going to increase the chances that this investment will not happen here in Canada and that it will happen south of the border.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Then why is the cap there? You cannot have it both ways.

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask members, including parliamentary secretaries, who have a question or comment to wait until it is time to ask.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's remarks.

He referred to the Buy American Act. Let me remind him that in 2013-14, Novelis, a mill in my region that rolled aluminum, was relocated to Oswego in New York State. Hundreds of jobs were lost in my riding.

My colleague also mentioned the problems with supply management. Without indulging in recriminations, since I do not want to bash my Conservative friends, I must point out that they allowed loopholes in the trans-Pacific partnership and in the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. Quebec is Canada's leading producer of fine cheeses. The loopholes have jeopardized businesses in Quebec that produce exceptional cheeses, such as the Médard cheese factory.

Does my colleague agree with me that Quebec is once again the big loser and that its market shares will be affected by the new agreement?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, when we negotiated our previous trade agreements and there was market access given up on things like dairy and poultry, we moved in lockstep with the industry. We consulted all the way. That did not happen this time, and that is why we have this egregious idea in the free trade agreement that we are talking about today that we are allowing the United States to cap our global exports.

One thing that dairy producers in particular appreciated when we negotiated the TPP, as well as CETA with Europe, is that those agreements allowed them to sell into those markets without restriction. They had the opportunity to make up in the export market whatever we were going to give up here as market access. However, this agreement tells our dairy industry that it cannot grow and that its export ability will actually shrink. That restriction takes dollars out of the pockets of producers, farmers and communities.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, for several days now, we have been discussing CUSMA and its advantages and disadvantages for our economy and our people.

I would like to take a look at it from a slightly different angle to try to make people understand why it is important not to take anything lightly in this matter. It is also important to be open to possible solutions that will help us implement an agreement with a genuine long-term vision, which is not necessarily the case right now.

We have been exporting our products outside Quebec since the era of New France, mercantilism and triangular trade with the French colonies in the Caribbean. Since then, we have never stopped exporting or trying to export our products and expertise. Just think of lumber exports to the markets of Great Britain in the 19th century or John A. Macdonald's reciprocity agreement, which was never really implemented but was the starting point for the FTA in 1989 and NAFTA in 1994.

The world has changed a lot in 25 years. I can understand that we feel the need to have an agreement that is in tune with the times, an agreement that reflects the current economic realities. Over the decades, we have created connections that provide consumers with access to a huge variety of products. The opening up of markets, combined with improvements in transportation and refrigeration, means that we can now have products every day that our parents only saw in their stockings at Christmas. Oranges are one example. Many of us could not imagine a morning without them. Basically, trade agreements are essential to the economies of Quebec and Canada.

In that light, CUSMA continues our history. At the same time, however, CUSMA marks a break with the past. In the past, Canada stood up to the Americans' demand that we abolish supply management. The argument we countered with was simple. If they stopped subsidizing their farmers so that they could sell their products at cost, we might consider opening up supply management.

With CUSMA, supply management takes a hit, yet we have made no demands to put an end to the subsidies to American farmers. Let me take a moment to explain what supply management is. Imagine a pie that represents Canadians' needs for dairy products. That pie is divided up among all producers, so that they can sell their products at a reasonable price, cover their costs and have an income.

Opening up supply management, as the last three agreements have done, means that we are giving a slice of the pie to foreign producers. This means the needs of Quebecers and Canadians are no longer wholly met by our own producers, but by foreign ones too.

What that means for producers is that they must now divide up about 82% of the income instead of 100%. The situation is problematic for many producers, such as my friend Éric, who comes from a long line of dairy farmers. Now his father is trying to convince him to sell the farm because it is no longer profitable. Éric wants to keep the farm because he loves what he does. It is his life, his passion. He makes ends meet by taking snow removal contracts. He wants to keep his farm and pass it on to his children, who also love taking care of farm animals. Like any good parent, he wants a secure future for his children. CUSMA is putting a wrench in the works for Éric and for hundreds or even thousands of others.

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I know very few people who would be able to make ends meet if they took a 20% pay cut today.

Consider this. How many members of this House would be prepared to give 20% of their paycheque to a U.S. senator? I am pretty sure the answer is none.

• (1225)

Nevertheless, that is exactly what CUSMA is imposing on our dairy farmers. The agreement hands over 20% of their income to foreign producers. It is unacceptable, unbearable, almost inhumane to do that to our own people. We need our farmers three times a day.

The concessions on supply management are not the only part of the agreement that break with our past. Canada literally punched a hole in its own economic sovereignty by allowing the U.S. President to decide how much milk protein Canada can sell abroad, besides what is sold to the United States and Mexico.

What is milk protein? It is not complicated. In the butter-making process, there is a by-product called whey that is dried to a powder. That is milk protein. Our producers sell about 55,000 tonnes of it a year.

The U.S. President decided that from now on, our producers should not sell more than 35,000 tonnes. What does that mean for our producers? A tonne sells for around \$2,000. Every tonne they sell beyond 35,000 tonnes will be subject to a \$540 tax. That is a quarter of the price per tonne.

By signing CUSMA, Canada is giving the United States the right to manage our agricultural economy and once again causing major income losses to our producers.

Once again, I will illustrate my point. Let's say I hold a small garage sale, and every year I sell about 200 items. Suddenly, my neighbour imposes some restrictions and decides what I can sell and for how much. If I sell more than the number he has decided on, I will pay a penalty. Would that be acceptable? As a human being, would I accept my neighbour's conditions? The answer is no. However, that is what we agreed to let the President of the United States do to our economic sovereignty.

I want to remind members that about 50% of Canadian dairy farms are in Quebec, even though Quebec accounts for only 23% of Canada's population, and 30% of the farms are in Ontario. Proportionally, Quebec is the one paying for CUSMA.

Our farmers are precious. Our instinct should be to protect those who are precious to us. In short, it seems that the concept of sovereignty is better known, applied and understood in Quebec than in Canada. Quebec seems to be two steps ahead of Canada when it comes to sovereignty.

We are the ones who should be deciding what is good or bad for our economy, not the President of the United States.

• (1230)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I know how important the dairy industry is to her riding. The dairy industry is also very important to my riding.

I would like to remind the House that in 2008, under the former NAFTA, there was a milk protein issue in Canada. U.S. exports to Canada increased exponentially for 10 years. Americans or third parties who wanted to export to Canada found ways to circumvent the rules. Now, under the new NAFTA agreement, the other parties, both Canada and the U.S., must be notified.

Is that not a good thing for Canada's dairy sector?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

As I said at the start of my speech, some aspects are interesting. Still, the fact remains that reducing the amount of powder that our farmers are allowed to sell is, in my opinion and in the opinion of the producers I know, an unacceptable and dangerous violation.

Canada is setting a precedent that could benefit the United States. We need be careful about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I understand that the member has a number of problems and some of those are similar to what happens with dairy producers in my riding. I have heard from the dairy producers. We also have an aluminum industry in British Columbia. Our largest aluminum smelter is in Kitimat, the Alcan smelter. A huge LNG plant is being built, which is getting its aluminum tariff-free from China. We see problems with this issue across the country.

I understand, from the different debates here, that many MPs are not happy with part of the negotiation. We hear that the Liberals were not happy when the Conservatives were negotiating these agreements. The Conservatives are not happy with the Liberals' negotiating of these agreements.

Do you think we should have a more open and transparent process of negotiating trade agreements, so all parties can be involved and we can debate the merits of the socio-economic benefits of these agreements before we enter negotiation?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member that he is to address questions and comments to the Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for his empathy. We share the same concerns for our constituents.

I do believe there should be more non-partisan discussion on such hot topics as the economy, our sovereignty, and Quebec and Canadian producers, since transparent discussions will make it possible to draft agreements that truly represent our people.

• (1235)

[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, over the last couple of years, stakeholders from across Canada have come together. When I reference stakeholders, I reinforce that they are provincial governments, the private sector, businesses, labour unions and interested Canadians. There has been a very long and healthy discussion and dialogue. That has led to the agreement we have today, which is endorsed by many throughout the country, including the Premier of Quebec.

Would the member not agree that trade is a good and healthy thing between Canada and the world, with the emphasis on securing markets like the U.S.A. and Mexico?

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question, which I answered at the beginning of my speech.

Canada does need treaties. However, the treaties must be fair and have a long-term vision. Currently, the long-term vision seems to be lacking, since it is our dairy farmers and aluminum smelters that will pay, and pay dearly, for the next 10 years.

I am not minimizing the consultations that have been held with various partners. Still, consultation does not necessarily mean listening and understanding. It simply means being present and sharing opinions. Those opinions can either be ignored or taken into account. That is the prerogative of the people who negotiate and sign the agreements.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the House debate on CUSMA for a few weeks now.

The Bloc Québécois promised to speak on behalf of Quebecers here in the House, to ensure that our people, our industries and our investors are represented, heard, protected and served in this Parliament. Quebecers make significant economic, social, cultural and environmental contributions to Quebec and to the world.

It is for that very reason that I am rising in the House today. It seems clear to me, based on our debates and the results, that Quebec is Canada's favourite bargaining chip to use in economic negotiations with the United States and Mexico. That is obvious. The clean aluminum that Quebec is so proud of will probably be sacrificed in this agreement.

How many times have we shown our colleagues opposite how disastrous this will be for Quebec's economy? A serious, in-depth study showed that this could cause Quebec's aluminum sector to suffer more than \$6 billion in actual financial losses. The federal government has not proposed any economic studies on the new provisions in the agreement. We, along with the Conservatives, are still waiting.

Let me also suggest something to think about. Try to imagine how angry Ontarians would have been if the steel sector had been sacrificed instead of Quebec's aluminum sector. Would Ontario

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have reacted with diligence and resilience, agreeing to sacrifice a large part of its steel economy with the virtuous idea that what is good for Canada must take precedence over what is good for Ontario? I highly doubt it.

That is not the case, since Quebec is making the sacrifices. This clearly shows why Canada is so keen on keeping Quebec in its ranks. An independent and sovereign Quebec would deprive Canada of an important and valuable bargaining chip to use in negotiating economic agreements like CUSMA.

I come from the hospitality industry, where food services only exist because of farmers and dairy producers. Just think of the famous and delicious Migneron, Fleurmier and Saint-Fidèle cheeses, as well as the tasty Paillason de l'Isle d'Orléans. I encourage hon. members to sample them if they have the opportunity.

Quebec no longer takes second place to anyone in terms of quality of agricultural produce. Organic farming, another source of great pride for Quebec, is also a growing industry. In my constituency, 37 small and medium-sized dairy operations are prospering because of supply management. For many of the crown jewels of Quebec's agricultural economy, this ingenious system has proved its usefulness again and again.

Supply management is great for Quebec. Not only does it foster balance and regulation in agricultural production, but it also works in harmony with the environment. Supply management encourages consumers to be aware and buy local, thereby reducing the environmental footprint caused by transportation.

Our system is a model for the world, yet Canada persists in knocking major holes in it. Those holes will end up endangering the very foundations of Quebec's economy and our supply management system. All of our success and competitiveness are systematically compromised when the dairy and agricultural sectors are undermined. In macroeconomics, that is known as the ripple effect.

Let's talk about milk, then. Let's talk about two of the loopholes that are hugely important to our dairy producers.

First, there is the elimination of class 7, which was for surplus milk protein. It became a significant economic vector for exports for our dairy farmers. Class 7 allowed farmers to offset losses caused by the influx of massive amounts of American diafiltered milk into the Canadian market.

Worse still, CUSMA gives the Americans control over exports of Canada's milk to other countries. Dairy farmers may end up with surpluses caused by Washington, which reserves the right in CUSMA to limit sales of our dairy protein products to the rest of the world.

Clearly, dairy farmers, 50% of whom are in Quebec, have also been chosen to be part of the sacrifices that Quebec is being forced to make, very much against its will, in order to save NAFTA, now known as CUSMA.

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• (1240)

The government is buying their silence with financial compensation. Let's talk about that. What is financial compensation in the context of a dynamic and prosperous economic mechanism complete with development and investment plans that play out over decades?

This is financial compensation for business people. My father, who was a businessman, would say, "Financial compensation? Government subsidies? Those are like band-aids on a wooden leg, my dear."

Who is going to pay? The agreement will weaken Quebec's economy as a whole in many ways, adversely affecting employment, investment, Quebec's finances and, thus, taxpayers, the same taxpayers who placed their trust in me and my Bloc Québécois colleagues, who hope that we will make the case for what we believe so we can protect Quebec from the Canadian government's lacklustre efforts to stand up for Quebec's interests. The government really wants to use Quebec's major economic levers as bargaining chips in trade treaties like CUSMA. Taxpayers are counting on the Bloc Québécois to ensure that does not happen.

Like my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, I have met with dairy producers in person. They are bright, proactive, in the know about the best production and marketing strategies. They care about and promote environmental preservation and animal welfare. They are experts on the subject.

I am very proud to be able to sing their praises here. However, what would make me really proud is if the concerns of aluminum workers and dairy farmers were recognized, listened to and taken into account in a fair way in the provisions of the agreement in question.

We are well aware that, even after the agreement is signed, provisions can be put in place to remedy the situation. The government is saying that there will be checks and balances to prevent an abundance of Chinese aluminum from being used in auto parts manufactured in North America. Why are these so-called checks and balances not included in the agreement? Perhaps that is something we could work on.

I am convinced that nothing that we are asking for is impossible if we have a real desire and the creativity needed to come up with clear solutions so that the same people, namely Quebecers, are not always being penalized. What a great opportunity this could be to stop fuelling the cynicism toward government election promises.

The Bloc Québécois believes in free trade. That position has not changed even though the government is trying hard to lead members to believe the opposite. What does need to change is the bargaining chips used in these agreements.

How are we supposed to believe that all of the measures that have been put in place are for the good of the agreement?

The government is not going to persuade a nation like Quebec to quietly sit back and let it do what it wants to the aluminum and agricultural industries just because it included some provisions protecting Canadian culture.

It is not too late for the government to put its best foot forward. The government has the power to turn the situation around. It is up to the government to show its goodwill and to prove that, this time, it really is listening to Quebec.

• (1245)

[*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, the government has listened to the province of Quebec through 35 members of the government caucus, who are very strong advocates for the province and, in fact, for all of Canada. They are strong advocates for the residents of Quebec, including business communities, labour leaders and so forth. Even the Premier of Quebec is supporting this agreement.

I think it is wrong for members to say that we are sacrificing one region over another. Whether it is the Bloc saying we are sacrificing Quebec, or it is the Conservatives saying we are sacrificing Alberta, both are wrong. This is a national government that serves all regions of our country, and no province is on the chopping block. I can assure the members of this chamber of that.

Would the member not agree, as the Premier of Quebec is agreeing, that the benefits of this agreement far outweigh any negatives perceived within it?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

It is clear that Quebec has become a bargaining chip for Canada during negotiations. The single tax return is a good example of that.

The opinion of a spokesperson for Quebec alone should not be used to pressure the Bloc when it comes to all of Quebec's demands with regard to its people, its nation. We are calling for environmental sovereignty and sovereignty over our agriculture. I think that taking a specific case, like the opinion of the National Assembly on this, does not reflect the range of demands by Quebec and the National Assembly, which is making many more demands—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I have to allow other members to ask her questions.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about dairy. It is very important in Quebec and it is important in parts of British Columbia as well.

I was recently speaking with a producer of milk products in British Columbia who was very concerned about the provision in the new CUSMA that gives the United States the ability to put quotas not only on milk products going into the United States from Canada but also on milk products from Canada going to anywhere in the world.

I wonder if she could comment on that provision and how it might affect producers in Quebec or anywhere in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that this agreement affects more than just Quebec. As far as dairy farmers are concerned, 50% of dairy production occurs in Quebec. Obviously, we feel a bit more concerned than all the dairy farmers in Canada. When I talk about dairy farmers, it is not just those in Quebec. Obviously, I am much more concerned about those in Quebec, who account for 50% of the dairy production market.

I thank my colleague for raising this point. It is true that other parties in the House are worried about this new CUSMA. Many of us are wondering about this agreement. I often agree with what my colleagues are saying.

• (1250)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, our two ridings are south of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean where aluminum is produced. I imagine the expansions supporting 60,000 jobs.

What impact does my colleague think that 60,000 jobs, with a payroll worth \$3.5 billion, would have on our ridings?

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, of course we are concerned about the hardships facing aluminum workers in neighbouring ridings.

The economic threats facing the aluminum and agricultural sectors because of CUSMA affect all of Quebec, and especially Charlevoix. I am extremely concerned about some of the provisions in CUSMA. I am still hopeful that progress can be made. We are acting in good faith in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

[*English*]

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here today to speak about the current round of free trade negotiations between Canada, the United States and Mexico. We call it CUSMA now, and it used to be called NAFTA.

I bring a bit of perspective to this because I was around for the negotiations way back in 1989 when we started this. In 1988 we negotiated a deal, initially with the United States of America, which became the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. We expanded that in 1994, and it was ratified by bringing Mexico into that pact and creating what was then called NAFTA. Some people are still calling the new agreement NAFTA, or NAFTA 0.5, NAFTA 0.7 or the new NAFTA, but I will call it CUSMA going forward, as it is a good name for it.

It was time for an update to the agreement. A quarter of a century has gone by since 1994 and the world has changed. We have a lot more of a technology industry at this point, as does the United States. The way we interact with that technology industry across our borders needed to be reflected in our trade agreements, so accepting that we had to update this agreement was a given.

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Negotiations involve give-and-take. We have to recognize that in 1988-89 and 1993-94, people in the government of this country arrived to make a serious agreement with other people in other countries. Negotiations are about give-and-take, and I will remind the members what we gave in 1988-89.

Few people remember this, but at that time, the United States of America was an energy-insecure country. One of its main asks for us at that point, as a partner in a trade agreement, was for limited access to our energy resources. We negotiated a proportional access agreement with the United States, which was reflected in the FTA and again in NAFTA.

That proportional representation meant that if we had to cut back the actual export of our resources to the United States by, say, 10%, we would have to curtail ourselves in the same way. There was a sharing that would have to happen once the U.S. became dependent upon us as a customer for our resource. That was a good ask because, if the U.S. was to become dependent on us, we needed to be presented as a serious supplier to the United States.

When I heard the Minister of International Trade suggest that one of the wins in these negotiations was taking that proportional sharing off the table, I shrugged and said that it must have been the U.S. that took that off the table in this round because it no longer needed it. The U.S. no longer needs it because we have become a captive seller to the United States market. That is a result of failed government policy.

I suggest this in this debate because it is very relevant to why we are suddenly a price taker in the U.S. market and what its negotiating strength is versus ours as a supplier. There are lots of terms in this agreement that are important, but it is not a win when the other side says it does not want that part of the agreement anymore and our federal minister takes it off the table. It is actually a loss for the country.

The government's short-sighted policies in constraining our oil and gas resources in particular are reflected in the regulatory environment. This policy misdirection is not increasing our ability to export our resource to markets besides the United States of America, so we are a captive seller. We are, as we say in financial markets, a price taker.

Let me quantify this statement. In 2018, Canada's oil and gas industry exported 80 billion dollars' worth of oil to the United States. That number is representative of 3.5 million barrels of oil a day. Those are big numbers. The big number that is not included there is that it should have been, by world prices, about \$21 billion higher over the year. That is \$21 billion that we are forgoing as a Canadian economy because we do not receive the world price for our resource. We do not receive it because we do not have access to other foreign markets. Those markets are needed to diversify.

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There is an inability to diversify those markets because of government policy. That government policy is reflected in the fact that it cancelled or caused the cancellation of any other pipelines that were going to lead our resources to foreign markets beyond the U.S., particularly the northwest pipeline through Prince Rupert.

• (1255)

Canadian petroleum products are some of the best resources we have. If we think about how much of the economy it represents, it is significant. The flip side of this equation, of course, is the way the United States refines these products and then sells petroleum products back to Canadians in other parts of the country at world prices.

Who is really winning in that equation? The United States companies that are making windfall profits and the United States government, which is making more corporate tax revenue. We are receiving less and they are receiving more.

Make no mistake, we are entering into negotiations with parties that know how to look after themselves. This is not a benevolent negotiation. This is a real negotiation and we need to take these negotiations seriously as a country. My first recommendation for the government has always been to get serious about these negotiations.

Let us also accept that being prepared for these negotiations and being serious about it meant arriving with an agenda on what we needed in this equation. Canada did not arrive there with any solid takeaways required from the Canadian economy's perspective, particularly a softwood lumber agreement, which has been an ongoing trade irritant between our two countries since the NAFTA negotiations started. We do need to come to some agreement on that. Nothing of that nature is reflected in this agreement. I anticipate these disagreements will continue for the life of this agreement.

We could have and should have anticipated the U.S. coming in and trying to get a portion of our dairy quota onto world markets. We had already ceded a portion of that dairy quota in recently completed negotiations through the trans-Pacific partnership. Our largest trading partner should rightfully have said that if we could do it for the rest of the world, why could we not allow U.S. companies a portion of the market as well? Arriving with that position might have been an easy trade-off at the end of the day. I am happy to see that trade-off. If we looked at it from another perspective, it was going to happen one way or another.

What I do not understand is our giveaway of the milk products that seem to be capped to all foreign buyers in this agreement. We are saying to our dairy sector that we will take away part of its quota, but we are also going to constrain it in the way it gets to grow in foreign markets on key products. That is a surrender of sovereignty, and that sovereignty is ours. We are going to have to economically prosper in a shrinking industry with one partner by going to other markets. Getting that capped was quite a surrender.

Money is leaving the country because of the business environment here. We know that in 2018 alone, Canadian foreign direct investment in the U.S. increased 13% and the U.S.'s investment in Canada increased 5%. That is a drastic difference and is a reflection

of our regulatory environment and the way people do business in Canada.

The Trans Mountain pipeline is now a Crown corporation because U.S. and foreign companies cannot see their way through getting a project built in our country. I raise this now because it matters in the way we deal with different entities across borders and how people prosper in Canada and bring new investment and new prosperity to it. Teck Frontier is a similar project.

The government needs to show the world that Canada does do business when people properly go through the motions and ensure they address indigenous and regulatory concerns, and bring back that foreign investment that is part of every free trade agreement.

Premiers want this agreement signed. The Business Council wants this agreement signed. However, they want it signed because they are tired of the uncertainty created around this. That uncertainty has to stop right away. Goldy Hyder, president of the Business Council of Canada, said that it was good enough and asked that we please get it done.

The necessity of having this free trade agreement is important for the Canadian economy. We are going to move this forward. The issue is to please get serious with this finally and stop surrendering going forward.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting speech. It is my understanding that the Conservative Party will be supporting CUSMA.

[*English*]

We thank the Conservatives for that support, because it is important.

I do want to bring up one point. I always measure what is happening. Trump stated clearly, before and during negotiations, that he would not sign any deals unless the dispute resolution was in place, where the panel would be American. Then he wanted a five-year sunset clause or it would be dead. Then there was the issue of supply management.

Those were the three major things the Americans needed in the deal, and they got none of it. I want to remind the member, who was not here in the last Parliament, that in the last Parliament, it was clear that the Conservatives wanted us to sign the agreement because there was \$2 billion on the table.

We have done the job. We did it right. We added all kinds of extras to labour, which was important, and to the environment.

Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague on the other side that this was a deal that needed to be signed. We needed to be at the table to negotiate the deal.

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As I said in my speech, a negotiation requires people putting real positions on the table, and some of those positions are negotiated away, which is exactly what the U.S. administration did. There was some give-and-take on its side. At one point in time, Canada was not even part of the negotiation. Only the U.S. and Mexico were negotiating, because Canada was not taking its side seriously. That was a failure.

If we look at what we gave up in this agreement, vis-à-vis the previous agreement, it was significant. Coming to an agreement here with our largest trading partner is important. Giving up all that we gave up along the way showed that we had a very poor strategy. As well, the labour and environment issues were not negotiated at the last minute. They were brought to the table by the U.S. after the first agreement.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, for the last couple of days, the Liberals have been blaming the Conservatives and the Conservatives have been blaming the Liberals for negotiating the worst agreement.

The investor-state provisions in the original NAFTA were negotiated by the Conservative government. Do the Conservatives not agree that it is a good thing the investor-state provisions that allowed investors to sue our government were scrapped in the new NAFTA, or CUSMA?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, the investor-state dispute resolution process was a good one at that point in time. It meant that people could invest in foreign countries and not expect the investment to be undone by a national government. It did provide some certainty to foreign investors coming into each country, knowing there was a way to balance their investment, vis-à-vis the caprice of any national government that might change, and have some recourse at the end of the day.

I did reference TMX in my documents. TMX had a good position there because of the regulatory delays and the hurdles that were put in its way, in terms of expanding an existing pipeline across the country. Eventually the company threw up its hands and said enough was enough, that it needed to move on and the Canadian government could take it over. It was done. We do not see the federal government enforcing federal regulations to get the project done. If the government would follow its own rules, at the end of the day, projects would be done well.

• (1305)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate today on Bill C-4, on which we will be voting. Typically, when I stand in Parliament to vote, I am always very comfortable with my vote. Whether it is yes or no, I am proud to stand in my place and vote.

Today we will be voting on this agreement, and it will be with a heavy heart and reluctance that I will stand to support it, knowing not only that there are a lot of problems with it, but if I do not support it, things will take a dramatic and drastic turn. We need to have a free trade agreement with our most important trading partner. It will not be an easy vote when I know it could have and should have been so much better.

I will talk about process, priorities and gaps.

On the process, Canada was left on the sidelines for some of the most important parts of the negotiations. Mexico and the U.S. put a lot of the final details to the agreement and told Canada that it could like it or lump it. What kind of negotiators do we have when they leave us on the sidelines for some of the most critical components of a deal?

The other piece I have trouble with is the lack of engagement. If we look at what happened in the U.S., the Republicans and Democrats worked very closely, made changes and came up with an agreement with which everyone was comfortable. That collaborative process, working together on important priorities, helped make a better agreement in the long run.

