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Thursday, October 19, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 19, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the following treaties: the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, composed of the amendments, adding chapter XIV to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization on November 21, 2014, and the amendments to annexes I, II, IV, and V of the Protocol of 1978 relating to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, adopted by the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organization on May 15, 2015; the amendments to Annex I of the International Convention against Doping in Sport, adopted in Paris on October 19, 2005, a treaty of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization done at Paris on October 19, 2005, the convention entered into force for Canada on February 1, 2007; and the agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Argentine Republic on Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters done at Buenos Aires on May 15, 2017.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to Bill S-2, an act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-375, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (presentence report).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise today to introduce my first private member's bill as the member of Parliament for Richmond Hill. This bill would amend paragraph 721(3)(a) of the Criminal Code.

The bill would mandate that, unless otherwise specified, when a pre-sentencing report is required by a court, in addition to such information as age, maturity, character, behaviour, attitude, and willingness to make amends, information outlining any mental health disorders as well as any mental health care programs available for the accused be provided as part of their pre-sentencing report. Such information is vital for the courts to have in order to ensure that those Canadians with histories of mental illness are afforded care and compassion, and that they will receive appropriate treatment throughout the process of their rehabilitation.

I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

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

* * *

• (1005)

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-376, An Act to designate the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

He said: Mr. Speaker, with the support of the hon. member for Brampton North, it is my great honour and pleasure to rise today in this House and introduce a bill to designate the month of April as Sikh heritage month.

The Sikh population in Canada is in excess of a half million people, making it the second-largest Sikh population in the world. This bill seeks to recognize the significant contributions that Sikh Canadians have made to Canada's social, economic, political, and cultural fabric.

The month of April is meaningful for the Sikh community, and by designating the month of April as Sikh heritage month, the Parliament of Canada would provide an opportunity to reflect on, celebrate, and educate future generations about the inspirational role that Sikh Canadians have played and continue to play in communities across this great nation.

Business of Supply

I hope all members in this House will support this proposed legislation.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

HOUSING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House this morning to present two petitions. The first is from residents throughout Saanich—Gulf Islands and it is with respect to a national housing strategy, which I know is already a work-in-progress.

These petitioners are asking the government to be mindful of the approach of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to create a national affordable housing program and to reform the tax system in order to provide incentives for investors to build purpose-built rental housing.

MARIJUANA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is the first one that I have presented on this particular topic. The petitioners note that Bill C-45, the bill that will legalize the use of cannabis, contains nothing that deals with the environmental impact of cannabis production. We have found that producing cannabis indoors has a tremendous energy and water demand.

The petitioners call on the House to ensure that standards of practice for the cannabis industry are mindful of the commitment to sustainability.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some. hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1010)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SUPPORT FOR FORESTRY WORKERS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC) moved:

That, given:

- (a) forestry is a major employer in Canada;
- (b) Canada is a world leader in sustainable forestry practices;
- (c) the government has failed to secure a Softwood Lumber Agreement and to make softwood lumber a priority by including it in the mandate letter for the Minister of International Trade; and
- (d) forestry workers and forest-dependent communities are particularly vulnerable to misinformation campaigns and other attacks waged against the forest industry

by foreign-funded environmental non-government organizations like Greenpeace and ForestEthics;

the House express its support for forestry workers and denounce efforts by foreign-funded groups seeking to disrupt lawful forest practices in Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to ask your permission to share my time with my friend, the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, who will add to what I have to say.

I am very proud to be the mover of today's official opposition motion, a motion to protect and support the softwood lumber industry and workers in regions across Canada and Quebec and, of course, in Lac-Saint-Jean.

Given the importance of the issue raised in the motion, I think it is a good idea to start with a few simple reminders. I want to refresh members' memories so that everyone in the House understands the enormity of the issue we are debating today.

First, let us remember that, in late June, Canadians were distraught to learn that a surtax would be imposed on softwood lumber exports to the United States.

Let us also remember that that unfair and unjustified tax is being imposed on top of the countervailing duties imposed on companies in April. It is worth noting that this surtax is significant and varies between 13% and 20%. Members should also keep in mind that the softwood lumber agreement expired a year ago last week, and that Justin Trudeau's Liberal government has still not negotiated a new agreement and presented it to the public.

Let us also remember that, during the last softwood lumber dispute, the Canadian industry lost \$5.4 billion in surtaxes, wasted money that had a direct impact on our companies and their employees.

To put that into perspective, 66% of Canadian softwood lumber exports are destined for the American market.

Here are some statistics that will help members understand the economic impact of this issue. The softwood lumber industry accounts for 400,000 jobs across the country, including close to 60,000 in Quebec and 10,000 in indigenous communities. It is a key economic sector, particularly in the beautiful Lac-Saint-Jean region. It is a source of pride for many men and women. It is a creative industry, and Canadians are using their expertise to make it more and more environmentally responsible.

Unfortunately, the industry has been the victim of many misinformation campaigns, funded by foreign interests that harbour prejudices and spread false information about forestry operations. Let us be clear. It is not in any company's interest to give up its forest capital. It is in all of their best interest to develop a sustainable industry.

Softwood lumber logging and processing feed hundreds of thousands of families, are vital to the survival of many regions, and allow thousands of Canadians to have a stable financial future.

Business of Supply

However, the forestry industry, which brings in \$15.8 billion a year, also provides the government with \$1.5 billion in tax revenues paid by corporations and workers. This means that the entire country benefits, as our local businesses and thousands of Canadians who work in this sector help build our hospitals and ensure services are provided in our schools and community organizations at all levels.

While the Prime Minister dithers, hesitates, and backs down, he is jeopardizing the livelihoods of forestry workers across Canada and Quebec and in Lac-Saint-Jean. It is estimated that Canadian producers have paid about \$500 million in countervailing and anti-dumping duties because the Liberal government refuses to negotiate.

That \$500 million, a huge amount, could have been invested in the economy and job creation. It could have been invested in thousands of projects that will now never see the light of day. This means additional debt, rather than additional public services and programs.

Does the government realize how many communities are at risk, as more and more time goes by and nothing is resolved? There are entire towns that depend on this industry. Will those towns survive without some good news, without an agreement?

I want to point out that the softwood lumber industry is a crucial and important sector, especially for regions such as Lac-Saint-Jean, and we must support it. We are now learning that German exports to the U.S. have soared by 916% compared to last year. We are losing our privileged place in the U.S. market, which is our main market.

● (1015)

Time is of the essence. Sawmills are closing and jobs are being lost across the country and in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. It seems that the Liberals are incapable of negotiating an agreement. Workers deserve more stability and predictability from this government.

Perhaps we are being naive in continuing to believe in this Liberal government and in its ability to quickly meet expectations, represent Canadians' interests in all forums, and negotiate agreements that benefit everyone. When will the Prime Minister demonstrate true leadership and come back to Canada with a signed agreement? The Netflix tax break, the threat to supply management, NAFTA negotiations, and this government's new negotiations abroad are extremely disappointing. Perhaps we are naive to believe that the Liberal government made the softwood lumber industry a priority. I want to point out that there is no mention of a new agreement in the mandate letters of the ministers currently negotiating with the U.S. government.

Not only is the government jeopardizing the entire industry, but it is also discouraging young people from considering a career in forestry. A few weeks ago, 400 young high school students from across Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean learned about the different facets of the forestry industry at the 11th annual Viens vivre la forêt event, which was held at the Chicoutimi campus of the Université du Québec. The event allowed hundreds of young women and men to get behind the wheel of a semi-truck, operate a backhoe, and learn about wood processing.

However, what are the prospects for these young people who might want to pursue a career in forestry, give back to their community, find jobs in their region instead of moving to big urban centres, and grow the economy in their part of the country? What can

we promise them? The prospects are not very good at all under this Liberal government. Times are very tough. In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, more than 5,000 jobs depend directly on the forestry industry. In other words, 5,000 worried families are waiting for the Prime Minister to give them a clear message, a sincere commitment, and express a strong will to save their jobs.

Instead of paying lip service, can this Liberal government finally give us a deadline and clearly spell out its negotiation objectives? Can it announce to the thousands of Canadians who are keeping the forestry economy going and doing their part to build a prosperous country that it will sign an agreement and put an end to the unfair and unjustified surtax as soon as possible?

In the hopes of obtaining a clear and unequivocal response, a real departure from the partisan rhetoric, and taking into account the concerns of Canadians who have been waiting for far too long, I invite the House to express its clear support and vote unanimously for today's motion, which reads as follows:

That, given:

(a) forestry is a major employer in Canada;

(b) Canada is a world leader in sustainable forestry practices;

(c) the government has failed to secure a Softwood Lumber Agreement and to make softwood lumber a priority by including it in the mandate letter for the Minister of International Trade; and

(d) forestry workers and forest-dependent communities are particularly vulnerable to misinformation campaigns and other attacks waged against the forest industry by foreign-funded environmental non-government organizations like Greenpeace and ForestEthics;

the House express its support for forestry workers and denounce efforts by foreign-funded groups seeking to disrupt lawful forest practices in Canada.

We are making a heartfelt appeal today for all workers across Canada and Quebec, and specifically those from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean who will be voting next Monday in the byelection. Let us send them a clear sign that we support them. I sincerely hope that all members in the House of Commons, Liberal government members especially, will vote in favour of this motion tonight, so that all these people feel supported and so that we can negotiate a deal for all workers across Canada.

● (1020)

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the responsibility for this agreement that the hon. member is suggesting is primarily and almost solely up to our Prime Minister, and that is there a campaign of misinformation. I think that is part of the misinformation.

Business of Supply

Could he maybe highlight the issues at hand with crown lands versus privately held lands, and the large companies in the United States trying to squeeze out small manufacturers in Canada? If the member could put into the record some of the real issues around this debate, it would be much appreciated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his very relevant question. We are currently seeing foreign interest groups mounting campaigns of misinformation to delude the Canadian public into thinking that forestry companies still get their lumber by clear-cutting, the method they used 50 years ago. That is completely false. Canada has the most stringent environmental regulations in the world. What these hard-working companies need now is a strong signal, very different from the kind of signal they are getting from a tax reform that takes aim at small and medium-sized businesses in smaller communities and across Canada. I think that our rightful role as a government, as a Parliament, is to raise awareness to support this vital sector across the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the member's passion and support for the forest industry in Canada. I certainly share those views.

During the reign of the Harper Conservatives, Canada lost 134,000 jobs in the forest sector, including 42,000 jobs lost in Quebec alone. As well, during those years, many mills closed down and many small rural communities were hard hit and have yet to recover.

How can you seriously expect Canadians to trust your party to come up with effective solutions that truly support a sustainable forest industry in Canada?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Certainly, it is not my party. I just want to indicate to the member to avoid using the words "you" or "your", because it puts us in a little bit of a difficult position.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for pointing that out, and thank the member for his question. If it will make my colleague feel better, I will reassure him right away. The Conservative Party has always been a champion of the softwood lumber industry. It has fought to defend this vital sector. When Stephen Harper's government came to power in 2006, it did not let two, three, or four years go by before it signed an agreement with the U.S. to support the forestry sector. It signed an agreement in just three months. The Liberals came to power two years ago, and this agreement expired one year into their mandate, yet we have seen no clear signals that this issue is going to be resolved for our forestry workers. I feel that if anyone has fought for forestry workers nationwide, it is really the former Conservative government. We are absolutely determined to do our job as the official opposition and persevere in supporting every Canadian working in the forestry sector.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to

thank my colleague for his speech. First and foremost, I also want to reiterate our government's steadfast support for the Canadian forest industry, which creates hundreds of thousands of jobs. We are well aware of the situation. I worked in the industry for a decade, and I can assure you that it is a top priority for me. I have one very simple question for my colleague. It takes two parties, two governments to negotiate. Does my colleague opposite think we should go to the bargaining table with no conditions in mind and let the other government do whatever it wants?

• (1025)

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Speaker, I do not really know what to say to that. I am not sure I understood the question, but what I can say is that they are the ones in government, and it is up to them to keep their promises. When we were in government, it took us three months to get to a deal.

They are now halfway through their term in office. When the Prime Minister had his first opportunity to meet with Barack Obama, the former U.S. president, one year into his mandate, who did he bring with him? Not the Minister of Natural Resources or any other minister who negotiates, but his in-laws. We certainly do not need anyone telling us how things ought to be done. I hope the government will step up and take care of this problem.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member for Niagara Centre that if he has questions and comments, we are just starting the debate and therefore will be able to stand up and be recognized in the House during that time. Resuming debate.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's debate, which I think is critically important. Although I used to be a city girl, I am now a proud ruralist, so I really understand how much the government across the way has given in to the Americans.

Whether we are talking about supply management for our municipalities or softwood lumber, we need to be strong and stand up to the Americans. We need to have frank negotiations, as a matter of pride, to save our small towns in places like Charlevoix and Lac-Saint-Jean. Some of these small communities depend entirely on this industry. Softwood lumber is very important to our small towns. Everyone here, across party lines, knows how much those communities need us to fight for them so that the Americans understand that what we are talking about today is negotiable, but also non-negotiable.

Business of Supply

We simply cannot jeopardize the softwood lumber trade over a few trivial details. I hope the Prime Minister, who is on the ground there right now, understands this and will send the right message to the right people, specifically, that softwood lumber is a priority. When it is a priority, it must be included in the mandate letter to the minister who is negotiating with the United States. We need to remember that 96% of U.S. softwood lumber imports come from Canada and that 69% of Canadian softwood lumber exports go to the U.S. When you have such conclusive numbers, it is important to negotiate fairly, but more importantly, in a way that is equitable for Canadians. Our citizens, Canadians, Quebeckers, and the people of Lac-Saint-Jean, must not be the ones who lose because this government is sitting on its hands. To negotiate means to speak frankly, but without kowtowing to the U.S.

Our Conservative government negotiated an agreement in late 2006, three months after we took power, in order to settle the softwood lumber dispute. It was also the Conservative Party that negotiated an extension of the agreement in 2012 to ensure market stability until October 2016. It is now 2017. What has been done? What are we debating? What figures can the Liberal Party provide? What has it negotiated? I hope that it has not been at the expense of forestry workers.

Sawmills are closing everywhere. We are not talking just one or two; many sawmills have closed. I am referring to Quebec because that is where I come from. Many of our sawmills have closed and it is unacceptable today to listen to the Liberal Party proclaim that it is the champion of the middle class. Standing up for the softwood lumber industry is a good way to defend the middle class because forestry workers are part of the middle class. They are the ones who work hard for us.

Today, we have no figures and we have no idea where negotiations stand.

• (1030)

There is no mention of the new softwood lumber agreement in any of the mandate letters of the ministers involved in the negotiations. That leaves us with the impression that they could not care less. I hope that we, on this side of the House, are wrong. I hope that we can drop the partisanship and that all members will work together to save supply management and our sawmills.

Today, my comments are directed especially to the people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. They must stand up to the Prime Minister. They must be passionate, and even cry if they must, so that their message is heard: today, we want the government to stand tall and be frank in the negotiations in order to save the softwood lumber industry.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that, on issues as important to our small communities as softwood lumber and supply management, the Liberals are happy just to get some good photo ops. People need to eat and they want some reassurance about their future. We do not know what is being negotiated by the other side of the House. We are in the dark. The Liberals are not telling us anything. We do not even know what has been done on this file since 2016, and we probably never will because the Liberals themselves do not even know what direction they are taking with the American administration. That is

rather frightening for ordinary Canadians who struggle every day to put food on the table.

We on this side of the House have always stood behind the softwood lumber industry. A number of our ministers have defended the industry, including the hon. Denis Lebel, who fought for his community of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. He is still fighting for the forestry industry today. I hope that the motion that we moved today will send the clear message that we all stand behind the people who make a living from working in sawmills and the lumber industry. We must not play politics at the expense of workers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, Charlevoix, and across Quebec and Canada who make a living from this industry. I hope that the government party will understand that this is a heartfelt plea and that we must work together to strengthen our future. We must all stand behind forestry workers.

In my riding, representatives of Greenpeace came to see me to lecture me about the forestry industry, which is unfortunate. I have nothing against the environment. On the contrary, I do everything I can to protect the environment in my riding, but when groups like this attempt to destroy an industry, it is because they do not know enough about it. They do not have all the facts.

It is up to us, the members of Parliament, to listen to industry representatives. Today I am asking the members of the party opposite to join us and vote unanimously in favour of this important motion for workers in the forestry industry, so that we may negotiate honestly and with head held high.

• (1035)

Let us not bend to the United States.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, through NAFTA negotiations, we are taking into consideration already established policies, a national strategy, etc., that we have put in place. We are providing over \$150 million over four years to support clean technology and \$867 million for the softwood lumber action plan to support workers and communities, as well as a plan to expand market opportunities.

Within those negotiations, we are taking into consideration not just a national strategy but also local strategies. Of course, we have injected the objectives contained within those local strategies into our overall objectives with respect to the NAFTA negotiations with our counterparts. With that, we are taking into consideration the interests of all Canadians throughout this great nation.

With respect to the impacts the member may have in her own jurisdiction, what recommendations or strategies is the member putting forward to help us inject those interests into NAFTA negotiations?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. He wants an answer. Well, I will give him one:

Let them stand up for the softwood lumber industry. Let them stand up for supply management. Let them stand up for the average Canadian who puts food on the table. Let them stop quoting numbers at us and start talking about people, instead.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her speech and her support of the forest industry. She talked a lot about the softwood lumber agreement and placed a lot of blame on the Liberals for not doing anything in the past couple of years to get that agreement redone. I fully agree with her. There is blame there, but the agreement was actually set to expire in 2013. It was extended for two years, and the Conservatives did nothing to negotiate a new agreement with the United States at that time. That would have been the perfect time. Now we are behind the eight ball. We are negotiating with Trump. It is a crazy time in Washington.

With any foresight at all, would the Conservative government not have seen that that was the time to negotiate a new softwood lumber agreement? However, it did nothing.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Unfortunately, I may have to correct him. It was the Conservative government that negotiated an extension to the agreement in 2012 to ensure market stability until 2016. Those are the facts.

From 2016 to 2017, we heard nothing. We know negotiations are ongoing, but we hear nothing about them. What I am asking the party opposite to do is to give us the numbers that they are negotiating. We cannot abandon softwood lumber because it is vital to our regions. Every rural region has forests and the industry currently operates in most rural regions. For the sake of the forestry industry, I am calling on the Liberal Party to vote unanimously with us and stand behind the people who work in the industry.

• (1040)

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it seems that the member suggested that it took only three months for the Conservative government to sign the agreement in 2006, when in fact, the work had been done largely through the Liberal Party from 2001 to 2006 to get ready for an agreement. It takes years for these things to go through, and unfortunately, the Conservatives did not carry the ball all the way on this one, and now we are trying to pick up the ball.

Could the member comment on the time frame involved?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Speaker, it took us three months. The Liberals have been in power for two years now, and so far they have not done much. Maybe today, they should stand up for our industry.

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska for this motion.

I know that, like our government, he fully appreciates how important forestry is to Canada.

[English]

The forest industry employs more than 200,000 Canadians and contributes more than \$23 billion a year to our GDP. In fact, it provides more jobs per dollar than any other natural resource sector. We export more than \$34 billion worth of forest products to 180 countries around the world.

Today forest producers are strengthening composite car parts, making vehicles lighter, reducing emissions, and replacing plastics made from non-renewable fossil fuels. A forestry worker is as likely to be wearing a white lab coat as a red plaid shirt. He or she might be a genomics researcher investigating ways to make trees more resistant to disease or an economist working to optimize supply chains. To paraphrase that classic Oldsmobile commercial, this is not our father's forest industry. In fact, the Canadian forestry industry has transformed itself into one of the most innovative parts of our economy.

It was not that long ago that forestry seemed to be on the ropes. To many it seemed like an outdated or even dying industry, then something remarkable happened. Instead of wringing its hands, the industry rolled up its sleeves and began a transformation, whose best chapters are still being written. Forestry leaders reached out to their critics, listened to the concerns, and made changes to their operations. The industry invested in research, developed new products, and established new offshore markets, creating not just a new image but a new vision of what forestry was and could be.