In our case, was there engagement with the other parties in the House? Yes, there was a committee, but that committee did not talk to the elected representatives, the elected representatives being the official opposition, the Bloc and the NDP. The negotiators did not benefit from the wisdom of the other parties in the House, which has left us with a lump-it-or-like-it agreement.

Last week, the minister suggested that the opposition parties not hold up the agreement. The Conservatives had suggested the House resume early. The election was in October and the Liberals did not recall the House until early December. We said that we needed to come back to talk about and engage on this agreement. Then we suggested the House resume in early January to debate the agreement, that it was one of the most important trade agreements we would sign and that we needed to give it due diligence and talk about it. Did the government bring us back early? No. Then the Liberals said that they did not want the opposition parties to delay it, yet we had not even seen the legislation. It is a failed and flawed process. They should be very ashamed with how they went about it.

The Liberals took a number of priorities into the negotiations, but what did they omit? They omitted probably the biggest trade irritant between Canada and the U.S. in the last number of decades, softwood lumber. Was softwood lumber made one of their priorities for negotiation? No. The government headed into negotiations on an updated agreement, and the most important trade irritant we had for decades was not a priority.

In 2017, the government said it would get a new softwood agreement. The Prime Minister and President Obama said that they would get it done. Here we are in 2020, and the agreement is not done.

What has been happening with the softwood lumber industry? In my province alone, over 24 mills have closed and 10,000-plus employees have been impacted. The government's lack of doing its job in getting a softwood lumber agreement is hurting Canadians across the country.

• (1310)

I would like to suggest that British Columbia might be the canary in the coal mine on this particular issue, because mills in New Brunswick are suggesting that they are having problems. Quebec has been concerned about it. When 20% is put on as an arbitrary number at the border and we do not have an agreement, our industry is hurting.

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Was it a priority for negotiations? No, forestry was neglected. Was it in the Speech from the Throne? It was neglected. Was it in the minister's mandate letter? It was neglected.

I would suggest that the government has failed to do its job. The Prime Minister said one of the most important things he needed to do was protect jobs in this country, but he has been absolutely indifferent to the crisis in forestry across this country. It took the last Conservative government to get the deal done, and it obviously looks as though we need to get back in, because it will take a Conservative government to get it done in the future.

Let me speak to failures. The one failure that stands out in my mind is aluminum. Aluminum has not been afforded the same provisions as steel. Why not?

Let us look at what is happening in the industry. In Canada, aluminum production in 2019 was 2.9 metric tons, and that has diminished from the year prior. It has been going down a bit. What is happening in China with aluminum? In China, aluminum production was 33.8 metric tons and is going up. What has been happening as well is that around the world, the need for aluminum has been going up, but the Liberal government did not feel it was important. Aluminum did not really matter.

One other priority was the environment. What the government failed to recognize is that Canada has the lowest carbon footprint for aluminum production in the world, since we use hydroelectricity, but there is more than that. The Prime Minister was at an announcement in Quebec with Rio Tinto and Elysis. They are looking at a no-carbon-emission process for the production of aluminum. Let us imagine that: We are going to have no-carbon-emission aluminum. I understand that oxygen might even be produced as part of the process.

The government is providing some protection for steel for the car industry, but it is not saying that our aluminum industry matters. Producing environmentally sound aluminum, predominantly in Quebec but also in British Columbia, does matter. The government neglected that, left it out of the agreement, and did not offer the same protections. That is certainly a failure.

There is another area of concern. I have never seen a government give up sovereignty in agreements that it signs with other countries, but now we are going to need permission from the U.S. to enter into an agreement with China. There are also restrictions with respect to our exports to other countries. We are giving away our sovereignty.

These are significant concerns. For the reasons I have identified, we are very reluctant to support this particular agreement as it moves forward.

That said, the United States and Mexico are our largest trading partners. We need to have an agreement. It will take another Conservative government to fix the softwood lumber agreement, to work with the aluminum industry and to make sure that both industries get the same recognition as our steel industry. We are going to have a job to do in trying to fix the agreement, but we cannot go without it in the meantime.

• (1315)

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, the member talked about consultation and information being made available to the House. The leader of the Green Party brought up a very valid question, and I would like to pose that question for the member opposite.

An agreement was signed by Stephen Harper in regard to a trade arrangement between Canada and China. It was never debated in the House of Commons. It was signed off without any consultation with the different stakeholders here in Canada.

Does the member not see that there seems to be a double standard coming from the Conservative Party? On the one hand, it says we should have more debate and more information, whereas on the other hand, when her party was in government, it did not allow for any sort of information flow on a critical agreement that was signed off by Stephen Harper.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, I think that our record for ensuring that the appropriate documents were tabled and that the opposition was informed and had briefings is miles and miles ahead of what happened in this case.

This is a trade agreement with our most important neighbours, and I will contrast what happened in the U.S. We have a minority Parliament now. In the U.S., the Democrats and Republicans worked together to have a deal that would work for the United States, but the Liberals, in their arrogance, decided that they knew best. We could have helped them with some of the issues that I have identified and we could have made a better agreement for our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech. I hear my colleagues in the House criticizing the agreement. One of our concerns has to do with aluminum and the sacrifices being asked of workers in that sector. The same goes for agriculture and softwood lumber. We have also heard about economic sovereignty. I am sure everyone knows that, on the issue of sovereignty, we on this side of the House are always ready to listen closely.

These issues are the reason the Bloc Québécois will be voting against the agreement. If we have the same concerns regarding those issues, why is my colleague suggesting that we vote in favour of the agreement? What is it about the agreement that makes her want to vote for it?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to talk a bit about the aluminum industry. In Canada, we need to be extremely proud of the amazing work that our aluminum industry is doing in heading towards a low-carbon product. For aluminum not to have the same protection as steel in the agreement is quite shameful and shows a lack of appropriate negotiating by the Liberal government.

That said, the member asked why we would support the agreement. As I said at the start of my remarks, usually I can stand up very proudly with my vote, but today I will stand up reluctantly, because I think the harm to Canada if this very imperfect deal does not go ahead would be more than the harm that is currently there.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo shares a lot of the concerns of my constituents around trade, especially in the case of softwood lumber. It is a huge issue in British Columbia, and I thank her for bringing it up.

I wonder if the member would agree with the NDP that what we need here, coming out of this example, is a whole new way of negotiating trade agreements that would force the negotiating process to be transparent from the start, as is the case in the U.S. Congress and the European Union. In this way we would get a chance to debate the priorities of that negotiation, such as softwood lumber.

● (1320)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, certainly we share the concerns around softwood lumber, but the NDP historically has been very reluctant to support any trade agreement, and so I am not sure we have common ground there in terms of the best way to move forward. However, had the government reached out in terms of some priorities, I think it absolutely could have had a better deal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank the Conservatives for making it possible for me to participate in today's debate. I was not supposed to speak, but they allowed me to, so I thank them for that. There is co-operation in the House, which I think bodes well for the rest of the 43rd Parliament, because it will make it easier to move forward on issues.

Incidentally, I will warn my colleagues that I am going to talk about aluminum. I do not know if they are aware of this issue, but there has been some discussion about it lately.

Before I address the House this afternoon, I thought I would do some math for the benefit of all my colleagues. The Bloc Québécois has risen in the House nearly 90 times since the beginning of this Parliament to ask the government to explain to us and to the public why the aluminum sector has received less protection in the CUSMA than the steel sector.

I tried to count the number of satisfactory responses we received. I tallied it up, with the help of hard-working researchers. Unfortunately, the answer is zero. We did not get any satisfactory answers. Instead, we have had a lot of talking points, each one more laughable than the last.

We have been told that 70% is better than zero, even though they know full well that this percentage applies to auto parts and not the metal used to manufacture them. I would like the government to know that 70% of zero is still zero. It is simple math.

Another talking point we have been treated to states that the Aluminium Association of Canada, the AAC, supports the agreement. We are well aware that the AAC represents multinationals and not workers. Jean Simard of the AAC appeared before the finance com-

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mittee as recently as Tuesday and explained that he would have really preferred to see aluminum get the same protection as steel. This talking point is also laughable.

Still another talking point is that we should listen to Premier Legault. We know full well that not since Pierre Elliot Trudeau's government has there been a Canadian federal government so at odds with Quebec.

The most amusing talking point, however, tells us that U.S. President Trump did not originally want an agreement and that CUSMA is therefore a win. We are well aware that Mexico was responsible for dropping the protection for aluminum because it benefits from the dumping of Asian aluminum.

Since we did not get a proper answer to our question, we suggested that the answer might lie in the fact that most of the steel industry is in Ontario. Otherwise, the agreement would have been different. That is irrefutable evidence. However, all we got was radio silence. Have we perhaps found the smoking gun? I am not sure, but I think so.

While Ottawa ties itself in knots trying to justify its mistakes, unions, residents and politicians in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region have rallied around a consensus, namely that Quebec's aluminum is the greenest in the world, that it helps communities that have been hurt by Canada's many trade disputes thrive, and that our people make it worth fighting for.

Since the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has chosen not to stand with us, we are the only party in the House that has been pushing for a broadly supported, transpartisan proposal on aluminum since day one of this amendment. That is why we do not need to ask Jean Simard whether he thinks the agreement will directly deprive our economy of \$6 billion. We believe it will because it is a fact that is quantified in a non-partisan study conducted by experts using a flawless methodology, which we have provided to all parties. I hope everyone has done their homework.

It seems clear to me that CUSMA will ultimately protect China's aluminum industry instead of North America's. China smelts 60% of all of the aluminum in the world. Quebec essentially produces all of the aluminum in Canada, and this aluminum accounts for 6% or 7%.

What would it cost the federal government to protect such a critical industry in Quebec that is struggling around the world? Since the Deputy Prime Minister launched into a flood of figures the other day, I want to give her some important data to factor into her responses in the future.

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Six key investment projects are at stake: phase 3 of the Alouette aluminum smelter in Sept-Îles; phases 1-B, 1-C, 2 and 3 of the AP-60 aluminum smelter in Jonquière; and phase 2 of the billet casting centre in my riding, in Alma.

• (1325)

Some \$6.242 billion will be lost in the construction industry, simply because this government did not protect North America's primary aluminum market. We will lose 30,539 direct jobs in the construction industry, indirect jobs with suppliers and induced jobs in the consumer sector. We are talking about 829,000 new tonnes of the greenest aluminum on earth. The worst is that, according to the terms of the agreement, we will have to wait 10 years to renegotiate including the aluminum sector in CUSMA. There is one more figure.

The Quebec economy, and therefore Canada's economy, will lose \$1 billion in spending. If you multiply that by 10, you get \$10 billion. I will do the math for the government and tell them that it will ultimately cost \$16.242 billion in communities that need this money.

The worst part of this agreement is that the 70% "protection" for aluminum parts will sanction aluminum dumping from Asia. If we agree to the terms of the agreement without saying or doing anything, manufacturers will be able to proudly stamp "*Hecho en Norte America*" and "*Fabriqué en Amérique du Nord*" on Chinese aluminum.

When we started, it was said that the Bloc was alone on the issue of aluminum. Now, when I look on this side of the House, and on the other side, I see that a number of my distinguished colleagues are now on the same page as us. The NDP and the Conservatives are now more or less sharing our concern for the aluminum sector and the tens of thousands of families that depend on it. I am happy, because the only ones now alone on the issue of aluminum are the Liberals.

Something else has affected me since this debate in the House began. Things have been said that are not acceptable in this House and that hurts me deeply. Last week, the hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook said, "I know there is the issue of parts, but with all due respect, the group of people who came to Ottawa yesterday certainly did not stop in Quebec City." He said it in a tone that was supposed to be humorous.

In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, people have come together to form a regional movement. Civil society, aluminum workers and elected municipal representatives have genuine concerns. The study that was tabled now justifies those concerns. This is no joking matter.

These people are rallying together and coming to Ottawa to tell us that they have concerns and that they are worried for their region, their jobs, their families and their children, and the government is responding with jokes. The government is making fun of them by saying that they should have gone to Quebec City rather than coming Ottawa. Even if the member said, "with all due respect", I think he did exactly the opposite. He showed a lack of respect for them. Regardless of the topic of debate, we will not agree

on everything. However, demonstrating a lack of respect for citizens is unacceptable.

I have a note on my bedside table. The first thing I see when I get up in the morning is, "Who do you work for?" I work for my constituents.

I hope to have elevated the debate.

• (1330)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Jean for his speech. He gave an overview of this week's discussions. He clearly paid close attention to the debate and I commend him for that.

My comments last week were meant to be lighthearted. They were certainly not meant as a personal attack.

I will say one thing. I am the only Liberal Acadian from Nova Scotia. In Lévis, Quebec, there is a monument to the Samson family, in honour of the contribution of the two Samson brothers. It was erected in 1967 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Canada. I feel very comfortable. You are my friends, just as I know I am yours.

I no longer have time to ask my question, which was a really good one, so I will simply ask my colleague to provide his own comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Even though the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook has been a member of the House for over four years, I would remind him to address his questions to the Chair and not to a specific member.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his thoughtful words.

Now that we are friends, perhaps he will agree that it might not have been the right time for jokes about that. I am sure he will not make the same mistake again. I am so pleased to have shared that learning experience with the member.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I did not really know the member for Lac-Saint-Jean before today.

I really enjoyed his insightful speech, his summary of the past week and his expertise on aluminum. I want everyone here to know that I just want to be his friend.

In closing, I would like him to explain the difference between our party's position on aluminum and the Conservative Party's.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's question, and I want him to know he can count on my friendship.

The difference is that the Bloc is proactive. We want our ideas to have a real impact.

In spite of everything, I believe the Conservatives want to collaborate and make a difference on this issue.

Unfortunately, their proposals are not viable for now, but I am sure that, in time, we will achieve real gains and better protection for Quebec's aluminum sector and its workers.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I too hope to befriend the member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

I would like him to give us a more detailed analysis of the Liberal position on aluminum. Specifically, I would like him to explain the difference between parts and aluminum produced in North America.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, it is not complicated. Steel obtained protections in this agreement that aluminum did not. In fact, 70% of steel must be smelted and poured in North America. Aluminum did not get that clause.

Aluminum can therefore come from China via Mexico. Mexico will turn aluminum into parts and eventually flood the U.S. market.

This does not just concern aluminum workers, but also some Liberals and Conservatives, who have parts factories in their ridings.

The aluminum will be processed in Mexico. It is also damaging for my friends and colleagues outside Quebec. I hope that we will have the Liberals' co-operation. I am convinced that we are on the right track, but we must not just talk; we must act.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is my first speech in this chamber in the new Parliament, I would like to take a minute to thank the voters of Regina—Wascana for electing me to this chamber. It certainly is an honour and a privilege to be able to represent the interests of Regina—Wascana in the House of Commons. I would also like to thank all of the volunteers on my campaign team who worked so hard putting up lawn signs, stuffing brochures into mailboxes and knocking on doors to make sure that the campaign was a success.

Of course, I have to thank my family, particularly my mom and dad. I am sure there have been many times when they wished that their son would just choose a more normal hobby other than pursuing a seat in Parliament, but I am glad it finally worked out for the better. I would also like to thank my brother Brad, his wife Kathy and my nephews Mason, Michael and Mark. They all had the opportunity to join me for my swearing-in ceremony, and it certainly was a special family occasion.

Now I would like to say a few words about Bill C-4.

On March 28, 2019, the Western Producer farm newspaper ran an editorial about agriculture policy. The Western Producer's editorial board said, "Two years ago, the federal government identified agriculture as a key sector for growth in exports". Considering the high quality of our Canadian dairy products and the priority that the government gave to expanding agriculture exports, it came as a complete surprise to me that the new NAFTA, the new free trade agreement that the government recently negotiated with the United States and Mexico, had a serious flaw. This flaw, a concession made to the Americans at the expense of the dairy farmers in my

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province of Saskatchewan and thousands of other dairy producers across the country, is a real head-scratcher.

It is puzzling to me and to my fellow Conservative colleagues on the international trade committee why this government would kneecap our hard-working dairy producers by bargaining away their ability to increase dairy exports under the new NAFTA. I think it is important for Canadians to realize that the new Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade agreement does not just limit the ability of dairy farmers to export to the United States and Mexico; it limits their ability to export to Japan, China, Europe or anywhere in the world.

Yesterday, the international trade committee heard detailed testimony from a panel of government experts on Bill C-4. These experts included Mr. Steve Verheul, Canada's chief negotiator for the new NAFTA, and Mr. Aaron Fowler, chief agriculture negotiator and director general of trade agreements and negotiations from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

At committee, I asked Mr. Fowler to clarify whether the new dairy export tariff that our dairy farmers would soon have to pay included only the United States and Mexico or applied to Canadian exports to the rest of the world as well. Mr. Fowler confirmed that the agreement applies to Canada's exports to the rest of the world.

When I asked Mr. Fowler whether there was a similar provision under the old NAFTA, the trans-Pacific partnership or our trade deal with the European Union, Mr. Fowler said, "I am aware of no similar provision in any of our other trade agreements."

Then I asked the negotiating team to provide some insight into how the dairy export limit made it into the new NAFTA. Mr. Fowler said that the U.S. was concerned about new innovative Canadian dairy products, and that Canadian exports of these products were displacing American dairy products from markets that they, the Americans, traditionally exported to.

I appreciate the detailed answers that Canada's negotiating team provided to the committee on how truly innovative our Canadian dairy farmers have become in recent years in specialized products that Canadians can export around the globe. However, in the end it was up to this government to negotiate a better free trade agreement, or at least not a worse agreement, with the U.S. and Mexico, and not to impose a new worldwide limit on our dairy exports. This Liberal export limit would cut farm revenue, and farm families need this extra money.

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• (1340)

Better margins and increased profitability on each and every dairy farm are more important now than ever because dairy farmers and, in fact, other producers across Canada have to come up with thousands of additional dollars to pay for the Liberals' carbon tax.

It is very troubling that the government can prioritize the expansion of farm exports on one day, only to limit them the next. During negotiations, why did our trade representatives, who were working on a North American trade deal with the U.S. and Mexico, buckle under pressure from the Americans and agree to limit exports to the rest of the world on dairy products?

These dairy products could have been sold to hungry and thirsty Japanese, Chinese and European customers who were not even parties to this trade agreement. Why did no one catch the significance of this concession, the imposition of a limit on our dairy exports, before it was too late?

It was my sad duty to report to the dairy farmers of SaskMilk, who came to Parliament Hill yesterday to brief me and my Conservative colleagues, that their analysis of the Liberals' new NAFTA was, unfortunately, correct. The Liberal government did, in fact, cave to the demands of the Americans at the negotiating table to limit Canada's dairy exports to hungry, thirsty, paying customers around the globe who live in nations that are not even parties to this new NAFTA agreement among Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

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, I think the member is missing out on a fairly significant point. Supply management means a great deal to farmers in all regions of the country. The United States was hopeful that Canada would abandon supply management.

I am very happy to say that the Liberals started supply management. From a party perspective, the Liberals brought it in and the Liberals have fought to ensure that we continue to have it. If the member were to check with his dairy farmers, he would find that the overwhelming majority of them understand and appreciate the importance of supply management and having those quotas, because this is the way we can produce quality products and protect the industry as a whole.

Would the member not say that this is a major gain for Canadians, in terms of certainty going forward, with supply management in this agreement?

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, it was the responsibility of the government to negotiate a better deal for Canada, or at least not a worse deal.

I had the opportunity to meet with representatives from SaskMilk who came here to Parliament Hill, and they were really excited about opportunities to export their products around the world. Now those opportunities have been taken away by the failings of our Liberal government in the NAFTA negotiations. It certainly is unfortunate that the Liberals were unable to obtain a better deal, or at least not a worse deal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague's speech, as well as his legitimate concerns about the farmers and dairy producers in his riding.

Earlier, I asked his colleague why the Conservatives decided to vote in favour of the agreement even though they find it flawed. She replied that it was better to have a bad agreement than no agreement at all. That said, if we do not ratify CUSMA, NAFTA would remain in effect.

Does my colleague think it is worth voting in favour of this agreement? Would it not be better to ask the negotiators to go back and do their job?

If we negotiated properly, it would no longer be necessary to make concessions on the backs of farmers and aluminum workers.

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

In my opinion, an imperfect agreement is better than no agreement. If this agreement is not ratified, the Americans and the Mexicans could cancel it altogether. In my opinion, this agreement is imperfect, but if we had no agreement, the Canadian economy would deteriorate quickly. That is why I will be voting in favour of the agreement.

• (1345)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I am pleased to represent thousands of Canadians, both in my riding in eastern Ontario and as the official opposition critic for the economic development initiative for northern Ontario, who make a living in the living forest.

Of the many issues I have championed for Canadians as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, defending Canada's forestry industry was one of my first responsibilities when I was elected seven elections ago. I am not pleased that, after 19 years, I am still talking about some of the same issues regarding softwood lumber. This time, it is within the context of the renegotiated NAFTA. It should never have come to this.

The Prime Minister promised 400,000 Canadian forestry workers a framework agreement on softwood lumber exports with the Obama administration by mid-June 2016. The government's failure to meet that deadline, and its subsequent failure to negotiate a final agreement before the expiry of the last trade agreement on October 12, 2016, allowed forestry workers' jobs to become a political football to be kicked around by the new U.S. administration.

Many high-quality, well-paying jobs in the forestry sector are still at risk due to the federal government's lack of action on this important sector of the Canadian economy.

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The worst part about there being no softwood lumber deal was the statement by U.S. trade representative Michael Froman of the Obama administration. He was on the verge of signing a new softwood lumber deal with Canada. The pact fell through when the anti-forestry lobbyists got the ear of a close prime-ministerial buddy, the disgraced Gerald Butts.

Someone close to the Prime Minister claimed, obviously as a stalling tactic, that a better deal could be reached with the incoming Trump administration. Only someone who was opposed to a healthy Canadian forestry sector could make that kind of claim.

The incoming Trump administration did not even have Canada in its sights. It was looking for concessions from Mexico. That changed pretty quickly with a number of diplomatic stumbles that made it appear the Liberal government was going out of its way to disrespect the American president. This jeopardized the tens of thousands of jobs that rely upon North American trade.

It was our government that negotiated a softwood lumber agreement by the end of April 2006, within three months of coming into office, to solve the last softwood lumber dispute.

As a member of the government that signed the agreement that expired October 12, 2015, I recognize there were critics of that agreement, just as there were critics, like me, of the previous agreement that had been negotiated under the old Chrétien administration.

Our government recognized that signing a deal that would satisfy everyone would have resulted in no deal. It was unacceptable then, just as having no deal today is unacceptable. That is why Canadians have little choice but to accept the deal that has been put before them today. Too many Canadian jobs are at risk.

The softwood lumber industry in my riding is characterized by small operations, many family-owned, and by the people who depend on jobs in the working forest. When I was first elected, the old Chrétien government softwood lumber policy was causing significant unemployment in my riding. Worried softwood lumber producers called my office regularly in the hope of a resolution regarding the softwood lumber dispute.

Forestry contributes billions of dollars to Canada's GDP. The forestry sector generates approximately 370,000 direct and indirect jobs in Canada. Since the last agreement was signed by our Conservative government, things have changed.

The Liberal Party is making it a lot tougher to live in rural Canada and places like eastern Ontario where forestry jobs exist. Skyrocketing energy prices, a plan to ban burning firewood for heat as it is written in the Paris accord, and the carbon tax that now adds tax on the fuel that powers the only means of transportation for rural Canadians, spell hard times.

If times are tough when workers have jobs, we can imagine how tough it is going to be when increasing carbon taxes take away their jobs. Carbon taxes, like any Liberal tax increases, are job killers. In rural areas, jobs are hard to come by. Ben Hokum & Son Limited in Killaloe, Murray Brothers in Madawaska, McRae Lumber in Whitney, Lavern Heideman & Sons in Eganville, Gulick Forest Products Limited, Randy Commanda Forestry in Pikwakanagan, Thomas J.

Neuman Limited, Pastway Planing in Palmer Rapids and Bell Lumber in Renfrew are just a few of the businesses in my riding that are affected every time there is a softwood lumber dispute.

● (1350)

For Canada's forestry industry, for the people employed in that industry, and for the businesses that provide employment and need certainty in their business if they are going to continue to invest in their businesses and create jobs, an agreement is critical.

American producers have alleged for years that the Canadian forestry industry is subsidized by federal and provincial governments. In the U.S., prices are set by the market, a situation the U.S. contends is unfair compared with the way Canada manages its forests. It believes Canadian lumber should be subject to a tariff to offset so-called subsidies.

In the past, the U.S. has introduced anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations against Canadian softwood lumber. Time and again, Canada has successfully defended itself against those actions. However, companies always fall off along the way.

In Canada, 94% of the forest is on public land, and by law all forest harvested on public land must be regenerated. All harvested trees are regrown. At 161 million hectares, or 43% of our managed forests, Canada has the highest volume of independently assessed, certified sustainably managed forests in the world.

Canada's forestry companies work with environmental groups, like Ducks Unlimited Canada, Pollution Probe, Nature Canada and the favourite of the Prime Minister's former principal secretary, the World Wildlife Fund.

The working forest benefits the aboriginal community in my riding. About 70% of aboriginal communities are located in forested areas. Forest companies are one of the largest employers of aboriginal people.

Far more forest is damaged by fire and insects, compared to the sustainable harvest that takes place in Canada.

Canadian mills are cleaner and greener than ever. What Canadians need is a lasting solution to ensure fair treatment of the Canadian forestry industry. My constituents truly hope the agreement before us today will bring certainty to the market.

For Ontario, trade with the United States is significant for the forestry industry. While up to 95% of Ontario's forestry product exports go to the United States, Ontario's share of the U.S. market equates to 3.34%. A producer in Ontario is selling domestically or to the United States.

Jobs have been disappearing at an alarming rate in rural Ontario. The need to keep jobs in the lumber industry to maintain our way of life is paramount.