[Translation]

Today, the forestry industry is poised to help our country tackle some of its greatest challenges by combatting climate change, driving innovation, creating job opportunities in indigenous and rural communities, and boosting trade.

[English]

Let me touch on each of these.

The first is climate change. It would be hard to overstate the importance of the forest sector in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, I would even go so far as to say that there can be no global solution to climate change without the forest sector. It is that important. Why? It is because forestry is unique in that it actually takes carbon out of the air.

Most of us will remember enough of our high school science to know that trees suck up vast amounts of carbon from the atmosphere and store it for decades. However, forestry's contribution goes far beyond that. It is developing clean technologies, producing green energy, reducing its need for energy and water, and lowering both emissions and waste. While Canada's overall greenhouse gas emissions fell by 3% between 2004 and 2014, the forest sector reduced its emissions by an impressive 49%, and it is just getting started. Lignin, a material found in trees, could become the crude oil of the future, with biofuels substituting for fossil fuels in the production of plastics, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals.

Then there is wood as a building material. Pound for pound, engineered wood can be as strong as steel, making it safe and practical not only in buildings but also in infrastructure, such as bridges. With funding from our government, project Origine was opened in September. The tall wood construction project in Quebec City's Pointe-aux-Lièvres eco-district is the tallest wood-constructed condominium in North America.

● (1045)

In 2016, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the tallest wood building in the world, a new student residency at the University of British Columbia. This magnificent building is not only an engineering and architectural showpiece, it is an environmental game-changer, storing close to 1,600 metric tons of carbon dioxide and saving more than 1,000 metric tons in greenhouse gas emissions. That is like taking 500 cars off the road for a year.

Even in more modern structures, wood is far better for the environment. Building with lumber can result in 86% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than using traditional building materials such as concrete and steel.

To encourage greater use of wood in construction projects in Canada, the Government of Canada created the green construction through wood program. We are currently receiving expressions of interest for the next great Canadian projects.

Forestry also helps to fight climate change through its sustainable management practices. In fact, third parties have certified these practices among the best in the world.

Canada now boasts 37% of the world's certified forests, far more than any other jurisdiction in the world, and that matters. It matters because our customers can be confident that wood products brought from Canada were harvested through sustainable practices. Any tree harvested on crown land must be replaced, and permanent removal of forests for agricultural or municipal development, for example, is declining. The result is that actual deforestation is less than 0.02% a year.

We assess our sustainable forest management system by looking at a range of scientific indicators, from regeneration to forest disturbances, from carbon emissions to volumes harvested.

Canada has also developed a carbon budget model that simulates forest carbon conditions. It forms the basis of our carbon monitoring and accounting system used in international reporting. It is being applied in more than 25 countries.

Whether it is by providing greener building materials, finding new uses for wood products, or sustainably managing its resources, the forest industry is playing a central role in combatting climate change.

Second, it is helping to drive innovation. For decades, the forest industry has been developing and investing in new products and ways of operating. Look at the rise of clean tech and bioenergy, a renewable energy source derived from things like wood, wood waste, and straw.

Our government understands that the economy of tomorrow will be a bioeconomy. In September, Canada's forest ministers unan-

Business of Supply

imously endorsed a forest bioeconomy framework aimed at making Canada a global leader. That framework outlines a bold new vision for the future of the forest sector and the role for biomass in the transition to a low carbon sustainable economy.

Just last week, in my hometown of Winnipeg, I had the pleasure of hosting Generation Energy, the largest energy forum in our country's history. I can tell the House that biomass and bioenergy figured prominently in those discussions.

In July 2016, I travelled to Port-Cartier, Quebec to announce \$44.5 million for the first commercial-scale facility to convert forest residues into a form of renewable fuel oil. This project is a shining example of governments working together to support the industry and advance Canada's bioeconomy.

An increasing number of remote and indigenous communities are now using bioenergy to end their dependence on high-emission diesel generators for their electricity. We are supporting this effort with an investment of \$55 million to deploy proven bioenergy technologies and support the biomass supply chain in rural and remote areas. The government is working with industry and provinces to develop the forest products of the future through investments in R and D and innovation, and by helping first-in-kind clean innovations reach commercialization.

● (1050)

Third, forestry is a dynamic engine of growth, creating economic opportunity across the country, including in indigenous and remote communities. While its reach is global, the forest industry's impact remains the local lifeblood of rural Canada and a major source of income for about one in seven municipalities across the country.

As I mentioned at the outset, the forest industry has reinvented itself by demonstrating what can be achieved through collaboration and engagement. Nowhere have those efforts been greater than with indigenous communities, 70% of which are in forested regions. It is no surprise then that forestry is one of the leading employers of indigenous people, providing some 9,700 well paying jobs across the country.

[*Translation*]

These jobs bring hope of lasting prosperity and sustainable change.

[*English*]

Today, governments, indigenous communities, forest companies and environmentalists are all working together to preserve the sustainable forest industry we need while protecting the environment we cherish.

Fourth, and related, forestry creates jobs at home by driving trade abroad. There has been a remarkable rise in the export of wood products to markets such as China, up more than 1,200% over the past 10 years.

Business of Supply

In June, I had the honour of leading a trade mission to China to showcase the ingenuity, innovation, and opportunities Canada had to offer. I was joined by a delegation of more than 50 representatives from Canada's forest, energy, and clean technology sectors, focused on strengthening ties with our Chinese counterparts. The mission generated new business. All told, Canadian companies signed commercial agreements of close to \$100 million.

One of the highlights of our trip was a visit to the Sino-Canadian low carbon eco-district in Tianjin. This is a \$2.5-billion project, involving more than 1,300 houses in its first phase. Once completed, the community will cover almost two square kilometres, all built with Canadian lumber, Canadian ingenuity, and Canadian expertise.

With the support of China's ministry of housing and urban-rural development, the buildings will be approved as test cases, opening the door to revised building codes and more wood construction. This project is a direct result of the MOU signed between our two countries in 2012. While in China, Minister Chen Zhenggao and I renewed that MOU, maintaining the momentum it had created and enhancing supporting for green building in China.

For China, the eco-district means cleaner air, healthier communities and lower energy costs. For Canadian companies, such as Nu-Air, SOPREMA, and Kryton, it means new markets for their innovative products and services. With the success of this project comes the chance to replicate it throughout China, creating even more opportunities for collaboration and furthering China's climate change goals.

The Tianjin eco-district is a remarkable testament to what can be achieved when international partners come together to tackle big challenges.

While in Tianjin, I also had the pleasure of announcing the opening of a Chinese-Canadian wood technology centre, further cementing the bonds between our countries and opening the door for exciting new partnerships.

These are the concrete, practical ways that the government can support the forest industry, an industry that is on the leading edge of technology and setting the pace on environmental performance.

The U.S. market remains vitally important for Canadian producers of softwood lumber, but continuing to expand into other markets and other types of products is helping to diversify our trade and boost our prosperity.

Our government believes in this industry. We have a clear vision of it playing a central role in some of the most important issues of our times, such as combatting climate change, driving innovation, and creating economic opportunities for rural and indigenous communities. That is why we are standing by this industry and why we are continuing to work toward a new agreement on softwood lumber.

•(1055)

Our government disagrees strongly with the decision of the United States Department of Commerce to impose unfair and punitive duties on Canadian softwood lumber imports. We are vigorously defending Canada's softwood lumber industry against these unjustified duties

and we will litigate, if necessary, where we expect to prevail as we have in the past.

We remain confident that a negotiated settlement is not only possible but in the best interests of both countries, not just any deal but a good deal for Canada.

It is one of the more interesting quirks of our Constitution that it assigns natural resources to the provinces but trade and commerce to the federal government. This means we have to work together and draw on one another's strengths.

In February, we did just that, creating the federal-provincial task force on softwood lumber. Through the task force, we shared information with our provincial colleagues about how best to help affected workers and communities, and we arrived at a comprehensive action plan.

All told, our government announced \$867 million to provide loans for industry through the Business Development Bank and Export Development Canada; access to the work-sharing program to help employers and employees protect jobs; funding to provinces to help workers find new jobs; new resources for the indigenous forestry initiative to support indigenous participation in economic development; extensions of the investments in forest industry transformation and forest innovation programs to develop the next generation of wood products; and access to the expanding market opportunities program to reach new markets and expand the use of wood construction.

This is a comprehensive plan designed to meet real needs in real time and it is a clear and compelling demonstration of our commitment to this vital industry.

[*Translation*]

The motion before the House today reflects the importance of forestry to our communities, our economy, and our way of life.

Our government is aware of how much the forestry sector contributes. That is why we work day after day to support its future and help it reach its full potential.

I urge all members to join us in our efforts.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask the Minister of Natural Resources a question. It is an important question, because we know, as several members have stated this morning, that softwood lumber accounts for 400,000 jobs in Canada. This makes it a vitally important industry.

Business of Supply

I would like to ask the minister why our trade relations with the United States over the past two years have been the worst in over a decade? Whether it be Bombardier, NAFTA, supply management or softwood lumber, nothing is working. Our trade relations with the United States are appalling.

My question for the minister is the following: last July, a few months ago, the Governor of Idaho, Butch Otter, said that during a public meeting, a memorandum of understanding on softwood lumber management had already been signed between the two countries. What happened to this potential agreement that was signed?

Since Mr. Obama and the Prime Minister got along so well when the Prime Minister came to power, how come no agreement was signed at that time? If our relationship with the current American administration is strained, how come no agreement was signed then?

• (1100)

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr: Madam Speaker, I know the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been carrying on a continuous conversation with Secretary Ross to come to an agreement between the two countries. We make the argument—

Mr. Colin Carrie: Can you table the old one?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member for Oshawa that if he has a question or comment, he would want to stand to ask that question or make that comment when it is time to do so.

Hon. Jim Carr: Madam Speaker, Minister Freeland and Secretary Ross are having frequent conversations. The argument we make is that an agreement has to be in the interests of both countries, and we believe that is possible. Members will also know that in the case of the United States, the U.S. Lumber Coalition has an important say in the nature of that agreement, which is an oddity in a binational trade agreement, but that is the reality. Therefore, it is not only a question of a negotiation between two sovereign states, but it is also the attitude of the Lumber Coalition in the United States, 51% of which needs to say it is a good deal. That is why we say continuously that we will not accept any deal; we will only accept a good deal for Canada.

In the meantime, we have offered an \$867-million set of programs, anticipating that they might be needed. As members know, prices are very high at the moment and the uptake of these loan guarantees has been relatively small, but if times change, the government will be there to protect our industry and our workers.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the minister that he is not to use members' names in the House. In this case, he could say "the Minister of Foreign Affairs".

Questions and comments. The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was very happy to hear the minister mention the Brock Commons project at UBC, the tallest wood building in the world, built by Structurlam, a company in Penticton, in my riding, with glulam beams and cross-laminated timber in an

amazing time, because it is all built off site. It is really part of the tall wood building revolution that he mentioned.

As an aside, I hope that he and his government will support my private member's bill on building federal government infrastructure with wood, for all the reasons he mentioned. I am glad to hear of that support.

I want to ask about the impact of the softwood lumber dispute on forestry workers and the EI package that was offered. It was not anywhere near the package offered to the oil industry workers who were suffering when that industry crashed. Could he comment on why the same package was not offered to forestry workers?

Hon. Jim Carr: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his continuing constructive contributions to the natural resource debate in the House. I would like to let him know that the softwood lumber action plan, together with budget 2017, for the forestry sector is the largest federal investment in the sector and for the industry since the last recession in 2009. I will also let him know that the government's action plan is in response to the United States' trade action, but we remain flexible. As it turns out, the good news is that there have been very few layoffs in the sector and only a modest uptake of the loan guarantees made available to the sector. That is for now. We will be nimble enough to respond, if necessary.

• (1105)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The question I have for him is as straightforward as it gets: yes or no, will you be voting in favour of our motion, and will you be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member that she is to address the Chair.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Speaker, yes or no, will the party opposite vote in favour of our motion? Will the Liberals join us in defending the softwood lumber industry, for once?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr: Of course, Madam Speaker, we will be looking at the words very carefully and giving them due consideration. I appreciate the member's work on behalf of the sector, and she can be assured that we will have a very careful look at the proposal in front of us.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. Minister of Natural Resources for his speech and for the care and diligence he puts into these delicate and difficult files.

He mentioned in his speech the government's announcement of \$867 million towards a softwood lumber action plan.

Could the minister tell us a bit more about this plan and about the funds that were announced in budget 2017 to support the forestry industry?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr: Madam Speaker, it is not only that these programs have been made available, but also that we have been very aggressive in making sure that the industry knows these programs are available. There was a massive outreach by EDC and BDC, with more than 2,500 letters and emails sent to potentially affected companies offering them the financial services of these agencies. Because prices are high, some efforts have been made to accommodate the needs of the industry, but they have been relatively small to date. Of the \$605 million envelope announced in June, more than \$58 million in loan guarantees, loans, and other financial services have already been signed or approved, with more currently under review.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Génèreux: I appreciate the opportunity to ask another question, Madam Speaker.

Not all of these agreements have been signed yet and the changes in the government's proposed tax reforms are going to adversely affect every region in the country, not just Lac-Saint-Jean, and the sector's executives most of all.

In these circumstances, how can the minister have such high hopes for the future of the industry?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr: Madam Speaker, we have been meeting with representatives of the sector, really from the day we were sworn into office. We have spoken to the workers and have been able to maintain a coalition of virtually all of the provincial ministers of forestry during this difficult time, which I believe is unprecedented. The reason that we are able to hold the coalition together is that everyone understands that it is in the interests of all governments and, indeed, all parties in this House to make sure that Canada speaks with one voice.

• (1110)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to this motion, because I am proud of the Canadian forest sector. I know how important it is to hundreds of communities, small and large, across the country and I am concerned about the future of our forest industry.

However, I must say, off the top, that I cannot support this motion put forward by my Conservative colleagues. Their former government is equally to blame for this crisis, and for them to play partisan politics with people's livelihoods is something I cannot condone.

My riding has the complete range of forest industry operations. There is the big Celgar pulp mill in Castlegar; big Interfor sawmills in Castlegar and Grand Forks; Kalesnikoff's more specialized sawmill at Thrums; the ATCO plywood veneer plant at Fruitvale; the Vaagen Brothers mill at Midway that processes small dimension logs; the family-run Son Ranch just south of Eholt; pole mills at Nakusp community forests and woodlots; and Greenwood Forest Products in Penticton that produces wall panelling and edge-glued laminated panels; and Structurlam which the minister mentioned in his speech just now, a continental leader in the manufacture of glulam beams and cross-laminated timber panels that are at the heart

of the large wood building revolution. As well, there are all of the fallers and truck loggers, and the whole logging sector that supplies logs for these mills.

It is a long list, and I hope I have not left anyone out. It is repeated many times over in many ridings across Canada, in communities big and small, from Campbell River to Cornerbrook. More than 200 communities across rural Canada depend on the forest industry for at least half of their base income.

Across my riding today, I see a forest industry that is innovative and efficient, each mill specializing in some niche that will allow it to survive and, hopefully, thrive. I imagine that is the case throughout the forests of Canada. The forest industry is critical to the Canadian economy and to the hopes and dreams of thousands of hard-working families across this country.

In British Columbia alone, it contributes \$12 billion to the economy every year, and \$2.5 billion in direct government revenue. It creates 145,000 British Columbia jobs; one in every 16 jobs in British Columbia. Across Canada, the forest sector contributes more than \$20 billion every year to our real GDP.

Canada is a world leader in sustainable forest management. Our forests account for 40% of the world's forests certified as sustainably managed, the largest area of third-party certified forest in the world. Canada has become a leader in the use of biomass energy, using waste and residues from forest manufacturing practices to power mills across the country.

However, the industry has suffered in the past few decades. A vast pine beetle epidemic swept across B.C. in the last decade, killing trees throughout the interior. That epidemic has now moved into Alberta and is threatening the forest industry there. Catastrophic wildfires burned over a million acres of forest in British Columbia this summer, and climate predictions tell us that these hot, dry, and smoky summers will only happen more frequently in the future. That, of course, has reduced the annual allowable cuts for these mills. Mills that were already suffering from the pine beetle epidemic now have even less forest to access.

Then there is the softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the United States that has pressured many mills to close in the last 10 to 15 years. I will talk more about softwood lumber at the end. I just want to say that in my riding that dispute resulted in a lot of job losses: the Weyerhaeuser mill in Okanagan Falls closed in 2007, putting 200 people out of work; and the closure of the mill at Slocan hit that small community hard. In fact, during the years of the Harper Conservative government, Canada lost over 134,000 jobs in the forestry sector, including about 21,000 jobs in British Columbia, 40,000 jobs in Ontario, and 41,000 in Quebec.

I would like to spend the next part of my speech talking about the positive ways to give the forest industry a boost in Canada. An obvious strategy to mitigate the losses from the softwood dispute is to develop markets outside the United States. We have been working on increasing our share in the Asian market, particularly in China.

Business of Supply

● (1115)

The minister mentioned some recent efforts there. British Columbia exporters have been in China for over 10 years, though, and doing quite well. However, those efforts have plateaued because we are up against Russian competition that can simply move products to the Chinese border by train. With the low value of the Russian ruble, it is very difficult for Canadian companies to compete from the other side of the Pacific, for the foreseeable future. That is what I hear from the industry in British Columbia.

As an aside, lumber prices are so high because of the softwood lumber dispute that builders on the east coast of North America are starting to turn to European markets such as Romania and Germany to supply their needs. It is crazy. I think a better strategy in the mid-term is to expand our domestic markets through innovative new wood products and new ways to use wood in buildings.

As I mentioned earlier, in my home town of Penticton, there is a company called Structurlam that creates glulam beams and cross-laminated timber panels that can be used to construct large buildings entirely out of wood. The company just completed an 18-storey project at the University of British Columbia, Brock Commons, the tallest wood building in the world. The only steel and concrete in the building is in the elevator shafts. As the parts were pre-built off-site, Brock Commons took only 66 days to construct. That is 18 stories in just two months. The UBC project used 1.7 million board feet of B. C. lumber. Structurlam gets its lumber locally at mills such as Kalesnikoff, so the benefits spread through the region.

I was happy to see that the government included some money in the latest budget to help this innovative part of the forest industry grow. The minister mentioned that as well. Canadian companies are real leaders in this new technology in North America, but they need to expand to maintain that lead.

With this in mind, I have tabled a private member's bill, Bill C-354, which promotes the use of wood in government infrastructure buildings. This bill asks the government to assess the material options for large buildings, balancing the overall dollar cost of the project and the impact of its greenhouse gas footprint. That way we can decide whether wood, concrete, steel, or a combination of those materials is best for the building.

This bill is not meant to exclude non-wood materials but simply to ask the government to look at these new wood technologies that can be used to create beautiful, safe, and environmentally sound buildings. I was happy to hear from the concrete industry a couple of days ago that it has almost exactly the same ask of the government. It was not, of course, asking for the government to use more wood in buildings; but it was asking the government to use the same lens to look at the lifetime costs of the materials and the carbon footprint of the project when building infrastructure.

I believe that this process would result in more large wood buildings being constructed by the federal government. Many of them could be hybrids, of course, built with concrete and steel as well. This would have three positive impacts on the forest industry. It would stimulate the growth of this exciting new technology, keeping Canada ahead of the pack in North America; it would help all the players in the local forest industry to weather the difficulties they are

facing through the softwood lumber dispute; and it would be taking real action to meet Canadian goals in the fight against climate change.

The forestry sector is facing serious challenges in Canada: a future with declining wood supply, more catastrophic fires, insect epidemics due to climate change, and rising costs associated with trade disputes with the United States. I want to turn now to that trade dispute, the softwood lumber dispute with the United States.