Statements by Members

Forestry is big business in Ontario, exporting 3.6 billion dollars' worth of goods annually, and employing over 43,000 people, many of whom work in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Wages and salaries add up to almost \$2 billion in the Ontario economy. In the Ottawa Valley, the forest industry supports thousands of jobs. Primary wood manufacturing in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is over 10 times the provincial average. I can identify over 100 forest product companies that make their homes in Renfrew county.

The Canadian forest products industry is a major manufacturing sector, responsible for 12% of Canada's manufacturing GDP.

What is also important in this debate over the trade agreement with our largest market is how it is affecting our overall trade relationship with the United States. For value-added products, the United States is Ontario's number one market. More than half of all the forest products in Ontario are exported.

Members need to understand why we, on this side of the House, use the term “crisis” when we refer to the state of the Canadian softwood lumber industry when there is a dispute of any kind. Those products' largest export market is the United States. Exports from Ontario have increased by more than 100% since 1991.

The United States construction industry is worth nearly \$700 billion U.S. every year. It will continue to be the focus of Canadian wood product shipments. It is imperative that the government respect the special trading relationship we have had in the past, and prioritize the need to manage trade.

It is time to see if all the toadying up to the extremists in the anti-forestry lobby will stop, now that a new NAFTA agreement has been signed.

• (1355)

To the credit of our own forestry industry, Ontario lumber mills will continue to invest in their operations in the absence of support from the government.

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, it is important to recognize that this has been debated, talked about and consulted on for over two years now. Whether it is premiers, non-profit groups, unions or business leaders, there has been a great deal of consultation throughout the country over the last two years, ultimately culminating in what I believe is a good, sound agreement that will secure markets in the future and provide the types of jobs that Canadians expect.

Given the past record of this government in creating jobs for Canadians, over a million jobs in the last four years, I believe this is an agreement that is going to add more value to the Canadian economy. Would the member not agree?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I would like the member opposite to table that agreement, the draft, so we can look at it and evaluate it the way he has.

The greatest and growing input cost is the threat of ever-increasing carbon taxes to pay for the debt burden the government is placing on future prosperity. I do not see any intention whatsoever on

the part of the government to put forward the interests of the resource sector, which includes the softwood lumber industry. In Ontario, we saw how the Liberals kept on shrinking the footprint where we are allowed to forage for lumber and increased the input costs, including electricity, and now another tax.

The Liberals did not want the softwood lumber industry to be prosperous, and now those same individuals who bankrupted Ontario are in control in Ottawa.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member went through a lot about rural Canada, specifically her riding and some of the issues in Ontario. In British Columbia, the absence of a softwood lumber agreement is an issue. The government did not even put it in the mandate letters for the ministers responsible in 2015 or most recently in 2019.

I would simply ask the member if she believes the government is working, whether it is through this agreement or in other areas, for her constituents in the rural parts of her riding or against them.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, with everything the government has done to the resource sectors, be it oil and gas, mining or forestry, it has been the plan all along to just end them until they are no longer in existence. Every year more fall by the wayside. Whether it is this trade agreement or whatever the parliamentary secretary across the way said the government has on the way, when it is before us, we will have a look at it.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 1:59 p.m. and pursuant to the order made earlier today, the motion is deemed to have been put and the recorded division is deemed to have been demanded and deferred until later this day, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in January I visited the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, where 900,000 people, the population of Mississauga, are crammed into 34 small camps. There are 500,000 children there. About 60 babies are born each day. It is the largest refugee response in the world.

The camps are going into their third monsoon season. Flood control and sanitation systems have been built, and food, water and medical care are being provided. More good news came in the form of the recent ICJ ruling and Bangladesh's decision to allow better education programming.

I thank the Government of Bangladesh and the local host community, the Government of Canada and my host, World Vision, for their leadership. Our special envoy, Bob Rae, is doing extraordinary work and we have an amazing team of public servants on the ground. However, the future remains uncertain for the Rohingya.

I ask my colleagues in this House to be their champions, to explain to their constituents why Canada has taken a leadership role and to help ensure that the children in Cox's Bazar will have a much brighter future.

* * *

● (1400)

DONNA HORNING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to inform the House of the sombre news of the sudden passing of Donna Horning in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country.

Donna was an active member of our community. She was the former president and founding member of the Kelowna-Kasugai Sister City Association and former member of the Kelowna-Veendam Sister City Association. Donna also volunteered extensively in many political venues and was a strong woman of principle with a big heart.

She was the wife of Al Horning, who served our community in office at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. He was a fellow member of this House in the 39th Parliament. Donna and Al were teenage sweethearts and had three children in their 59-year marriage.

Donna's celebration of life will take place on April 18, at 1 p.m., at Rutland Centennial Hall on what would have been the Hornings' 60th anniversary.

I extend my sincere condolences to Al and his family during this difficult time and ask my colleagues in this House to join me in doing so as well.

* * *

MANITOBA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, 1870 was a special year. It is the year Manitoba joined Confederation. That is 150 years ago.

When I think of Manitoba, I think of miles and miles of canola and wheat fields. I think of the polar bears and beluga whales around Churchill. I think of communities like Neepawa, Flin Flon and my home city of Winnipeg. I think of Portage and Main and all those historic events that have taken place there.

I think of an economy that is diversified, of electric buses or the best milk production in the world.

Statements by Members

Most importantly, it is the people who make up the province of Manitoba: the indigenous people who were the first ones there, the individuals with French and English roots and the Ukrainian, Filipino, Punjabi or Indian heritage communities. It is that multicultural fabric that makes Manitoba the great province it is.

I encourage all Manitobans across Canada to recognize this year as a special year and take a moment to reflect on the wonderful province of Manitoba.

* * *

[Translation]

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois wishes to mark this Teacher Appreciation Week by acknowledging the work of all teachers in Quebec who are dedicated to educating our children, year after year. This year, the theme of Teacher Appreciation Week is “1,216,791 Reasons to Thank a Teacher!” That is the exact number of students currently registered in our schools in Quebec. It is an appropriate theme because students are the priority every single day. I was a teacher for nearly 30 years, so I know how much heart and energy these women and men invest in every child. It is a privilege. It is also a great responsibility to guide young people in the community along their path to success.

That is why, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I am pleased to say a big thank you to our teachers.

* * *

● (1405)

FAMILY OUTREACH CENTRE IN VAUDREUIL-SOULANGES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House today to recognize the work of an important organization in my riding, the Maison de la Famille Vaudreuil-Soulanges. This organization is a pillar for families in my community. It offers needs-based services, often free of charge, to ensure the optimal development of our children at every stage of their childhood.

I was honoured to be chosen as this year's honorary president for the fifth edition of “À Table en Famille”. This event will help ensure that thousands of families in Vaudreuil—Soulanges can continue to access high-quality services that support parents and kids.

I invite everyone in Vaudreuil—Soulanges to join me, my family, France Pomminville, Diane Lyonnais, and the entire Maison de la Famille Vaudreuil-Soulanges team at this fun event on February 16.

*Statements by Members**[English]***TECK FRONTIER MINE PROJECT**

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of our colleagues have been spreading much misinformation about the Teck Frontier mine project, so I want to take a moment to correct some of it.

Teck is indeed building a 260,000 barrel-a-day mine in northern Alberta and will invest \$20 billion to build it. Alberta needs new investment and the 7,000 construction jobs, as well as the 2,500 jobs in operations that will follow.

I will mention some facts that have been left out. It has one of the lowest water use intensities in the oil sands. It has lower carbon emissions intensity than about half of the oil currently refined in the U.S. It is reclaiming land as mining progresses. It has a leading-edge tailings management system.

Do members know that 14 local indigenous communities are supportive of the project?

The government should approve this project and let us get on with shipping Canadian energy to the world.

* * *

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the international day for the elimination of female genital mutilation. FGM/C is a violation of human rights, affecting more than 200 million women and girls worldwide.

In 1997 the Liberal government criminalized FGM in Canada. Now we are engaging with other nations, donors, UN organizations and civil society to take action to eliminate FGM globally. Canada has co-sponsored the African Union's UN General Assembly resolution entitled "Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation". We currently fund projects in Benin, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Iraq through community-based education and awareness campaigns.

More needs to be done. Ending FGM requires governments to act with legislation to protect the human rights of women and girls, with policies that empower them and, most importantly, in this year of Beijing+25, to remember that women's rights are human rights.

* * *

HUGS4HOPE

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 27, the town of Newmarket came together as a community for Hugs4Hope. I am proud to have been part of a team of eight people who hugged for one hour with our neighbours, friends and family, exchanging over 4,008 hugs. The event was a huge success, raising over \$6,000 for two incredible charities: Youth Speak, which serves youth with mental health and addiction issues, and Global Strides, which supports an orphanage and impoverished children in Kenya.

I am thrilled to announce to the House that on January 30, we received confirmation that Hugs4Hope Newmarket broke the Guinness

world record for the most hugs from eight people in 60 minutes.

I would like to congratulate the participants of Hugs4Hope Newmarket on their remarkable achievement. I thank them for reminding us that the best place in the world is inside a hug.

I invite my colleagues here in the House to stand up and give someone a hug.

* * *

*[Translation]***ENERGY SECURITY**

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's energy sector stakeholders should work together as part of a large-scale national consultation sponsored by the federal government. We must have the courage to talk about the energy sector—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order. It is wonderful to see everyone taking the advice about hugging and it is a great way to start off before Oral Questions, but I will ask one favour. Would members mind hugging in silence, please?

[Translation]

The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

● (1410)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I believe that Canada's entire energy sector should participate in a broad national consultation sponsored by the federal government.

We must have the courage to talk about the energy sector and pull our heads out of the sand. Unfortunately, this is currently a divisive issue in Canada whereas it should be uniting Canadians across the country.

I invite all parliamentarians from all parties to initiate these discussions with every stakeholder in the energy sector in order to establish a serious strategy for Canada's energy future by creating a national commission on energy security. Our Canadian approach to energy will guide the economic destiny of future generations and how we position ourselves on the world stage.

Let us take up our responsibilities as legislators and ask the government to show leadership for the well-being of Canadians and for our economic prosperity.

* * *

JACQUES MÉNARD

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a sad note, I rise today to honour a legend of Canada's financial sector.

We have learned that Quebec banker Jacques Ménard passed away Tuesday evening.

Mr. Ménard held many executive positions over the years and chaired the board of directors of Hydro-Québec, the Montreal Stock Exchange, Trans-Canada Options Corporation and the Investment Dealers Association of Canada.

Mr. Ménard was president of the Bank of Montreal. He was awarded the Order of Canada in 1995. He was a sports fan and the president of the Montreal Expos baseball team.

Jacques Ménard's legacy will live on in Quebec and Canada.

I extend my condolences and those of the House to his family.

* * *

[English]

TECK FRONTIER MINE PROJECT

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Teck Resources has a \$20-billion project in a struggling region of Canada, a project that will provide 7,000 jobs during construction and over 2,500 jobs for decades to come. Despite these benefits, the media is reporting that behind a veil of secrecy, Liberal MPs are pushing the government to block the Teck mine. The Liberal member for Beaches—East York and the parliamentary secretary for industry are actively lobbying the Prime Minister to block these new jobs.

When it came to SNC, the Prime Minister was willing to interfere with a criminal prosecution to make sure there are good jobs across Canada. When Liberal MPs stood in his way, he booted them from cabinet and caucus.

It is time for the Prime Minister to tell his backbenchers to support our resource sector and get cabinet to approve this critical project today.

* * *

PETER HOGG

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for nearly 50 years, Dr. Peter Hogg was a leading scholar of Canadian constitutional law. Professor and later dean at Osgoode Hall Law School, Professor Hogg was known in this precinct for his wise advice to members on both sides of the House and his clear testimony at committees.

His major treatise, *Constitutional Law of Canada*, remains the definitive source on the topic, owing to clear and careful reading of judicial case law and its searing insight into jurisprudence. His many accolades include the Hnatyshyn Award, named for the distinguished former governor general and minister of justice who once sat in the House.

Dr. Hogg recognized throughout his long career that the responsibility for advancing and protecting the rule of law, one of the great inheritances we share as Canadians, lies here in the House.

As his adopted country, Canada benefited from Dr. Peter Hogg's lifetime of scholarship and service.

Statements by Members

PENTICTON ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to highlight two initiatives in my hometown of Penticton that have really made a difference to community arts and culture.

One is Peach City Radio, CFUZ, a community radio station that on February 1 celebrated its first anniversary of being on the airwaves. In this age of big corporate ownership of our media, it is wonderful to have a strong local voice on air that is run entirely by talented and dedicated volunteers.

Second, I want to give a shout-out to The Dream Café, a small but mighty place that CBC Radio has ranked as one of the top three music venues in this country. Founded by the dynamic pair of Pierre Couture and Debra Rice, the Dream now operates as a co-operative and hosts the best of Canadian and international music. Some of the top names in music have played regularly in this beautiful café: Jeff Healey, Michael Kaeshammer, Judy Collins, Murray McLaughlin, Jann Arden and more.

If people want good music and good radio, come to Penticton.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

DANIEL GAGNÉ

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Daniel Gagné, who left us in the early morning hours of February 4.

Daniel Gagné was an adviser, mentor and supporter on my election campaign. He was a man of conviction and honour.

He led an extraordinary life, having tirelessly dedicated 50 years to social, cultural, artistic and political life in his home region of Abitibi.

He was also close to indigenous communities. They too have lost a friend.

Daniel was a painter, poet, singer, sculptor, writer, photographer and archivist, and he lived his life boldly and tenaciously. He used his art to add to the collective memory, capturing the visual memory of the landscapes of his native Abitibi, the aural and musical memory of feelings and the mood of the times, and the memory of a heritage, an identity, a country, the land and human solidarity. He will not be forgotten by anyone who knew him.

I offer my condolences to his wife, Nicole, and his family.

Rest in peace, my dear Daniel.

Oral Questions

[English]

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Conservatives are hearing the legitimate concerns of Canadians from coast to coast to coast on the actions of the People's Republic of China toward its people and the world. Between trade sanctions, arbitrary detention of Canadians, crackdowns on legitimate protests and concentration camps for Uighur Muslims, Canadians are questioning our current relationship with China.

Last night at the Canada-China committee, we heard from Ambassador Barton, who admitted the relationship was broken, yet he gave us very little reassurance that the Liberal government has a coherent plan or strategy. Even the Minister of Foreign Affairs said there is no framework for dealing with China. The ambassador expressed little knowledge on critical topics such as the situation in the South China Sea or a long-outstanding consular case. The government is dangerously naive when it comes to dealing with China.

Canadians expect a framework that protects their interests and human rights around the globe. People can rest assured there are people in this Parliament who hear their concerns and will fight for human rights and the rule of law.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 11 marks the United Nations International Day of Women and Girls in Science. It is past time to celebrate the amazing women and girls who have chosen to pursue science, technology, engineering, mathematics and innovation, to end the discrimination they often face, to recognize their remarkable accomplishments and to ensure they receive equal pay for work of equal value.

Canada has innumerable women explorers, leaders, pioneers and scientists, from astronaut Dr. Roberta Bondar to Canada's most recent Nobel Prize winner, Professor Donna Strickland, only the third woman in history to win the prize in physics. Today and always let us ensure we live up to Canada's new dimensions charter and that we measure progress.

I hope my sisters in science know they have a champion and an ally. Let us inspire the next generation to discover, because more than ever, the world needs science and science needs women.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are still concerned about the Liberal plan to set up a panel that censors media content.

Although the Liberals deny it, the plan clearly recommends that the government have the power to penalize media that it does not trust.

Twitter, Facebook and Reddit could all be subject to government censorship of their online content.

Will the Prime Minister promise not to implement the recommendations that seek to censor the Internet?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will always support a strong, free and independent press. The report that we received from an independent panel specifically proposes that news media be exempted from licensing requirements.

Let me be clear, in case we have not already been clear. We do not intend to impose licensing requirements on news organizations, nor will we regulate their content.

● (1420)

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a very narrow rejection of just one recommendation. There are multiple recommendations in this report that propose codes of conduct, regulations and fines for other types of media content and other types of platform.

Could the Prime Minister expand beyond this narrow rejection of just the question of licensing? It goes beyond that to other forms of codes of conduct, other aspects of this report that would restrict free speech.

Will the minister reject all those recommendations?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): I said it in French, Mr. Speaker, and I will say it in English. Our government believes in a strong, free and independent press. The report we received from an independent panel specifically exempted news media from licensing requirements.

Our government has said, very clearly, that we will not impose licensing requirements on news organizations. Nor will we regulate news content.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact that he cannot go beyond that one narrow rejection and talk about the other forms of restrictions on free speech is very telling. We are not just talking about the independence of the press. We are talking about every single Canadian's right to free speech.

This report is also proposing codes of conduct and letting government determine “trusted content”. When the Minister of Canadian Heritage cannot even be trusted to get his answers straight, why would Canadians want him to tell them which sites can be trusted?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the recommendations from this independent panel. I will be happy to sit with members of the opposition to look at the bill we will put on the table in the very near future.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said something in the House that simply was not true. He said that in the TMX case, the court had ruled that free, prior and informed consent did not constitute a veto. It did no such thing. The court ruled that the duty to consult did not grant a veto.

A United Nations declaration that the Liberal government is planning on proposing will in fact require free, prior and informed consent and will give one group that does not want to proceed with a project an effective veto.

Will the Liberals abandon their plans to implement this UN resolution?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to receive in my mandate letter from the Prime Minister the task of implementing UNDRIP into our Canadian law. One of our priorities therefore is to introduce co-developed legislation to implement UNDRIP by the end of 2020.

We will be engaging with Canadians, indigenous and non-indigenous, and working in partnership in particular with indigenous peoples to make the declaration a reality in Canada as a framework for reconciliation.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the court ruling was very clear. The dozens and dozens of first nations communities that supported this project have a right to see it proceed. It is the government's plan to implement a United Nations resolution that would require free, prior and informed consent from every single group.

Could the minister explain what happens if one of those communities withholds its consent?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, implementing UNDRIP is a priority for this government. Free, prior and informed consent is one of the key provisions of that.

I would ask that the leader of the opposition look at what has happened with Bill 41 in British Columbia with the implementation of UNDRIP and in which free, prior and informed consent is not considered to be a veto.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said during the election that he was not going to challenge Bill 21 at this time. The moment came yesterday with Quebec taxpayers' money.

François Legault said this morning that the Canadian Prime Minister was insulting Quebecers. He said, “This is not insignificant. A national government that passed legislation with the support of the Quebec nation is being sued.”

My question is simple. Does the government acknowledge that it should not challenge Bill 21 with Quebecers' money, against the will of Quebecers?

• (1425)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the court challenges program is a fully independent, non-political program.

We have no role to play in allocating funds or defining the eligibility criteria for the program. The decision is made by a committee of independent experts who ensure that the program is administered impartially and independently.

It seems to me that my colleague should understand the concept of independence.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, responding to the Bloc, the Minister of Justice issued an invitation to challenge Bill 21.

At 2:27 p.m., he said, “There are Quebecers who are currently challenging the bill in court, and that is the right forum.” The next day, we learned that the English Montreal School Board is challenging Bill 21 with money from Ottawa.

It is your money, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister finally be transparent and tell us whether he supports the Bill 21 challenge, no matter who it is from?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times, bill 21 is a bill that was introduced by the Government of Quebec in the National Assembly and debated by Quebec MNAs. It is now law in Quebec. It is being challenged by other Quebecers. We are simply monitoring the situation.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, nearly 50 workers have lost their jobs. On top of that, they lost their benefits because the government refuses to change the bankruptcy laws.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Barrymore Furniture has filed for bankruptcy, which means nearly 50 workers will lose their jobs. They will also lose their benefits. For some workers, that means losing as much as \$50,000.

When will the Liberal government stop prioritizing bankers and financiers and instead change the bankruptcy laws to protect working people and their families?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite has raised, we know that individuals are going through some difficult times, particularly individuals who are subjected to the bankruptcy law. That is why, in budget 2019, we took important steps to make insolvency proceedings fair and more transparent, like ensuring better oversight over corporate behaviour.

We understand that protecting Canadians and Canadian workers is a priority, and we will continue to do that.

* * *

*[Translation]***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we asked the Liberal government how much it has spent on taking first nations children to court.

The Liberals replied that it has spent \$5 million. When Cindy Blackstock asked the same question, however, they said it was over \$8 million.

[English]

How much is it? How much is the government spending on taking first nations kids to court? Is it over \$5 million, as they told us, or is it over \$8 million, as they told Cindy Blackstock?

My question is simple. How much money is the Liberal government spending on taking first nations kids to court?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully agree that we must compensate first nations children harmed by past government policies. The Department of Justice has a consistent formula that officials use to calculate legal costs in all these matters.

As we have said previously, our focus remains on finding a fair and equitable solution for first nations children who have been negatively impacted by child and family policies. That remains the same.

* * *

*[Translation]***CONSULAR AFFAIRS**

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that two Canadians contracted the coronavirus on a cruise ship with 3,700 passengers, including 251 Canadians, in Japan. Among them are Diane and Bernard Ménard, a Gatineau couple who are currently confined to their cabin. In their case, the problem is that her health could deteriorate since she has run out of medication for her diabetes. Can the Prime Minister tell

us whether he has a plan to look after our Canadians who are in a vulnerable situation on that ship?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. Naturally, this is a situation that we are monitoring very closely. As members know, the health and safety of Canadians abroad is a high priority. We are aware that we have 255 Canadians on that ship. Consular authorities are currently in contact with each of those individuals to provide any consular assistance they may require. We will always be there for Canadians abroad.

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday during question period, the Prime Minister called Ambassador Dominic Barton a deep expert in how we would move forward on improving the situation of Canadians in China. However, when asked about the detention of Huseyin Celil, Barton claimed that Celil was not a Canadian citizen. Celil's citizenship is not acknowledged by China because he happens to be a dual national, but a Canadian is a Canadian.

Does the Prime Minister still have confidence in his ambassador and will he set the ambassador straight about Mr. Celil's citizenship?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians would agree that a Canadian is a Canadian. I am happy that on this side of the House we understand that.

We are deeply concerned about Mr. Celil and we will continue to raise his case at every opportunity at senior levels. We will continue to call upon the Chinese government to give Canadian officials consular access in order to determine his well-being and offer him assistance, like we will do for every Canadian.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was not about buzzwords; it was about citizenship. The ambassador told the committee yesterday that this Canadian citizen, who has been in prison for 15 years and has never met his youngest son, was not a Canadian citizen.

Could the minister stand in his place, at the very least, and set the ambassador straight; tell us that he believes Mr. Celil to be a citizen; and that he will call the ambassador and tell him to recognize, publicly, the Canadian citizenship of this long-detained Canadian?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in the House recognizes that Mr. Celil is a Canadian. We will always stand up for Canadians. We recognize he is a Canadian. We will provide consular assistance. We will continue to assist him, like we would do for every Canadian around the world.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said that law enforcement officers could not seize gun licences. He is wrong. An RPAL or PAL is invalidated when it is seized by police for public safety and that person has no ability at law to possess or acquire any firearm.

Will the Prime Minister now admit that Canada has long had legal options to seize firearms in public safety scenarios, and apologize for misleading the House yesterday?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that red-flag laws save lives. I have actually used those sections of the Criminal Code to seize firearms in these dangerous situations. I can also advise the House of the limitations of those laws.

We know that the average assaulted woman in Canada is assaulted 25 times in a domestic relationship before the police are called. Seventy per cent of the firearm deaths in the country are suicides. We know there are people who are expounding violence and hatred against visible minorities.

These laws will empower Canadians to take action to render a potentially deadly situation safe.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should apply the existing laws, because he is certainly not familiar with the law. The law is clear that the police can suspend a firearms licence, and they can also prevent someone with mental health issues or someone involved in criminal activities from acquiring firearms.

The law is clear, so nothing needs to be changed. Why go after law-abiding citizens instead of tackling street gangs, which are the real problem?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the face of the constant threat that women in abusive relationships face from the potential of firearms in the home and the individuals who lose their lives to suicide, for anyone to suggest nothing needs to be done is unconscionable.

Red flag laws have overwhelmingly proven their effectiveness because they empower more than just the limited authority of the police; they give victims, families, teachers, doctors and elders the opportunity to intervene and to keep people safe.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I know some of us in the House have short memories, but the way it works is that members ask questions and then gets the answers. Whether members like the answers is irrelevant. They should not be shouting back and forth while answers are being given or questions are being asked. I want to remind everyone in case that principle has been forgotten.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

• (1435)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): If you recall, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I rose to point out that the Prime Minister was misleading Canadians on firearms. Public safety should not be a political game. It is our duty in this House to get the facts right to protect Canadians. The current law is very clear. If a firearms owner poses a threat, authorities can confiscate firearms and suspend licences, preventing further purchases or possession. If the public safety minister actually had a PAL or an RPAL, he would already know this instead of trying to develop what he is doing.

Will the Prime Minister rise, apologize and correct the record?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will admit I am not a recreational firearm user, but I have actually enforced and used these laws to keep communities and people safe.

What I can say is the authority that exists in law—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Okay, please continue.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, the laws that are currently available that enable law enforcement to seize firearms and to revoke licences are limited in their application and it is only in the circumstances where reasonable, probable grounds exist and only in circumstances where a seizure of a firearm has taken place that a firearm can be revoked. The practical application of that is that until there has been a return to the justice and that information is conveyed to the chief firearms officer, that licence can be—

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago, we learned that the English Montreal School Board has renounced government funding for its challenge to Bill 21. Even the school board thinks this situation is absurd. I hope the Liberals will realize the absurdity of the situation.

Will the government commit to stop all types of funding for future challenges to Bill 21? It needs to leave Quebecers alone.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague of some of the things the Bloc Québécois has said about the court challenges program, which include the following, and I quote: “That instrument has proven itself and has made it possible not only to make gains, but also to have rights that were theirs recognized.”

Also with regard to the same program, the Bloc Québécois said that it was a major tool for communities to combat assimilation and loss of language.

Oral Questions

Finally, according to the Bloc Québécois, the court challenges program is an ally in the fight against anyone trying to destroy the francophone minority fibre in this country.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, using our tax dollars to sponsor a legal challenge of Bill 21 is illegitimate. It is probably also against the rules.