About year ago, on October 17, 2016, in this place we debated a similar Conservative motion that specifically focused on softwood lumber. The motion urged the government to take all necessary steps to prevent a trade war with the United States over softwood lumber exports. I supported this previous motion, of course, because for the many thousands of Canadians whose livelihoods depend on this important industry, it is imperative that Canada secure a fair deal with the United States, a deal that respects our regional differences and protects high-quality Canadian forestry jobs.

● (1120)

However, a year later, here we are. The Canadian government continues to fail in its ability to get a deal. The industry has been hit by the U.S. Department of Commerce with massive, unfair tariffs reaching as high as 27%. These tariffs and our government's inability to secure a trade deal have led and will continue to lead to devastating job losses and damage to this vital Canadian industry.

A report released by The Conference Board of Canada at the end of May 2017 stated that the U.S. softwood lumber duties will result in the loss of 2,200 jobs and a \$700 million reduction in Canadian exports over the next two years. Softwood lumber is a vibrant part of Canada's forest sector, and as I mentioned, for many rural communities it is the backbone of the economy.

According to Canada's labour force survey, in 2015 the forest industry counted for 300,000 direct and indirect jobs, compared to more than 400,000 jobs in 2003. Hundreds of sawmills across Canada have been shuttered, taking with them high-quality, well-paid jobs.

Today, the softwood lumber industry is on the verge of more job losses. If we consider such factors as the crash of the U.S. housing markets and the other environmental impacts I mentioned, our already hard-hit industry will be further devastated. Canadian producers and workers need a new softwood lumber agreement that will bring fairness and predictability.

Business of Supply

This dispute first began back in 1982. For 35 years, the American industry has argued that the Canadian producers benefit from subsidization, which is a claim that has been defeated time and time again in trade tribunals. I think it has been 14 or 15 times.

Over the years, there have been several managed trade agreements, but upon their expiration Canadian exports have seen more duties applied, and Canada has spent approximately \$100 million in legal fees to defend our position. While it is true that Canada has consistently won tribunal warnings under the free trade agreement, NAFTA, and the WTO, which found that U.S. tariffs were unjustified, Canada has lost tens of thousands of jobs. I find it extremely disingenuous that the government touts these so-called tribunal challenges as wins. However, I am quite certain that the people who lost their jobs due to poorly negotiated agreements are thoroughly unimpressed with them.

I also find it extremely concerning that Americans are hell-bent on eliminating NAFTA's chapter 19, the dispute resolution mechanism that has protected Canada against those challenges for so long. After the previous agreement expired in 2001, the U.S. levied \$5.4 billion in duties on Canadian imports. This was money that should have stayed in Canadians' pockets, but instead was given to the American industry. It was the beginning of a decade of massive job losses in the Canadian industry.

Soon after the Conservatives were elected in 2006, they negotiated a new agreement with little or no consultation with Canadian stakeholders. The result was a very controversial agreement that many argue represented a sellout of Canadian interests. That agreement took \$50 million from Canadian industry to create a binding dispute settlement system whereby the U.S. was able to bring more actions against Canada. Perhaps most egregiously, the agreement allowed the U.S. to keep \$1 billion of the duties it illegally levied on Canadian producers. Canadians were furious with the 2006 SLA. When the Conservatives brought it to Parliament in the form of Bill C-24, the NDP argued vehemently against the agreement.

When we look back at this agreement, it is fair to say that the Conservatives caved to American interests. Today, it is imperative that the Liberals do not do the same, and yet, considering the lack of leadership they have shown during the NAFTA renegotiations, I fail to see any change between our past and current governments.

As we know, the 2006 agreement was renewed in 2012 and expired last October. Again, after the Liberal government failed to negotiate a new agreement, the Liberals seemed to spend more time denying their own responsibilities and blaming the previous Conservative government rather than ensuring forest industry workers had the job security they so desperately needed.

Despite the Prime Minister's highly flaunted bromance with former president Barack Obama, the Liberals broke yet another one of their own commitments and failed to get a deal done before the time ran out.

● (1125)

Now we must negotiate with President Trump, whose administration has moved to hit our softwood lumber industry with even more tariffs. As with the huge hit lumber companies took in 2006,

our industry is again reeling, and it is the forestry workers who will suffer most. After years of being unable to negotiate a fair deal, Canadians are left feeling unsure and, quite frankly, abandoned by their government. There seems still to be no path forward.

After two months of foot-dragging, the government introduced a compensation package, which the NDP welcomed, but I must point out that it contained nothing to improve EI benefits for workers who lost their jobs because of this dispute. The \$867 million support package was a good short-term measure for industry and forestry companies; however, forestry workers need long-term solutions.

While many concede that another managed trade deal is better than more costly litigation, there is something inherently unfair about the fact that, despite continued findings that Canada is not in the wrong, we continue to negotiate agreements that are clearly in the interests of the U.S. industry.

Many witnesses expressed a desire to see Canada and the U.S. reach a negotiated settlement, one that would work for all our regions, but we also heard in committee, very clearly, that people do not want to see another bad deal. In Quebec, for example, they made a lot of changes in their forestry practices, and any new agreement must recognize these and other regional differences. A one-size-fits-all solution simply will not do.

In the spring of 2016, the Standing Committee on International Trade held meetings on the softwood lumber agreement and submitted a report to Parliament. Sadly, one important voice we did not get to hear at all at the committee was that of labour.

The United Steelworkers, which represents some 40,000 forestry workers, has laid out several requirements for what it would like to see happen. First, it wants to see the creation of a provincial forest community restoration fund, to be invested in workers, forest-dependent communities, and forest health. It wants fair access to the U.S. lumber market, and it discourages a new quota system. It also wants a guarantee that Canadian producers will have the same access to the U.S. market as other countries will enjoy.

I appreciate the Steelworkers' perspective because it represents the workers' point of view. These three things would help give workers greater job security and strengthen the industry instead of weakening it.

In the committee's final report, there were five recommendations made to the government, including that it get a deal done that serves Canadian interests, that it consult with big and small producers, and that any new deal respect regional differences.

Business of Supply

I want to raise an issue I have seen more of recently, due to the NAFTA renegotiation process, one that has affected many aspects of the trading relationship Canada has held with our American neighbours. That is, it is an extremely unbalanced and abusive relationship. Repeatedly, whether it has been the 35 years we have argued over softwood lumber, or the nearly 30 years we have had a bilateral and trilateral trade agreement with the Americans, consecutive Canadian governments have continually negotiated bad deals. Perhaps this has to do with the size, strength, and wealth of the United States, but I cannot dismiss this huge lack of leadership and apparent cowardice and weakness shown by consecutive federal governments.

We often speak of political will in this place, so when I see Canadian producers being hit with U.S. tariffs of around 27% in forestry or 300% in aerospace, when I see mills and manufacturing plants being shut down right across Canada, and when I see thousands of people's lives at risk and jobs lost, I have to say that something is wrong. The way we negotiate trade deals is wrong.

I hope the government understands the gravity of what these job losses mean in our communities. Thousands of people have no job to go to and no more paycheques to bring home. Families are worried about how to pay the rent or make the next mortgage payment. I urge the government to act in the interests of those whose jobs are on the line. That means getting the right deal and working collaboratively with the communities.

If the Liberal government is serious about holding out for a good deal, instead of signing a bad one tomorrow, then it owes Canadians more transparency and openness about how it will help Canadians and Canada's industry weather the impending trade storm. Canadians deserve answers from the government, not more empty promises and hollow words.

• (1130)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad the NDP has decided to vote against the motion presented by the Conservative Party. The member across the way is underestimating just how important these discussions are. If he listened to the Minister of Natural Resources, he would have a very clear picture of just how important the forestry industry is to this government and to Canadians as a whole, given its immense contribution to the GDP and the quality of life we have, and how important it is that it remain a top priority for this government.

We are very much aware of the impact on our workers and the industry. Would the member acknowledge, as the Minister of Natural Resources has clearly indicated, how important it is that the national government continue to work with stakeholders, in particular the provinces, because of our joint responsibility, and that we do not cave in to the Americans for the sake of having an agreement but work toward a good deal for Canadians?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I agree that this is an important industry. If we had a motion that was more clearly worded with respect to supporting the Canadian forestry industry, it would have unanimous support. There are simply some problems with the way this motion has been drawn up, and we will be trying to fix it throughout the course of the day.

It is a very important industry. We would like to see more results from the government. In the course of the last few years, when we have been talking more about other industries, such as the oil and gas industry, the forestry industry has felt forgotten in the mix. It is such an important part of Canada, yet despite the problems it is having with respect to both environmental issues and the softwood lumber dispute, I think it feels that the government is not putting a high priority on it, as was the case, I would say, under the previous Conservative government.

We all thought the current Liberal government would get the job done right away. It should have been one of its highest priorities to get this softwood lumber agreement done with the Obama administration, yet it dropped the ball, and we are in trouble again.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, our hon. colleague is from a forestry-dependant community, as I am, as a British Columbia member of Parliament.

Over the tenure of our previous government, we put an end to one of the longest and most costly trade disputes between our country and the United States. That was in 2006, and we did it within the first three months of our mandate. It took longer than we would have liked, but we managed to get that deal done. That provided 10 years of certainty for our forestry industry, which had a lot of uncertainty previously.

We also negotiated a grace period that allowed the two countries to figure out what was working and was not working and then come to some form of agreement. We had some great discussions leading up to 2015. We indeed set whatever government would be coming into power in good stead to push it across the finish line, as we did with CETA.

We also invested in green technology. We spent hundreds of millions of dollars on green technology to innovate and to make our forestry sector a leading technology producer.

I want to ask our hon. colleague this. Where does he see that we have failed the forestry industry?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I know that the member's riding of Cariboo—Prince George perhaps suffered the biggest losses in this summer's catastrophic forest fires, and I know it has been very difficult for the people in that riding facing that and the future it will bring. I respect the challenges the member and his constituents face.

With regard to where they failed, yes, they negotiated that agreement. It was not a perfect agreement. It brought stability, one could say, for the five or six years it was set out, and then there was the two-year grace period. When we get a two-year extension or grace period, whatever we want to call it, on a longer agreement, we should use that time to start negotiating directly about what the new future would look like, what a new long-term agreement would be. It should not be left to the end of that agreement to get a new agreement. We had a fairly stable situation during those two years. We should have used it to get a new agreement with the Americans. We would not be in the situation we find ourselves in today.

Business of Supply

•(1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague. The people of South Okanagan—West Kootenay are very well represented. The forestry sector is too. I can see a whole lot of young people here today watching the debate in the House of Commons. Now, they know how to spot an MP who does a good job representing his region and the industry that defines it. Actually, it could be said that this industry defines Canada as a whole.

The member for Jonquière also does great work. She has often raised issues having to do with the NAFTA discussions, like supercalendered paper and the devastating countervailing duties it is subject to, a most important issue for the Lac-Saint-Jean region and the 12,000 jobs the industry supports.

I would like to know, does my colleague not find it disheartening to see that, after two years, halfway through its mandate, as was mentioned, the government has mostly indulged in spin and PR work without ever doing any real work? The effects of the government's inaction have become apparent after two years. Does my colleague not agree?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, as I have said several times, the Liberals have had two years. They announced very quickly that a deal was imminent. It was basically done. They were going to spend 100 days to just dot the i's and cross the t's, and we would have a new deal.

The reason we had that debate a year ago on the Conservative opposition day motion, which we supported, was that the deadline for that 100 days was basically done, and nothing had happened. Here we are a year later, and still nothing has happened. Now we are caught up in some very messy NAFTA negotiations. This is getting all caught up with those. We do not want it thrown under the bus to save other parts of our economy. We wanted it done separately, and it could have and should have been done that way.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his kind words regarding my riding. It is indeed devastating. As we do in Cariboo, we will prevail and will come back stronger than ever.

I believe our hon. colleague was part of an emergency meeting that took place with the natural resources committee back in August 2016, where I put forth an emergency motion calling on the government to immediately convene a round table of provincial ministers, our own minister, and the industry to come up with some form of agreement or strategy moving forward, because we were within mere days of the deadline. At that time, we were told by the Liberal members that this was seen as a complete waste of time and money.

Can the member offer comments on that?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I do not think talking is ever a waste of time. I was in Washington in June talking to senators and congressmen about the softwood lumber agreement, and many of them were really poorly briefed on this situation. These were representatives of northern states with a lot of forestry industry. It is

an ongoing dispute, yet they did not seem to know about the history of this. They were happy to hear from us about our side of the story.

Members from all sides of this House should be down in Washington, and should have been down in Washington for the last 10 years, talking to representatives and pressing our case.

•(1140)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise to speak to something that, as many in the House know, I am deeply passionate about. The forestry sector has played a vital role in Canada's history and is leading the way toward a bright future. It is clean, it is green, and it is growing. Trees provide jobs, sustain our economy, and truly help define our culture. After all, where would Canada be without hockey sticks? I love that point. It was sent to me by a friend who is in the forestry industry, which has been hard hit and has felt a little neglected over the last while. It was a forest leader in my province of British Columbia.

These are indeed troubling times we see moving forward and indeed have faced over the last two years.

In the last two years, I think I was the first person to bring up softwood in this Parliament. I am deeply passionate about it. I am probably one of only a few members of Parliament who can honestly say that I know what it is like to get up at two o'clock or so in the morning and then drive hundreds of kilometres to the block. I ran a skidder for a while as well as bucked. I ran a chainsaw. I know exactly what it is like to have sawdust in my hair—I know that I do not have hair, but at one time I did—and to have chain oil underneath my fingernails and on my hands.

Forestry truly is the lifeblood of our economy in British Columbia.

I want to apologize. The first time softwood was mentioned in this House I attributed to me. I want to be on the record saying that I was wrong. I erred. It was not me. It was my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola who raised it on December 7, 2015, just an hour or minutes before I gave my maiden speech and mentioned it as well. I was, however, the second MP to mention softwood, the next day, when I got up in questions during the debate on the Speech from the Throne. It was not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. As a matter of fact, it has been missed completely by the current government from day one. The Speech from the Throne failed to mention the importance of softwood and our Canadian forestry workers. The first time it was actually mentioned by a Liberal member of Parliament was on January 29, 2016. I asked a question, and it was the Liberal member of Parliament for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun who said that the government was consulting. I asked where we were in terms of the softwood lumber agreement and that it meant jobs, and well-paying jobs, in communities right across Canada.

This has been a priority for us from day one. Indeed, our previous Conservative government invested a lot of time and effort. I mentioned earlier, and I have said it before, that the Conservative government put an end to one of the longest and most costly trade disputes between Canada and the U.S., our number-one trading partner. We put to bed this long-standing trade dispute in 2006. We did it within three months of our mandate.

Business of Supply

There is much to be said about that trade dispute. In doing research for this presentation, something interesting I found was that the trade dispute was very costly. It cost our Canadian producers dearly. It was found to be unfair and unjust. The penalties that were assessed were unfair and unjust. Do members know who really benefited from that? There is some good that came out of that trade dispute. When signing the 2006 Canada–U.S. agreement, we did more than bring some peace to a perennially problematic trade file.

● (1145)

What it did was guarantee that \$500 million of the penalties and duties levied against the Canadian lumber industry would not go to the American industry. It went to American charities, and one of them was Habitat for Humanity. The organization has built over 19,000 homes since that time, with 70,000 people in the U.S. benefiting from the \$500 million that went to Habitat for Humanity due to the Conservative Party's negotiations to make sure that the money did not go only to the American side, which was unfair. Again today, the U.S. is penalizing our forestry producers, families who depend on forestry for their livelihoods, as well as U.S. consumers. It is unbelievable that the Americans are so nearsighted that they are holding their own consumer market hostage. Why? What product makes up a good portion of all the homebuilding and new housing market in the United States?

An hon. member: Softwood.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Softwood, and Canadian softwood. Why is that? It is because we have the best product in the world right here. Not only that, our industry is leading the way in green technology. It is the leading way in harvesting methods and principles. Despite what we hear, which I will get into, we are being continually attacked by outside interests that have a sole purpose, and that is to shut down the Canadian industry. Whether it is the forest industry, the fishing and marine industry, the tanker industry, or the oil sands, outside interests are intent on one thing: shutting down the industry in Canada.

I got a little off topic, but I will go back to one of the very early throne speeches that the Prime Minister addressed to Canada and the world. He said that under this government, Canada will be known more for its resourcefulness than its natural resources. That rings true to this point. Projects are not being approved. Definitely energy east has gone by the wayside. Where is softwood lumber? That is why we are debating this today. We are seeing more and more uncertainty.

The government's role always is to create an environment in which industry and organizations want to invest to create jobs. At this point, two years into the Liberals' mandate, all they have done is create more uncertainty. A recent article stated that Canada is no longer one of the most economically stable environments or countries in the world because the government continues to cause uncertainty through inconsistent policy, inconsistent measures, and, indeed, questionable actions.

British Columbia is the largest producer of softwood lumber in North America, with \$33 billion in output and \$12.9 billion in GDP for the province. In 2016, there were, indirectly and directly, over 140,000 jobs tied to the forest industry. There was a total labour income of \$8.6 billion. There are over 140 communities in the

province of British Columbia that are forest-dependent. My riding of Cariboo—Prince George is one of them.

This past summer, B.C. faced one of the most unprecedented fire seasons. Over 53 million cubic metres of fibre have been scorched. To put that into context, that is the equivalent of one year's annual allowable cut for the province of British Columbia and 10 years' annual allowable cut for my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. It remains to be seen how much of that is still marketable. There is a very small time frame for forest producers to get in to see whether there is any salvageable or marketable wood or fibre.

● (1150)

We call on our provincial NDP government to allow access to industry, to get in to find out what is going on. We are calling on it again today to make sure that this is taking place. The earlier we can get in and figure out the status of our fibre, the better we can strategize and plan as we move forward.

The B.C. forest sector is the world leader in sustainable forest management with less than 1% of our provincial forests harvested. For every tree taken, three are replanted. That is something that many people never mention, but we can always do better. Our previous government invested in that. We spent hundreds of millions of dollars in green technology allowing us to reforest. If we replant we have a root structure along a bank that means rivers, lakes, and streams are going to be secure as well. We are going to need that more than ever before with the 53 million cubic metres of fibre that has been scorched. Our rivers, lakes, and streams have lost that critical root structure, so we call on the federal government to assist our provincial government to make sure that takes place.

I also want to talk about the impact to Canada. The Minister of Natural Resources talked about the importance to Canada. He has been speaking to the file for awhile and he talked about the value to Canada, \$22 billion in GDP. We employ over 200,000 first nations and people right across Canada, with 9,500 jobs in indigenous communities. I would hazard that the actual indirect numbers are well beyond 200,000 and forest-dependent communities are in the hundreds right across Canada.

We see that the government has dithered away a good amount of time on the softwood lumber issue. It was not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, the very first message to Canadians about what the Liberals were going to do during their mandate. We heard earlier that the first time it was mentioned by a Liberal member of Parliament was January 2016 on a question from a Conservative.

Business of Supply

In the early part of 2016, we heard there was a new-found relationship, that the Prime Minister and the outgoing president were BFFs and they were going to get this deal done. As a matter of fact, one of the ministers said that the Prime Minister was absolutely giddy. That was the term that she used in one of her interviews. There was a bromance going on and they were going to hammer through all the challenges.

We pressed from this side and we later heard that within 100 days there would be some form of agreement. I believe the president at the time stood in the House and said “we will come up with a solution to this irritant.” I took offence to the fact that he called it an irritant. This irritant employs my family, my wife's family, so many families in my riding and as we have heard, many families across Canada. It is not an irritant, Mr. President, it is a way of life. It is one of our number one industries. It is the cornerstone of our national economy and it is shameful when a Prime Minister sits there and smiles and calls it a bromance. When he went to a state dinner, he left the Minister of Natural Resources at home. He is more focused on the red carpet and taking selfies than negotiating a softwood lumber agreement.

I am getting a little frustrated because people in my riding, family members, friends, and neighbours have been waiting for good news. Time and again, it is us sitting here pounding away and what do we get? Platitudes or a hand on the heart.

• (1155)

We are seized with this issue. Somebody must be kidding me. Two years.

I have been on those trips to Washington. I have heard comments from folks on the other side, who are not Conservative friendly. They say the Liberals have mismanaged this file from the beginning of their mandate. They limped into the discussions. They did not negotiate from a position of strength, and that brings me to my next point.

Throughout this tenure, whether it is my file on fisheries, oceans and Canadian Coast Guard, whether it is electoral reform, whether it is forestry, foreign-funded groups have taken credit for the defeat of the Conservative Party in the 2015 election. The senior policy adviser to the Prime Minister at one point was the president and CEO of one of those groups. Some of the chiefs of staff and those who advise ministers on our files, files that are key to our national economy, have roots based in these groups. Whether it is Forest-Ethics, Greenpeace, Tides Canada, or Tides Foundation, they all have one thing in mind but they like to say that it is all about making things greener or it is for the good of the land.

I will bring the House right back to something else that happened in my community, and I am speaking of the Mount Polley mine disaster. There are no two ways about it, it was a disaster but the company and our community, those that mattered, those that are dependent upon the lakes and streams and the environment and the mine for the economic viability of our region, all banded together and managed to get things done. They all agreed that they never want to see this happen again.

When we did an ID check at the front gate it was interesting to note who was protesting. Busloads of people were sent to protest and

they were not from Williams Lake, Quesnel, Prince George, Vanderhoof, or Cariboo region. These people, these paid activists, came from other countries, they came from south of the border, and they came from larger communities.

It does not surprise me that our NDP colleagues are not supporting this motion. During the 2015 election these groups openly targeted those Conservative ridings that were seen as vulnerable, and my riding was one of them. I could show the House the documents. Who did those groups support? They supported NDP candidates and other candidates who were not Conservative in order to defeat Harper, to defeat the Conservatives.

It is interesting to note that the NDP members, with whom we have banded together so many times in recent weeks to point our fingers at members across the way for their failures, will not stand up with us in support of our forestry workers. That is shameful.

Our policy should always be developed in the best interests of Canadians and without the influence of foreign groups. With that, I am going to rest.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is most unfortunate that the member's passion was not there when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. The Conservative government had the opportunity to negotiate an agreement.

However, to try to leave the impression that this government was negligent in any way on this file is just wrong. We have very competent and capable ministers who have been on this file virtually from day one. He is trying to give Canadians the impression that the government does not care. The member knows there is a compensation package in place of well over \$800 million. The Minister of Natural Resources talked about the importance of this industry.

The member talks about the 200,000 direct jobs. Hundreds of thousands of indirect jobs are also critical to our economy. These are middle-class jobs, which we have been emphasizing since day one. The government believes we have to not only negotiate an agreement, but it has to be a good agreement for Canadians. The government has strived to do that. Yes, it might not be on the Conservatives' timetable, but it is not important for us to meet that timetable. It is important that we get the right agreement and a good agreement for Canadians. That will secure the middle-class jobs we have today and will grow the industry, as the Minister of Natural Resources said.

My question for the member is very simple. Would he not agree that it is in Canada's best interest to not just settle on this issue, but that we strive to get the best agreement we can, which will result in more economic and social activity for all Canadians?

• (1200)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I categorically reject some of the things my hon. colleague has said.

Business of Supply

The hon. minister stood in the House and talked about China, how it got a ton of new things, and that the government had introduced Canada's wood to China. We have been in China for over a decade. I was there. I helped lead some of the trade missions, Canada's wood first. Canada did an incredible job prior to the Liberal government. Again, the Liberals can try to take credit for that, but we will not let them.

I agree that we should get a deal done, but what are the Liberals waiting for? They have had two years. I will bring the member back to what I said on the newfound romance and friendship with the outgoing President Obama. There was going to be a 100-day solution to that irritant, an irritant to which I so angrily took offence.

The Liberals have let other groups influence decisions along the way. They have dithered away. I am not pointing a finger at who has mismanaged it. It has been the collective of the government's ministers. From day one, this has not been a priority. Now they are scrambling. They are behind the eight ball, despite our warnings time and again.

In my maiden speech in the House on December 7, I brought up the softwood. We brought up forestry and the importance of it. The government has dithered away. It has sat two years since being elected and we have yet to see a softwood lumber agreement. In fact, all we have seen is more and more uncertainty.

The Liberals talk about their care package. They would not need a care package if they had managed to get the deal done, and get the job done. They said they had a plan when they came into power. All we have seen is that they do not have a plan, and they have failed Canadians.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I hear the member across the aisle come say that this is simply the "Conservatives' timetable", it is the only kind of terminology the Liberals can come up with to try to push the issue back to our side of the floor. When the member stands to speak, who is he speaking on behalf of?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, time and again, whether it is the changes to the Standing Orders or whatever, the Liberals fails to understand that the House does not belong to them, Nor does it belong to us. We stand here as elected voices for our ridings, for Canadians.

This is not a Conservative timeline. It is not an NDP timeline. It is Canadians' timeline. It is the forestry industry's timeline. It is the families from across Canada that are waiting for the good news.

Jobs are being lost, more uncertainty is taking place. Time and again, the government allows outside interests to dictate its policy moving forward. Who pays the price? Canadians.

• (1205)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke with passion. I have enormous respect for him, and he knows that.

The member wanted to know what the government had been doing. I can assure him that, as trade minister, I have not taken one trip abroad on behalf of Canadians without bringing up softwood to Asia, whether it is in China, Japan, or Korea. When we were with the Prime Minister in India, we talked about softwood.

I would invite the member, because he speaks so passionately about helping Canadians, to join in our efforts. We need to modernize our industry, bring innovation to it, and diversify it. I recognize the member's passion. I recognize my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have done work on this in the past.

However, I implore my colleagues, for those watching us at home, to join in the journey, come with me on trade missions, talk to the industry in Canada, and ensure that together we can sell more softwood around the world. Families in my riding, just like in his riding, depend on us to act.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, again, from the earliest point of raising this issue, our Conservative team and myself, as vice-chair of softwood, have offered our support.

This is a non-partisan issue. Where we are getting partisan is on the failure to actually get a job done. When we are sitting before our counterparts, the U.S. side, this is not a partisan issue; this is a Canadian issue.

I have been waiting for an invite, but it is not my file. Clearly I am passionate about this. I am the vice-chair. I wait for the invite to go to speak passionately about the impact in my riding, but also about the impact on other countries. I can speak first hand about the challenges we face. I can also speak first hand about the opportunities we have.

I have yet to see an invite. I just came back from a trip with the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. I welcome the opportunity to travel with the Minister of International Trade. Hopefully, I get that invite in my mailbox shortly, and the whip approves it.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his heartfelt speech on behalf of the forestry industry.

We know today that the Prime Minister is in Lac Saint-Jean, Quebec, attempting to persuade voters there that the Liberal government stands, unqualified, in support of the forestry industry. However, at the same time, we have learned that he refuses to condemn Greenpeace or any of the other organizations the member mentioned, which spread so much misinformation and disinformation about the industry.

Could the member speak to the government's inconsistency?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, in a quick review of ForestEthics, its executive director's office is in Bellingham, Washington. On Greenpeace, we know it along with ForestEthics proudly talk about how they have shut down Canadian industry, how they have forced Canadian industry to withdraw their tactics. What they say in some of the documents, if members do the research, is that they will not make the argument; they will get people within the organization to make the argument. They put pressure on them.

Business of Supply

We have seen the government, and indeed the Prime Minister's senior policy advisor, with his background, being solely influenced by this, whether it is ForestEthics, Tides Canada, Tides Foundation, or Greenpeace.

Most recently, the hereditary chiefs' council of Lax Kw'alaams spoke about the government's foreign funded influence. It categorically rejects any of the policies put forward by the government.

● (1210)

[Translation]

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

The motion before the House calls on the government to reaffirm its support for forestry workers and denounce efforts by foreign-funded environmental activists to tarnish the Canadian forestry sector's environmental reputation. I am happy to be speaking today because forestry is central to the economic prosperity of my own region, the Mauricie, in Quebec.

I can assure the House that our government is well aware of the very real hardships the industry is facing and of the impact recent events have had on our forestry communities and their workers, in the Mauricie and elsewhere. I would remind the House that it was our government that took targeted and tangible measures to protect and defend the industry. We have also worked to foster new business opportunities in some highly competitive markets in order to ensure the prosperity of our forestry workers.

Our government is always endeavouring to find new, innovative ways of supporting every stakeholder in the industry, from large corporations and small family businesses to every last worker along the value chain, in every community that relies on forestry.

As Minister of International Trade, I know that over 70% of Canada's forestry products are exported. That is why selling our forest products to the world and Canada's international reputation as an environmentally responsible supplier of sustainable forestry products are among our government's top priorities.

As I was saying to my colleague opposite, my first team Canada trade mission was focused on the Chinese softwood lumber market and included all of our forestry partners, such as Canada Wood and Quebec and New Brunswick representatives. Our goal was to showcase the innovation that we are famous for in the Chinese market.

What I feel is important to emphasize today is that our industry, the best in the world, is about so much more than the product it sells. It offers real solutions to the needs of all modern societies: it supplies a product that is in demand, fights climate change, and adds major value. That is why we are opening up new markets for our producers. For one thing, we want them to have more choices, and for another, softwood lumber offers solutions and is an essential commodity for the biggest markets in the world.

We have also turned to other markets in Asia, where we have held meetings, such as in Singapore, in Vietnam and in the Middle East, to increase our exports and promote our commitment to sustainable

forest management. The goal of our plan is to improve business relations with the current main foreign buyers of Canadian forestry products, and to establish stronger relations with new long-term buyers. We are doing that with the support of our team of highly qualified employees in Canada's missions abroad, and we also use the tools and expertise of Export Development Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada and the Canadian Commercial Corporation.

As Canada's chief marketing officer, I have made a priority of softwood lumber. I am first and foremost the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain. I have often had the opportunity to meet with employees at Resolute Forest Products, in Haute-Mauricie, and I can testify to their love for the forest and their professionalism. They are proud, hard-working and responsible people.

Remember, with my colleagues the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, we announced on June 1 that our government would invest \$860 million in tangible measures under the Lumber Action Plan. My colleague called for tangible measures earlier. We have invested a total of nearly \$1 billion to promote innovation and productivity in our forestry sector. This plan offers support to forestry workers and to communities affected by the United States' recent measures targeting softwood lumber.

● (1215)

This plan was developed to directly support workers, as mentioned by the Quebec Forestry Industry Council, whose new president recognizes the work that we have done and that we continue to do in support of the forestry industry. He was once a colleague of ours in the House, a Conservative member; I salute him. That investment is concrete assistance for softwood lumber that will allow for its sustainability and ensure continued operations and development.

It is also our government that has taken strong and concerted action to counter the American administration's unfair measures. This action plan shows the Government's commitment to taking quick action to overcome the difficulties our important forestry sector must face. It describes the overall strategy of our government to develop markets around the world in a targeted and global manner in order to increase the diversification of trade and Canadian wood and wood product markets as part of our commitment to promote a clean growth economy.

Business of Supply

These concerted efforts, combined with the quality products of our Canadian businesses, have already provided initial results in terms of positive growth for exports of Canadian softwood lumber to markets outside the United States. For example, in the first half of 2017, exports to China increased by nearly \$50 million dollars compared to the second half of 2016, which is a significant increase. India tripled its imports of Canadian softwood lumber over the same period. We have also seen positive growth in new and emerging markets, including the Philippines and South Korea.

These recent initiatives were not put in place overnight; they are based on our department's long-standing commitment to support trade associations and businesses that want to develop international trade. Consequently the Canadian trade commissioner service, which has five central regional offices in Canada and more than 161 offices worldwide, is actively involved in various international trade promotion and development initiatives for Canadian forestry products in traditional and emerging markets, often in partnership with national and provincial trade associations throughout Canada, our federal partners at Natural Resources Canada, and of course, our provincial and territorial counterparts.

By working together, we obtain much better results. The trade commissioner service, whose focus is to help small and medium-sized businesses, has employees in 44 of our embassies and consulates around the world who are responsible for offering direct export support for Canada's forestry product businesses.

These international trade professionals work on the ground, and I commend them for their efforts and know that my colleagues on both sides of the House do too. These professionals work to facilitate numerous initiatives to promote international trade development by Canadian wood product trade associations that receive funds from the expanding market opportunities program led by Natural Resources Canada.

Last year, the tangible results of that commitment included some 45 initiatives specific to forestry products and wood carried out in 16 countries by our trade commissioner service, more than 40 trade agreements with foreign organizations, and some 500 forestry sector clients across Canada who received services and support over the course of the year.

On behalf of forestry sector workers, I thank the trade commissioner service staff for being there to help.

I will set my notes aside and simply say to those watching us that the people who are familiar with the forestry sector, the workers who I meet when I return to my riding on the weekends, know that our government is there to help them. We are with them, we were with them, and we will be with them every step of the way.

As a member of the government, a member of the government's Quebec caucus, and a minister, I always have the interests of forestry workers at heart. I take every opportunity to promote them.

• (1220)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to ask the minister a question. I have much respect for him, and I know he is very involved in his riding. I also know that he is in close contact with the forestry industry.

I have only one question. I would like to know why, in the 2,871-word mandate letter the minister received from the Prime Minister, the words "forestry industry" do not appear once.

When a minister gets a mandate from the Prime Minister that makes no mention of the forestry industry, how can that minister tell Canadians and those watching us, to use his words, that the government he represents is truly interested in defending the forestry industry?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. He knows that I have a great deal of respect for him, as well. He represents a neighbouring riding.

I am happy to learn that my mandate letter contains 2,871 words. I had not looked at it that way, but what I can say is that we are there for more than 2,871 forestry workers. It is one thing to put words in a mandate letter, but quite another to listen to the needs of the forestry industry as a whole and to work with the people at the Quebec Wood Export Bureau and Canada Wood and with our colleagues in New Brunswick and British Columbia.

Our Prime Minister said that we would be an open and transparent government that would listen to people's needs. My colleague has even condemned us a few times for holding too many consultations.

I can assure my colleague that I listened to more than 2,871 voices asking for help to ensure the development of the forestry industry in Canada.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): I thank the minister for his speech, Mr. Speaker.

I do not know whether he is aware that, in the Lac-Saint-Jean region alone, one of Canada's 200 rural regions that rely on forestry, 12,000 jobs are at stake because of a dishonest government that was unable to negotiate a deal to protect our jobs in the forestry sector.

The hon. member for Jonquière asked dozens and dozens of questions; letters were written to the minister; unions and Quebec mayors, in particular from the Lac-Saint-Jean region, came here to tell the government how important this matter is.

Two mills in the Lac-Saint-Jean region are in danger because of the 18% countervailing duty, and others have been paying a 27% duty since the softwood lumber agreement was negotiated with the United States. This is outrageous.

This affects thousands of jobs and families. Some jobs have already been lost, while others are threatened. It is a very difficult issue. When the Conservatives negotiated, \$1 billion and 134,000 jobs were lost. The government record in this regard has been abysmal for years. Everyone is saying how important this file is.

Business of Supply

Why then is that not apparent in the government's actions? How is it that so many jobs are at stake in a flourishing industry in which people are finding innovative ways of using waste lumber to manufacture other products and working to ensure the sustainability of our resources?

We are tired of empty rhetoric. We need to see some action. We need to stop seeing the industry unravel and jobs being lost.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by acknowledging my colleague, for whom I have enormous respect.

She is addressing a minister from a region of Quebec that relies on the forestry industry. I can tell her that we have taken real action in this matter. We set up a \$867-million program to promote innovation and productivity. I encourage her to speak to union presidents and company directors. I encourage her to speak to the president of the Quebec Forest Industry Council, who was telling me recently that we are making progress and that the key is diversification. There are forestry workers in my region. I meet them on weekends, not when I am here in the House answering questions. We see them and interact with them every weekend.

I appreciate the hon. member's question, because I know she cares about workers, but I can tell her that, on this side of the House, we do more than just ask questions. We take real action. On my trade missions, I have made sure that markets are opening up for our workers.

• (1225)

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought you were going to ask me to ask a question of my colleague, the Minister of International Trade, whom I commend for his extraordinary work. I would have liked to ask the minister how the union presidents and entrepreneurs in his region reacted to the measures that we implemented and that he listed. I can say that his answer would have been quite clear. Entrepreneurs are satisfied with the measures we have implemented. I will have more to say about that in the next few minutes.

I would like to reassure my opposition colleagues, notably my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska, that the softwood lumber issue is an absolute priority for our government. I will say it again. It is an absolute priority. As the Minister of International Trade said earlier, we are proud of our world-class forestry sector. Canadian forestry companies employ more than 230,000 Canadians across the country, often in rural regions, where they play a key role in the economy by employing hundreds of middle-class workers. That is the case in my riding, Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. Our businesses and our economy largely depend on forestry, and I am very proud of our entrepreneurs' work in the forestry industry.

The forestry sector is clearly a major contributor to Canada's economic growth, contributing more than \$21 billion to the country's GDP. We have worked hard to diversify our export markets and to offer the highest quality Canadian products around the world. These measures have created excellent opportunities for Canadian businesses in Asia, particularly in China. The United States is obviously the primary destination for Canadian softwood lumber exports. In 2016 alone, 78% of such exports were destined for the United States, with a value of more than \$7.6 billion. It is

therefore essential that we maintain stable and predictable access to the American market if we want our softwood lumber industry to continue to prosper and if we want Canadian workers to keep their well-paid jobs. That is why the softwood lumber file has been an absolute priority for our government since our first day in office.

As soon as he took office, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was then Minister of International Trade, asked for broad consultations with the main stakeholders in the softwood lumber industry, including provincial and territorial governments, small and large softwood lumber businesses, producers of various types of softwood lumber products, industrial associations, unions, and representatives from indigenous groups.

In my region, particularly in Amqui, Carleton-sur-Mer, and Gégépegagiag, I have had the opportunity to consult with various stakeholders and entrepreneurs who are working hard to grow their businesses. I have met with them, along with some of my colleagues who are here in the House, to listen to their concerns and determine how our government can support them in concrete ways in the development of their businesses. They made some good suggestions. Later, I will talk about concrete measures that our government has taken.

In order to assist us, federal public servants have gone across the country to meet in person with stakeholders who clearly indicated that they supported the negotiation of a new agreement that reflects the best interests of Canada. However, those stakeholders warned that it was better to not enter into an agreement than to enter into a bad agreement.

Our government then worked to negotiate a new agreement with the United States. Negotiations began in January 2016 and are continuing at a good pace. In just 12 months, our two countries held approximately 20 in-person meetings and numerous conference calls to advance discussions. Our government has raised this issue with the highest representatives of the American government and will continue to do so.

The Prime Minister has spoken with President Trump about softwood lumber on numerous occasions, including last week on his trip to Washington on October 11. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has personally assumed responsibility for this file since the start of the negotiations. She has raised this important issue with the American Secretary of Commerce at every opportunity. As a result of that high-level political engagement, this crucial file remains on the political agenda in the United States.

Business of Supply

•(1230)

Close collaboration between the provinces and territories and the industry, as well as their active engagement, are at the heart of our management strategy in this important file. The minister and federal officials, as well as the hon. members on this side of the House, have made a sustained effort to establish dialogue with Canada's largest exporters and principal producers, such as remanufacturers and manufacturers of specialized softwood lumber products.

Furthermore, as part of our government's efforts to establish nation-to-nation relations with indigenous groups, measures were taken to consult first nations representatives, particularly those in the sawmills belonging to these groups. We held various types of consultations, including consultations in person, regular updates in advisory forums for governments and the industry, official and informal bilateral meetings, and telephone calls with premiers and ministers across the country.

The government's efforts have clearly paid off. Provincial governments and industry representatives have publicly congratulated our government on the firm resolve it has shown in this file. The close ties between our government and the provinces and territories and the industry have allowed Canada to speak with one voice at the bargaining table, which has strengthened our position.