To get funding from the court challenges program, the English Montreal School Board had to prove that it needed financial support. The board's budget is \$365 million, \$320 million of which comes directly from the Government of Quebec.

How was the English Montreal School Board able to get sponsorship to take the Government of Quebec to court?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct one thing.

The school board never got a penny. What was said is not true. My colleague also asked us to leave Quebecers alone. I am just as much a Quebecer as he is. Quebec MPs are just as much Quebecers as he is. Disagreeing does not make anyone less of a Quebecer.

If they want to talk about the court challenges program, I should point out that the Bloc said abolishing the court challenges program would be against the law because the program is an essential tool that exists to ensure equality. The Bloc said that abolishing the program would violate constitutional principles and so on.

It was good then; why is it bad now?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the problem is not the court challenges program. It is a good program, except it is supposed to help those who really need it, not an organization that has a \$365 million budget. Can we agree on that?

The government wants to give the English Montreal School Board \$125,000 and sponsor a partisan lawsuit against Bill 21.

Now that we know that federal funds are available to challenge secularism, we want to know what other organizations received funding. Which ones?

• (1440)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague shared some erroneous information. The English Montreal School Board has not received any funding from that program.

I never thought I would have to rise in the House and give a lesson on a concept as important as independence. Independence means having no connection to someone else, not being accountable, much like the court challenges program, which is independent. Sovereignty is when someone can do what they want, like the court challenges program, which is sovereign. Separation is when someone is far away, divided, separated, like the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Ethics Commissioner released his report saying that Liberal Joe Peschisolido chronically failed to take reasonable steps to prevent his non-compliance with the code's disclosure obligations.

It is not surprising, given the Prime Minister has been found in violation of the act six times himself. The profound lack of ethics in the Liberal caucus is astounding.

When will the Prime Minister order some remedial ethics courses for his government, and will he commit to take a front seat at the class?

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member in question is no longer in the House. I do not see what this has to do with the management of government.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nearly two months ago, I questioned the government about serious delays in federal funding for key infrastructure projects that have already received the approvals from the municipalities and the Ontario government. The House was assured at the time that there was a fund there and they were ready to help.

Councils are now wrapping up their 2020 budgets and need to issue tenders immediately, and still do not have an answer nine months later after submitting their application. This is so unnecessary.

Why does it need to take so long to get federal approval for projects that already have the support from every other level of government?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his concern for communities across the country.

When we invested over \$180 billion over the next 10 years to support communities, our colleagues across the aisle voted against it. When we ran on a commitment to invest in Canadians, they ran on a commitment to cut infrastructure.

We look forward to continuing our investments so that every community, small or large, can prosper.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, dairy processor Saputo is laying off 280 workers, including at a plant in Trenton right next to my riding. This comes after the Liberal government injected millions of dollars into this company.

Saputo is a billion-dollar company. It is hardly the family-run business the Minister of Agriculture said the government would help. Over and over, we see that well-connected Canadians are given access to government while hard-working Canadians are left out in the cold.

Can the minister tell us why the government is giving handouts to companies that are laying people off in the Bay of Quinte?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is sensitive to the concerns of Canadian farmers, and particularly dairy farmers. We have created various programs to help farmers and investors.

I am obviously very disappointed to learn that a large company like Saputo will be shutting down some facilities. Naturally, my thoughts are with the workers affected and their families. We will see what we are able to do.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada used to be recognized around the world as a country that took care of others. We punched above our weight in peacekeeping and poverty reduction.

However, thanks to Conservative and Liberal cuts, Canada has lost that leadership and we are now at the lowest we have been in over 50 years. For social, economic and diplomatic reasons, this is really bad.

When will the government commit to real, predictable dollar increases in our support of the poorest and most vulnerable people on this planet? When will the Prime Minister actually be back?

• (1445)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has considerable experience in international development. I would like to acknowledge that this week is International Development Week, a chance for all of us to come together and celebrate our achievements in international development.

I am very proud of the work that we have done introducing the feminist international assistance policy, which has placed Canada in a leadership role when it comes to gender equality, sexual health and reproductive rights on the world stage. I am also extremely proud of our commitment to Thrive, which is working with civil society organizations to make Canada a leader in global health.

Canada is there, and we are committed to helping the world.

Oral Questions

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning a terrifying accident shook the people of Guernsey, Saskatchewan. This comes just a year after the derailment of a CP train in B.C. that killed Dylan Paradis, Andrew Dockrell and Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer.

What have we learned from Lac-Mégantic?

The Transportation Safety Board is limited. The rail companies continue to put profits over the lives of workers and the safety of communities. Deregulation has proven deadly.

What is the government doing to ensure justice for the three men killed, and safety for communities like Guernsey and so many others across Canada?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are indeed very concerned about the derailment that occurred just outside of Guernsey, Saskatchewan this morning.

That is why I put in place a ministerial order that is going to reduce the speed of trains carrying dangerous goods for the next 30 days, as we examine why these derailments are happening. As members know, this is the second derailment in the area in the last two months.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year Canada is hosting its first world circular economy forum in Toronto, where industry leaders will have important discussions on building a circular economy that benefits people, the economy and the environment.

I know Guelph and Wellington County will be there promoting our smart cities initiative that is focused on creating Canada's first circular food economy.

Would the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please speak to the significance of this year's international forum?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Guelph for his advocacy on strong climate action.

This year's world circular economy forum will be the first in North America, and it is an opportunity for Canada to showcase its talent on the world stage. Canadian companies are at the forefront of clean technology, and many of our homegrown innovations involve zero waste.

Oral Questions

By bringing together business and thought leaders from around the world, and sharing innovative ideas that help us reuse, remanufacture and create new economic opportunities, Canada can be a leader in clean jobs of the future.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following the closure of the smelter in Belledune, New Brunswick, the province is hoping that a \$1-billion iron ore processing facility will fill the void. It is expected to create 1,300 short-term jobs and more than 200 permanent jobs.

The Liberals claim that the environment and the economy go hand in hand, but they constantly throw up roadblocks that hurt Atlantic provinces. It is continuously “no” with the government, and New Brunswick deserves a “yes”.

Will the Liberals work with the Province of New Brunswick and support the Maritime Iron project, and the hundreds of jobs it will create?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the economy and the environment certainly need to go together as we move forward. The hon. member should know that with the project in question, the issue is the emissions of greenhouse gases, which is entirely a provincial issue.

Premier Higgs has a climate plan and a target, and it is up to him to determine how he is going to meet those emissions targets.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said one of his most important roles was to protect jobs. Did he mean only certain jobs were worthy of his protection?

He has failed to acknowledge the softwood lumber crisis in British Columbia. He did not put it in the mandate letter for the minister. The so-called softwood lumber action plan expired a while ago, and a lot of the money got doled out to provinces that were not even suffering from softwood tariffs.

Would the minister stand up today and commit to helping rural Canadians impacted by this forestry crisis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo is from B.C., I would like to thank Premier Horgan, with whom I spoke with at length yesterday about a trip I am making to Washington tomorrow to work on softwood lumber, NAFTA, aluminum and other issues.

Premier Horgan worked closely with our federal government. Softwood lumber is a priority, and I want to congratulate B.C. producers on the important recent Department of Commerce ruling, which has confirmed, as we have long said, the fairness of our softwood lumber industry.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is all well and good, but the problem is that the lumber industry is not concentrated exclusively out west. It operates across Canada. In Quebec, it represents 60,000 jobs and an \$18-billion economy. That is a lot of money. The new NAFTA or NAFTA 0.5 negotiations yielded nothing for lumber workers.

I would like the minister to explain why nothing was done. Tomorrow, can she guarantee Canadian workers that the discussions will bear fruit for once?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for our hon. colleague, but I must say that he is wrong. The new NAFTA gives a lot to the softwood industry. It is vital for the softwood lumber industry because it gave us chapter 19, which is crucial for the softwood lumber industry. The new NAFTA also guarantees a free market for softwood lumber. For that reason, I urge the Conservatives not to bicker, and to support the ratification of the agreement.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Teck Frontier project represents an investment of \$20.6 billion in northern Alberta's economy. Ten thousand jobs depend on this decision. If reconciliation with first nations means something, surely it means saying yes to economic development for indigenous peoples. Premier Jason Kenney said that if the Liberal government does not say yes to this project, it means the end of the oil sands and thousands of jobs in Alberta.

Is the Liberal government afraid to say yes to Premier Jason Kenney when it comes to the Teck Frontier project?

[English]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians elected this government to protect the environment, to take climate action, to grow the economy and to advance reconciliation. They also expect this government to oversee fair and thorough environmental assessments.

This is a major project that is under active consideration by our government. Under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the decision on this project must be made before the end of February. The government will consider a range of factors, including economic and environmental impacts, in making a decision.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking the government to be transparent since the spring, but it is no use. The government is dilly-dallying, hedging and avoiding the issue. It is incapable of being clear.

The Minister of Justice keeps expressing his opposition to Bill 21, and this week, he even invited Quebecers to challenge it in court.

Will the Minister of Justice be clear and commit to not using Quebecers' money to challenge a Quebec law that is broadly supported by Quebecers?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been extremely clear in that regard. Bill 21 was introduced and debated in the Quebec National Assembly. It was passed by the Quebec National Assembly, and so it is now a Quebec law. It is currently being challenged by other Quebecers, and we are following the situation with considerable interest. Period.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it feels like we are facing one of those committees where no one has seen or heard anything. They may be in the government, but they do not know anything that is going on.

The Minister of Justice issued an invitation to challenge Bill 21. He said, and I quote, “that is the right forum”.

One group did so. Ottawa gave them some money, but the government is telling us it had nothing to do with it.

The Liberals must think we are pretty stupid.

Can the minister perhaps tell us whether his government intends to give more money to other groups, in any way, through any program, so they can challenge a law that was passed legitimately by Quebec's elected representatives?

My question is for the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tearing one's shirt in anger only helps the shirt industry. There are some shirtmakers in my riding, actually. Before getting worked up, my colleague should get the facts straight. No money has gone to the school board. That is a fact. The committee is independent. That is another fact. Bill 21 was debated and passed in the National Assembly, and it has since been challenged by others. That is a fact too. We are simply monitoring the situation.

* * *

● (1455)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from October 11 to 14, 2019, the public servants who work at 70 Crémazie Street in Gatineau were gobsmacked to learn they would have to work from home while the entire building was treated for bedbugs. This operation cost Canadian taxpayers more than \$300,000.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of Public Services and Procurement assure the House that protocols have been followed to prevent further infestations, for the sake of our public servants and Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government takes the well-being of its employees very seriously.

Public Services and Procurement Canada continues to work closely with the building owners and federal departments to prevent any future pest-related incidents.

* * *

[English]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Liberal government does not understand basic economics. When a company raises its prices, consumers look to other suppliers. This is the case for Canada Post, which just raised the price of stamps.

With volumes declining and costs to Canadians and Canada's small and medium-sized businesses increasing, what is the minister's plan for Canada Post to attain financial sustainability?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced a new vision for Canada Post that puts service front and centre and fulfills our platform commitment.

Part of that vision includes reinvesting in Canada Post's services and innovations. A renewed Canada Post will provide high-quality service at a reasonable price to Canadians, no matter where they live. We look forward to working with the members opposite to resolve any further issues.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that her mandate letter calls on her to keep Canada Post services “at a reasonable price.” Raising postage rates is clearly not a way to do that.

The most recent Canada Post annual report shows an increase of 12% in the deferred revenue related to stamps and other postage. Can the minister explain this change?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken immediate actions to support our new service first vision, including terminating the community mailbox conversion program, enhancing the accessible delivery program, reinvesting profits in Canada Post services and innovations instead of paying them as a dividend to the federal government, promoting Canada Post remittance services and renewing Canada Post's leadership.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, housing in my riding is at a crisis level. Forty-three per cent of all homes in Northwest Territories either have affordability, suitability or adequacy issues. Although our government has invested significantly in housing, we know more needs to be done. There is immediate need to invest directly in housing in order to improve the lives of indigenous people in the Northwest Territories.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update us on what is being done to address this issue?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his leadership and strong advocacy on this important issue.

Our government is committed to supporting the housing needs of northern communities and indigenous peoples living in the north. That is why we have signed bilateral housing agreements with all three territorial governments and are investing \$639 million in affordable housing through the national housing strategy. In addition to that, we are committed to investing \$1.5 billion in affordable housing projects in Métis, first nations and Inuit communities.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sometimes the government gets a taste of its own medicine when dealing with government red tape. From papers tabled by the current government, we have learned that completion of a simple project to build needed jetties at CFB Esquimalt has been delayed for four years because of new government regulations.

Can the Minister of Public Services and Procurement tell this House what measures are being taken to deal with these regulations imposed by Fisheries and Oceans that are delaying yet another government project?

• (1500)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is creating economic benefits and good middle-class jobs for Canadians from coast to coast. Our record includes a fully costed defence policy, launch of future fighter jet procurement for 88 modern fighters and delivery of the first interim jets. Ninety per cent of our procurements are delivered within their planned scope and budget—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. minister for a second.

There seems to be some chatter. I am not even sure if it is heckling anymore. There seems to be a disinterested group in the House on both sides. If hon. members are going to talk among themselves while questions are being asked and answered, please try to whisper and not talk very loudly.

I will ask the hon. minister to please proceed.

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, from boots to ships, we will continue to ensure Canada's military is well equipped.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new report shows that under the current Liberal government,

Canada has dropped to its lowest level in at least a decade in a global index of corruption. This must be part of what the Prime Minister means when he claims that Canada is back.

Can the Minister of Public Services and Procurement tell Canadians how many companies are listed as suppliers with administrative agreements under the federal government's integrity regime, and which ones are they?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is modernizing procurement practices so they are simpler, require less paperwork and support members of our communities who have been historically left out. We are taking action by implementing a simplified contract model to remove barriers to participation and by improving existing procurement tools, and we will continue to work with the members opposite to further this initiative.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a defence contractor doing business with Canada was recently a victim of a ransomware cyber-attack, exposing the Government of Canada and its sensitive operational and commercial information. Defence procurement contains highly classified military requirements and capabilities, yet Public Services and Procurement Canada simply said that it was going to do better.

When classified material falls into the hands of hackers, one does not get a do-over. How can Canadians trust the procurement minister and these Liberals with the protection of Canada's highly classified defence and security information?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our security, we take things extremely seriously. If the member opposite—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt, but I am having a hard time hearing.

The hon. minister can continue.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we take our security extremely seriously. When it comes to our procurement, we take the utmost care in making sure we look at cyber-protection and we go through the proper requirements. The Communications Security Establishment is the agency that looks after this, and we have the right people to do this work to make sure we have the right safeguards for all our procurement.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in York Centre regularly share with me their deep concerns about the BDS movement and the alarming rise of anti-Semitism in Canada and around the world.

Last month, as part of the Governor General's delegation to the World Holocaust Forum in Israel and the Auschwitz commemoration in Poland, I had the opportunity to reaffirm Canada's strong resolve to fight anti-Semitism, including by formally adopting the IHRA definition.

With this in mind, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterate Canada's position on BDS?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for York Centre for his advocacy on this very important issue.

Canada is, and will always be, a steadfast ally of Israel. Canada remains very concerned about any effort to single out or isolate Israel internationally. Let me be firm and clear to all Canadians: We condemn BDS. As a country, we need to urgently address the resurgence of anti-Semitism at home and abroad. We will continue to stand with the Jewish community in Canada and around the world.

* * *

• (1505)

HEALTH

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the opioid crisis is getting so bad it is actually driving down life expectancy. In communities across my riding, first responders and families are dealing with compassion fatigue and burnout. We are at a breaking point.

The everyday problems associated with the crisis are a constant reminder of the failure of the Liberal government. Will it finally call this what it is, a national health emergency? Will the government work with my communities and communities across Canada to finally turn the tide on this crisis?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member's deep alarm and concern about the opioid crisis that has been in effect for many years, since before I was a politician. I certainly will work diligently with the member opposite to look at all solutions.

Let me just talk about the Liberal government's record on this, though. When we were first elected we restored harm reduction to the Canada drug policy after it had been removed by the Conservative government because we knew that when people are seeking harm reduction services, they want to live.

I am proud of our record on the work that we are doing. We have a tremendous amount more to do and I look forward to working with the member opposite and all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Government Orders

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, today's enforcement action in Wet'suwet'en territory was another humiliating stain on Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples. The Canadian Constitution and the United Nations recognize the rights and title of indigenous people. The Supreme Court recognizes the indigenous hereditary systems of governance. Nation-to-nation negotiations are the responsibility of the government.

Why has the government abandoned its duty and allowed the constitutional and legal rights of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs to be violated today?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is a crucial priority for our government and we are committed to renewing our relationship with indigenous people. We will continue with the necessary work of building partnerships based on rights, respect and co-operation. The commissioner of the RCMP is mandated to lead in the support of that site in a way that supports reconciliation, and we will continue to protect the constitutional rights to peaceful protest.

RCMP officers are and have been in regular communication with the Wet'suwet'en elected councils and hereditary chiefs, as well as with the protesters to promote a constructive dialogue aimed at peaceful resolutions.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the winners of the 2019 Arctic Inspiration Prize. These eight teams from across Canada's Arctic are recognized for their innovative projects to improve the quality of life in their communities. I am going to name all eight, and would ask members to withhold clapping until after I am done.

The winning teams are Northern Compass; Dehcho: River Journeys; Nunavut Law Program; Resilience Training and Healing Program; Kamajit Program; Baffin Youth Outdoor Education Project; Yukon Youth Healthcare Summit; and Trades of Tradition.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-UNITED STATES-MEXICO AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an act to implement the agreement between Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading of Bill C-4.

Call in the members.

*Government Orders**And the bells having rung:*

The Speaker: Before we go to the question, do we all know the rules?

• (1515)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 13)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison	Hutchings	Iacono
Albas	Alghabra	Jaczek	Jansen
Alleslev	Amos	Johns	Joly
Anand	Anandasangaree	Jones	Jordan
Arnold	Arseneault	Jowhari	Julian
Arya	Atwin	Kelloway	Kelly
Bachrach	Badawey	Kent	Khalid
Bagnell	Bains	Khera	Kitchen
Baker	Baldinelli	Kmiec	Koutrakis
Barlow	Barrett	Kram	Kurek
Battiste	Beech	Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Bendayan	Bennett	Kwan	Lake
Benzen	Berthold	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Bessette	Bezan	Lametti	Lamoureux
Bibeau	Bittle	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Blaikie	Blair	Lawrence	Lebouthillier
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Lefebvre	Lehoux
Block	Blois	Levitt	Lewis (Essex)
Boulerice	Bragdon	Liepert	Lightbound
Brassard	Bratina	Lloyd	Lobb
Brière	Calkins	Long	Longfield
Cannings	Carr	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lukiwski
Carrie	Casey	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
Chagger	Champagne	MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Chen	Chiu	Maguire	Maloney
Chong	Collins	Manly	Martel
Cooper	Cumming	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Dalton	Damoff	May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
Dancho	Davidson	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Davies	Delteall	McCrimmon	McGuinty
d'Entremont	Dhaliwal	McKay	McKenna
Dhillon	Diotte	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
Doherty	Dong	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Dowdall	Dreeshen	McPherson	Mendès
Drouin	Dubourg	Medicino	Miller
Duclos	Duguid	Monsef	Moore
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Morantz	Morneau
Duval	Dzerowicz	Morrison	Motz
Easter	Ehsassi	Murray	Nater
El-Khoury	Ellis	O'Connell	Oliphant
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Petitpas Taylor	Poilievre
Fast	Fergus	Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Fillmore	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan	Raves	Regan
Fisher	Fonseca	Reid	Rempel Garner
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Richards	Robillard
Fraser	Freeland	Rodriguez	Rogers
Fry	Gallant	Romanado	Ruff
Garneau	Garrison	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sahota (Brampton North)
Gazan	Généreux	Saini	Sajjan
Genuis	Gerretsen	Samson	Sangha
Godin	Gould	Sarai	Saroya
Gourde	Gray	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Green	Guilbeault	Schiefke	Schmale
Hajdu	Hallan	Schulte	Seeback
Hardie	Harris	Serré	Sgro
Holland	Housefather	Shanahan	Sheehan
Hughes	Hussen	Shields	Shin
		Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
		Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
		Simms	Singh
		Sorbara	Soroka
		Spengemann	Stanton
		Steinley	Strahl
		Stubbs	Sweet
		Tabbara	Tochor
		Turnbull	Uppal
		Van Bynen	van Koeverden
		Van Popta	Vandal
		Vandenbeld	Vaughan
		Vidal	Viersen
		Virani	Vis

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Yip
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Webber
Williamson
Young
Zahid
Zimmer

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Desilets
Gaudreau
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

• (1520)

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by nine minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I thought that a point of order about question period had to be raised immediately afterwards. Please let me know if I was wrong.

In any case, during question period, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan claimed that the Canadian ambassador to China said yesterday that Mr. Celil is not a Canadian citizen.

I urge you to review the transcripts, Mr. Speaker, but I was there and I can tell you that the Canadian ambassador never said any such thing. What he said—

The Speaker: I did not see that after question period.

[*English*]

That was more debate than a point of order.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, my dear colleague from the Bloc can review the video. It is up on my Twitter @garnettgenuis—

The Speaker: We are back into debate.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday, I would like to ask the government House leader

Government Orders

what business he intends to bring before the House for the remainder of this week and for the week following next week's constituency break.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will resume second reading debate on Bill C-3 on border security.

[*Translation*]

That debate will continue tomorrow. Next week we will be back in our ridings working with our constituents.

When we return, we will start debate on Bill C-5, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code. Thursday, February 20 will be an allotted day.

I wish all members a good constituency week and hope they enjoy the time with their families.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

The House resumed from January 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-3, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

This bill follows on a Liberal campaign promise to ensure that there would be an oversight body for all Canadian law enforcement agencies. That is a promise that was made during the 2015 election campaign. That was five years ago, and it was supposed to be a priority.

This bill was introduced in the last Parliament as Bill C-98. However, the Senate did not have time to complete its analysis of this bill before the end of the Parliament. Our party supported Bill C-98 at every stage without amendment.

This bill changes the name of the—

[*English*]

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind hon. members that there is a speech going on. It is nice to see everybody getting along and talking, but I want to make sure that we can all hear what the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles has to say.

Resume, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, thank you for laying down the law.

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This bill changes the name of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP to the public complaints and review commission. Under this new name, the commission will also be responsible for reviewing public complaints against the Canada Border Services Agency.

The bill follows on a promise made by the Liberals to ensure that all law enforcement agencies in Canada are monitored by an oversight group. We agree that all Canadian law enforcement agencies must have an oversight group. Canadians must be respected and protected from potential abuse of power. We must all make sure that the agency does its job to the letter and in compliance with Canadian legislation.

Our party's vision of Canadian security has always prioritized maintaining the integrity of our borders and making sure that the CBSA has appropriate resources in terms of staff and equipment. A public complaints review commission will undoubtedly improve general oversight and help the CBSA exercise its duties and powers more effectively.

I have spoken at length with border services officers and listened to the union president. It is obvious that the problem at the border is not due to a lack of training or will on the part of the officers. On the contrary, the problem stems from a blatant lack of resources to support officers in their work.

When Bill C-98 was first tabled, the government had not even consulted the union. We raised this point in the debate on Bill C-98, but we got nowhere, since the government was in a rush to move forward. There was not enough time for the bill to be passed by the Senate. Today, the government is coming back to us with Bill C-3.

Even if we support the bill, we need to take the time to consult the union representing the CBSA and the RCMP, which we will probably do in committee. It is a good idea to create an agency to monitor the officers' work and give Canadians some power. We are completely in agreement with that, but the officers also have something to say. That is why I think it is important to listen to the union. There needs to be a balance between the two.

Since 2015, our Liberal friends have constantly said that they consult Canadians on various issues. However, in the case of Bill C-3, there have been no consultations.

I would like to talk about the challenges faced by the Canada Border Services Agency. A lot has been said in recent years. Members will recall the Prime Minister's famous tweet from January 2017. At a time when the United States was in turmoil, the Prime Minister tweeted to the world that Canada would welcome everyone with open arms. That created a situation at the border that is still ongoing. Close to 50,000 people who read the Prime Minister's tweet came to cross the border at Roxham Road in Quebec. Some came through Manitoba, but most came through Roxham Road. These people crossed our border believing that they would be welcomed with open arms.

The RCMP had to mobilize enormous resources. In 2017, officers from across Canada were sent to Roxham Road. The CBSA also had to mobilize resources to receive the people who thought they would simply be welcomed to Canada.

The problem is still going on. The government is trying to make us believe that nothing is going on, but that is not true. Every day, 40 to 50 people cross the border at Roxham Road. The financial and human resources costs are massive. In a report last year, the Office of the Auditor General examined all of the federal agencies involved, including public safety, immigration and other federal services. In three years, we have spent more than \$1 billion on federal services alone. That figure does not include costs to the provinces.

• (1525)

Quebec calculated its costs for the first year. Just for costs associated with receiving the asylum seekers, Quebec applied for a reimbursement of \$300 million. Ontario followed suit. Quebec was reimbursed before the election campaign because our Liberal friends knew that this was a very sensitive subject for Quebecers.

We Quebecers are a hospitable people. We like people, but we also like order. Now we are in a situation where there is no order. No one, myself included, can understand why people are being allowed to enter our country, and specifically Quebec, illegally.

That being said, the Conservatives have often been called racists in debate and in question period. It is very upsetting to be called a racist. The people who come to the border are of different ethnic origins, but that does not make us racist. We are simply asking for effective border control. That starts with a duly completed immigration application. Of course Canada welcomes refugees, as it always has. Even when the Conservatives were in power, we always supported taking in refugees from UN camps around the world.