This united front was confirmed last August, when provincial envoys from British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick met with the ambassador in Washington to clearly demonstrate that the provincial governments stand together with the federal government in this matter.

Although Canada consistently defended its interests at the bargaining table, the United States was unwilling to accept the conditions that were acceptable to Canada. I would like to point out that, although we would prefer to reach a new agreement that will give our industry more stability and predictability, we will not sign an agreement that causes considerable permanent damage to our industry and our workers. Our position is very clear: we want to reach a fair and balanced softwood lumber agreement with the United States. However, I repeat that we will not accept just any conditions. We will continue to work very hard for our industry. There are too many jobs at stake.

With that in mind, I would now like to outline the measures we have taken. I would remind those who claim that the Government of Canada is not committed to standing up for the interests of the forestry sector and its workers that we have allocated a total of \$867 million in direct support for the industry, its businesses, and its workers, naturally. This support is made available through the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada, and I have personally spoken with stakeholders in my riding to make absolutely sure they were all well aware of the measures being offered.

The interesting thing to note is that there has been a steady rise in lumber prices in Canada over the past few months. Two-by-fours, for example, have gone from roughly \$500 to \$650 per 1,000 board feet. Obviously, that means more money for the industry, and other domestic industries will benefit as well, since local businesses will have to hire in order to increase production. In light of all of the

devastation that has been wrought upon the United States, the demand for softwood lumber keeps going up, which is good for prices and, in turn, for our business community.

We want to reach an agreement with the Americans and thus bring some stability to the market. I can assure the House that our government has made this file its top priority and that we will keep working to ensure that the softwood lumber industry continues to grow, while still looking to diversify our markets and foster innovation. We are very proud of our Canadian industry.

•(1235)

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank our hon. colleague for his impassioned speech. I hope it came from the heart and was not written for him, as we are hearing the same talking points over and over again.

About half an hour ago I stood up and was a bit animated. As members can imagine, I am passionate about softwood lumber because it impacts thousands of families in my riding, and we are facing troubling times. The Liberals like to stand up and say they are fighting passionately for these families right across Canada, yet what we see is a wasted opportunity. They point fingers at the previous Conservative government, rather than rolling up their sleeves and taking responsibility for a file they have now had for two years. All they have done is to point fingers and say, "They should have done this", and have offered nothing but excuses.

Late last year we got wind of a deal on the table. What was wrong with that deal and why did the government not pursue it, because if it had, it would not now have had to provide the aid package it is boasting of and would have been able to put some certainty into an industry that is facing uncertain times. Late last year there was a deal on the table. Why did the government not take that deal?

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's most appropriate question. I am not sure where in my speech he heard criticisms of or a direct attack on the previous government. On the contrary, we are here to work proactively and we have put clear measures in place to support the industry.

However, he raises a good point. He was part of the previous government, a Conservative government that lasted 10 years, so he is quite familiar with the reality facing the industry. He knows full well why we have no formal agreement in place. It is quite simple. The U.S. coalition plays an important role in these negotiations.

We are ready. We want to have a good agreement for the industry and for Canadians. Unfortunately, that is not how the American industry sees things. It is applying all sorts of terms and conditions that we cannot abide by.

Business of Supply

Clearly, the member opposite, who knows the industry in and out, knows full well that the powerful U.S. coalition has a direct impact on our negotiations. We want to reach an agreement. The Minister of International Trade and the foreign affairs minister are working very hard and I am sure that we will reach an agreement. However, there is still a lot of work to be done and we are committed to reaching a formal agreement.

In the meantime, we must ensure that we have the measures to support the industry and its businesses. We have injected \$867 million to ensure that our businesses can benefit from the measures they need to get through this crisis.

So far, the industry is doing relatively well, especially back home. We are still hiring and, again, the price of two-by-fours has gone from \$500 to \$650 per 1,000 board feet. That goes to show that even though the situation is far from perfect, we are continuing to do the work that we started.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Are there any questions or comments?

There is a minute and a half left, so 45 seconds for the question and 45 seconds for the answer.

I would encourage members to ask their questions as concisely as possible, so we can have more time to hear what everyone has to say.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the glacial pace of the Liberals' progress on this file is going to cause the lumber industry, back home in Mauricie, in Lac-Saint-Jean, and throughout Quebec and Canada's forestry regions, to have merely a good year, rather than an exceptional year, despite the disasters that struck the United States that will require a great deal of construction material.

As we all know, negotiations are about a balance of power. We are all fairly well versed in the pressure tactics used by the American administration in negotiations.

Can the member tell us about any pressure tactics we can use on our side to tip the scales back in our favour?

• (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, in 45 seconds or less, please.

Mr. Rémi Massé: Mr. Speaker, thank you for reminding me how much time I have left. I really appreciate it.

Our government is not letting up, as I mentioned earlier. Members of this House, parliamentary secretaries, and ministers have been meeting and continue to meet with various American stakeholders and elected officials to lay out our position, our arguments, and our proposals.

This work, just as the minister's involvement, has been ongoing since we were elected. I mentioned how many conference calls she has had. We are committed to securing a deal, but not just any deal. Our goal is to defend the industry's interests, and we are doing this in an appropriate and ongoing manner.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, if that is all right with you.

I would like to go back to the previous speech, because I was impressed by the pressure tactics the Liberal government is using to negotiate an agreement on softwood lumber with the United States. My colleague mentioned all of the action being taken, from the minister's phone calls, to the parliamentary secretaries, in particular the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for Canada-U.S. Relations, who, in an interview about NAFTA on October 11, had this to say about supply management:

[*English*]

“Is there room to discuss and negotiate? Of course.”

[*Translation*]

That was his answer. That is the most our parliamentary secretaries can muster in their negotiations with the Americans. They open the door wide open and voluntarily suggest there may be room to negotiate. Since we began talking about this free trade agreement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was previously Minister of International Trade, has been staying on message, stating that they want a good deal, not just any deal.

Two years into the government's mandate and we still have no agreement, and the industry is concerned. We are certainly giving dairy, poultry, and egg producers cause for concern, because every time the government needs to deal with the Americans, they mess things up. The government is incapable of reaching an agreement. So much for the Liberal government's negotiating power vis-à-vis the Americans.

I thank the member from Richmond—Arthabaska for the opportunity to discuss this important issue today. It is exactly the type of agreement—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am just going to interrupt the member for a few seconds.

[*English*]

I have heard a few phones go off today, and although we know that phones are allowed in here, could members, if they do not mind, just check their phones and make sure the sound is off. They are very interesting sounds; it is just that we do not want to hear them while someone is speaking.

The hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the calls that we are receiving are in support of this magnificent motion before us today. In that case, I would ask that you be more tolerant so that we can take calls from Canadians who want to join us in testifying to the importance of this motion.

The forestry industry is a major employer in Quebec and across Canada. Quebec's forestry workers in particular deserve stability and predictability from their government. As we know, the forestry industry is the cornerstone of many communities in Quebec.

Business of Supply

However, as I mentioned, the government has been unable to negotiate a softwood lumber agreement. The livelihood of forestry workers has been jeopardized, not only in Quebec, but all across Canada. While the Prime Minister continues to drag his feet on this important file, workers in this sector that is vital to the Canadian economy remain vulnerable to misinformation campaigns conducted against their industry.

These are schemes by non-governmental organizations funded by foreign interests, such as Greenpeace and ForestEthics, groups that do not understand that Canada is a world leader in sustainable forestry practices, but who take advantage of our forestry industry, which is currently very vulnerable.

All of this is because of the Liberal government's inaction. On this side of the House, we are very aware and very concerned about the current situation in Canada's softwood lumber industry. The situation remains unacceptable for thousands of workers, their families, and their communities. These people depend on the federal government to take action with the American administration.

According to the Quebec Forest Industry Council, the softwood lumber industry in that province generates \$15.8 billion a year, including nearly \$4 billion in salaries and benefits. Natural Resources Canada indicates that the industry employs more than 200,000 people, including 9,500 in indigenous communities. In Quebec, 58,000 jobs are directly related to the forestry industry.

Despite these impressive figures, we are still waiting for concrete action by the government. This lack of leadership jeopardizes the security of entire communities that depend on the softwood lumber industry. We are hearing this message everywhere. We hear it from workers, from people who live in towns and villages across Quebec, from people in British Columbia, from people all across Canada where there is a large forestry industry, and from people on the ground who depend on the sustainability of the softwood lumber industry.

We hear this message from people like Gilles Potvin, spokesperson for the forest committee of the Union des municipalités du Québec. Back in April he told *La Presse*:

The Quebec forestry industry is being doubly penalized by the new U.S. tariffs on softwood lumber.

This puts us in a really difficult situation, and the last small, family-owned businesses that are still in the game are going to be further penalized. They do not have the capacity to withstand this additional pressure.

In Quebec's regions, in places like Matawinie, forestry companies are expecting this to have a significant impact.

This spring, in an article in the newspaper *L'Action*, it was estimated that lumber mills like the one in Saint-Michel-des-Saints would have to pay up to \$3 million a year because of the new tariffs.

The Alliance des chambres de commerce de Lanaudière stated in May:

...this new conflict jeopardizes the competitiveness of many companies and the very survival of the forestry industry, which is crucial to the economic vitality of Quebec City and its regions.

Despite all that, the government still does not seem to understand the importance of the serious issues we are talking about today. In the previous speech, I heard an argument to the effect that this

government simply does not understand the urgent need to take action and to stand up to the Americans.

The fact that the rise in lumber prices from \$500 to \$650 is being used as an excuse as to why the government is in no hurry to reach an agreement with the Americans explains a lot about our current predicament. We can understand why the issue of a new softwood lumber deal was never raised during the Prime Minister's first meeting with the American president, President Obama. Why was it not raised? The Liberals told us not to worry, that there was plenty of time, that the industry would be able to manage on its own. "No need to worry", they said. We were told that prices had gone up, and that there was no need to negotiate because people were not complaining too loudly. Families are concerned and people are afraid of losing their jobs? No need to worry. The Liberal government certainly is not. Now there is a byelection. No need to worry. The Liberals will just say that they are getting around to it, but by next week nothing will have changed. This is serious.

• (1245)

It is important for the government to carefully examine today's motion and to take action against these foreign-funded groups seeking to disrupt our forestry industry because the damage being caused now is permanent, even though the price of softwood lumber has risen. These people are being allowed to tarnish the reputation of our forestry industry. The government is doing nothing and then wondering why thousands of jobs have been lost in regions like Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. That is unacceptable.

Organizations like Greenpeace and ForestEthics, which are spreading misinformation about the forestry sector and have been trying for a long time to destroy it, have understood that this government had no intention of doing something about this harmful propaganda and that they could continue with this campaign of misinformation. Why not, when no one is standing in the way? They need this campaign to fundraise abroad or, even worse, to obtain money from certain U.S. lobbies who do not want Canadian softwood lumber entering the United States. These are the issues we must focus on and address today with the motion moved by my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska. That is why, today, we are asking the government to stand up for once to these groups that are threatening hundreds of thousands of jobs across Canada.

Mr. Garneau told *The Globe and Mail* that Greenpeace is not satisfied with marauding just our companies, but also our way of life, which is built on nurturing healthy forests that are the lifeblood of the people who live there.

Forests are synonymous with Canada. Forestry workers are at the heart of Canada's history. The forest is a major resource that has made Canada one of the most beautiful, greatest, and richest countries in the world. We must preserve our forests and, above all, we must protect it against foreigners with interests other than protecting the families of Canada's forestry workers.

• (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we move on to questions and comments, I would like to remind the hon. member that, even if the name of a minister or other hon. member appears in a quote, the quote can be modified to avoid naming the person in question.

Business of Supply

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, it was not a minister. It was another Mr. Garneau.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I understand. I apologize. It will still serve as a reminder for the hon. members. When the name of a minister or hon. member appears in a quote, it must be replaced by his or her title in the House.

Let us move on to questions and comments. The hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we have to hear from any of the Conservative members of Parliament in terms of the importance of the industry. From day one, we have had a government that has been dealing with this issue as a priority, from different ministries right to the Prime Minister's Office. There is literally hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation available. We are looking at ways to have a good agreement. Ultimately, that is what we are trying to achieve.

It is important we recognize that the former government did not get the job done. Now the Conservatives are trying to say that we should just get an agreement. They are pushing the government because they want an agreement. The Government of Canada also wants an agreement, but it does not want just any agreement, it wants a good agreement that is in the best interests of all Canadians.

Why does the member feel that the New Democratic Party is not even supporting the motion, given the fact that the New Democrats, like the Liberals, are also acknowledging the valuable contributions of the industry to our economy and Canada's middle class?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I know that the parliamentary secretary would like to be on this side and let other people make the decisions on that side, but, unfortunately, such is not the case. The Liberals must deal with their inability to settle the softwood lumber dispute with the United States.

They have been in power for two years and they have done absolutely nothing to settle the softwood lumber dispute. It is all well and good to say that, in the past, in the early 1900s, trees were bigger and it took workers more time to cut them down, but that changes nothing today. We can go as far back as we want, but that changes nothing today. The Conservatives and the NDP have not been in power since 2015. The Liberals have, and they are the ones who are incapable of making a decision and negotiating an agreement with the United States.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable and his proverbial spirit.

We will be voting this evening, and I admit that I have not yet come to a decision because I am in agreement with motion in general. My question concerns one specific part of the motion.

My colleague undoubtedly remembers, as I do, that a documentary like *L'Erreur boréale* in Quebec, for example, largely contributed to changes in forestry practices in Quebec, which are now sounder and better than they were before.

The last part of the motion proposes having groups that have a say in the matter and industries face off in a conflict that is currently in court. I do not see how a fight like that would help the situation. In any case, it will be resolved in court, since the parties are already there.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this.

● (1255)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Trois-Rivières has been doing outstanding work. I know this issue is of particular interest to him because he himself is from a region with quite a bit of forestry activity, sawmills, and pulp and paper mills. People in his region depend heavily on forestry.

The simple answer to his question has to do with why the government has been unable to negotiate an agreement with the Americans. Is it because the government is paying too much attention to the lobby groups whose actions are under fire today? Is it because the government would rather listen to lobby groups for purely partisan, electoral reasons than to forestry workers across Canada and particularly in our regions?

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about the softwood lumber industry, the motion, and share some concerns. I come from a northern British Columbia riding. Forestry is big in Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies. Just two weeks ago, I visited Lakeland Mills in Prince George to see how it was doing. It was affected by the mill fire and loss of life. It has recovered well and selling its lumber, thankfully, with the temporary lifting of the tariffs until, I guess, the U.S. decides to re-establish them in November.

I made a lot of trips to the U.S. to understand its view on the softwood lumber industry. I got to know Ryan Zinke, the Secretary of the Interior, and a week into the Trump administration's mandate, in February of this year, I understood where they were going. They are developing a lot of their public timber and fibre to be much more competitive with Canada's. The concern is that Canada supplies a lot of their timber and lumber.

When talking about the softwood lumber agreement, the reason I bring up the U.S. is that 69% of our softwood goes to the U.S., which is a big deal. Meanwhile, the U.S. administration to the south of us is sharpening its pencils and doing its very best and whatever it takes to develop its industry. We cannot blame it for that. It is defending its country, just as we defend ours. The government seems to be making a lacklustre effort to negotiate a softwood lumber agreement. It was the former Conservative government that actually negotiated and extended the last softwood lumber agreement. Conservatives think it was a successful agreement, with two streams to it. When I go to the U.S. and talk to the Secretary of the Interior, I ask why we cannot sign a similar agreement to the one that worked for everyone before and I argue that the U.S. needs our lumber, etc.

Business of Supply

I will go back to why we are debating this today in the House. We have a government that does not seem to be interested in the softwood file. It is busy with NAFTA, which is a big part of what it is dealing with right now, but on softwood lumber, I would say as a person from the province of British Columbia, that it is equally as large in terms of exports. It is a massive part of our industry base, providing jobs and employing British Columbians and Canadians in the province and my riding. That is why Conservatives are deeply concerned.

When the Liberal government was elected in 2015, it seemed that some positive things were going to come from the relationship between the Liberal government and the then Obama administration. On softwood lumber, the Prime Minister and the president promised to have an agreement within 100 days. When those two key figures make a promise like that, there should be no reason why they could not come together. Ideologically, there were not many differences between the two administrations. There was a lot of hoopla, fanfare, and expense for the president to come to Ottawa. We always welcome heads of states from other countries in this place, in this room where we sit today. With all of the fanfare, we hoped that a book would be opened and the softwood lumber agreement would be signed.

Days went by, the president spoke in this place, and then left, with no agreement being reached. Members with softwood in their ridings knew it was a huge missed opportunity. It sent signals to forestry workers in B.C., Quebec, and across Canada that the government did not view softwood as that important an issue. Selfies, pictures with the president, and dinners with fancy suits and dresses were important, but no signal was sent by the Prime Minister and the president in reaching a softwood lumber agreement, which could have been done easily. That makes us question if the government understands how significant this industry is to the entire country. It sent a signal that really did not exist.

● (1300)

I understand that it is difficult to conclude a softwood lumber agreement, but when we hear a promise by a prime minister and a president that they can reach one within 100 days, we would expect them to have it all sorted out. They had three months to get it done. They already had a pre-existing agreement that had worked for both countries. It would have been very simple to bring that back to the table and sign off on it so we could continue.

Right now, we are caught in a dispute that is just going to get worse. With our American neighbours elbowing us out for their own industry to grow, it is likely not going to get better.

We cannot cry over spilled milk, but there was a whole bunch of spilled milk that day when the agreement was not signed and fulfilled. It left a promise unfulfilled by both individuals.

Concerning a lot of our communities, we wonder about our government's resource development philosophy. We see projects in B.C., even pipelines, being over-regulated to the point that companies are pulling out of the province of B.C. The Energy east project has been halted, with the company saying there are too many regulations and too many risk factors to proceed with that particular investment.

We look back at other industries like agriculture and forestry that have chugged along year after year over the centuries in Canada, and we look to rely on those even more for stability in our economy. It is troubling that the government appears not to understand how significant that is. It has really failed our forestry industry and workers.

As politicians we are often guilty of talking about the economy, numbers, GDP, exports, and import tariffs, and all of that kind of terminology, but it really comes down to food on tables, roofs over heads, and sustaining families where they want to live.

I was born and raised in the Peace region. We lived out here in Ottawa when my kids were small. We are happy to be back in Fort St. John and the north Peace area of the province of British Columbia. People ask why we would want to go back when we lived in such a nice city, in Ottawa. It is because it is home. A lot of the forestry workers simply want a nice place to live, which we have in beautiful northern British Columbia.

Robson Valley is another place where there is a lot of forestry, including in Valemount, McBride, Prince George, and all the way up the Rocky Mountains. They all really rely on the forest industry. It is not a number they rely on in the forest industry; it is a person, a family, and other industries. There are subsets of those industries, employing heavy-duty mechanics and others. I have often said that a person at Tim Hortons selling coffee to people in the morning is likely selling it to someone who works at a mill and makes lumber. Likewise, someone who works on trucks, like my son, a heavy-duty mechanic, likely works for a company in forestry. He is a first-year apprentice. He works on trucks and heavy equipment that go right out into the forest. That is how he makes his living. It has afforded him a nice car and lifestyle.

I want to get back to the government needing to care about that person on the ground. We are coming up to Christmas. We will be celebrating a great season with our families and we want to make sure that those jobs and lifestyles are sustained.

I hope that the government considers how important the softwood lumber agreement is to British Columbia, Quebec, and Canada. I hope it will do a better job than it did in the past. We saw a lost opportunity, and I hope the relevant ministers and the Prime Minister grasp how important the agreement is and how much it means to Canadians. I hope they will think about the people who are attached to these forestry jobs and how they would be affected by a signed softwood lumber agreement.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for sharing his comments on the forestry system.