Let us get back to our officers. We are going to pass a law that will allow the public to file complaints against RCMP and CBSA officers. We should try to see things from our officers' perspective. They are being asked to do things that they may find distasteful. I remember going to Roxham Road three or four times to watch our officers at work. I saw police officers there, RCMP officers, whose job is to enforce law and order.

People arrived with suitcases, knowing full well that they were entering Canada illegally, but they were taking advantage of a loophole in the Canada-U.S. safe third country agreement. The warm-hearted RCMP officers carried the people's suitcases across the border to help them enter Canada illegally. This created a conflict in the officers' minds. On the one hand, since they have big hearts, they have no choice but to help children, as is only right. On the other hand, their job is to enforce the law.

Government Orders

I would remind members that the Prime Minister created this situation on Roxham Road, which has been going on for exactly three years now. People do not realize that the government has even built a building there that is equipped with systems and all the necessary technology. When people get out of a taxi at Roxham Road, they can walk down a small road that leads directly to this reception centre, which is the equivalent of a regular border crossing.

That makes no sense, and we are in this mess because the Liberals cannot negotiate with the Americans to change a rule that prevents us from putting an end to the situation. Let's not forget the financial repercussions for Canada, which are huge.

In addition, our officers have to deal with another serious problem, namely drugs and weapons being smuggled across the border. The RCMP and CBSA officers find their work very hard and complex. In addition to their working conditions, which are obviously less than ideal, the rules in effect and the way the boundaries are delineated sometimes prevent the officers from doing their job properly, despite their best efforts.

We share a border with certain indigenous reserves and with the United States, and international rules make our officers' work far more complicated. This means that a lot of illegal drugs and weapons are entering Canada and contributing to crime.

It is important to understand that criminals, especially Toronto gangs, get their weapons illegally. Huge numbers of weapons cross the U.S. border or arrive by ship in Montreal or Vancouver. We are therefore asking the government to invest major human and financial resources to fight this type of crime.

● (1530)

The influx of drugs like fentanyl is a serious threat to officers' health. At Canada Post, CBSA officers randomly inspect packages entering Canada, and those packages may contain extremely dangerous substances. A tiny dose of fentanyl or any opioid can be fatal. We need to keep in mind that this kind of work can be hugely stressful for individuals, just as it is for members of the military.

This bill will make it possible for members of the public to complain about deliberate or accidental conduct on the part of RCMP or CBSA officers.

Still, we need to understand the position we are putting these officers in and be judicious. That is why we have to listen to what the officers' union has to say.

The examples I gave earlier illustrate situations in which officers have to make decisions. They have to face dangerous situations. Sometimes, if they react reflexively or have to make snap decisions, they may say or do things they should not.

For this reason, I hope that the commission that reviews the complaints will have a balanced approach. I find that the blame too often falls on officials, police officers and the military. When I was in the army, we were often aware of this during operational deployments. I remember very well that, during the war in Bosnia, we often had to follow UN rules and send soldiers into a conflict zone and tell them that, if they made a mistake or did something wrong, we would not be there to defend them. They would be responsible for their actions.

We were representing our country, going to a war zone in a foreign country, but, at the same time, we were being warned to be careful not to get into trouble, otherwise we would be on our own.

This type of situation often causes psychological stress for RCMP officers and border service officials. At some point, these people wonder whether or not they should take action. If, for fear of reprisal, they decide not to take action, this may create a situation that will cause problems elsewhere. In the case of drug control, for example, if the official is afraid to take action, the drugs will end up somewhere else. I do not have any concrete examples to give, but I believe that everyone listening to us can understand what I am trying to say.

I would also like to briefly address our correctional services. I know that correctional services are not covered by Bill C-3. However, I would like to remind the House that, when we discussed Bill C-83 during the last Parliament, there was talk about the various resources available to Canada's penitentiaries.

First, I would like to talk about syringes. Syringes were not part of Bill C-83. However, penitentiaries were asked to give prisoners syringes. The government provides prisoners with syringes, and they inject drugs illegally obtained in prison. It can be difficult to accept and understand how drugs could be illegally obtained in prison and how syringes could be provided so that prisoners can inject these illegally obtained drugs.

Ideally, we should be preventing prisoners from obtaining drugs in prison. There is an easy way to do so, as set out in Bill C-83, and that is to acquire body scanners. Body scanners like the ones in airports, but more sophisticated, can detect 95% or more of anything hidden on a visitor's body, whether drugs or other contraband. I will not list all the things that can be carried in a human body, but a body scanner can find them. That way, the government could avoid having to provide prisoners with syringes.

At the moment, I can say that there is a great deal of concern within the correctional service. Officers who work in penitentiaries are concerned for their own safety. Despite the fact that there is supposedly a syringe control system in place, needles can, for all sorts of reasons, end up somewhere else, and prisoners can use them to create weapons and do various things.

● (1535)

We expect the government to make this investment and deploy the 47 scanners that are required across Canada as soon as possible.

Government Orders

There are policies for the Border Services Agency. I can say that I am proud of what was done by the former Conservative government. In debates over the past few years, we were blamed for cutting \$300 million from the Border Services Agency budget. That is absolutely false. There have been budget cuts in administration, but line officers have never been affected by the cuts. We have evidence, reports from the Library of Parliament complete with exact figures.

I am also proud of the measures taken by our government at the time. Officers were asked to be alone at guard posts at night. Officers were completely alone, left to their own devices. It was excessively dangerous, so we saw to it that there would now be at least two people on duty. We also armed our border officers. They had no weapons previously. How is it possible to intercept someone or take action in dangerous situations without a weapon? That is why we took steps to ensure that Canada is better protected.

Beyond Bill C-3, which will give the public access to a complaints mechanism, our hope is to continue to work to improve border control and enhance Canada's overall security.

• (1540)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, for his speech.

I would like to correct one of his figures, since we agree on the facts themselves. Yes, the previous Conservative government cut the Canada Border Services Agency's budget. However, it was not cut by \$300 million, but rather \$390 million. The Conservatives eliminated more than 1,000 CBSA jobs, and we all know how that turned out.

I do not agree with his reading of the facts. A number of analysts do not agree with the version put forward by the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles regarding the consequences those cuts had on the CBSA. In his speech, he talked about the importance of increasing CBSA's human and financial resources. Indeed the border is difficult to protect. It is important to properly equip the men and women who defend and monitor it.

In that regard, I find it hard to understand why the member's party voted against the 2019 budget, which increased the CBSA budget by \$382 million, resulting in the hiring of 560 full-time employees, including 350 border security officers next year. That is significant.

The Conservatives also voted against Bill C-37, which allowed border services officers to search for 30-gram packages of fentanyl. We know that this can cause up to 15,000 deaths. We invested \$33 million in the Canada Border Services Agency specifically for this initiative, which prevents drugs such as fentanyl to reach the Canadian market. We know the consequences this can have.

Now for my question for my hon. colleague. Does he agree with our government's reinvestments following the budget cuts made by the previous Conservative government?

I appreciate that he will support Bill C-3, which has not changed in recent months from when it was originally introduced in the House.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Louis-Hébert for his question.

This is the same rhetoric about budget cuts that we have been hearing for the past two years. I admit that there were cuts to the agency. We should remember that everything was going well at the time. The border control situation was not what it is today.

As the Auditor General pointed out, this situation has resulted in costs of more than \$1 billion just to address the Roxham Road problem. This has led to a great deal of work for the agency and created enormous needs. Now they are saying that the problem was created by Conservative budget cuts. When we made budget cuts, it was to balance things. Naturally, the situation then was much different from what it is now.

If a war were to break out somewhere in the world and we decided to deploy our armed forces, as we did in Afghanistan, the current National Defence budget would obviously not be sufficient to intervene. We would have to vote on and increase the budget accordingly.

That is what is happening now. Dealing with Roxham Road costs over \$1 billion, not including what the provinces pay. That brings the total to nearly \$2 billion. That is where there is a resource shortage. People should stop saying that the Conservative government cut budgets. We made those cuts when everything was fine at the border, before that mistake was made.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. There is a veritable smorgasbord of things on which I disagree with him in terms of his characterization of what has been going on.

Even though the bill is about establishing a complaints procedure that would benefit Canadians and members of the Canada Border Services Agency and makes clear how we should deal with problems that occur at the borders, I take issue with the member's remarks on Roxham Road.

The solution at Roxham Road is very clear, and that is to terminate our safe third country agreement with the United States. Since the current President of the United States has added other countries to the list of those from which people cannot make refugee claims or claim asylum in the United States, we will perhaps see more people coming across the border at these illegal border crossings, as the Conservatives like to call them, which are, really, irregular border crossings. It is never illegal for refugees who are in fear of their lives to make a claim in Canada. The problem is our agreement with the United States, which says refugees cannot do that at border crossings.

The solution, which the Conservatives and the Liberals seem to fear, is to suspend our safe third country agreement with the United States. That would direct this traffic where it should be: to the regular border crossings.

Would the member agree with me that a much simpler solution is to suspend our agreement with the United States?

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I realize the member may not agree with me. That is his party's philosophy, and that is fine. However, there are two things I cannot accept.

The first is the suggestion that the United States be classified as an unsafe country. That is utterly ridiculous. The government investigated, and officials confirmed that the suggestion is impossible and makes no sense.

The second is that, so far, 50,000 people have taken the risk of going to Roxham. If the agreement is suspended, the 13 million people now living illegally in the United States might very well want to come here. Are we going to let 13 million people come to Lacolle and knock on the border crossing's door, asking for asylum in Canada? This second idea does not work either and makes no sense.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier, the hon. member for Louis-Hébert mentioned that the numbers were off by \$90 million. I think we need to rise above that sort of thing.

I now turn to my colleague, the public safety critic in our shadow cabinet.

This week, we heard what happened to Marylène Levesque in Quebec City. It seems that the Parole Board of Canada allowed an inmate out on day parole to become a murderer.

I would also like to come back to the famous tweet sent by our Prime Minister, who opened our doors to all foreigners, encouraging them to come to Canada illegally at Roxham Road.

Can my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles tell Canadians whether he feels safe given the way the Liberal government is leading our country right now?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for his question.

Do I feel safe? I personally am not too worried about my safety. However, I definitely do have many questions when I see situations like the murder of Marylène Levesque.

That is why I am pleased that the House unanimously agreed to condemn the report from the Parole Board of Canada and to instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to investigate and understand what happened within the Parole Board and what happened in 2017 with the board's nomination process. Where did these people come from and why were the contracts of a large number of existing members not renewed, even though it would have provided some continuity?

Government Orders

I care very much about Canada's safety and security. No matter which government is in power, the safety and security of Canadians must always be top of mind in the decisions we make. We must ensure that our decisions do not cause safety concerns, because Canadians, the people at home, the people going to work every day, must be able to live in peace. People must not be afraid when they go to bed at night. That is our responsibility.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage my colleagues across the way to learn how to read the public accounts, because if they did they would see that in the last year the Conservatives were in power, the accounts hit a high of almost \$1.8 billion in spending. They then dropped about \$300 million in subsequent years, under the Liberals.

I want to go back to a point that my colleague made about the lack of consultation. As we saw, the government did not consult with prison guards when it brought in Bill C-83. It did not consult with parole officers and program officers dealing with the Parole Board issue we discussed the other day. Now we hear that on this bill, the Liberals have not consulted with CBSA guards. Why is the government so apparently allergic to consulting with our officers and considerable police force on the ground?

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and the excellent work he does auditing public accounts. If we have a question regarding public accounts, we can rely on him. He always has the information needed.

To answer the question, it depends on one's philosophical point of view. It is the Liberal vision versus the Conservative vision.

The Conservatives have always firmly believed that those tasked with maintaining order must have all the resources they need, and that means more than just budgets. It is important to listen to the requests and needs of our officers, because they have to deal with criminals. Correctional officers, police officers and border service officers never know who they might encounter. We must always show great respect for their work and be willing to listen to them.

Generally speaking, the Liberals are more interested in helping criminals by pushing rehabilitation to the extreme. There comes a point when you have to pay attention and keep your eyes open.

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Government Orders

As it is my first time rising in the 43rd Parliament, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the constituents of Richmond Hill, who bestowed on me the honour of representing them in the House. I thank my campaign manager, my riding association executive and the over 100 volunteers and friends who worked so hard to help me get re-elected.

I would especially like to acknowledge and thank my wife Homeira; my daughter Nickta and my son Meilaud, who have supported me in my political life over the past five years.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise at second reading of Bill C-3. The bill proposes to create an independent review and complaint mechanism for the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA. I would like to highlight five significant components of the bill.

First, it would provide for civilian oversight.

Second, it would strengthen the accountability and transparency of the CBSA.

Third, it would ensure consistent, fair and equal treatment to all when receiving services.

Fourth, it would complement and align with other measures being taken by our government to create independent review functions for national security agencies.

Fifth, it would close a significant gap with the other Five Eyes international border agencies.

Such mechanisms help to promote public confidence by strengthening accountability. They ensure that complaints regarding employee conduct and service are dealt with transparently. CSIS, the RCMP and the Correctional Service of Canada are already subject to that kind of accountability.

Among the organizations that make up Canada's public safety portfolio, only the CBSA does not currently have a review body to handle public complaints. Bill C-3 would fill that glaring gap and build on recent accountability and transparency reforms introduced by the Government of Canada.

One of those reforms is the newly created National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. This new body addresses a long-standing need for parliamentarians to review the government's national security and intelligence activities and operations, including those involving the CBSA. Its members have unprecedented access to classified information.

As the Prime Minister has said, it "will help us ensure that our national security agencies continue to keep Canadians safe in a way that also safeguards our values, rights, and freedoms."

The government has also brought into force a new expert review body, thanks to the passage of Bill C-59, called the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency.

This new agency will greatly enhance how Canada's national security agencies are held to account. It will establish a single, independent agency authorized to conduct reviews on national security and intelligence activities carried out by departments and agencies across the Government of Canada, including the CBSA.

The legislation before us today would go one step further by establishing an independent review and complaints function for the CBSA's other activities. Those activities play a critical role in our country's security and economic prosperity. They facilitate the efficient flow of people and goods across our border to support our economy, while protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

In keeping with its sweeping mandate, the scale of the CBSA's operations and the number of people and goods it deals with are enormous. CBSA employees deliver a wide range of services at more than 1,000 locations, including 117 land border crossings, 13 international airports and 39 international offices.

The agency's employees are diligent and hard-working. In 2018-19, they interacted with more than 96 million travellers and processed more than 19 million commercial shipments and 54 million courier shipments.

The vast majority of the CBSA's interactions and transactions go off without a hitch. However, when dealing with more than a quarter of a million people each day, and nearly 100 million each year, the occasional complaint is inevitable. Each year the CBSA recourse directorate receives approximately 2,500 complaints concerning employee conduct and services.

Last summer, as I was knocking on doors in my riding of Richmond Hill, I talked to many residents, Canadian citizens and permanent residents alike, who regularly crossed the borders to and from the U.S. They shared their challenges with wait times, extensive and intrusive repeated questioning and the feeling of inferiority that it left them with. Repeatedly, they raised their concern about their inability to get answers about the way they were treated and their frustration with the lack of an independent body to raise their concerns.

● (1555)

However, as I noted earlier, there is currently no independent review body that people can turn to when they are unsatisfied with the level of service or the conduct of an officer at the border. That accountability gap has generated considerable public interest and been regularly raised by parliamentarians.

On that note, I would like to recognize and thank the now-retired Wilfred Moore for his advocacy on this issue with the introduction of Bill S-205 in the other place.

There have also been numerous calls by stakeholders and NGOs to improve CBSA accountability and transparency. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association said that it considered "such a gap as being incompatible with democratic values and with a need for public trust in such an important agency."

According to the late Professor Ron Atkey of York University, the lack of CBSA oversight presented “a problem in the makeup of the current security intelligence review mechanism”. He added that the creation of the committee of parliamentarians should not be considered as a substitute for independent expert review bodies, which he suggested should be extended to cover CBSA.

That is exactly what Bill C-3 would do. It proposes to establish an independent review mechanism for the CBSA by expanding and strengthening the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, or CRCC. The CRCC is currently the review agency for the RCMP.

To reflect its proposed new responsibilities under Bill C-3, it will be renamed the public complaints and review commission, or PCRC. The proposed new PCRC will be responsible for handling reviews and complaints for both the CBSA and the RCMP. The PCRC will be accessible to anyone who interacts with CBSA employees and has complaints about the conduct of CBSA officers and the quality of services.

The PCRC will also have the ability to conduct reviews of the CBSA on its own initiative or at the request of the Minister of Public Safety. Those reviews could focus on any activity conducted by the CBSA, with the exception of national security matters.

With the passage of Bill C-59, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency will be responsible for complaints and reviews relating to national security, including those involving the RCMP and CBSA. The PCRC will work in a complementary manner with the proposed new National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. Provisions in Bill C-3 will facilitate information sharing and co-operation between the two bodies. If the PCRC were to receive those types of complaints, it would refer the complainants to the appropriate body.

By providing an independent arms-length mechanism for people to be heard, Bill C-3 would make them more comfortable to come forward with a complaint. That, in turn, would help ensure that Canadians would remain confident in the system of accountability for the agencies that work so hard to keep them safe.

That is why I urge hon. members of the House to join me in supporting this important legislation at second reading.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech on this important bill.

My region, Châteauguay—Lacolle, is home to the largest border crossing in the country. In Lacolle, where Highway 15 ends, many of my constituents cross the border regularly, whether for personal trips or to ship goods for businesses.

In terms of the quality of processing and information, can my colleague tell us what this bill will mean for my constituents who cross the border?

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[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, as I said, it will further strengthen the ability of those who are receiving services to have a platform to raise their concerns. As has been discussed before in the House, provisions are being made already to welcome those who are irregularly crossing the border. This is another step in further strengthening and ensuring they have an opportunity to be heard in case there is an issue or a concern.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Richmond Hill for his very comprehensive speech on the bill, which, of course, the NDP is supporting.

I first called for such a bill when I was the NDP public safety critic for the official opposition in 2014. There is no doubt that there will be both benefits for the Canadian public and trust in our institutions, for the individuals who have complaints.

As I said in an earlier question, I think there would be benefits for the CBSA officers themselves in having clear guidelines on what is expected of them as they do their jobs. I am disappointed that there was not further thorough consultation with the union previously, but I am sure that is going to be corrected by the government.

My question is about timing, given that this is something I have been talking about for almost six years here in the House of Commons and we have not seen any indications from the government. I wonder if the member has any information about how soon, once the proposed legislation is passed, we could expect to see the changes put in place so that the complaints, of which there are literally thousands every year, can begin to be dealt with. Also, what plan does the government have to adequately resource the complaints body?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to thank the hon. member for his advocacy. As the hon. member mentioned, he has been at the forefront of this for many years, and I am glad to hear that he will be supporting this bill.

As far as the consultation is concerned, I believe that there were a number of consultations done for us to get to this stage. I am confident that once this bill makes it to committee, further consultation will be conducted and, if need be, union members from CBSA or other members will be called, if needed, to amend and further strengthen the bill.

As far as the timing is concerned, this is something that will be decided by the ministry and the minister. As the bill number indicates, Bill C-3 is the first bill initiated in this House, and I am sure that there is strong support for early adoption and full implementation of the bill.

Again, I thank the hon. member for supporting this bill.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the member for Richmond Hill have any comment or insight about how this independent agency would stop Iranian-born Canadians from being detained by U.S. Customs due to the changes its government made?

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Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, I have full confidence in all of our security agencies and organizations to work collaboratively to ensure that those who are crossing our border, regardless of their nationality, receive background and security clearances before entering the country. While they are here, they are closely monitored. If there are any issues, they will be reported and dealt with by the proper authorities.

I thank the member for his concern for the safety of Canadians and those who come to our country.

• (1605)

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, I would like to say it is wonderful to see you in that chair again. I am looking forward to following the great work that you have been doing in this Parliament and many others in the past.

I welcome the opportunity to add my voice to the debate of Bill C-3 at second reading. This bill would establish a public complaints and review commission by making amendments to the CBSA Act and the RCMP Act.

This is a tool for people to be heard. It would build on the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, which is the independent review and complaints body for the RCMP. This new commission would then consider public complaints about both CBSA and RCMP employee conduct on service issues, except those related to national security. The review of national security activities is conducted by the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency.

For nearly 16 years, the CBSA has been an integral part of how we protect Canadians and maintain a peaceful and safe society. The over 14,000 women and men of the CBSA provide trusted, fair and equal treatment to the public they serve every day.

Most, if not all, of us here in the House interact with CBSA employees multiple times a year, if not every week. That might occur at one of the 117 land border crossings CBSA manages, at one of the 13 international airports at which it operates, at one of Canada's numerous marinas or major ports, or at one of 27 rail sites across the country.

In fiscal year 2018-19 alone, CBSA employees interacted with over 96 million travellers, conducted over four million traveller examinations, processed over 21 million commercial shipments and 46 million courier shipments. Their jobs include interdicting illegal goods, protecting food safety, enforcing trade remedies and removing or detaining those who may pose a threat or are otherwise inadmissible. I know I speak on behalf of all of us in the House when I commend their professionalism and dedication.

If I ever had a complaint to lodge against any government agency, I would like to be assured that the complaint was investigated and assessed independently. That is what citizens of our peer countries have come to expect, and it is what Canadians should expect as well.

Bill C-3 would fill a gap in our security review landscape. The CBSA is the only organization in the public safety portfolio without

its own review body. The review mechanism we are proposing has long been sought after.

Allow me to take a look at the support for creating such a body. The Canadian Human Rights Commission has said, "we have joined the call for independent monitoring and oversight of the Canada Border Services Agency in relation to migrants and other foreign nationals in detention." That is on top of similar calls to action from civil liberties associations and refugee lawyers, to name just a few. That is on top of numerous calls to enhance CBSA accountability and transparency.

In December 2015, the Hon. Senator Moore introduced Bill S-205 in the other place, proposing the creation of an inspector general to consider such complaints. In that same year, the report by the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, entitled "Vigilance, Accountability and Security at Canada's Borders", made a similar recommendation. The committee recommended that the "Government of Canada establish an independent, civilian review and complaints body for all Canada Border Services Agency activities."

We took that one step further. With respect to national security activities, we have brought into force a separate National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. That agency has the authority to review national security and intelligence-related functions across government, including the CBSA. To be clear, Bill C-3 would allow for independent review of non-national security activities only.

The new public complaints and review commission would not only be required to investigate complaints it receives, but would also be able to conduct its own investigations, self-initiate complaints and produce an annual public report on its findings. These are all welcome and long-sought-after changes.

• (1610)

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any major contentions with this bill. It fills the critical gap in providing an independent review for complaints relating to CBSA employee conduct and service. It ensures all immigration detainees have access to an independent complaints mechanism. It provides ongoing capacity for conducting reviews that can lead to organizational enhancements. It clarifies the framework governing CBSA's response to serious incidents. It enhances accountability and transparency, and promotes public confidence. It brings us in line with our Five Eyes allies in other developed countries and their processes.

Our government is committed to creating robust accountability and transparency mechanisms that ensure the public is confident in our public safety institutions. That is important for Canadians, including for the trade and travel communities within Canada. It is also important for the CBSA. The proposed new public complaints and review commission would be accessible to all individuals who interact with CBSA employees. This would impact thousands of people daily and tens of millions annually.

Bill C-3 is thorough, comprehensive legislation that neatly responds to the calls to action of many over the years. I encourage all members to join me in supporting this bill and moving it through Parliament in this sitting session.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having worked for the RCMP in Moncton, New Brunswick, for close to 24 years, I have personally seen the value of having an independent review and complaints process. Many of my constituents felt very comfortable knowing there was a process in place when they had to make a complaint. I wonder if my colleague could elaborate on the benefits of having such a process in place for the CBSA.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, I had a constituent call me who was frazzled and embarrassed. He did not know where to go when he felt he had been discriminated against at the border. He had a complaint to file against the CBSA and felt there was no recourse for him. He had nowhere to go to lodge such a complaint, which could have been used in a positive way to improve the process of how the CBSA operates at our borders.

There are hundreds of stories like this across our communities. They are good examples as to how Bill C-3 would impact Canadians daily. Whether they are travelling for business or pleasure, they are coming into and out of our country as some of the millions of people who move across our borders annually.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Indeed, we agree on a number of points.

I would like to hear her thoughts on one important aspect. As we know, CBSA is understaffed. That is causing delays and creating tension and stress for officers and travellers alike.

Does the government plan to look at that problem?

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, I believe 380 million dollars' worth of investments are being made. Tens of thousands of CBSA employees provide excellent service to people travelling across our borders, and we commend the hard work they do.

The member opposite is right. We must ensure that all of our public service and government agencies that provide that support to Canadians are well maintained, well funded and efficient. That is why Bill C-3 is so necessary. It helps us create those efficiencies, fix the process and iron out any kinks that exist in the service the CBSA officers provide to people across the country.

• (1615)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the CBSA union was not consulted during the

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creation of this legislation. If a review found that a union member was to be let go as the result of his or her actions, would the union support an initiative to let an employee go in the course of a review?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to consultation, our Liberal government has really gone above and beyond. We have had the largest number of consultations in government history over the past four years. The topic of the bill is not new. As I mentioned in my remarks, it has been discussed at length in the Senate. It will be discussed at length here as well. We look forward to having input from experts all across the country as to how to move forward with this and how we can make this bill even better than what it is now, if that is possible. We look forward to engaging with all stakeholders on this issue.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the bill is changing parts of the RCMP Act. The RCMP Act excludes current or former members of the RCMP from serving on the Public Complaints and Review Commission. "Member" under the act has a specific definition; it means an employee of the RCMP.

Does the member think that members and former members of CBSA should also be excluded from the review process so that they are not adjudicating over their former colleagues?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the discussions and the receiving of expert testimony that will happen at committee once the bill reaches there. If this is an area that the member feels strongly about, it can be explored at the committee level, based on evidence that the committee would hear to make those decisions or amendments accordingly.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

We are considering Bill C-3, which would reorganize the RCMP's Civilian Review and Complaints Commission while extending independent oversight to the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP.

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This past Monday was the RCMP's 100th anniversary, and part of the celebration includes a campaign to designate February 1 nationwide as RCMP appreciation day. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank RCMP officers for the tireless and important work they do. I also want to thank our Canadian border agents for everything they are doing to protect our country. There are four official crossings in my riding: Rockglen, Monchy, Climax and Willow Creek.

Conservatives believe in checks and balances, parliamentary ethics and the rule of law. To better promote these values, we support increased transparency, accessibility and accountability for government agencies. It is the right thing to do and it shows proper respect to citizens and taxpayers.

As a Conservative, I support the fundamental idea behind this bill, and I hope that expanded oversight will start to make a real difference. It is in line with our party's principles and vision for our country's future. It is one thing to have good ideas and intentions; we must also do our due diligence and make sure that this will be implemented and applied properly.

After the House votes on this, we will be waiting as the opposition to see how this new public complaints and review commission will work out in practice and whether it results in real improvements.

Responsibility means more than receiving people's complaints. We cannot be responsible without offering a response. We need to make sure that there is an effective response made in a reasonable amount of time whenever someone raises concerns related to law enforcement, such as with the RCMP or CBSA.

The main change proposed by this bill involves recreating and transitioning a government agency, and that is what raises the very practical point of timeliness and effectiveness as part of its operations. The RCMP has already had independent oversight since 1988, and it was established as the current Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP, or the CRCC, back in 2013.

I have spent some time reading further into the CRCC's more recent work. I could not help but notice that there appears to be a pattern with its investigations since 2007, at least for those posted on the CRCC's website. It takes anywhere from three to seven years to get a final report on the findings of an investigation and the recommendations following from it. It is good to know that it is conducting a thorough review of the complaint, but the fact remains that it is taking a long time in the process.

Presumably, if the RCMP decides to implement any changes into its organization or policies, this will not be an overnight process either. It could take a long time to draft new policy or prepare for any changes addressing the areas that have been reviewed and criticized by the commission. All of this means that from start to finish we might realistically expect the process will go on for years and years, possibly even up to a decade in some cases. These kinds of timelines would likely dissuade too many people from even bothering to file a complaint at all. If people do not have the confidence to report an issue, it will defeat the original purpose of having a review process.

That is exactly what we want to avoid. We want Canadians to call attention to the real problems they are experiencing so there can be an investigation and fair treatment for anyone who is involved. Most importantly, we want to make sure problems get corrected as quickly as possible to prevent similar incidents from occurring.

For the final reports that were available for me to look through, the number of findings ranged anywhere from five to over 55 per incident and the recommendations ranged anywhere from one to 31. Further, I could not help but notice that there is one additional point that is missing after looking at these reports, and that is which and how many of the recommendations have been accepted and specifically implemented into RCMP policy moving forward.

I would like to see a review and report on the results of these final recommendations. It would be a valuable piece of information for the general public to be aware of whenever we are talking about all the different cases being studied. Again, I believe that a civilian oversight is the right approach. This all has to do with providing transparency and maintaining trust in the RCMP and CBSA, whom we entrusted with the public safety of our rural areas in Canada and our border crossings.

Respecting and maintaining public trust is extremely important. That is why it only makes sense to have a similar commission in place for the CBSA. If we are going to be broadening this oversight to the CBSA, then this would be the right time to also ensure that there are accurate reporting mechanisms on whether changes are implemented or not. The CBSA is another organization that the public has a great deal of respect for, based on the scope of the important job we have entrusted to it.

● (1620)

CBSA workers are routinely put in the uncomfortable spot of searching vehicles, belongings and persons, whether it be at an airport or a port of entry along the Canada-U.S.A. border. In the course of carrying out these searches and interviews as part of their duties, I would think that having oversight and review in place would help everyone involved feel more secure in these situations.

There is something else I noticed about the CRCC's current review process. At every stage of the review process, when initiated by the chairman, it goes to the Minister of Public Safety. At face value, it makes sense for the agency to work with the appropriate minister. The fact that there are provisions for this to happen in this bill, as well as before, is not an issue by itself. It goes back to an old question in politics: Who will watch the watchmen?

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This is not an empty political cheap shot either. Our real problem is that we still have a Prime Minister and a government that have shown disregard for how our processes are supposed to work. We repeatedly saw their interference in the SNC-Lavalin affair, hiding behind cabinet confidentiality and insisting on limitations for witness testimony and the RCMP's investigation. Will they be able to resist the temptation to interfere in other areas? These are the kinds of real questions that people have across Canada.

In this past campaign I heard repeatedly that Liberal interference in the justice system was a big concern and, at the time, Liberals rallied with their leadership instead of with their former colleagues who were speaking out with integrity. Canadians have seen examples of the Liberals over the last year showing that they cannot trust them with staying out of business that is not theirs to dabble in.

I need to make it absolutely clear by saying again that we have the greatest respect and admiration for active members in both the RCMP and the CBSA. We are proud of their service, and this bill should be one of the ways in which we work with them to best serve the public good. Members in both of these organizations need to be included in our close consideration of this bill. For that reason, my colleagues and I are concerned on this side of the House about the reported lack of consultation with representatives for police officers and border agents. This concern was expressed during the rushed debate on this same bill at the end of the last Parliament, and it was raised again by the member for Kootenay—Columbia, who previously had a long career with the RCMP himself.

Supporting the idea of oversight in this bill does not mean we will not call for proper consultation and otherwise carefully consider it during committee. There are some unanswered questions about how the new commission will operate and we need to make sure that the bill is strong and well balanced for succeeding with its intended goal.

Since we are taking the time to discuss the RCMP as it relates to this legislation, I need to say something about its work in my riding and across Canada. Back home, I have attended five town halls around my riding regarding the RCMP's operations. There are huge concerns related to the number of officers in different places and the response times to emergency calls. This has left too many people feeling unsafe in their own homes. We are dealing with many terrible cases of violent crime. We are seeing an increase in the illicit drug trade with fentanyl and methamphetamine becoming a big problem.

The people in rural communities committing crimes are no longer just the local bad boys. They are large, coordinated crime groups and gangs coming out from the cities and from other provinces to commit organized and targeted crime. In a specific example recently in my riding, an off-duty RCMP officer saw three vehicles speeding in excess of 150 kilometres an hour. These three vehicles were headed to British Columbia with two young girls, who were being taken to be victimized by human traffickers. Thankfully, this story has a happy ending with the suspects being apprehended and the girls returned home safely.

This is the larger problem we have to deal with whenever we are considering public safety and how we can best support our law enforcement. I am looking for a solution that will significantly reduce

rural crime and I am not sure that this bill really has much to say for that type of issue. Even though rural Canadians on the ground, provinces and some of my colleagues have been repeatedly raising this issue for a while, we have not seen or heard much about it from the government. We are still waiting for a response.

That being said, I look forward to further studying Bill C-3. We can only hope the government will respect and learn from this bill's spirit and principles of accountability.

• (1625)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was particularly interested in the research about response times when doing reviews. The member is absolutely right that if response times are long, that might discourage people from making a complaint and having it investigated. I congratulate the member on that point.

One point, though, I really stuck on was the underfunding of the RCMP. In 2014, there was a \$32.5-million deficit with the funding for the RCMP, something that members on my side are trying to address as we go forward. We have increased funding to the RCMP. We need to provide the resources for people to do their jobs, and part of that is also taking public input back to the minister so he can see whether any change in policy is needed.

Could the hon. member talk about the back-and-forth of the information coming in and being able to effect policy change, including funding for organizations such as the CBSA?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I have been to five different public consultation meetings in regard to the RCMP and the coverage it provides in the area. A vast array of different topics have come up in regard to whether we need more dollars invested in RCMP members for different policies, be it for the RCMP to look internally or externally for different options. This is an area where we can definitely work together as parties all throughout the House to find solutions. That kind of information is valuable, to go back and forth with the minister in that regard.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, what I am hoping to see with this bill is external oversight for the Canada Border Services Agency to ensure that travellers are protected, but also fundamentally to address the issue of public trust. We want to make sure that the public has trust in our institutions and ensure there is accountability and transparency so that trust is there. It is important.

I wonder if the member could answer how this bill deals with it and if there are any gaps in those concerns.

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Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, this bill is definitely a great step forward in providing that accountability and transparency so that members of the public are able to have a greater sense of confidence when there is an issue that they need to raise, and to have it addressed.

As far as the enforcement side of it goes, that is where some of the concerns I have are, when we are looking at three, seven or 10 years for a review to be finished and then something practical being implemented. Sometimes when we are dealing with employees, the solution might be that person's employment needs to be terminated because of an act. When we did not consult with the union people on this, it created a bit of a problem. If we are talking about a gap here, those consultations that did not happen would be a big part of the gap.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I need to mention an important fact. The Bloc Québécois is not blaming the Canada Border Services Agency officers. We do not want to put the agency on trial.

Rather, we believe that the government is the one responsible for the agency's lack of oversight and the lack of transparency, which is unusual for such a large organization. The Liberals and the Conservatives are both responsible for tolerating this for so long.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure there was a question there, but one thing we can both agree on is the lack of transparency coming from the government. We will definitely find some commonality there.

In this bill, ultimately we are looking at the trust of the public. It is a step in the right direction for sure. There is room to grow within it, but we are going the right way with this.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I want to briefly compliment members.

As everyone knows, the time allocated for questions and comments is certainly limited. Today, I noticed that members participated in the period for questions and comments. Comments must be brief in order to allow as many members as possible to participate in the debate.

Resuming debate.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank members of the Conservative Party for organizing their speeches to allow me to have a portion of their time.

I am very pleased to see this bill come forward. We worked on it in the 42nd Parliament as Bill C-98 when it had a different name, but there are some concerns.

I would like to split up my time to talk about what the Canada Border Services Agency is, what it does, what the problems are and

whether this bill would fix them. I will try to move quite smartly through that description.

We have in Canada national security agencies, such as the RCMP, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Communications Security Establishment, which is a bit of a different animal, and the Canada Border Services Agency. They essentially are a collection of national security intelligence agencies that work with each other. As of now, the Canada Border Services Agency is the only one that operates without either oversight or a complaints process, yet it does have extraordinary powers.

The Canada Border Services Agency's powers at the border are superior to those of the police. They have powers to arrest, detain and remove people from Canada. This is a profound power, the ability to have someone deported. I want to underscore this for members because we need to get a review of our immigration and refugee law on another occasion. This bill does not have the scope for it. The previous government under Mr. Harper changed the deportation rule from deporting people as soon as is practicable to as soon as it is possible. That has resulted in a lot of people being thrown out of Canada more quickly than I think most Canadians would find fair, and certainly with disastrous consequences on a humanitarian ground.

The CBSA authorities can prevent people from entering Canada. They can conduct interviews with refugee claimants when they have lost their first opportunity to explain why they wish asylum. They can detain refugee claimants on any number of grounds. They can issue removal orders and send a person out of Canada without an admissibility hearing. In other words, they have enormous powers. By the way, a review of the agency, which I found extremely informative, was issued in 2017 by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association.

The question is whether, with all of these powers, everything is going very well. It is not perfect by any means. There are literally, as we have heard from other speakers, hundreds of complaints every year, but many of them are of a rather routine nature. They are unpleasant but they are accusations of racism and unpleasant comments.

I know that we want to thank the vast majority of members of the Canada Border Services Agency at the borders. We need them to be focused on stopping the flow of illegal drugs. We need them to stop the flow of illegal handguns. I think it would be well worthwhile as a public policy matter to stop having it be a priority to find people whose citizenship is irregular and deport them in a hurry. A lot of families are ripped apart by this and it would be much wiser to focus on those things that we know we want to stop at the border, such as drugs and guns, not necessarily people.

This brings me to one of the most tragic of many tragic stories. This one led to an inquiry. Unfortunately, it was in the form of an inquest because the woman in question died.

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Her name was Lucia Vega Jimenez. She was stopped at a transit stop in Vancouver and transit police thought there was something unusual about her. It has been alleged it was her accent. It turned out that her citizenship papers were irregular. They turned her over to the Canada Border Services Agency and she was incorrectly advised. The inquest proved that she had been incorrectly advised that she had no hope of avoiding deportation and that there were no appeals. That was not correct. She hanged herself in her cell. The inquest then was able to find that there was a lot of discussion within the agency of how to cover this up, what to do if people found out. It is long overdue to have this kind of a complaints commission.

We now have another change that is worth looking at because we are in a new era of national security law. We have the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. It has the ability to have oversight over what all the agencies do, but it does not take complaints in the same way that this complaints commission would take complaints.

• (1635)

The public complaints and review commission, which is renamed from the public complaints commission that only looked at the RCMP, would now take on the Canada Border Services Agency. I will be voting for this bill at second reading. I do want to see this bill get to committee.

However, the concern I have is that there are a number of excluded areas that the complaints commission cannot look into. We need to look at those and recognize that while the larger agency, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, can give a summary and an overview of how the CBSA has been performing in these areas, people cannot make complaints in the same way.

Complaints cannot be made about the agencies in Bill C-3 that we are debating today. They cannot be made about decisions made by CBSA employees under statutory authorities. This of course includes one of the key areas where abusive behaviour has been reported and is of greatest concern, where people are detained and can die or could be deported and die in a country they should never have been sent back to: the statutory authorities under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and under the Customs Act.

It cannot receive complaints about matters that could be more appropriately dealt with by other bodies, such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Commissioner of Official Languages, and the Privacy Commissioner.

This one is really disturbing. It cannot receive complaints on the conduct of part-time employees at detention facilities where CBSA detainees are being housed. That is particularly concerning, because it goes on to actually say that the CBSA would not even be required to investigate complaints that relate to part-time employees.

We need to look at the whole scheme of things where things can go wrong and make sure that in this legislation we fix it as much as possible.

The other matter that is added to Bill C-3 which was not there in the previous Bill C-98 is that national security matters cannot be the source of a complaint.

There is good reason for that in policy because, after all, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency can look at the overview of what CBSA has been doing on national security matters. That is quite a different matter from saying someone cannot complain. The complaints are direct. They are personal. They deal with an actual incident. The review agency is going to look at the whole of the conduct as best as it can as an oversight agency.

I would be very interested to know if we cannot look at the CBSA in this bill and consider whether amendments would not be wise to say that any of the activities of the CBSA and its agents can come before the complaints commission. The complaints commission, if it knows of a better place, could make sure that takes place, as opposed to sending someone away, someone who has been traumatized by an episode at the border and sent away.

People may not know. Even if they are told to take the complaint somewhere, they may just stop. They may not want to go through a revolving door. The complaints commission could have a positive obligation not just to inform a person where to go but to actually take it on, organize the hearing and make sure it is started, make sure complaints are not ignored.

On the matter of national security complaints, I am very concerned about this. One of the places where the CBSA was first studied was in the context of the Arar commission of inquiry. Mr. Justice O'Connor, who was the commissioner in the Arar inquiry, commented:

The CBSA often operates in a manner similar to that of a police force. There is a significant potential for the CBSA's activities to affect individual rights, dignity and well-being, and much of the national security activity undertaken is not disclosed to the public.

I am concerned that we not inadvertently miss an important piece of oversight, an important piece of justice to anyone who happens to be, and I certainly do not think it happens routinely, traumatized.

Government Orders

In my own experience, I had no idea there was a detention facility under the Vancouver airport where people are deported quite quickly, until the family of an indigenous man from Penelakut Island, not in my riding but nearby, reached out to me for help. It was in 2014. The issue was that CBSA agents had shown up at the door of his home. He is a grandfather, an indigenous man, living on Penelakut Island, whose wife was a residential school survivor. Without warning, they arrested him. They had sent him notices that he had missed. They put him in leg irons. They drove him in a van on that December night all the way to the Vancouver airport, where he was told it was hopeless and that he would be deported the next day back to the United States where he had been born. They did not say there was something called the Jay Treaty regarding indigenous rights. They just said that was it.

• (1640)

Fortunately, we were able to stop the deportation but it was not easy. It did give me an insight into what goes on.

I want to make sure this legislation will work. It needs amendments.

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 look forward to hearing what kinds of amendments the leader of the Green Party will suggest at committee. I am not surprised that she would be proposing amendments.

It is important for us to recognize that the RCMP, our correctional officers and CSIS already have an oversight committee. One of the things we need to reinforce is the benefits of how a civilian oversight review board helps to promote public awareness and builds on public confidence in the system.

Could the member provide her thoughts as to why it is important for the public to have confidence in our security agencies?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is essential that Canadians have confidence in the agencies that have extraordinary powers over them.

It was in the debate during the 41st Parliament on Bill C-51, legislation which made a major overhaul of national security law under the Harper administration, and it was very clear from legal analysts like Craig Forcese that we need to have oversight agencies, like the security intelligence review committee, but we also need to have agencies that can do on the spot, in real-time response.

What we have at this point in Canada is an improvement but the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency is at the level of oversight. We do not have that quick response that we get when we have what we have now in the complaints commission. We have a bit of this and a bit of that. We do not have a full and comprehensive system to ensure both oversight and review.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

This morning, I took a training course on the importance of cybersecurity and concerns about our electronic devices. Cybersecurity

is getting more and more attention, and several arrests have been made in relation to this.

Could the member explain how this bill would improve cybersecurity?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Shefford and congratulate her again on getting elected.

I think that this bill fails to address the issue of cybersecurity. It is a key issue because we have agencies that we are trying to improve. However, Bill C-3 is fairly limited in scope.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech.

Some witnesses said that, despite four years of work on this issue, there has been no consultation with the Canada Border Services Agency and Royal Canadian Mounted Police unions.

Is the member concerned about that?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Beauce. I congratulate him, as well.

I am really sorry that the unions were not consulted. I really do not know why they were not, but I think it is absolutely mandatory to talk to the unions, because they are affected by this bill.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, Telecommunications.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg North. Congratulations on the 150th anniversary of Manitoba that he spoke about earlier. I was born in Manitoba. "Go, Manitoba."

A dear friend of mine in Guelph passed away today. I found out this afternoon that Ken Hammill passed away. He was a mentor and wanted the citizens of Guelph and across Canada to be engaged. He was a city councillor for 29 years. He was a friend of Guelph, and we will very dearly miss him. All my best to Eileen and his kids and grandkids. I will be missing time with him at Rotary and in coffee shops talking about the kinds of things we are talking about today.

Government Orders

We are talking about Bill C-3, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts. We are talking about introducing legislation that has come to the House before. It was here in the last Parliament. It came to us originally through the Senate. It is needed legislation. Right now we are the only country within the Five Eyes that does not have public oversight over border services, which is something we need to correct.

Also, this is the last agency with the power of detention in law enforcement to have independent oversight, as has been mentioned in other speeches in the House today.

The volume of interactions has been increasing and will continue to increase as we have trade agreements with the EU and the United States, hopefully coming through very soon with CPTPP. There will be a lot more interactions going on at the border. Review agencies like this would help us with those interactions, as well as to see whether we are keeping up with policy and whether we are giving tools to the people at the border, who do the wonderful job they do, to keep us safe and to keep products and people coming and going to and from the country in a safe way.

The independent oversight provides an avenue for a non-governmental agency, an agency that is not connected with politics and is really independent, to look, as a citizen of the country, at whether the country is being served by the institution, to review complaints, and to provide citizen engagement and oversight.

It is very important that this legislation gets through the House this time. It is good to see that it is coming into the House early in our mandate and hopefully will get all the way through second reading, the committee work, to third reading and the Senate to get back to us in time to receive royal assent.

The case for independent oversight has been mentioned by several members today. We are talking about civil liberties. We are talking about how important it is, when we give authority over civil liberties, that it is then scrutinized by independent agencies as well as by the agencies themselves. They must have the means and professionalism to make sure that jobs are being conducted with respect for civil liberties within the policies they are given from Parliament, as well as through the Supreme Court.

It is important that the decisions are transparent and accountable, as was mentioned across the way, and timely. Maybe the committee could focus on making sure that we are being responsive. Decisions on forced detention and law enforcement have to be made a priority, because we are talking about the civil liberties of people who live in Canada. This is so important to our freedom and citizenship, but also to keeping our country safe.

With 96 million travellers coming into Canada, it is important that processes are applied consistently, fairly and without prejudice. We know that the professionalism of the staff is there. In fact, there is now a television show that shows some of the situations that people working for CBSA get into. People try to mislead them to get into the country under different pretenses. The professionalism that is shown on TV is, I am sure, the type of professionalism that we see every day. However, there will still be complaints, and we need a way to deal with those.

• (1650)

Guelph is not a border town. Places like Windsor and Niagara are clearly border towns, but Guelph is within easy access of a lot of Canada's borders. With the volume that goes through Sarnia, Windsor, Niagara, the ports of Fort Erie, the airports of London, Windsor, Hamilton and Waterloo, Guelph has a lot of connections that need CBSA's services.

When I travel on the shuttle back and forth to the airport, I meet a lot of people coming to the University of Guelph. These students come from different countries. There are researchers and professors. People visit Guelph for business. Twenty-five per cent of Guelph's employment is involved in manufacturing, and a lot of people and products go across borders several times. As we build the car of the future, as an example, we need to have free and open access the border, but we need to ensure we do it in the proper way.

Guelph receives 800 immigrants a year who settle there. Immigrants come with family members who want to see them in their new home. A lot of people want to reunite with families, and CBSA agents play a very human role. They are the first faces that many people see when they come to Canada.

The CBSA really does a lot of wonderful things to keep our communities safe, protect shipments and ensure our products move properly. Guelph is very appreciative of the work of the CBSA.

Guelph is part of the Great Lakes region. If it were a separate country, it would be the third-largest GDP in the world, with \$6 trillion U.S., home to 107 million people, supporting 50 million jobs, and growing. We need to look at the importance of our border within the region to ensure it is successful in all ways, through safety, environmental success and economic success. How does this happen? How do we implement legislation? What changes are we talking about?

It is interesting that this legislation started in the other place through the great work of former Senator Wilfred Moore. It passed third reading in the previous Parliament. However, sometimes we do not get all the way across the finish line. We simply run out of time. Therefore, it is good to see the bill in the House early in the schedule.

When enacted, the RCMP oversight body will be expanded to include CBSA activities, as well as RCMP activities, under a separate group of people, renaming the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission to the public review and complaints commission. People will be tasked to look at CBSA and will share some administrative duties, but groups of experts will help with any complaints coming into the CBSA.

Government Orders

With all of this activity going on, 2,500 complaints came through the CBSA last year. What do we need to do to improve policy? Are we giving people the right tools to do the job? How do we have public oversight, which is really what we are talking about today?

The PCRC needs to have flexibility to organize its internal structure and give staff members, and there were some questions in the House today about what they need to do their jobs and how to organize things together.

Currently, complaints from the public regarding the level service are handled through an internal process, which will still exist, but there will also be this external process. Hopefully this will build public trust and show that we are being transparent and trying to meet the needs of Canadians. It comes down to citizen engagement.

The independent review requires citizens to step forward to help us ensure we do the right job on their behalf. It also asks citizens to tell us when we need to improve. In business, we talk about customer relationship management. Really, citizenship is active engagement to ensure that as customers of government services, they get the services they need.

It is important that we separate political influence from the implementation of policy. This external review will help us to do that. We will work on better solutions together through this independent review agency.

I look forward to the bill passing in the House in an appropriate amount of time so it can be enacted in this Parliament.

• (1655)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while I applaud Bill C-3 on its civil liberty enhancements, the Preclearance Act, Bill C-23 under the previous government, allows U.S. Customs and Border Protection agencies to detain and question people indefinitely, without allowing them representation or the ability to leave pre-clearance detention while on Canadian soil. As the act says, “No action or other proceeding of a civil nature may be brought against a preclearance officer in respect of anything that is done or omitted in the exercise of their...duties and functions under this [legislation].”

What oversight are we going to provide to Canadian citizens in pre-clearance on Canadian soil with United States Customs and Border Protection?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to getting to know the hon. member for Hamilton Centre and working with him.

Even though some of the services from U.S. Border officials are on Canadian soil, they are within U.S. jurisdiction, and that is an issue. It is something we talked about last Parliament. We should try to make sure that when we are doing pre-clearance, we are able to get things all the way through to Canada so that we can deal with them under Canadian jurisdiction. We do have jurisdictional issues at the border.

The independent review of decisions could possibly come through this, but if the policy has not changed, officials will not be reviewing that within the scope of what we are talking about.

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 wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts regarding the types of border crossings we have. Many people assume that we have a wonderful, long U.S.-Canada border, but this is about a lot more than just the U.S. border. I will let the member fill in some of the blanks on that.

• (1700)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North always finds the details we need to cover.

I was talking about the ground border agencies and thinking of those who drive to the United States. Of course, we can get to the United States in other ways, such as through the airports in our communities or the airports we travel to. We have shipping ports as well, which are important in ensuring the whole package works together.

We need an integrated transportation strategy, especially in southwest Ontario, that will take us from rail to ship or rail to plane, or will get the trucks off of Highway 401 so we can move goods in a more efficient way. That would also require us to keep those in the CBSA in mind, because they would have to do the clearances. Whether it is rail, boats or on the road, they are there to serve us.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think we are all keen to get the bill passed in this session, and I am pleased that it has come up early.

Is the member worried at all? I wonder if he heard my concerns earlier. We should not exclude so many aspects of our Canada Border Services Agency activities such that rather serious incidents fall through some cracks between a review agency at a global level and the specific complaints of individual incidents. Things could fall through the cracks with so many exclusions in the bill.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I was listening very carefully to what the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was saying, and it brought to mind Arnold Chan. When he was in the House, he said that we need to listen to each other, not talk over each other. He said that as members of Parliament, we should respect what others are saying.

There is a balance between members of Parliament debating the operations of facilities to give them the right tools to do their jobs and their use of those tools. If there is a gap in policy that we can fix to help them do their jobs, then we can play that role. However, in terms of their professionalism and how they operate within their agencies, they need to identify any shortcomings and use the tools at their disposal. I am very confident they are doing this in most cases. If they are not, we now have a way for them to report in and a way for us to look at policy to see how we can fill those gaps together.