I have been a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade for two years now, and we all know that the softwood lumber file is one of the most important ones we have worked on. I hope that my colleague has no doubts whatsoever about everything our government has done for workers. We have made investments. On June 1, 2017, we announced an \$867-million softwood lumber action plan.

Business of Supply

Export Development Canada has viable export solutions for forestry companies. Through the expanding market opportunities program, we are investing \$45 million in market development.

Earlier, our Minister of International Trade said that we are working on finding a solution with the United States. Members should be aware that we need to develop and diversify our offerings, and that is what our Minister of International Trade is doing. He is working very hard with the United States.

If it were easy, it would already have been done. I would also like to remind the member of the \$63-million Forest Innovation Program, which fosters innovation and expands market opportunities for the sector.

Our government is working hard to come up with a solution. I look forward to hearing comments on what I have just said about all of the statements and investments we have made in the two years we have been in office.

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, that simply highlights the two philosophies of two different governments, with one that would subsidize everything.

During all of my discussions with forestry workers and mill owners, I have never been asked for a subsidy. They have only asked to get this agreement signed and done so they can do what they do best and open the gates of trade.

I have always viewed the role of government as keeping the doors of trade open, not to over-regulate, but to let the groups that want to trade do exactly that. We should be staying out of the way, not getting involved.

The Liberal government subsidizes. It subsidized Bombardier not long ago and I do not know how well that has worked for the government. The company has failed miserably to the tune of \$500 million.

The forest industry is not asking for subsidies. It is asking for a good agreement, and I hope the government understands that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my friend from northern British Columbia, I share the benefits and value of a vibrant and long-standing forestry industry, but there has been a steady and aggressive decline in both the number of mills and the number of people working in those mills. Just within British Columbia alone, never mind across Canada, tens of thousands of families can no longer rely on the forestry sector.

Various factors have come into play in that regard, whether it is more machines out in the bush, less people having to work, or the trade disputes with the U.S. Every time one of these disputes happens, we lose mills. They concentrate further in the United States as the barriers go up. Let us be clear: these disputes are a tactic. The softwood lumber disputes are a tactic by the U.S. lumber industry to attack Canadian producers trying to enter the U.S. market, sometimes using Canadian money to do it.

Since the last time we went through this Groundhog Day of American protectionism, many of the major Canadian producers

have made significant investments south of the border. The greatest free trading nation in the world seems to like its protectionist attitude, at least the present administration does, but I am not seeing or feeling the same urgent push by Canadian producers as the last time there was a dispute.

My concern is that the way the industry works has changed significantly. Is that one of the factors that is causing the government not to feel an urgent need to reach a deal that the member says the workers in my region want, which is just fair and free access to the U.S. market?

• (1310)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. The industry views risk as a calculation. If a company's survival is at risk, that company will go somewhere else where it will survive and flourish. We have seen a lot of our Canadian forestry companies go south. Some of our older companies that used to be located predominately in Canada now have more than 50% of their mills in the U.S.

When we talk about over-regulation, these groups are going to make a decision just like we saw with Pacific NorthWest LNG, and so on. They look at the risk and decide to move out of Canada.

I would like to highlight something the member said: once we lose these companies it is going to be difficult to get them back.

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for North Vancouver.

As members know, this is an issue that affects ridings all across the country, and my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac is no different. This is a file that has been critically important to our government, and continues to be today. It is one that we have made a top priority since day one of this dispute.

Our forestry sector supports 230,000 good-paying, middle-class jobs for Canadian workers and communities all across the country, such as communities like Juniper in my hometown. Softwood lumber production contributed \$21 billion to Canada's GDP. In particular, softwood lumber is an economic anchor in more than 170 rural communities.

Given Canada's geographic proximity and close commercial links with the United States, it is no surprise that the U.S. is our number one export market for softwood lumber. Today, the U.S. market accounts for over 78% of Canadian softwood lumber exports. We all know that there are significant benefits for the U.S. in having access to Canadian lumber. For many decades, the U.S. has relied on our exports to fill the gap between domestic production capacity and demand for softwood lumber.

Business of Supply

Canadian softwood lumber has historically been used to meet about one-third of the U.S. demand overall, but despite this mutually beneficial relationship, softwood lumber has been a contentious subject in a long-standing trade dispute between Canada and the United States. Since the early 1980s, Canada has experienced very few months when either litigation or a managed trade agreement have not applied to its softwood lumber exports to that country. Softwood lumber is a deeply complex issue, and although Canada has been engaged in intense negotiations with the United States in an effort to secure a new softwood lumber agreement, we always knew that finding mutually acceptable terms would be highly challenging.

I would like to reiterate that this is a priority for our government and we are working closely with the provinces, territories, and industry on this issue. My colleague the Minister of Natural Resources has held several meetings with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders to find solutions to support our workers and our communities. We have also been working hard with our stakeholders towards the likelihood of litigation at WTO and under NAFTA following U.S. final determinations.

We strongly disagree with the decision of the U.S. Department of Commerce to impose unfair and punitive duties on Canadian softwood lumber imports. These penalties are unjustified and are damaging to workers, communities, and consumers in both Canada and the United States. The accusations made by the U.S. lumber industry are baseless and unfounded. From the very beginning, this has been a frivolous case designed to shake up the industry, and has ultimately resulted in higher prices to consumers on both sides of the border.

There have been four previous U.S. countervailing duty investigations over the past 30 years, and U.S. duties have never survived the legal challenge. The U.S. has always lost before the WTO and NAFTA panels, because Canada does not subsidize softwood lumber. We will vigorously defend Canada's softwood lumber industry, including throughout litigation. We expect to prevail as we have in the past.

We fully understand that the duties that were unfairly imposed on Canadian lumber producers created uncertainty for the workers and their families within the industry. This is why in June of this year our government announced \$867 million for the softwood lumber action plan to support the workers and the communities affected by these duties.

Specifically, we have two measures in the action plan that will help workers. First, our government is spending \$9.5 million over four years for a work-sharing program that gives employees and employers the flexibility that they require when there is a temporary reduction of business activity. This program supplements employment insurance benefits and eligible workers who are working temporarily reduced hours. It extends the maximum period for work-sharing agreements from 38 to 76 weeks in order to reduce layoffs. This measure will help companies to retain skilled workers even during difficult economic times. Second, we are providing \$80 million over two years through labour market development agreements. This funding will help workers to upgrade their skills and transition into new opportunities. We recognize that career transition can be a difficult and stressful time. To help make it easier, workers will receive salary top-ups through a targeted earning

supplement while they are making the move to another field of employment.

I also want to acknowledge that forestry is very important to our indigenous communities across the country. This is why we will provide \$10 million over three years to support forestry initiatives in our indigenous communities. These initiatives can be in clean technology, environmental stewardship, or forestry resource management.

As the Minister of Natural Resources had said when the package was announced, "...This action plan delivers on our pledge to take swift and reasonable action to defend our softwood lumber industry and charts a stronger future for the workers, families and communities that depend on it."

● (1315)

Finally, our government is actively working to help the forestry industry access new international markets. The Minister of International Trade is leading forestry-related trade missions around this issue. For example, Asia is a market with an increasing potential for Canadian lumber products and the minister has promoted the use of Canadian forestry products during recent visits to China, Vietnam, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan.

Canada continues to believe that a negotiated settlement that brings stability and predictability to the softwood lumber industry is the best option for both countries, but we will not accept a deal at any cost. It is not right for our industry, it is not right for our communities, and it is not right for our workers. A durable negotiated agreement would be the best outcome for Canadians and for Americans. While there is no deal at this time, we are continuing to work toward this goal. We are looking for a good deal, not just any deal.

It is important that we realize that this should not be a partisan issue. This is an industry that affects communities, families, and workers all across this country. It is important to note that we as a government have said from day one that we support these families, we support the workers, and we support the industry stakeholders during this difficult period.

In my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac, softwood lumber plays an integral role. It is huge in my riding and it is huge in the province of New Brunswick. The majority of New Brunswick softwood lumber exports go directly to the United States. It takes three and a half hours to drive the length of my riding, and the entire length of that is the U.S. border. We work strategically hand in hand with U.S. counterparts that are just across the border trading back and forth in an industry that often has shared resources for industry stakeholders on both sides of the border.

Business of Supply

When I talk to American consumers, which I have done on several occasions over the last six months, they want to see softwood lumber prices stay relatively where they are. That is because they do not want to see the cost of their homes go up. That is where the U.S. is offside. It is offside for a plethora of reasons, but one of the main reasons is because it is failing to recognize the detrimental impact this is having on U.S. consumers.

As a politician in the Canadian government, I find it offensive both to myself and to our government that people are trying to play partisan politics on an issue that we should all be united on. The last softwood lumber agreement stretched over half a decade and it too was filled with partisan comments back and forth. What did that ever get us? We spend a lot of time in the House nitpicking back and forth for partisan political reasons when we should be focused on the task at hand which is to support Canadian workers, to support the sector, and to support industry stakeholders through this difficult time and to help them try to adapt and find new markets, focus on civil culture, focus on ways that they can grow their business and respect those families and try to do this collectively.

● (1320)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to join the debate on the supply day motion today, I want to express my regret that the Conservative Party has put forward a motion that includes extraneous, egregious, and malicious attacks on environmental groups. I think there is not a member in this place who would not be proud to stand and support the Canadian forest industry, support that forest practices are for the most part sustainable, and support forest workers.

This is part and parcel, I am afraid, of recent attempts by forest industry, particularly Resolute Forest Products, to brand the two organizations interestingly enough that are mentioned in the Conservative motion today, Greenpeace and Stand.earth, formerly known as ForestEthics. Resolute Forest Products with its millions of dollars and access to lawyers has taken these two environmental groups to court charging them with criminal racketeering, if we can believe. The U.S. court on October 16 threw out these efforts to demonize environmental groups.

I really regret enormously that the Conservative Party's motion will divide the House when we could have united around the cause of our forest industry and the importance of achieving an equitable agreement with the U.S. on trade.

I will ask my hon. colleague across the floor who just gave a speech that mostly focused on the question of the Canadian forest industry and the ongoing softwood lumber dispute whether he would agree that the motion the Conservatives put forward would be passed unanimously if they had simply taken out the absolutely malicious attack on Greenpeace and ForestEthics?

Mr. T.J. Harvey: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's comments are very reflective of the type of tone and candour with which I think we should be addressing issues within this House that should not be of a partisan nature.

I know from my opportunity of sitting on the natural resources committee for the last two years that I have witnessed members from the opposite side of the aisle, from all parties, come together to talk about issues, like softwood lumber and resource development, in a

very thoughtful and concerted manner which takes into account the needs of Canadians, and the viewpoints and opinions of indigenous peoples, and ultimately works collaboratively with stakeholders.

It is very representative of the reasons that I wanted to be a member of Parliament. I really like the idea of working, on both sides of the aisle, with members from all parties, trying to facilitate and construct solutions that are to the betterment of the industry and ultimately to the betterment of Canadians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of trigger words that I am starting to get nervous about when I hear them from my Liberal colleagues.

One is “unacceptable”. I just had a phone call from some folks who are struggling with the Phoenix pay system, and they have heard from representatives and in calls to the government that the travesty of the Phoenix pay system is unacceptable. It has been unacceptable for a couple of years, and it continues to be unacceptable. As a friend of mine, Coral from Prince Rupert, B.C., asked, “What does unacceptable mean?”

The second term is that this is a “high priority” for the government. The softwood lumber agreement and getting it settled is a high priority. I share the member's concerns, because I represent a place that is even more impacted, I would argue, but I do not know all the details, than Mactaquac. My riding is hugely and significantly impacted by not having a deal on the table, and yet we hear that it is a high priority for the government and is of greatest urgency.

We see the Prime Minister go to Washington and somehow develop a friendship with the president, which is remarkable in some ways when we think about it, but hopefully, it is to get something done. When does he expect this deal to actually get done? That is what the families I represent want to know. This is my specific question, what impact will it have on a per day basis, not having a deal? Does the government have an estimate of what it costs the Canadian forestry industry every day that the deal is not acquired?

● (1325)

Mr. T.J. Harvey: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to touch on the point of Phoenix. I, too, agree that this is egregious, that we are still at this point where we are arguing and fighting to try to get to a better place with the Phoenix pay system. Absolutely, his constituents should be concerned. My constituents are deeply concerned about this.

We are working constructively through the department and with departmental officials, with the people on the ground to try to focus a concerted effort to fix this as soon as possible.

On the issue of the softwood lumber, I would probably agree with my hon. colleague that this may be a larger issue in his riding. I do not know the specific demographics within his riding. Arguably the forest industry in B.C. is of immense magnitude to that province. My thoughts are with the workers in his riding. I, too, agree that it is unacceptable that we are at this point.

Business of Supply

I would have liked to have gotten to the rest of this, but maybe at a later date.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to participate in this very important debate, for it gives me an opportunity to speak about our forests and Canada's forest industry and how they are serving to build a stronger economy for all Canadians while helping to protect and preserve a healthy environment for our children and for future generations.

The topic of today's debate is rather timely. It was just last week—on October 12, to be precise—that I had the opportunity to attend and actively participate in the Forest Stewardship Council's general assembly in the beautiful province of British Columbia. For those not familiar with the Forest Stewardship Council, it is a global not-for-profit organization, whose stated goal is promoting environmentally sound, socially beneficial, and economically prosperous management of the world's forests. It is one of three independent third-party standards that Canada recognizes as tools to demonstrate Canada's sustainable forest-management practices, and it is complementary to Canada's rigorous forest-management legislation and regulations. In fact, Canada has more forest land independently certified than anywhere else in the world: 168 million hectares as of the end of 2016.

Approximately, 800 delegates from more than 80 countries attended this session in Vancouver. A number of important issues were discussed, including climate change and boreal forests. I had the pleasure of speaking to the delegates about our government's approach to combatting climate change, as well as our efforts to protect and recover boreal caribou populations.

Colleagues on both sides of this House have spoken about the importance of Canada's forest sector. It employs hundreds of thousands of workers throughout Canada generating billions of dollars for the Canadian economy, and it is the lifeblood for many rural communities right across the country.

Our government believes that a strong economy and a clean environment go hand in hand. That is why all stakeholders need to work together to find a path that will lead to further economic growth that is consistent with sustainable forests and the protection of biodiversity. To accomplish this, we are working with the forest products industry, provinces and territories, local communities, indigenous communities, environmental non-governmental organizations, and others to ensure that Canada continues to be a world leader in the conservation of biodiversity while promoting sustainable economic growth.

One thing we should not overlook during this debate is the importance of Canada's forests in the fight against climate change and the protection of human health. Canada's forest industry leaders are well aware of the role they play in helping to address climate change. They have been leaders in the development of the clean technology that is helping to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.

Further, Canada's forests represent one of the largest carbon stores in the world, which is why our government is committed to enhancing carbon storage in forests through land use and conserva-

tion measures, including significant reforestation, and through encouraging greater use of wood in construction projects.

Over the past four decades, global forests have absorbed about one-quarter of the carbon emitted by human activity such as the burning of fossil fuels and the changing of land uses. It is clear that forests in Canada and elsewhere have a huge role to play in helping the world combat climate change.

Our forests also make a major contribution toward improving air quality. Back in June of this year, there was a study published in *Nature Communications* by scientists at Environment and Climate Change Canada, which demonstrated, among other things, how forests would reduce ground-level ozone levels, resulting in better air quality and in turn healthier Canadians.

Our forests also play a key role in the protection and recovery of species at risk. Our government recognizes the importance of conserving Canada's biodiversity and maintaining and improving our species at risk protection and recovery. That is why we are working with members of the forest sector, provinces, territories, and indigenous leaders to ensure that our forests are managed sustainably, including the protection and conservation of special areas.

There is no question that our forest industry is an economic driver in Canada, particularly in my province of British Columbia, but it is also an important contributor toward realizing positive conservation outcomes in Canada, particularly for species such as the boreal caribou. The boreal caribou is a priority for this government, and we are determined to protect this iconic symbol of our rich Canadian cultural identity. As members know, the Species at Risk Act creates legal obligations for the Government of Canada to act to protect this threatened species. Therefore, in 2012 a recovery strategy for boreal caribou, including an identification of the species' critical habitat, was developed. The strategy recognized the lead role of provinces and territories in managing the boreal caribou and its habitat, thus providing those jurisdictions with up to five years to establish range plans for how habitat would be restored to support self-sustaining herds.

Most provinces and territories are still working to complete recovery plans for boreal caribou. To be effective, their plans will need to focus on the maintenance and restoration of critical caribou habitat. This implies a focus on things like selective harvesting and intensive reforestation as elements of broad solutions, particularly in areas where habitat disturbance levels are already high.

Business of Supply

•(1330)

In July, the Government of Canada published a proposed action plan that set out the federal government's contribution to support caribou recovery and protection in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. Under this action plan, we have invited the forest sector, as well as indigenous peoples and other stakeholders, to participate in a new multi-stakeholder forum called the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium to share information, indigenous knowledge, and lessons learned on boreal caribou conservation science. We will also be pursuing conservation agreements with provinces and territories to accelerate work and collaboration on boreal caribou and reporting to Canadians, which includes the release of a five-year progress report at the end of this month. We are now reviewing some of the documents we have received from provinces and territories to determine whether caribou and their critical habitat are or will be adequately protected. We intend to report on the adequacy of these plans in April 2018.

Once adequate range plans are in place, Environment Canada will explore with provinces and territories, and other parties as appropriate, the establishment of conservation agreements to clearly describe the commitments each party is making to protect and recover boreal caribou. The government will enter into such agreements if they provide specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bound measures that are founded on a scientific basis that enables confidence that such agreements will over time provide for the protection and recovery of the species and its critical habitat. Robust conservation agreements with concrete protection and recovery measures could achieve important progress toward protecting boreal caribou.

On September 15 of this year, the Minister of Natural Resources hosted the annual meeting of the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. At that meeting, ministers recognized the important role that the forest sector can play in helping to recover and protect caribou. Federal, provincial, and territorial ministers discussed the need to work with indigenous peoples, with stakeholders, and with industry to protect and recover boreal caribou populations. They unanimously agreed on the importance of taking a collaborative, science-based approach and of sharing best practices to help support conservation agreements, while considering the socio-economic benefits of the forest sector for communities.

Developing effective range plans and conservation agreements that lead to the protection of critical habitats certainly does not preclude continued economic activity in the boreal forest. I believe that, by working in partnership with all stakeholders, we will ensure continued economic growth for Canada's forest industry, reap the benefits of carbon capture through sustainable management of our forests, and protect many species at risk such as the boreal caribou. I know that the forest sector is committed to working toward innovative ways to support a robust and sustainable Canadian economy while also contributing to caribou conservation. I know that the industry recognizes the need for sustainable development, particularly in the boreal forest. I look forward to continuing to work with our forest sector and all stakeholders in efforts aimed at protecting our boreal forests and biodiversity and to ensure a healthy, sustainable forest industry for decades to come.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate a bit of what my colleague from across the way said. Our Canadian forest industry is the most environmentally friendly forest industry in the world.

We have a fantastic industry, but the problem is that it needs a marketplace. Our former Conservative government was able to ink a deal within three months.

There has never been a closer relationship between prime ministers and presidents than there was between our current Prime Minister and the former president Obama. In fact, they had this little bromance thing going. The Liberals in this House committed to inking a deal within 100 days. They did not get it done. I want to know what it is about the Liberal government that it cannot seem to get a deal done.

•(1335)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the hon. member is aware, this government has made reaching an agreement on softwood lumber an extremely high priority. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has worked extensively to achieve that agreement. She has involved in that conversation all of the relevant parties in Canada that represent the forest products sector in every region of the country. From meetings that I have had with the folks in British Columbia, I would say that they are extremely happy with the work the minister has done and extremely proud of the work Canada has done. We will work to get to an agreement, but it will be an agreement that is a good one for Canada; it will not be just any agreement.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague opposite talk about the folks in British Columbia being happy with the work that has been done.

In reality, colleagues of mine who represent communities that rely on forestry tell me their constituents are constantly saying the government does not seem to be listening to them.