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 must first compliment the member for Guelph. I respect it immensely when members come across as being very strong nationalists, thinking in terms of the nation first and foremost while having a love for the province they represent and not forgetting about our other provinces.

I appreciated his comments in regard to Manitoba's 150th anniversary of joining Confederation in 1870, much like my other colleagues who are enthusiastically getting behind members of Parliament from Manitoba. We recognize the importance of that event, as I said in a statement earlier today. We should be very proud of all the different regions of this great country.

To get to Bill C-3, I will try to emphasize the numbers. We are talking about oversight for our border control officers, and I want to emphasize how important those civil servants are to our communities. We often talk about the complaints, and there are complaints, as I will say right away. However, the vast majority of the work conducted by these civil servants is overwhelmingly positive. They do fantastic service to our country with the fine work that they do. I want to extend my compliments to them, and I know members of this House would echo those comments in regard to the outstanding work that they do day in and day out, seven days a week and 24 hours a day.

Let us think in terms of the number of transactions that take place, or of face-to-face encounters. This is what really took me aback when I was doing a bit of research on the issue. Think of 2018-2019 alone; CBSA employees interacted with over 96 million travellers, conducted four million traveller examinations and processed over 19 million commercial shipments and 54 million courier shipments.

Those are incredible numbers. Earlier today, we voted on the free trade agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico. In speaking to that legislation, we heard that in trade alone, we see \$2 billion a day across that land border. I expect some of that is flown in and possibly even arrives by ship, but I repeat that it is over \$2 billion a day in trade.

We have huge expectations for our border control officers. We expect them to be consistent and fair and to provide equal treatment. I suspect that it can be a challenge at times to provide that service, yet over 99% of the time, that is the type of service that they are providing. We need to feel comfortable about that organization, and confident in it.

The legislation before us was introduced by the Minister of Public Safety, and I compliment him and his department for the fine work they have done in ensuring that there was consultation over the last number of years. It is only because we had such a busy legislative agenda dealing with public safety in the previous run between 2015 and 2019 that this legislation unfortunately did not make it completely across the finish line. We are reintroducing it now, and it is a priority for this government. The Minister of Public Safety has done a fantastic job in pulling it together and making sure that we could deal with it early in the current parliamentary session.

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I have listened to a few members across the way who have already spoken on it. It is encouraging to hear that all members, or at least all parties of this House, have recognized the value of ultimately seeing this bill passed.

● (1705)

I understand that some members would like to review it at the committee stage, and I anticipate we will see some amendments. If our record has demonstrated anything over the last number of years, it is that our government, even in a majority situation, is very sympathetic to good amendments. In a minority situation, members can anticipate that we will continue to support good ideas that make legislation better for Canadians. I look forward to seeing the bill go to committee, given the type of support we have already seen at second reading.

Oversight is important. If we were to say there is public oversight for the RCMP, CSIS and our correctional services officers, most people would assume that we already have it for our border control agents. However, that is not the case. In essence, this legislation is meant to provide oversight for our Canada border control officers. As opposed to our creating something independent, this oversight body would also be able to deal with RCMP complaints. It has a name. It will be addressed as the public complaints and review commission, and it will deal with both RCMP and CBSA concerns or complaints that come forward.

As I referenced in one of my questions, by having oversight we are ensuring there is a higher level of accountability and transparency. In doing so, we are building public confidence in the system, and if not directly, then indirectly.

If we were to talk with stakeholders or individual Canadians, we would likely hear stories. We have already heard some of those stories in this debate. When we were debating Bill C-98, stories were brought forward as well, one about a border officer who had an issue and dealt with it in an inappropriate fashion.

We know that unfortunately things of that nature will occur. Members of the public need to feel that there is a sense of justice so that when they do occur, there is a place they can go to lodge a complaint. That is really what Bill C-3 would do. I see that as a win in many different ways. I suspect that if we were to talk to the civil servants who work for CBSA, they too would recognize the true value of oversight.

Our borders need to be safe. They need to be secure and open and provide for the efficient flow of travel and trade. As I referenced in my question for the member for Guelph, we have border officers not only along the Canada-U.S. border but also at the international airport in Winnipeg, and it is not alone. I believe we have 12, 13 or possibly 14 international airports in Canada. These points of entry and departure must have border officers in order to allow for the efficient flow of travellers and trade.

Government Orders

I am glad to see that we will finally have an oversight committee to build upon that confidence. I suspect and hope that members will see the benefits of moving the bill to committee, where we can give it a final review to see if there are ways to improve it.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year the member's city was one of the worst cities for murders. If I recall, it was a record 44.

The last public safety minister is no longer in the House. My province of Saskatchewan took care of that. The minister representing the riding of Regina—Wascana failed to do what was in his mandate letter in 2015, and that was to bring forward legislation like this. This could have been brought forward in the last Parliament. Now we are in a minority situation. How can Canadians have confidence in a minority situation and in a minister who has a lot on his plate, with illegal firearms and a rise in the number of shootings by gangs, which we have talked about in the House? How can we be confident that Bill C-3 will proceed any further than it did in the last Parliament?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of wonderful things in Winnipeg. I would invite the member to come to Winnipeg and see for himself.

With respect to his comments, I would not be so hard on Premier Brian Pallister. The province is trying very hard. We are working with his provincial government to deal with some of those outstanding things. This is an example of Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals working together to ensure all communities are safe, not only those in Manitoba but across the country.

In regard to prioritizing the legislation, it bodes well in the sense that it is Bill C-3. After listening to the debate thus far, I can tell there is good support for it. It would be nice, given its history, to pass it relatively quickly and send it to committee. The standing committee would be able to get a better assessment of it and look at possible amendments if necessary. Then we could see the legislation go to the Senate.

It seems to me that there is good, solid support for the legislation. It might need a bit of tweaking, and we will find that out once it gets to the standing committee.

• (1715)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am delighted with the enthusiasm of both the Liberals and the Conservatives with a proposal I made more than six years ago in this place. The Conservatives complain about the Liberals' tardiness, but they had plenty of time to do this when they were government.

My question for the member has to do with a topic that was raised by my hon. colleague from Hamilton Centre.

In the member's newfound enthusiasm for accountability for CBSA agents, he is also part of a government that passed the new Pre-clearance Act, Bill C-23, in the last Parliament, which gives extraordinary powers to U.S. officials on Canadian soil. The U.S. border agency will be able to detain Canadians, question them without

representation and prevent them from withdrawing from the pre-clearance area.

I wonder why his enthusiasm for accountability of those working at borders does not extend to those U.S. border agents working in the pre-clearance areas.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, with the little time I have to provide an answer, I would suggest the member read what then Minister Ralph Goodale put on the record in regard to the bill. He will find that a vast majority of individuals welcome having pre-clearance because it is a more efficient way of travelling into the United States.

I do not fully understand all the details. I would have to look into it. Generally speaking, I have never had a complaint in all my years as a parliamentarian on that issue, but that does not necessarily mean they do not exist. However, I value the importance of pre-clearance when I go into the United States.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague if there are any concerns that have already been raised about the security or speed with which people and goods will be able to cross our borders when the provisions of the bill are implemented. Is he aware of any concerns that have been raised in that regard?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada does have a priority and a focus on ensuring trade gets through the borders as quickly as possible. We always want to deal with the issue of safety. It really helps Canada's middle class and our economy to be as efficient as possible.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, in theory, my speech should last about 20 minutes, but it might be a little shorter. I want to give some notice to the speaker coming after me. If he or she is listening and is not already in the House, he or she can come a little earlier.

Today we are debating the role of the Canada Border Services Agency. It might be a good idea to remind everyone that the Canada Border Services Agency is a massive organization. It is responsible for enforcing no fewer than 90 laws and regulations, which is a lot. This is a very important organization.

One of the main laws that the Canada Border Services Agency is responsible for enforcing is the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA. Immigration experts and lawyers often say that if Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, is the judicial branch that handles immigration, the CBSA is its enforcer. This metaphor comes up often in the immigration world.

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IRCC follows the judicial process. If a claim is filed, it is made in writing. The claimant is then heard by a panel, which must render a written decision. There are several ways to challenge the decision, either by review or appeal.

There is a transparent, substantive and reasoned process for challenging decisions that fall within the legal branch. However, at the enforcement level, there is no system in place to challenge what is being done, such as how CBSA officers may deal with individuals who, for example, are subject to deportation orders or with immigrants detained in detention centres for identification purposes.

There may be gaps in several places, but there is no way to find out what those gaps are, other than through an access to information request. There is no open complaint system, there is no open process, and there are certainly no guidelines for handling these complaints.

That is exactly what Bill C-3 is trying to correct. We need to ensure that there is a transparent system in place to monitor and track complaints, and perhaps even facilitate filing them.

The subject has attracted media attention in recent years. CBC filed access to information requests to get a better idea of what was going on and what kind of complaints were being received internally. It is possible to file complaints, but they have to be submitted to the CBSA and are handled by the agency, not by an external third party.

CBC filed an access to information request and got some information. From January 2016 through half of 2018, the CBSA received no fewer than 1,200 complaints about its employees. In some cases, the complaints were about harassment and grave misconduct. CBC noted that the number of complaints ruled credible was not made public and there was no information about measures taken to address complaints found to be credible. There is no accountability. Nobody follows up on the complaints. There is no system to remedy complaints deemed admissible.

The subject of the complaints was interesting too. It was not until the media got involved that we found out what was going on. Of the 1,200 complaints received, 59 were about allegations of harassment, five were about allegations of sexual assault, and 38 were about statements alleging criminal association.

● (1720)

In connection with the lack of a complaint handling system that was uncovered by the CBC, we are seeing another problem, namely that people who are in Canada temporarily have less access to this complaints system. We are talking about temporary residents and visitors who may also have to deal with CBSA officers. Some examples were reported by the CBC. A woman who was supposed to be deported to Guatemala claimed that CBSA officers seriously injured her by pushing her to the ground and kneeling on her back. She said, "They pulled [my arm] backwards and kept kicking my back with their knees."

In that specific case, there is nothing in writing on that woman's file to indicate whether there had really been any excessive use of force. There was no follow-up to the complaint because there is no complaint tracking mechanism. However, Nazila Bettache, a Mon-

trepreneur who later saw the woman, said that she had suffered a traumatic injury that damaged the nerves in her cervical spine. Nevertheless, as there is no complaint tracking system, no one could ever shed light on what really happened.

A year and a half ago, La Presse filed an access to information request to get a better idea of what happens to complaints that are received and handled internally by the CBSA. La Presse found that about 100 of the approximately 900 complaints that were received were deemed to be founded. About one in 10 complaints is considered to be founded by the CBSA. Once again, that is problematic because we do not know what criteria are used to determine whether a complaint is founded or credible. The complainant does not necessarily receive a decision with reasons, as would be the case with a complaint received and handled by independent organizations with clear guidelines.

The report noted that some complaints were about CBSA officers who made racist or crude comments about travellers. There is no way to see the details of these complaints or how they were received, assessed and handled, as the case may be.

The Canadian Press also looked into this matter. For 2017-18, it identified 105 complaints that were deemed to be founded, which represented about 12% of the complaints received. It analyzed 875 complaints in total. Once again, we have to wonder about the proportion of complaints that are received and deemed to be founded. Perhaps a more detailed analysis with clear criteria would reveal that more complaints should have been deemed credible and accepted and analyzed. These complaints could have led to follow-up and hopefully to corrective action.

In this case, the Canadian Press looked at the type of complaints made. It mentioned one traveller who stated that a CBSA officer was rude and yelled at her until she passed out. Apparently, the officers only reported that she was found to be in medical distress and received appropriate care. There seems to be a discrepancy between the content of the complaint and the manner in which it was analyzed by the CBSA. However, an external investigation is not necessarily carried out in such cases.

Another complaint came from a traveller who reported that the officers were insulting other travellers and lacked respect. Radio-Canada also looked into this. It raised an issue that is a bit different but that also deserves to be analyzed by the committee that examines Bill C-3. The Radio-Canada articles state that border officers have the right to search the contents of electronic devices but that they have to put the device in airplane mode. It seems that, in many of the cases that were reported, the CBSA officers did not abide by that directive and there was not necessarily any follow-up. I will give a few examples.

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One person was asked for access to her online bank accounts. The person had her phone with her, and the CBSA officers asked for access to her bank account without giving any reason to justify it. We have to wonder whether it was legitimate to ask the person to give them access to her bank accounts.

● (1725)

Another traveller gave the following example. At the Montreal-Trudeau Airport, returning from a trip to Cuba, he was asked by border officers to open his luggage so they could inspect the contents. The traveller said that he had been to Cuba 15 times and never had any problems. That evening, he was clearly targeted.

In his luggage, he had a cellphone, a tablet and two USB keys, which contained his lesson plans and his students' files. The officers asked him whether they could inspect all of the contents of his USB keys and tablet. The next day, the man received warning messages informing him that an unidentified person had tried to access his Hotmail and Facebook accounts.

This raises questions that are very interesting to me as a lawyer. When those articles were published, I remember that they got people in the legal field talking, particularly my colleagues in immigration law.

Like my colleagues, I wondered what I, as a lawyer, would do if I arrived at customs and a CBSA officer asked me to unlock my phone to verify the contents.

As I am bound by solicitor-client privilege, it is possible that my phone might contain confidential information. I might be an immigration lawyer, and my phone might contain information from my clients that might end up in the hands of the CBSA. Do I cancel my trip? Do I hand over my phone to the officer? Later, if I want to file a complaint, the system does not allow me to do so properly.

There are some gaps when it comes to privacy protection. How do we know if limits have been exceeded when those limits are not yet clearly established? They cannot even be corrected through a process where a complaint is deemed acceptable after being analyzed, detailed and justified, or challenged in court and referred to higher courts to set precedent, because such a system simply does not exist.

The Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-3, just as we supported its previous iteration in the last Parliament, although it may have been introduced a bit too late, unfortunately causing it to die on the Order Paper.

However, we hope the bill will benefit from many thoughtful comments, but not only from CBSA staff. It is important to remember that our support for this bill does not mean we are in any way criticizing CBSA officers. No large organization has a monopoly on problems, nor is any organization immune to them.

The main objective is to give CBSA a chance to develop a good system for analyzing complaints so it can put best practices in place and, if necessary, be able to dismiss people who do not apply best practices when complaints are considered valid.

We hope the committee that studies Bill C-3 will hear from many experts, especially immigration lawyers and representatives of the

union representing CBSA employees. This will ensure that the final version of the bill will give CBSA the best possible system for processing complaints and that complaints are then processed in a way that ensures CBSA officers are given clearer guidance.

● (1730)

[*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, in listening to the member opposite, it seems as if there is qualified support for the legislation, which is a good thing.

Does the Bloc already have a sense of some of the amendments it would like to propose, and if so, has it shared that with the department yet? It seems as if the member has done a great deal of homework in looking over the bill. Can she enlighten us as to some of the specific amendments she would like to see?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his remarks regarding the work we have already done on this file. I am not the only one who has been looking closely at this matter. We have worked together, as a team.

I do not have any suggestions to make at this time, especially since I am not a member of the committee. I will leave that to my colleagues who will be tasked with studying the bill. I would not want to put any words in their mouths, and I do not want them to feel tied down by my recommendations, which they might not necessarily agree with. I will therefore refrain from speaking on their behalf.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She raised issues related to cybersecurity. She also talked about the different types of complaints. As my party's status of women critic, any time sexual assault or harassment comes up, that is in my wheelhouse.

In this day and age, with women being encouraged to file complaints and speak out about these situations, I would like to know if an independent agency can help encourage them to do just that.

● (1735)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford for her question.

Simply having an external agency makes things seem legitimate. For example, if the police is investigating the police, that gives people the impression that cases will not be treated fairly.

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If an external organization is responsible for reviewing complaints, that will encourage people to file complaints. It is harder to complain about an organization that is also responsible for reviewing complaints made against it.

I hope this will be an incentive for people to file complaints and that it will come to include specific measures for complaints related to sexual assault.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, regarding the commission that will be created, who does the member think should be on the newly created commission, how does she think they should be selected and what kinds of qualifications should they have?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It raises important issues that will need to be addressed when the time comes to decide who will sit on this commission. Unfortunately, I cannot give him an answer.

I would not be surprised if people responsible for immigration and national security files were chosen. As I mentioned, the Canada Border Services Agency is a huge organization with many services. The CBSA administers 90 acts and regulations. In some cases, even foods may fall under its purview. There may be complaints about this as well.

I believe that a commission that is as eclectic as possible could be a good thing and would make compelling recommendations.

[*English*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill C-3, our proposed accountability legislation for the Canada Border Services Agency.

Specifically, this bill would establish an independent, arm's-length public complaints and review body for the CBSA. This is important and overdue.

This bill follows the efforts of Wilfred Moore, who proposed Bill S-222 and Bill S-205 to provide oversight for the actions of CBSA employees. This bill has been reintroduced in the House after its former iteration, Bill C-98, received all-party support during third reading in the last Parliament.

As we all know, the CBSA has repeatedly been singled out for the lack of independent oversight over some of its activities. Filling that accountability gap is the right thing to do in any democracy. It would also improve the public's trust and confidence in an agency that not only helps to keep the public safe but also deals with the public on a daily basis.

Many of our constituents travel for work or leisure. They expect and deserve a relatively uneventful experience when receiving border services.

Let me be clear: The CBSA does excellent work while operating in a complex and challenging environment. As I followed the debate with great interest, I was pleased to hear praise and recognition from members of this House for the agency and its dedicated employees.

More than 14,000 people work for the CBSA. Some employees have behind-the-scenes jobs, working on investigations of suspected criminals, national security cases and organized crime groups. Others have a more visible role, including the more than 6,500 uniformed CBSA officers. Many of these officers engage with the public at various ports of entry to Canada.

The CBSA manages 117 land border crossings, more than half of which operate on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week. The agency also operates at 13 international airports, and its officers perform operations at 27 rail sites. In addition to this, CBSA officers carry out marine operations at the ports of Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver, among others, and at numerous marinas and reporting stations.

The CBSA's work goes well beyond its presence at our ports of entry. For example, it processes and examines international mail at three processing centres. Its officers enforce laws and regulations that involve nearly every sector of Canadian society, including our agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors. It has a very broad and wide-ranging mandate.

In fulfilling that mandate, CBSA employees engage with large numbers of Canadian citizens, permanent residents and foreign nationals. In 2018-19 alone, they engaged with more than 96 million travellers. That is in addition to the over 19 million commercial shipments and more than 54 million courier shipments they processed last year. It is a world-class agency.

These numbers are a testament to the CBSA's diligent, hard-working employees. In almost all cases, the services they provide to the public are beyond reproach, but, as with any organization of its size and scope, incidents do arise from time to time. The CBSA has procedures in place to handle complaints about the public's experiences in dealing with the agency. Currently, these complaints about service or employee conduct are handled internally. If there is dissatisfaction with the results of an internal CBSA investigation, there is no mechanism for the public to request an independent review of a complaint.

That is where Bill C-3 comes in. It proposes to establish a strong and independent review mechanism for the CBSA called the public complaints and review commission, or the PCRC. We would not be starting from scratch with the PCRC, because it would incorporate and build on the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. The new PCRC would handle complaints from the public about its interactions with and the services provided by both the CBSA and the RCMP.

Here is a brief overview of how the proposed PCRC would work. The PCRC would notify the CBSA of any complaint it receives from the public. The CBSA would likewise inform the PCRC of any complaint it receives directly from the public. In most cases the CBSA would conduct an initial investigation of the complaint.

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Of course, it is possible that someone making a complaint would not be satisfied with the way the initial complaint investigation was handled by the CBSA. Bill C-3 accounts for this. It would allow those filing complaints to submit a request to the PCRC for a complaint review. This request would need to be submitted within 60 days of receiving notice from the CBSA of the outcome of the complaint.

• (1740)

This bill would also give the PCRC the power to conduct its own investigation of a complaint. It could choose to do so if it receives or is notified of a complaint received by the CBSA and believes a PCRC investigation would be in the public interest.

In these cases, the CBSA would not begin an investigation into the complaint. If an investigation had already been launched, it would be terminated. As its name suggests, the PCRC would also play an important review role for the CBSA. The PCRC would be able to review any of the CBSA's activities, with the exception of those involving national security matters. That is to avoid duplication of work with the new National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, as well as the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians.

All other areas of CBSA activity would be subject to the PCRC review. The PCRC would be free to make its own decisions about what to review. A request for review could also come from the Minister of Public Safety.

I am proud to stand with a government that is committed to ensuring all of its departments and agencies are held accountable. It has been clear for quite some time that an accountability gap exists when it comes to some of the core functions of the CBSA. Right now the CBSA investigates complaints about its own conduct and service. That system certainly cannot be expected to inspire trust and confidence among Canadians.

Bill C-3 would make things right by creating a public complaints and review commission. This would be a body that people could turn to if they have comments or complaints about their experiences with the CBSA, and crucially, it would be completely independent.

That is why I wholeheartedly endorse this important piece of legislation and look forward to seeing it move through the parliamentary process during this session. I encourage hon. members of the House to join me in supporting this bill.

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, we have these oversight committees to ensure there is a higher sense of accountability and transparency and also to help build public confidence in the institution, in this case the Canada Border Services Agency.

Could the member provide her thoughts on why it is important we continue to support and build people's confidence in the border control agents, the RCMP or correctional officers? These are all groups with oversight committees.

• (1745)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, it is important that all Canadians have confidence in their government and institutions, which is why it is important to make sure these bodies are there to help support them and provide a place they would be able to complain to.

When an agency oversees its own complaints, we never know what the outcome is and we never know exactly who is checking the complaints. Having a second body able to do this is important to help gain the confidence of Canadians. Canadians need to know these services are there to protect them, first and foremost, and if they do not have good experiences with agencies, such as the CBSA or other agencies, it is important they have a place to make that complaint.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the concerns I have around this bill, and I am hoping we will be able to fix it at committee stage, is that it explicitly says that reviews cannot be conducted if resources are not available to do so. That worries me.

Could the member let the House know what kind of resources the government is planning to commit to ensure the PCRC has the resources it needs to carry out its review function?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that the budget has not yet come out. We do not necessarily know where funding will be placed and how much money will be going into these programs. I do trust that if this is legislation we are moving forward on, there will be money available to make sure this is something that can happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. How will this new type of commission deal with the increased workload?

I gather that civilians who currently file a complaint with the commission can wait months or even years before receiving a response.

Does the government have a plan to increase the commission's capacity?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The commission has not yet been created. We are not at that point yet, so I cannot answer my colleague's question.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member opposite about the costs of running programs like this. Taxpayers are often quite concerned about government-run programs like this being hugely expensive. We are already looking at \$150 million for oversight groups that are already in existence.

What assurances do we have that taxpayers will get value for the massive cost of this program?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, most Canadians, if not all, have dealt with the CBSA at some point or other when travelling. We never know what can happen, what kind of event will take place and what kinds of dealings we will have with the CBSA. Hopefully all Canadians will be able to benefit from these services and from the money being put into these services.

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-3.

I am in favour of a complaints and review mechanism for the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA. This type of proposal goes to the very heart of our government's core values and objectives.

Each minister of the Crown has a mandate letter that clearly states:

We have committed to an open, honest government that is accountable to Canadians, lives up to the highest ethical standards and applies the utmost care and prudence in the handling of public funds.

• (1750)

[English]

We want to raise the bar even further on the transparency and integrity of government.

[Translation]

As Prime Minister Trudeau said, if we want Canadians to trust their government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that she must not use members' names in the House.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, if we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians. I would add that this position has been repeated many times in the House, and not just when Bill C-98 was introduced.

On that note, I would also like to thank the senator who introduced Bill S-205 in 2015. That bill set out a number of the recommendations that we are proposing today.

[English]

Beyond the CBSA, our government's desire to improve the transparency and accountability of all our security agencies is clear.

[Translation]

For example, in 2013, a member proposed the creation of a national security committee of parliamentarians, but unfortunately the House rejected that proposal. The following year, a member introduced a bill that would have amended the National Defence Act in order to improve the transparency and accountability of the Communications Security Establishment.

Obviously, parliamentarians and Canadians want our intelligence and security agencies to be as accountable and transparent as possible. When our government took office in 2015, we knew we had to

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take action. During the government consultations on national security, experts and members of the public told us that we risked losing the trust of the public if our security agencies did not become more transparent and accountable.

[English]

After all, these measures create an effective and efficient government.

[Translation]

They help us oversee the exercise of authority and deliver results for Canadians.

The bill established the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, which is the heart of Bill C-59 and represents a historic change for Canada.

The creation of this agency resulted in an integrated and comprehensive review of all national security and intelligence activities, including broader access to information across the government.

The government also created the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, a group tasked with reviewing Canada's national security and intelligence organizations.

[English]

As members know, this committee now has extraordinary access to classified information so that it can scrutinize security and intelligence activities.

[Translation]

The creation of this committee filled a significant gap and allowed us achieve two objectives: guaranteeing that our security agencies are working effectively, and protecting the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

The government also adopted a national security transparency commitment across government to give Canadians better access to information. All of these measures will help build public confidence in our security agencies. The RCMP, CSIS and Correctional Service Canada are already subject to solid accountability measures.

[English]

We know that similar steps have to be taken for our border agency.

[Translation]

We need a transparent system to ensure that complaints regarding the conduct and quality of services of CBSA employees are handled appropriately.

This is what Bill C-3 aims to do.

This bill would build on all of the government reforms I mentioned earlier and would increase the accountability of our national security apparatus.

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Canadians can rest assured that an independent review body would be handling complaints relating to the conduct of border officers.

Bill C-3 would expand and strengthen the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, the CRCC, which is the RCMP's review agency. This commission would become the public complaints and review commission. The new commission would be responsible for handling complaints and reviews for the Canada Border Services Agency and for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Anyone interacting with CBSA employees who wishes to file a complaint about the employee's conduct or quality of services would be able to go through this enhanced commission.

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission could also conduct reviews of the Canada Border Services Agency of its own initiative or at the request of the Minister of Public Safety. However, matters of national security would be addressed by the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency with help from the CRCC.