Honestly, I have to say that this Conservative opposition day is pretty pathetic, because they are the ones who let the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement expire without a murmur. The Liberals are just as bad, having taken no action for two years.

The member for Jonquière said that the specialty paper manufactured in Jonquière is overtaxed due to countervailing duties. You have unquestionably been dragging your heels on this issue, and frankly, the other side has not done much better.

Did you hear the member for Jonquière when she asked this kind of question, or did you forget, just like you forgot your finance minister's villa?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sure the hon. member does not expect the Speaker of the House to answer the question. I would like to remind the members to address their comments to the Speaker of the House and not directly to another member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, I think everybody in this House is united in the fact that we are looking for a deal on softwood lumber that is a good deal for Canadians, the forest products sector, and the local communities that support and provide the personnel who work in the forest products sector.

We have been working very hard, and the minister has dedicated enormous amounts of effort to this. I can say that the folks who actually represent the companies in the forest products sector have been actively engaged in this dialogue. They have expressed to me their admiration for the work the minister has done.

We are very focused on ensuring that we get to an agreement. However, it needs to be an agreement that is in the best interests of Canada and the best interests of Canadians.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that forestry and softwood lumber are an important industry for our country. In fact, the industry creates more than 200,000 jobs directly. That does not speak to the number of indirect jobs it creates.

I would ask the member to quickly outline the importance of this industry in terms of providing middle-class jobs, and what the government is doing to protect those jobs.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member herself has pointed out, there is significant employment that generates well-paying, middle-class jobs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

There is also a significant amount of work that is being done through the forest products sector that relates to some of the jobs in the future, such as clean technology and the utilization of biomass as a fuel that will enable us to move toward a lower carbon future. This is an incredibly important sector for Canadians, and it is one on which we need to continue to build and modernize as we go forward.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Peace River—Westlock.

I am pleased to speak in support of this motion and in support of the Canadian forestry industry. Across Canada, forestry plays a key role in the growth and economic prosperity of provincial economies, and of small communities in particular. In fact, over 650 communities throughout Canada rely on forestry, and roughly 160 of those communities are solely reliant on forestry. In 2016, Canada exported \$34.6 billion in forestry products, a 5.2% increase from 2015. It represents a key component of Canada's export portfolio.

In my home province of Alberta, there are more than 27 million hectares of forest area. Forestry employs more than 20,000 people and pays out close to \$1 billion a year in salaries and wages. The forestry sector contributes \$5.5 billion to the Alberta economy, and the workforce in the prairie provinces in forestry could double by 2020. It is clear that forestry is vital to the Canadian economy, and the federal government must do its part to support forestry workers and processors.

The official opposition's motion today calls on the government to support the forestry sector and its workers by securing a softwood

lumber trade agreement. The motion also asks the government to denounce efforts by foreign-funded non-governmental organizations that actually seek to disrupt Canada's lawful and sustainable forestry practices, and other natural resources development, such as crucial energy projects, that benefit communities and raise the standard of living of all Canadians.

For example, ForestEthics has called pipelines that would safely transport oil to export markets “dirty energy projects”. Greenpeace recently celebrated the cancellation of the energy east pipeline by calling it a “victory”. These groups do not represent the vast majority of Canadians, who support responsible natural resources development. In fact, they actively campaign against the good-paying jobs and benefits the natural resources sector creates in Canada on which the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Canadians depend.

The most recent softwood lumber agreement expired over two years ago. There is no agreement to protect Canadian forestry workers. The negative impacts of this Liberal failure are huge. The last softwood lumber dispute cost the Canadian forestry sector \$5.3 million. The previous Conservative government negotiated a new agreement within three months of coming into office in 2006. Conservatives took action again in 2012 and negotiated a two-year extension, which protected the Canadian forestry sector and workers until October 2016. It provided the forestry sector with certainty and stability, unlike this Liberal inaction, which has put the sector and workers' livelihoods at risk.

On March 12, the then minister of international trade heralded a real breakthrough on softwood lumber negotiations and said that there would be the structure of a deal within 100 days. The deadline came and went. “No softwood lumber deal, as 'challenging but productive' talks drag on”, was the headline after that deadline passed.

The tariffs currently being imposed on Canadian producers are as high as 24%, which will undoubtedly lead to job losses for Canadians and will make it increasingly difficult for Canadian forestry producers to thrive. Forestry is an important part of Alberta's economy. It provides over 20,000 Alberta jobs, and the forest products industry is Alberta's third largest manufacturing industry and second largest manufacturing export industry. However, because of Liberal inaction, these jobs and the economic contributions from the forestry sector are at risk.

With the countervailing and anti-dumping duties combined, Alberta's forestry producers are faced with trade barriers as high as 30%, with no clear remedy in sight. This, in addition to the mountain pine beetle infestation, is causing real damage. For example, in Alberta alone, nearly \$500 million has been spent to fight the mountain pine beetle, but it continues to spread. In fact, six million hectares of land are currently at risk.

Albertans know the impact of hard times in the forestry sector. In Lakeland, Millar Western had to shut down its sawmill in Boyle. In a town of 950 people, 10% of the population lost their jobs, which eliminated roughly a quarter-million dollars in property taxes and other revenues for the village. It is devastating.

Business of Supply

However, there are many success stories. Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. is a pulp and paper company, also in Lakeland. Alberta-Pacific is one of the top 100 employers in Canada and one of the top 100 employers of young Canadians. It is recognized as being one of the top environmental companies in the world. In addition to pulp products like paper and tissue, it produces renewable energy from forest biomass to power its mill site. This is a great Alberta story.

● (1340)

As a key contributor to Alberta's economy, it is crucial that the Liberals secure a new softwood lumber agreement.

Paul Whittaker, president and CEO of the Alberta Forest Products Association, said, "If you look at the significant challenges facing Alberta's forest sector, if Item 1 is the mountain pine beetle, Item 2 is the future of the softwood lumber agreement." He went on to say, "it provides a stable and predictable platform for trade with the most significant, to Alberta, external market that we have." In 2014, 24% of Alberta lumber processed by member companies of the Alberta Forest Products Association went to the United States, but with still no deal, it is clear that the Liberals need to change their approach to negotiating.

Naomi Christensen, a softwood lumber expert with the Canada West Foundation, says that Canada needs to show the U.S. government how increased tariffs on Canadian lumber will negatively impact American consumers. Increasing tariffs on Canadian lumber products will actually cause higher housing prices for Americans, lost jobs, and lost wages. She also said:

There is only one real reason behind the U.S. Lumber Coalition's move to petition the Commerce Department to place duties on Canadian softwood lumber—to raise the price of lumber. Yet, while the U.S. domestic industry benefits from higher profits, U.S. consumers lose out. This is clear by looking at the effects of the duties prescribed by the recently expired Softwood Lumber Agreement. Ranging from 0 per cent to 15 per cent, depending on the price of lumber, U.S. producers earned more than \$4-billion because of the duties, according to the Montreal Economic Institute; meanwhile, U.S. consumers paid an extra \$6-billion.

Prior to the U.S. government imposing duties on Canadian lumber, it was estimated by the U.S. National Association of Home Builders that imposing a 25% tariff on Canadian softwood lumber imports would result in nearly 8,000 American jobs lost and \$450 million in lost wages. Ms. Christensen points out that Canada can motivate the U.S. to remove these tariffs. She said:

The housing market plays a major role in U.S. economic health. After the Great Recession of 2008, the U.S. economy only began to recover when the housing market did, and Canadian lumber aided this recovery.... Imposing duties high enough to significantly restrict the export of Canadian lumber to the United States will raise prices, decrease consumption and slow growth. A cooling housing market will make it difficult to boost growth in the [American] economy as a whole.

In other words, the Liberals need to make it abundantly clear to the United States how imposing high tariffs on Canadian lumber imports could, in fact, have significant negative impacts on Americans. Unfortunately, it appears that the Liberals have not convinced the U.S. and are not concerned with securing a new agreement to protect Canadian forestry workers, despite all the Liberal rhetoric. This continued uncertainty is bad for workers, bad for Canada's world-class forestry industry, and bad for the Canadian economy.

● (1345)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask my great colleague, and in fact neighbour, in terms of ridings, a question about this important motion on softwood lumber.

What we see in general, when it comes to a foreign policy relationship with the United States, is a government that prioritizes image over actually getting results. It was very proud of a state dinner with President Obama, yet under President Obama, and now under President Trump, it had two opportunities to pursue an agreement on softwood lumber, and we do not see any results.

Contrast that to the approach of Prime Minister Harper, who said right out of the gate that he wanted to have a good relationship but that there were certain priorities for Canada and he wanted to get these things done. Right out of the gate, when Prime Minister Harper was elected, we got a softwood lumber deal done, a deal that had eluded the previous Liberal government.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on why it is important that our foreign policy, trade policy, and engagement with other countries on economic issues prioritize Canadian interests and values, not the kind of purely symbolic, image-based photo ops that do not have any practical relevance to Canadians.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my prolific and effective colleague for the question. Not surprisingly, he is bang on.

I think all of us recall when the Prime Minister went to Washington on his first trip and met with the then president, who our Prime Minister lauded having dudeplomacy and a bromance with, but he failed to even bring the natural resources minister on that trip. As my colleague rightfully points out, there have been many opportunities and visits to the United States. They have included having pictures with business owners to bolster the Prime Minister's own credentials as a feminist instead of focusing on implementing a trade deal to protect Canadian forestry workers and advocating for Canada's world-leading, responsible natural resources development overall.

It is completely mind-boggling that two years in, the Canadian government has not yet been able to secure a softwood lumber agreement, while on a number of fronts in natural resources development, Liberals themselves have caused continued uncertainty and instability with regulatory changes. It seems that there is a bit of a pattern with the Liberal government, despite all its big talk.

Business of Supply

•(1350)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in power and were negotiating a new softwood lumber agreement, 42,000 jobs were lost in Quebec alone, including 100 jobs in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. During their reign, the Conservatives spent a lot more time talking about the oil and gas industry than about how important the forestry industry is. I do not see how they are any different than the Liberals on this. In addition, in the negotiations, they handed the Americans \$1 billion. A lot of money and a lot of jobs were lost in Quebec and Canada. In fact, 134,000 jobs were lost in Canada under the Conservatives' watch, under Mr. Harper.

Of course, everyone agrees that today's Conservative motion is important, but their action, when they were in power, killed thousands of jobs in the forestry sector, including many in Quebec.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, to start off, I would like to give my friend from the NDP some political advice. The Liberal government desperately wants to keep the soft NDP voters who voted for the Liberals last time around on side. For the NDP to be successful in the next election, it really needs to focus on the government, which needs to be accountable to Canadians right now, and try to take some of their votes back. That is just one aspect of some planning New Democrats might want to undertake in the next two years.

To her point, I am kind of confused, because the facts do not demonstrate that at all. The Conservative government secured a softwood lumber agreement within three months of coming to power in 2006 and renegotiated an extension later on to protect Canadian forestry workers and the Canadian forestry industry.

Conservatives proudly support responsible natural resource development of all kinds, in every province, in every community, that benefits Canadians and the Canadian economy and that allow us to play an unequivocal leadership role in the world, and we always will.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before resuming debate, I want to remind hon. members that there are speeches being given and debate going on. It is nice to hear everyone talking among themselves, but it is rather difficult to hear what is being said.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock has six minutes and will have four minutes left when debate resumes.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of the softwood lumber industry.

All of us, in some aspect of our lives, touch up against the softwood lumber industry. I had an opportunity recently to tour DMI in Peace River. It gave me a three-page document, listing all the companies where its product ended up in a final product. Members will be pleased to know products like Kleenex start out in northern Alberta in the form of a tree. Products like Pampers, or like the very paper in front of us started out as a tree up in northern Alberta.

This is very important to each and every one of us. The very fact is that western civilization, the lives that we all lead, the quality of life, the products we use, all are bound up in the softwood lumber industry.

I recently had a report on my desk that said that 127,000 jobs in the northern half of Alberta were affected by the softwood lumber industry, 127,000 jobs. That is just in northern Alberta. That says nothing of the jobs across Canada. I know that 85% of the softwood lumber sold in North America is produced in Alberta or B.C. Therefore, it is a very important part of the Canadian economy.

When I say 127,000 jobs are affected, we often take that as one large number. However, I would like to bring this down to the individual level as well.

I am going to talk a little about Mark, who is a mechanic in Whitecourt. He is self-employed. He has a small tax shelter out of which he works. It is a personal corporation. He works there every day. He works for a number of different logging companies, fixing up their logging equipment. We are talking about those people when we defend these kinds of jobs. Mark is raising his family in Whitecourt. His family moved to the Whitecourt area because of the economic opportunities.

I also want to talk a little about a buddy named Guido. Guido drives a logging truck during the winter and he farms during the summer. I talked about this same fellow the other day. Guido's ability to farm comes from the very fact that he is able to drive a logging truck during the winter. He is able to make money during the winter in order to plant his crops in the spring. As I said the other day, he also had significant crop failure last year. He had to save up the money again this year in order to put his crops in. It is not looking great for his crops this year, again. Hats off to Guido for the efforts.

However, it does speak to the fact that we need the softwood lumber industry in Canada and we need to support it.

When I talk about the softwood lumber industry, it is people like Guido and Mark who I think about. I am not thinking about the next prize I am going to get from an international organization. It is not about looking for a seat at the UN Security Council. It is not about being able to say that Canada is back, wherever this may be. It is about looking after Canadians and ensuring that each and every one of us has the opportunity and the ability to make a living in order to support our family. It is with that in mind that I come to the defence and recognition of what our softwood lumber industry does for each and every one of our communities.

I recently hosted a round table in my riding on softwood lumber. The member for Prince Albert came up to visit with us. The industry folks we met with are very much concerned about where we were headed with the softwood lumber agreement. They know that without the agreement, we end up in an area where our products are put at a significant disadvantage. We need to ensure we can avoid the high tariffs that have been in place and ensure our product, which is some of the best product in the entire world, can compete on the world stage, particularly in the North American market.

Statements by Members

●(1355)

One of the things that was repeatedly brought up was the idea of quotas that could come into force without the new agreement. That was significant for them. Each and every time the quotas were mentioned, they were concerned about how Alberta, in particular, would be affected. The last time there was an agreement production was divided up across the country. Alberta seemed to always exceed its quota. Alberta was forever penalized under the tariff regime. Whatever comes out in the next agreement, which we hope will happen any day now, they want to ensure Alberta gets its fair share of the quota if that is the direction in which the Liberal government is going.

For the sake of the 127,000 jobs in northern Alberta, it is crucial we get a softwood lumber deal. We in the Conservative Party have been pushing hard for that. I want to ensure the government continues to work hard to get a softwood lumber deal sooner rather than later.

The Speaker: The hon. member will have four minutes remaining for his speech following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

JOHN DUNSWORTH

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise as the member of Parliament for Sunnyside to honour our beloved Canadian actor and Trailer Park boy, John Dunsworth, who passed away this week.

He cared about those around him and showed it by mentoring others and working hard to rid Nova Scotia of VLTs. He loved theatre and performed in many productions on Halifax's Neptune Theatre stage.

John believed in the Nova Scotia film industry and those working in it. From building stages, running his casting company, to appearing in countless films and television productions, he did it all.

However, he is best known as Dartmouth's own Mr. Jim Lahey on the *Trailer Park Boys*, an epic trailer park supervisor we will never forget. As Mr. Lahey would say, we will have a little "drinky poo" for my friend tonight.

* * *

●(1400)

CHRISTMAS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my favourite time of the year is just two short months away. With the Christmas season just around the corner, Canadians from across the country will be spending special time with our families and friends.

Christmas is a time to reflect on our many blessings in Canada, while also celebrating the birth of Jesus, a saviour for all the world.

These are some timeless words from Luke that have given all mankind joy and hope over the centuries:

Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"

May the Christmas story of this humble birth in a stable remind us of the real hope given to all of us.

From our Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies family to everyone across Canada, merry Christmas.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURALLIA 2017

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you cannot imagine how proud I am of my friend Guy Larouche, the mayor of Roberval, for taking up the challenge of hosting the 2017 edition of the prestigious Naturallia business forum in his wonderful city of Roberval. It is the largest forum for businesses in the natural resources field and major projects in Canada. I am proud to have fully supported him in this extraordinary adventure, which is coming to an end today.

I have admired the success of this event from afar, as well as the quality of the 650 participants that showcased Lac-Saint-Jean and all our leaders in the natural resources sector.

Our forestry industry, our aluminium industry, our mining sector, and our technologies of the future were all very well represented at the forum.

Congratulations to all the organizers on this extraordinary success.

* * *

[English]

DIWALI

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Diwali is the festival of lights, signifying the triumph of good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair. Diwali represents a time of new beginnings, optimism and renewal.

Diwali is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists around the world, including in my riding of Burnaby South. During this special time, families, friends and communities come together to celebrate, enjoy entertainment and of course enjoy delicious food.

In Canada, celebrating Diwali enriches our multicultural society as people of different ancestries and religions take time to share their traditions and contribute to Canada's ever growing diversity.

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, for all those celebrating Diwali across Canada, I wish them and their families happiness, prosperity, and peace.

Diwali mubarak. Happy Diwali.

*Statements by Members***MCCAIN FOODS**

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an iconic partner in food production and agriculture from my riding, McCain Foods. This year, it is celebrating 60 years of passion, potatoes, and partnerships with Canadian farm families, serving up goodness, from its family to ours.

In 1957, the McCain brothers founded the company in their hometown of Florenceville, New Brunswick. Today, while McCain is still family owned and headquartered in New Brunswick, it has grown to over 41 production facilities across six continents, employing more than 17,000 people around the world. In fact, one in every three French fries around the world is a McCain French fry.

From farm to fork, this innovative Canadian business has generations of potato growing under its belt and knows what it takes to put good food on our table. McCain is proud to partner with Canadian farm families in three provinces, which collectively produce more than 80,000 acres of high quality potatoes.

McCain Foods will also tell us that its people are the secret ingredient to its delicious products and the core reason for its worldwide success. Sixty years ago, brothers Harrison and Wallace McCain co-founded McCain Foods on the belief that good ethics was good business. This still holds true today.

I congratulate McCain Foods and wish it all the best in the future.

* * *

JAMES HARGRAVE

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, high winds fuelled a wildfire that tore through Cypress County north of Hilda. The quick response by local farmers, residents, and volunteer firefighters helped put out the fire, but not before it destroyed several family farm homes, along with a significant amount of property, including livestock. In most communities across Canada, the commitment of these volunteers saves lives and livelihoods.

Tragically, the fire claimed the life of volunteer firefighter James Hargrave, a dedicated young husband, father, rancher, and community leader known for his involvement with land stewardship, environmental issues, and for advocating for Canada's farming and ranching industry. James' passion was operating the five-generation JH Ranch north of Walsh. He is the grandson to Bert Hargrave, who proudly stood in the House as the member of Parliament for Medicine Hat years before me.

James leaves behind his wife, Elizabeth; their four children, Hudson, aged 6; Alek aged 4; Savannah, aged 2; and Isabelle, aged six months.

Our hearts go out to all those who were impacted by this fire, and especially to James' family and his many friends. Our community, our province, indeed our country are less because of the loss of James Hargrave.

● (1405)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Don Valley West is the new home to close to 1,000 Syrian refugees. On Sunday night, I hosted 250 of them at a Thanksgiving concert. We were enthralled by world-class musicians from the Looking at the Stars Foundation, which brings classical music to people who may not have a chance to hear great music, which transforms and transports them to places of beauty, compassion, and grace.

Dmitri Kanovich, once a refugee himself, founded Looking at the Stars. He brought together musicians Lukas Geniusas, Yolanda Bruno, Joseph Johnson, and Barry Shiffman for a magical evening. They were supported by the Consulate of the United Arab Emirates and volunteers from Lawrence Park Community Church and Leaside United Church, who responded to my call for help.