Departments and agencies within Canada's public safety community are very familiar with this new transparency and accountability model. I know that they understand that their ability to respect this model has a direct impact on public trust, their credibility and their day-to-day activities.

The government knows that with the creation of the independent mechanism proposed in Bill C-3, Canadians will be much more comfortable filing a complaint. We will thereby greatly improve the accountability of our public safety apparatus' oversight mechanism.

• (1755)

[*English*]

I encourage all members of the House to join me and support Bill C-3 at second reading.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question pertains to the complexity, sometimes, of the environment of oversight organizations. I saw a number cited in the backgrounder on this bill. We spend about \$150 million on various agencies that do oversight, which obviously is an important function.

Other members spoke earlier today about duplication. People worry that it may take a long time for them to get an answer or that they may not receive correct directions on how to find an answer or file a complaint.

I am wondering if the member could comment on that, to assure Canadians that this legislation is money well spent and that there would be an easy, directed process and a timeline for an outcome that Canadians could have confidence in when they make a submission to the oversight commission.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*Translation*]

I think that the government has always sought to establish the best commission and the best organizations possible to meet the needs of all Canadians.

Bill C-3 effectively seeks to ensure that people can file complaints, feel safe and rest assured that their rights will be respected by border services officers. We hope that these questions will be answered in the next stages this bill will follow through to its adoption.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

My riding, Châteauguay—Lacolle, is home to an important border crossing. I am talking about the crossing in Lacolle, on Highway 15. Thousands of people, individuals and families, cross that border for tourist and business reasons. Goods are also shipped by businesses for export and import between the United States and Canada.

What changes does Bill C-3 make? We sometimes hear stories about people held up at the border or being asked questions they found inappropriate. What changes does this bill make for ordinary citizens?

• (1800)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Our government is committed to ensuring that border services earn the trust of the Canadian people, and we are working on strengthening accountability. Bill C-3 will facilitate the safe and efficient flow of people and goods. It goes even further by introducing an oversight body that will allow people to file complaints more easily. I think this will help the people in the riding.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, will this commission be empowered to deal with illegal or improper searches of the phones of Canadians, or will it be powerless to stop U.S. agents from collecting information?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[*Translation*]

As for the rights granted to the commission, I cannot answer that question too specifically. One thing is certain: Our aim in introducing this bill is to strengthen Canadians' confidence and make sure they feel comfortable dealing with border service officers and filing complaints when circumstances warrant them. I am confident that all the necessary mechanisms will be implemented so that we can address these situations.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with my colleague, the member for Beauce.

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I rise in the House today to support the government's Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. This bill makes two key changes to the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. First, it will rename this agency to be called the public complaints and review commission. This bill will also expand the agency's responsibility.

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP, as it is now named, is an independent agency. It is not part of the RCMP. The commission was created by Parliament in 1988 to ensure that public complaints made about the conduct of RCMP members are examined fairly and impartially. The commission receives complaints from the public and conducts reviews when complainants are not satisfied with the RCMP's handling of their complaints. Bill C-3 seeks to expand the oversight responsibility of the commission to include the CBSA in addition to the RCMP.

The CBSA plays a vital role enforcing laws governing trade and travel, while stopping potential threats at Canadian border points. In carrying out these duties, the CBSA relies on border service officers who engage with the public at various points of entry: highway crossings, airports, marine terminals, rail ports and postal facilities.

Border service officers enforce laws and regulations that touch nearly every sector of Canadian society, including our agricultural, manufacturing and service sectors. The CBSA encounters millions of Canadians every year when goods, services and citizens travel from our country to another or return from their journey.

In a constantly changing world with ever-evolving threats, our border service officers work in fast-paced, intense and often stressful environments. CBSA officers, much like RCMP officers, are on the front lines of duty for ensuring the protection of our national security and public safety. They work under significant pressures and are constantly expected to perform to the best of their abilities. It is not an understatement to say that much of our national security and public safety depends on them.

We benefit every day from the hard work these officers put in and, for the vast majority, officers approach their work as professionals and conduct their work responsibly, as expected by the Government of Canada and citizens alike. However, instances of improper or inappropriate conduct from RCMP or CBSA officers can arise from time to time, which may trigger a civilian complaint.

Currently, individuals may launch a complaint against the RCMP for improper attitude, improper use of force, improper use of firearms, improper arrest, neglect of duty and mishandling of property, among other classifications. Many of these classifications could conceivably apply against CBSA officers in specific cases as well. That is why it is reasonable to reinforce existing CBSA procedures to hear comments or complaints about the public's experience with the agency by expanding accountability and oversight of the agency.

These changes in part reflect efforts to ensure that our law enforcement agencies are doing their work and interacting with citizens in an accountable, responsible, professional and respectful

manner. It also heightens overall public trust and confidence in these critical institutions.

I am therefore encouraged that within this new minority Parliament, the government is introducing Bill C-3 early in the 43rd Parliament. The government is indicating that it understands this is something we can work on together to support and get passed for the benefit of all Canadians. My constituents want to see this kind of co-operation and I am pleased to be standing in my place saying that we will be supporting this legislation.

As many of my colleagues know, my riding of Niagara Falls is unique in our great country. Geographically, the riding stretches the length of the Niagara peninsula, touching on two of our Great Lakes, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, which are connected by the magnificent Niagara River. On the other side of this river is our greatest trading partner and ally, the United States of America.

My riding's connection to the U.S. is close not only in geographic terms, but we are also connected physically by four separate international border crossings that are all situated along the length of the Niagara River. These border crossings are the Queenston Lewiston Bridge in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Whirlpool Bridge and the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls, and the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie. As such, the implications of Bill C-3 will be felt directly in my riding by many CBSA officers who work in and call Niagara their home.

● (1805)

Born and raised in Niagara, I am very familiar with the work of the CBSA. Furthermore, in my work with the Niagara Parks Commission for the past 18 years, my understanding and appreciation of their work grew. In this role, I had the pleasure of working with the CBSA on several occasions, in concert with our own Niagara Parks Police, to facilitate large-scale international events and visits to our community.

I understand first-hand the level of experience and professionalism our border officers exhibit when they conduct their work. However, as mentioned before, incidents can arise, and expanding the responsibility of the public complaints and review commission of the CBSA makes sense. In fact, this change would increase my level of confidence in our national security and public safety authorities overall.

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It is my hope to see this reasonable bill be passed through the House of Commons, once again, in a timely manner, given its simple reintroduction without change and its recent history of going through the House of Commons parliamentary process with relative ease. Changing legislation is just one important part of implementing Bill C-3; funding it is another. Budget 2019 proposed to invest \$24.42 million over five years starting in 2019-20, and \$6.83 million per year ongoing, to expand the mandate of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. I look forward to reviewing budget 2020 for any updates to this funding, once budget 2020 has been published and passed later this spring. In the meantime, I am pleased to support Bill C-3 at second reading.

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, I suspect that the numbers from the budget are more than what the member has just mentioned. We will get another opportunity through another budget. I believe that the government has not only brought through legislation but has also brought through some additional resources.

The member correctly said that this is not new legislation, because it was brought in last year in Bill C-98 and actually passed through. I am wondering if the member would agree that as we go into the standing committee, the government would be open to amendments. That is a positive thing. We have seen in the past that when good amendments were proposed, they received the support of the House.

• (1810)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments earlier about the CBSA officers and the important role that they play at the international airport in Winnipeg.

In terms of the ongoing funding for the commission, my hope is that it would be as robust as the funding that the government places in the CBSA and its front-line officers, and as well in the border infrastructure, which is critically important to my community in ensuring the free flow of goods and people across my community and across our country.

When we get to committee, I look forward to working with all members of this House. In terms of working on amendments that strengthen this legislation, I will be pleased to work with the member on that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we made reference to the fact that these border control officers have direct interaction with millions of people every year. I believe there are around 2,500 complaints a year. Even though we need to take all complaints seriously, and deal with them, it is important for us to highlight the high sense of professionalism among those civil servants. We should not underestimate, because we do recognize the importance of having that oversight. It is more of a comment, and the member can provide his thoughts on that if he so chooses.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments on the professionalism and the importance of our CBSA officers. I hope he saw that I stressed that aspect in my comments about the interactions and the important role that they play. During the summer months leading into the election campaign, our

local CBSA offices issued a news release that in the first eight months of this year, over 300 illegal firearms were confiscated at the border. These officers play an important role, and they are protecting the safety of Canadians.

I look forward to working with all members of this House to see that this bill is passed.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government seems to be plagued with inefficiency. Does my hon. colleague have an idea as to why it has taken the government an entire mandate to introduce a straightforward piece of legislation that was actually part of the 2015 election platform?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, indeed it is a shame that something that should have been quite easy to pass was left to die on the Order Paper when the election was called. That is why I mentioned in my remarks that it was so important for this legislation to be brought forward quickly so that it can be implemented, as well as these important oversight provisions and the funding for the commission. I also hope that funding for both border infrastructure and for CBSA officers is increased over time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is my first speech, I would like to say hello to the people in my riding of Beauce. I thank them for the opportunity to bring their issues to Ottawa. I have always been proud of the fact that I am from Beauce and I accept with humility the unique opportunity to represent my constituents.

I would especially like to thank my wife, Ginette, my children, grandchildren and my entire family. Without them I would definitely not have been able to get through this campaign, which I found to be very long.

I would also like to acknowledge the members of my team, Derek, Marco and Alexandre. I thank them for minding the store while the House is sitting. I especially want to thank France, who supported me throughout the campaign and who continues to be the rock for my team. I also thank Myriame, Scott and the volunteers for their invaluable assistance during the election campaign. During the campaign I often said that it is faster to go alone, but we can go further together.

I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-3, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, which will create a review body that is at arm's length from the Canada Border Services Agency.

This bill was formerly known as Bill C-98, which the government tried to ram through the last Parliament, no doubt because it wanted to boast about keeping an election promise. Although we are not opposed to Bill C-3, there is still work to do, and it must be done properly.

Interestingly, in the last Parliament, the Liberals waited before following through on their 2015 promise. Right at the end of their term, they pressured all the parties to hurry up and pass Bill C-98.

The Liberals are back at it this time around with Bill C-3. I congratulate them on introducing it at the beginning of the new Parliament instead of doing like they did last time and sweeping it under the rug for their whole term only to make it a big emergency at the end.

Currently, complaints about the conduct of CBSA officers and their services are managed internally. If a member of the public is dissatisfied with the results of the CBSA's internal investigation, that person has no other way to ask for an independent review of the complaint.

I repeat, as with Bill C-98 in the past, our party does not oppose Bill C-3. Canadians expect oversight of our law enforcement agencies. A public complaints commission will improve general oversight and help the CBSA exercise its powers, duties and functions even more effectively.

Our mission is to ensure that the government always keeps Canadians safe. That said, as I mentioned a little earlier in my speech, that work must be done properly.

A few questions remain unanswered, and I hope the government will answer them for Canadians. What bothers me is that Jean-Pierre Fortin, the national president of the Customs and Immigration Union, said he was not consulted about this legislation.

Why did the government not ask for input from people working on the front lines, the ones who will be monitored by a new oversight body that will also oversee the organization that represents them?

In my view, a good employer presents its vision, rather than imposing it. Perhaps the government needs to sit down with Mr. Fortin in order to do its job properly.

• (1815)

While I was preparing my speech, I was surprised to learn that only seven witnesses testified on the last Parliament's Bill C-98.

Other than the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, the witnesses included the chairperson, general counsel and senior director of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the counsel for the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the acting director general of the law enforcement and border strategies directorate. Those five people report directly to the minister.

Let me repeat what I said before: Is it not imperative that the government present its proposals to people on the front lines instead of making people in its entourage testify? It is the government's duty to consult those affected by the changes, if only to ensure that it is on the right path and not just going by what people in the inner circle say.

I also have a concern about deadlines for processing complaints under Bill C-3. Currently, when we send in forms for our constituents, the delays drag on forever. Whether it is about immigration or employment insurance, people in our riding encounter never-ending wait times.

Once the new organization is in place, can the government guarantee that the complaints process will not drag on forever?

Government Orders

In 2017 and 2018, nearly 40,000 people crossed the border illegally as a result of a tweet from the Prime Minister. Although the government said that those numbers dropped by 15% in 2019, the high volume of arrivals caused major problems for border services officers on the ground and for the CBSA, which had to deploy an incredible amount of resources to Roxham Road and other crossings.

What is worse, Jean-Pierre Fortin, who, as I mentioned earlier, is the president of the Customs and Immigration Union, said that there was a resurgence in illegal border crossings at Roxham Road over the holidays. There were twice as many as usual. CBSA officers have asked for additional staff for this year.

The border management system is overloaded, and that is causing problems. CBSA officers are doing their best to do their job properly. I hope that the government learned from the mistakes it made during its previous term in office. Had it introduced its bill properly the last time instead of trying to do it in a rush, we would not be in this position right now. The bill would have gone through the legislative process, and we could have focused our efforts on other bills that are just as important and require just as much attention as Bill C-3.

I hope the government demonstrates that it can do its job properly if it wants the official opposition to co-operate.

I will end my speech on a more personal note. Since we are talking about a bill on the Canada Border Services Agency, I would like to acknowledge the border services officers at the Jackman crossing, which is located in Saint-Théophile in my riding. I thank all border crossing employees for protecting our borders.

I would also like to acknowledge the members of the RCMP who came to my riding last summer to perform the Musical Ride during Saint-Elzéar's summer festival. The event, which is performed by 32 riders in dress uniform and their horses, attracted a crowd of over 2,000 people, young and old, on the wonderful sunny day of June 23, 2019.

• (1820)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I sincerely congratulate the hon. member on his inaugural speech in the House of Commons. I also commend him for having earned the trust of the people of Beauce. It is obviously an honour to sit in the House.

He was right to thank border services officers and the RCMP, because the work they do can be quite challenging. We must not forget that. We must monitor the activities of these peace officers, but we must also take into account the fact that their job is not always easy.

My colleague believes in monitoring security officers. Under the Harper government, we proposed creating a security review committee, which we did in fact bring in after the 2015 election. If memory serves, the government of the day was not in favour of this proposal.

Government Orders

The hon. members across the way seem to have had a change of heart. They were not in favour of monitoring then, but they are now. What is more, they are criticizing the government, saying that it did not act quickly enough.

• (1825)

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his question and, above all, for his kind words in my regard.

I am a new MP. In my previous professional life, in my public and political life, I was always someone who looked ahead. There is no reason why people cannot change their minds.

Personally, I am prepared to support the bill even though I have some concerns, which I just raised and which can be studied in committee.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the residents of Beauce for electing that particular member. We will have high-fives all around, and much celebration. They made a very good choice.

On the topic at hand, I am wondering if my colleague could tell the House a bit about his confusion as to why this legislation was the first priority of the Liberal government when there are so many other things on this particular file that need to be looked at by the government.

I am particularly interested in his further thoughts on the issue of rural crime. Could he talk about some of the things that he would like to see the government do to address rural crime in his great, wonderful, very smart riding.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her kind words.

Beauce is a rural riding that is close to the border. We share a border with the state of Maine. We must pay particular attention to rural crime, but the concern I raised earlier has to do with consultation of people on the ground. I mentioned the name of the union president. It is very important to consult the people at the grassroots level, people who are on the ground, where the action is, in order to properly understand their concerns. It is important to defend Canadians, but the people responsible for defending us must be very well equipped. That is why I was wondering why they were not consulted.

[*English*]

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his maiden speech.

In his remarks, the member made reference to a social media tweet. I would like some clarification on whether he thinks social media are able to undermine our border services, and if there was an influx of refugees, is he able to quantify that for us?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I think that the tweet posted at the time had significant implications. Figures have been released on the number of illegal border crossings, especially at Roxham Road. We are talking about some 40,000 people. I do not think that underestimating the implications of this tweet is the best solution.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have had an opportunity to speak during this 43rd Parliament, so I want to take a moment to thank my constituents from the beautiful riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

Members certainly would not be in this place without the hard work of many people, and I am very blessed to have had a tremendous team of volunteers that supported me during the summer and fall of 2019. I want to thank each and every one of them. I want to thank my constituents, the volunteers, the donors and riding associations because they worked with me hand in hand to make this a reality. It has truly been the honour of my life to represent the great folks of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-3, an act that would create a public review and complaints commission, which would provide Canadians with added accountability measures.

Before I proceed, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the work currently performed by front-line officers at our airports, who work tirelessly to protect us from the coronavirus. Though the risk to Canadians remains low, we do not often take the time to commend those who dedicate their time and effort to keeping us safe, day in and day out.

Looking at the months and weeks to follow, there will be long weekends and March breaks. Many of my constituents will visit another province or territory to see family, cross the border for weekend shopping or leave the continent altogether to go on a well-earned vacation. However, if they do decide to travel I, like other members in the House, want my constituents to have a hassle-free and stress-free experience.

I know that during the course of the debate on policies and legislation, there are often partisan disagreements and arguments. However, when it comes to this bill, I am pleased to say that so far we have seen bipartisan support which, to me, is very encouraging. I thank all members for helping to make this bill as strong as possible as we move forward.

Thus far, we have come to agreement on a few items. First is the tremendous quality of the work undertaken by our border officers and the CBSA. Second is the necessity of ensuring that any negative, or otherwise unprofessional, experiences can be independently heard and reviewed.

We have heard from other members that the CBSA processes millions of travellers and shipments every year at multiple points across Canada and abroad. When looking at 2018 and 2019 statistics, this included 96 million travellers. That is an astonishing number. They also looked at 27.3 million cars, 34.5 million air passengers and 21.4 million commercial releases. Every day, at 13 international airports, 117 land border crossings, 27 rail sites and beyond, CBSA officers provide consistent and fair treatment to travellers and traders.

[*Translation*]

Our border officers are the first point of contact in Canada for visitors and for Canadians who are returning home. What is more, these officers are responsible for maintaining the integrity of Canada's borders. This means that their work is essential to our country's well-being. In this day and age, border security management is a key concern for the government and for Canadians.

[*English*]

Other public safety organizations in Canada, such as the RCMP and Correctional Service of Canada, are already subject to independent review. Globally, border agencies in a number of countries, including the U.K., Australia, New Zealand and France, are subject to external review. Addressing the accountability gaps through Bill C-3 would improve the CBSA and strengthen public confidence in the agency.

I should indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

The legislation would ensure that the public could continue to expect consistent, fair and equal treatment by CBSA employees, and that funding would include support to modernize some of our land, ports of entry and border operations with the goal of both ensuring efficiency and enhancing security.

● (1835)

Under Bill C-3, complaints would be handled by a new arm's-length public complaint and review commission. The PCRC would be able to receive and investigate complaints from the public regarding the conduct of CBSA officials as well as the service provided by the CBSA. Now, if any of my constituents have a particular unprofessional experience, they can be assured that an independent review can occur.

This bill is very similar to Bill C-98 from the last Parliament, and it received all-party support at third reading. Whereas concerns were expressed about the timing of introduction, we were proud to make introducing Bill C-3 one of the first pieces of legislation during this Parliament.

We also incorporated feedback that we received, such as ensuring that a chairperson-initiated review would have access to the same information that the CBSA review has.

On a question from the opposition in the last Parliament, the CBSA union has been contacted already and there will be, at some point, the ability to compel oral or written evidence on oath or solemn affirmation.

Adjournment Proceedings

Under Bill C-3, the PCRC would publish an annual report covering each of its business lines, the CBSA and the RCMP and resources devoted to each.

This bill aligns with other commitments to improve accountability and transparency. The creation of the PCRC is long overdue. Independent review legislation was proposed in the previous two Parliaments, both in the other place and in this House. Amnesty International Canada's 2018 report card noted that the CBSA remained the most notable agency with law enforcement and detention powers in the country that was not subject to independent review and oversight.

The professional men and women at borders would be well served by an independent review function for the CBSA. My constituents and the constituents of the other 337 members of Parliament deserve it as well.

That is why I encourage all members to join me in supporting this bill, Bill C-3, at second reading today.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to hear in the debates today that we have the support of the official opposition, but I also heard concerns with regard to the funding.

Could our colleague perhaps give us more details about the funding for the creation of this new body?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, if we want to put together this type of procedure, we have to ensure the proper resources are put in place.

In budget 2019, I was extremely pleased that \$24 million was put in place for the border enforcement strategy, which will cover the cost of exactly this initiative. Also, each year going forward, an additional \$6 million per year will be funded for the ongoing funding and continuation of this program.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would like to inform the member that she will have four minutes left for questions and answers when the House resumes consideration of the matter before the House.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, something our Parliament should be addressing is the fact that an emerging catalyst for inequality is access to fast, affordable and reliable Internet. As we have seen 4G technology revolutionize our economy with things like streaming services and apps like Uber, we have seen the disruptive impact this has had on the economy in a positive way, but that is only going to accelerate as we see 5G technology roll out over the next five years. When we already have an issue in this country between urban and rural divide, rich and poor, and we have to deal with the issue of reconciliation, we should be looking for ways to unite us through technology and through fast, affordable access to the Internet.

The reality is there are over a million Canadians who do not have any type of access and there are many more people in Canada who pay a lot more. It becomes an affordability and equality issue. Right now, most people in Canada pay five times more than an American does for data. We pay 10 times more than a European does.

When the Liberals talk about reducing cellphone bills by a certain percentage that is not even close to that without any sort of plan outside of maybe asking the telcos nicely and hope that they do this, it is really not addressing the issue of a catalyst for inequality in any sort of meaningful way. I am hoping that in this Parliament, the government will be open to working with the opposition on concrete, innovative ways to get access for everyone.

If over 100 years ago, or whatever the time period was, we built a railway across the Rocky Mountains and across the Canadian Shield, then surely we can figure out how to do things like lay infrastructure so that first nations communities are not separated from Canada and rural Canadians have the same access as urban Canadians do. We want urban and rural Canadians, everybody, to have access to a vital service that is the underpinning of our economy and of the economy of the future.

What I mean by working collaboratively is there are things the government needs to be stating its intent on. I would first point out it needs to signal whether it is going to uphold the ruling on MVNOs that allows for more competition in this space. That is something many Canadians are advocating for in order to ensure there is competitiveness so there is a market pressure downward on this type of access.

It would be interesting if the government signalled some sort of intent to look at new ways to auction spectrum. If we look at this building as having a value to the government, I am not sure we would just sell it off as is without any sort of requirement on how it is being used given how important it is to the Canadian people. We have to start looking at spectrum from the same perspective, that this is an asset that will become an underpinning of the Canadian economy in a much more integrated way and ask whether there are ways we can use this to better incent competition and better incent that fast, reliable and affordable access in Canada.

I do not want to hear these prepared talking points that do one of two things, such as, the Liberals are going to reduce cellphone bills by 25%. How? How are they going to do that, just by asking nice-

ly? The second thing I do not want to hear about is a digital charter that has no teeth and no plan to implement.

● (1840)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to respond to the comments from the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill regarding the affordability of telecommunication services for Canadians. I want her to know that we obviously agree with her assessment that there is an emerging catalyst for inequality and that we take affordability and standing up for consumers very seriously. We very much look forward to collaborating with her.

I can also say that I am not going to be responding by simply bringing up the digital charter. It is fair to say that we have done many things over the course of the past four years, and I would be very happy to recite those.

Our government has taken significant actions with both the regulator and industry to improve affordability, competition and consumer interests in telecommunications. Progress has been made.

Through these efforts, we have seen several developments. First, we have seen the introduction of lower-cost, data-only wireless plans. Second, we have experienced the creation of a new, discounted prepaid brand by a national carrier. Third, we have also seen \$10-per-month Internet services for eligible low-income families.

We have applied competitive measures in spectrum auctions to ensure that regional and smaller wireless carriers have access to the spectrum they need to deploy high-quality networks. With this spectrum, regional carriers have been able to upgrade their networks and offer their customers the latest technologies and smart phones.

This has created a more competitive telecommunications market with increased options for Canadians. Regional wireless carriers can now offer compelling plans for consumers, often at lower prices than national carriers. National carriers have felt the pressure of regional competition, responding with new promotions. These are steps in the right direction.

Consumer interests have also been strengthened. This includes changes to the wireless code of conduct, pursuant to which carriers are now required to unlock mobile devices free of charge, and all mobile devices must now be sold unlocked. This change reduces barriers to switching providers when consumers find a better deal.

Another change is the right for the account holder, the person actually paying the bill, to be notified of data overcharges and approve of them, instead of the user. Other steps resulted in the creation of an Internet code of conduct to provide Internet consumers with the same protection they have for wireless and TV services. This measure came into effect last week.

Finally, as a commitment to Canadians, we have been clear that we are going to work to reduce cellphone costs by 25%.

In sum, much has been accomplished to date, but much more remains to be done.

• (1845)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I do not think there is any Canadian who would say that there has been any material change to make their access more affordable and more reliable. I am flanked by colleagues right now who represent that swath of rural Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and this is something that is worth fighting for.

I want to put the government on notice that in this Parliament, this issue is going to be a big priority for our caucus on this side of the aisle. It is unfair, to both individual Canadians and to businesses, to not be addressing this issue as a pressing, urgent matter. The 25% is a talking point that has no plan behind it. That is not going to cut it.

What I would like the parliamentary secretary to do right now is make a commitment that perhaps by the end of this Parliament, all

Adjournment Proceedings

Canadians, including the farthest-to-reach Canadians, will have fast, affordable Internet access.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, let me assure the hon. member that there is no need to put us on notice. We are very much focused on the issue that she is speaking to today.

I will reiterate that the government has acted to improve the affordability of wireless and Internet services for Canadians. Progress has been made, but there remains more to be done.

Because of the policy direction given in 2019, the CRTC must now take into consideration affordability, competition, consumer interests and innovation in all its decisions. This will apply to the current CRTC review of mobile wireless services, which is looking at competition in the retail market, the wholesale regulatory framework, as well as the future of mobile wireless services in Canada.

In short—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but I have to cut the member off.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:49 p.m.)

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