Settling refugees well takes a government that welcomes those in need of protection; community agencies like Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and New Circles who give direct service; and settled Canadians who open their hands and hearts to help them flourish in this country.

Together, we make Canada stronger and better.

* * *

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to wish a Happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas to all those celebrating in Winnipeg South and across the country.

Diwali, known as the festival of lights, is one of the most important holidays in Hinduism. It celebrates the triumph of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

Bandi Chhor Divas is celebrated by Sikhs all over the world. On this day, we reflect on the values of courage, compassion, and freedom for all.

Last Saturday night, I had the pleasure of joining a Diwali event hosted by the Hindu Society of Manitoba. It was a fantastic evening, featuring great cuisine and cultural performances. Over 5,000 Manitobans attended to celebrate Indian culture. I helped light the diyas and shared a meal featuring matar.

It is great that in this country we can experience all the flavours and textures of so many cultures right in our own backyard.

Again, I would like to wish a happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas to all those celebrating.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BLOCK PARENTS OF CANADA

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the iconic Block Parents of Canada is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2018.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

In communities of every region of Canada, this initiative is often the only volunteer safety program available for people who want to keep their communities safe. The program has been supported by the Department of Public Safety over the past 26 years with a tiny contribution of \$23,000 dollars annually.

[Translation]

However, on the eve of the program's 50th anniversary, the Minister of Public Safety suddenly decided that the efforts being made by these volunteers are not worth it. Without hesitation, the minister decided to end the partnership between the community volunteers, the police forces, and the Government of Canada by cutting the government's small contribution.

We know that the Liberals have a penchant for spending, but ending such an important program shows a complete lack of judgment. We always knew that the Liberals have never taken Canadians' safety seriously. This just proves it yet again.

* * *

*[English]***SCARBOROUGH CENTRE MULTIFAITH COUNCIL**

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my two years as the member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre, I have been privileged to visit many different places of worship. No matter where we come from or how we worship, I have continually been impressed by the values and priorities that we all hold in common: our love for our families, our community, our great country, and our desire to give a better life to our children.

I believe there is so much more we can accomplish for the community together when we harness our collective energy and passion, which is why we have launched the Scarborough Centre Multifaith Council. I hope this group can work to help us understand and bridge our differences to promote respect and harmony.

As our first event, the Scarborough Muslim Association recently hosted a thanksgiving dinner at the local mosque where people from all faiths came together in fellowship to break bread and learn from one another. It was a great evening, and I look forward to seeing what this group can accomplish.

* * *

● (1410)

PERSONS DAY

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 18 of each year, Canadians celebrate Persons Day. This day marks the pivotal moment in 1929 when the five Canadian trailblazers, the Famous Five, fought for women to be legally recognized as persons under our Constitution.

Each year the Governor General recognizes Canadians for their outstanding contributions to equality for women and girls. Today, six phenomenal Canadian women received the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case for 2017: Betsy Bury, Saskatoon; Micheline Dumont, Sherbrooke; Dr. Ramona Lumpkin, Halifax; Elizabeth Sheehy, Ottawa; Linda Slanina,

Kitimat; and Melissa Sariffodeen, this year's youth recipient, who is from Toronto.

This year's recipients have made their mark and we salute them for helping to build a more equal and inclusive country.

* * *

JOE CARBURY

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise to mark the passing of a friend and Calgary legend, Joe Carbury.

Joe was the familiar voice at the Calgary Stampede for 45 years. His play-by-play commentary brought an unimaginable level of excitement to the stampede chuckwagon rangeland derby. His deep, gravely voice was so recognizable that his calling of the chucks is etched in the memories of anyone who attended the greatest outdoor show on earth.

He was a large part of our community and a huge promoter of local sports. He was a class act, refreshingly humble, and was always ready to help and to serve his community in any way he could. He left his mark on chuckwagon racing and was loved by the fans. He worked to make the sport safer and accessible to all.

Joe will now join his beloved Rose once again. Our deepest sympathies go to his daughters Colleen and Kathleen, and the entire Carbury family.

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*[Translation]***STARTUP CANADA**

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a great day.

We are celebrating not only Small Business Week, but also Startup Canada Day on Parliament Hill. Throughout the day, more than 1,100 entrepreneurs, investors, industry representatives, and leaders will be planning the future of Canada's innovation ecosystem.

These small business owners create and support well-paying jobs for the middle class. I am proud of the fact that our government is lowering the small business tax rate to 9% in 2019, while ensuring that the tax system is fair for all Canadians.

I invite all hon. members to join me in welcoming to the Hill Victoria Lennox and the team from Startup Canada and congratulating them on their excellent work.

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**GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARDS IN
COMMEMORATION OF THE PERSONS CASE**

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 90 years ago, five Canadian women won a hard-fought battle for something we now take for granted: recognition that women are persons.

Oral Questions

This morning, I had the honour of attending the presentation of the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case. This year, a woman from Sherbrooke was one of the honourees. Her name is Micheline Dumont, and she is professor emeritus in the Université de Sherbrooke's history department. Ms. Dumont has authored and co-authored 18 books and essays, including *L'histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* and *Le féminisme québécois raconté à Camille*.

I would like to personally congratulate Ms. Dumont and thank her for dedicating her life to bringing women and their contributions out of the shadows and into the light. Conventional historical narratives have not given their role in our society the attention it deserves. We need more women as engaged and determined as Ms. Dumont if we want to build a truly egalitarian society.

In closing, I would like to share with the House something Ms. Dumont said this morning, words that aptly summarize what her life's work has taught us: women are part of history, women have a history, and women make history.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is reverting back to the time-honoured Liberal tradition of buying used equipment for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. Over Thanksgiving the government quietly announced that it has begun negotiations with Australia to buy their old fighter jets. This is after the defence minister clearly stated that the Liberal government would not buy used jets for our air force.

Canadians still remember the embarrassing Liberal purchase of used submarines. Instead of learning from their mistakes, the Liberals have doubled down, sending a direct message to Canadian troops that the government is willing to buy old equipment and that the armed forces must make do. The fact is that the government has turned the replacement of our CF-18s into a circus.

The members of the Canadian Armed Forces are tired of the delays, empty rhetoric, and a defence minister who cannot keep his facts straight. It is finally time for the defence minister to do what is in the best interest of our air force and immediately launch an open and fair competition to replace our entire fleet of CF-18s.

* * *

[Translation]

LIBERAL GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, Canadians made a choice. They chose a government that wanted to invest in the middle class and invest in our families. Over the past two years, that is exactly what we have done. We have raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could lower them for the middle class. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which is more generous and tax free. We have also made major investments in home care and mental health care. We have invested in our seniors. Our plan is working. More than 400,000 jobs have been created,

most of them full-time. They are jealous. For two years now, we have been focusing on the middle class. I just want to say that we are going to keep going. We are not stopping here. We are going to do this for our youth, for our children, and for our families. We are going to do this for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister hid his offshore company in France until he got caught, and then he reported it. He hid from Canadians his millions of dollars in Morneau Shepell shares in a numbered company in Alberta, despite wrongly telling others it was in a blind trust, until he got caught, and now he is selling them.

Why does he expect us to blindly trust that he is not hiding other conflicts of interest in his eight additional numbered companies that he has across the country?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a process in the country to ensure that ministers do not have conflicts of interest. I worked with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure I disclosed all of my assets. I worked with her to ensure that I took an approach that freed me from conflict.

I called her this morning and informed her that I was going to take two additional steps beyond her recommendations. First, I was going to put my assets in a blind trust. Second, I was going to work with her to ensure that neither I nor my family have any shareholdings in Morneau Shepell, a company I used to be with.

Finally, I am going to continue with the conflict of interest screen to make sure that I have no conflict of interest and that Canadians have confidence.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the last several months, the finance minister has said that our farmers, plumbers, and other small business owners are a privileged few, using fancy accounting schemes to avoid paying their fair share.

We now learn that the finance minister used a loophole, putting millions of dollars of shares he was otherwise banned from owning into a numbered company in Alberta in order to continue to earn millions of dollars.

Now that this hypocrisy is exposed, does he not think it is time to apologize to those business owners he slandered?

● (1420)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two separate issues there, so let us start with what we have actually been working with on behalf of Canadians.

Some hon members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, please. I am asking the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton and others to try to restrain themselves and to wait until it is their turn to speak, if it comes today, and not speak when they do not have the floor, as they know the rules do not permit interruptions.

The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, there are two issues from that question. First, we have been working with Canadians to make sure we have a tax system that does not create advantages only for the very wealthy. We have also ensured we have tax rates that are low, so small businesses can invest across the country.

With respect to my own finances, I am going to continue to work with the Ethics Commissioner to not only make sure I meet all of her recommendations but even go further to ensure Canadians have confidence in the long-term future of the country and confidence in the role of the minister of finance.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has vast powers at his hands that he would be able to use to advantage the company in which he had tens of millions of dollars of secret holdings. He committed to the Ethics Commissioner in writing that he would recuse himself from any matters that might advantage Morneau Shepell. Could the minister tell us how many times he recused himself from matters relating to Morneau Shepell since he took office?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by setting the record straight. I disclosed all of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner, to meet the high standards of integrity that our government wants to continue to uphold. I will continue to do so.

We will, on an ongoing basis, continue to work on behalf of Canadians. We know it is important that we meet their standards. I will ensure that, to the extent there is any approach the Ethics Commissioner advises me to take, I take it. As I said, I am going that one step further than any person has before me to divest of my assets in Morneau Shepell.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning *The Globe and Mail* reported that the Minister of Finance told his former colleagues two years ago that he would be placing all of his holdings in a blind trust. He even said the same thing to the media. Suddenly, he has woken up. A light has gone on. Two years later, he has just realized what every member of this House already knew: that the law requires all holdings to be declared within 60 days. All of a sudden, a light has gone on.

We would like to know exactly when the Minister of Finance made the Prime Minister aware of his conflict of interest.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the way our system is set up, we work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to make sure our affairs are out in the open. That is what I did. I did so at the start with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who gave me her advice, and whose recommendations I have followed this whole time. When I spoke with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner today, I told her that I wanted to do more, to set up a blind trust, and I will work

with her to sell all of my and my family's shares in Morneau Shepell. It is important to make sure Canadians have confidence.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it took him two years to get the picture. The mandate letter the Prime Minister gave his Minister of Finance reads as follows: “you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and...the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.” Who am I talking about? About the Minister of Finance, the same man the Prime Minister stood up for as recently as yesterday here in the House.

When did the Minister of Finance tell the Prime Minister that he was in conflict of interest?

● (1425)

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not talk to the Prime Minister about this; I spoke to the Ethics Commissioner. That is actually the way our system works. I worked with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure I did not have conflicts of interest. In fact, I followed to the letter the approach she suggested.

What I am saying today is that I do not think the distractions, the slander, and the things that were being said across the hall are in any way helpful to our economy or to Canadians. Therefore, I am going to move forward and take an additional step, a step that will ensure the confidence of Canadians and ensure that I can get back to the work that I want to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for two years the Minister of Finance told his own company that he would put his assets in a blind trust. For two years he told the media that he would put his assets in a blind trust. For two years he told his own colleagues that he would put his assets in a blind trust.

Why, for two years, did he mislead the media, his colleagues, his company, and really, all Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear. The way it works with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is we explain our situation, we ask for her advice, and we act on her recommendations. That is what I did. Thanks to her recommendations, I was confident that I was not in a conflict of interest situation. Now I have decided to go even further, which will improve public trust in the office of the finance minister.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if he had such confidence in what he was doing, then why did he mislead all of his colleagues?

According to our information, in the five days following the introduction of Bill C-27, which will directly benefit Morneau Shepell and is a bill sponsored by the Minister of Finance himself, stocks in Morneau Shepell went up 4.8%. The Minister of Finance would have made more than \$2 million profit on his shares.

He is an intelligent person. Does he not find there is perceived conflict of interest, since he was in a position to personally benefit from his own actions?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be clear, what I did was ensure that I worked with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that she understood my situation. I took her recommendations and made sure that I moved forward with them to not have a conflict of interest. Now I have gone one step further, and in order to make sure that there is no possibility of any conflict whatsoever, I actually informed the Ethics Commissioner this morning that I would like to work with her to divest of any shares of mine or my family's in my former Morneau Shepell employer. That, I think, will give a great deal of confidence to all Canadians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the few days after he personally introduced Bill C-27, a bill designed to attack the pensions of Canadians and help firms like Morneau Shepell, the value of Morneau Shepell stocks increased by 4.8%. For the finance minister's personal holdings, that represented a profit of over \$2 million in just five days. That is more money than the average Canadian makes in a lifetime of work.

The minister constantly talks about serving the public. How does pocketing millions of dollars from his work as the minister do anything but serve himself?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said this morning to the Ethics Commissioner, I have taken all of her recommendations because I respect the Office of the Ethics Commissioner and I believe that what she is doing is trying to ensure that we do not have conflicts of interest.

I also said that I am going to move forward with additional steps, to work with her and her office in whatever way I can in order to move away from having any of those shareholdings. That will happen over the course of time. I will not have any understanding of what the actual proceeds will or will not be, and that is the process as it should be.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for two years the finance minister told the media that he was putting his shares in a blind trust. He told the same thing to his old company. Canadians and even fellow Liberal MPs lived this lie. His response two years later, I guess after making millions, is that now it is time to do the right thing. Talk about Liberal entitlement. Those guys really know how to celebrate an anniversary.

Too many Canadians already think that too many politicians are just in it for themselves, and now this.

Does the finance minister simply not understand that his actions ruin the trust in our institutions? If he really wants to do the right thing, will he apologize for abusing the trust Canadians put in him?

• (1430)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a different sense of why Canadians have a distrust of politicians. It is when people say things that they are aware are certainly not the case. That is why Canadians do not have confidence in politicians.

What the member opposite knows is that I fully disclosed my assets to the Ethics Commissioner. I worked with the Ethics Commissioner to get her recommendations, and I followed those recommendations.

If the member opposite is actually suggesting that the Ethics Commissioner is not doing a good job, he should come out and say that to her.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a promise of transparency and we are getting quite the opposite today.

The Minister of Finance and his company, Morneau Shepell, have benefited from the minister's actions. His company made money and the minister still holds shares in that company. He introduced Bill C-27, which directly increased profits at Morneau Shepell.

My question is simple: when did the Minister of Finance inform the Prime Minister that he was in conflict of interest and when did he recuse himself from any discussion on this bill?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the way to ensure that we are not in conflict of interest in Canada is to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, which is what I did. I explained my situation to her. She gave me some advice and I followed her recommendations to be sure to be free of conflict of interest.

I will go even further. I will put my assets in a blind trust. I will work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to divest my family and myself of any shares in Morneau Shepell. That will give Canadians more confidence in my situation.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sad truth is that the reason he had these discussions with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner was not because he wanted to be more transparent. It was because he wanted to find a way to get around the law. That is just what he did. It is what he had been trying to do since 2013.

In 2013, as president of Morneau Shepell, the minister gave a speech in which he said Canada needed legislation enabling target benefit plans. In 2016, he himself delivered the goods by tabling this bill, which benefited both the minister himself and his company.

At what point did the minister recuse himself from these discussions?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to continue to work for Canadian families and for Canada's middle class, because I know that is vital.

We have done many very important things for our country, such as lowering taxes for the middle class, introducing the Canada child benefit, and strengthening the pension plan for all Canadians. We are going to continue to implement measures and policies that help Canadian families. That is something that means a lot to me. I would like to keep doing this important work, instead of dwelling on matters that are hardly worth mentioning.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2013, the executive chair of Morneau Shepell said, “We need legislation enabling Target Benefit Plans...in all Canadian jurisdictions”, so he made it happen. He became the Minister of Finance and he tabled the legislation himself. To make this conflict much worse, Morneau Shepell continued to pay that minister tens of thousands of dollars a month.

The question the minister has not answered is this. Why did he not recuse himself around discussions about Bill C-27?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process for working with the Ethics Commissioner, which all 338 members in this House are familiar with, is actually to present one's assets, to work with the Ethics Commissioner to understand her advice, to take that advice, and to respect the officers of Parliament. What I did was I took the advice, I respected the officer of Parliament, and I moved forward with the conflict of interest screen, which I know has been put in place for the last year to year and a half. That is the way that we do it in this country.

I have decided to take it one step further, because I think that is worth doing in my position as the Minister of Finance, so I am looking forward to continuing to do that.

• (1435)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Morneau Shepell thought that the Minister of Finance had placed his shares in a blind trust. We all thought he had placed his shares in a blind trust. He had not done that and in fact he was enacting legislation that would directly benefit him and Morneau Shepell.

I have a different question. Maybe the minister will answer this. At any time, did the minister discuss Bill C-27 with Morneau Shepell while he was the finance minister? At any time, did they discuss this bill?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, time and time again the minister has claimed that he has been in full compliance with the ethics law. Now we find out, by his own admission today, that he has not been.

Here is another one. Last week we learned that the minister has been hiding his ownership of an offshore corporation for over two years, something he is obliged by law to disclose.

How can any Canadian believe anything the minister says when he keeps saying that he has been following the law and we now know that is not true?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite are familiar with the approach to declaring assets to the Ethics Commissioner, to getting the advice of the Ethics Commissioner, and to moving forward. That is exactly the approach that I have taken, so my—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: And we follow it.

The Speaker: Order. I know the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore is new here, but I think she and others know the rules by

now, that one is not to interrupt. Therefore, I would encourage members to wait and save their comments until they have the floor.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, my situation has been fully disclosed. What I have said this morning is that I am actually going to go a step further. That step further is, in my estimation, something that is necessary because of the distraction that this places at our feet at this moment. Putting in place a blind trust and making sure that I or my family no longer have shares in Morneau Shepell I think will help with the confidence, allowing us to do our job.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps saying that we have a process. Yes, we do. It is called honesty and integrity. For two years the minister was breaking the law by specifically hiding the ownership of his offshore corporation from the Ethics Commissioner. That is not called compliance, that is not called working with the Ethics Commissioner, it is called hiding from the Ethics Commissioner. When will the minister finally admit that he broke the law?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to address the question directly, I disclosed all of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner at the time of discussing that with her. We did in fact find out later that there was one administrative error, which was not substantive, so we corrected that problem.

What I will do, on an ongoing basis, is work with the annual process to make sure that we disclose everything to the Ethics Commissioner, which will help Canadians have confidence. What I know now is that I will ensure that I live by those very high standards, because that will allow me to get on with the work that we want to do to improve the lives of Canadians.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the current bankruptcy process is failing to protect Canadian workers and their families. This is true for the workers and retirees of Sears Canada. Instead of doing something to protect workers, the Liberals continue to support wealthy corporations. What is worse, we learned yesterday that Morneau Shepell will be handling the administration of Sears Canada's pension plan, which means that the finance minister will personally benefit from this liquidation. Is the finance minister comfortable with the fact that, alongside Sears executives getting massive bonuses, he is making money while workers lose their benefits?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that this is a difficult time for the workers, their families, and for many communities.

That is why our government is making every effort to connect Sears employees and pensioners with programs that can assist them during this difficult time. We also understand that current Sears Canada pension funds are held in trust and must be used solely for the benefit of the pensioners.

We will continue to engage and work with the employees and their families to make sure we help them during this difficult time.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing is perfectly clear: our bankruptcy laws do nothing to protect our workers, and this government is doing nothing to fix that. Sears Canada workers are getting laid off without any severance pay. Retired workers could have their pensions reduced. Meanwhile, are the executives going to get bonuses?

Who else benefits from this agreement? None other than the Minister of Finance.

How can the Liberals accept that their minister is making money on the backs of the unfortunate employees and retired workers of Sears Canada?

• (1440)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is a very difficult time for the employees and their families.

[English]

That is why we are engaging with them, and all our colleagues are involved, to help them out where we can. In particular, Service Canada has been meeting with representatives from Sears Canada. Across the country, there have been 80 sessions that have taken place. We will continue to work with them in order to assist them during this difficult time, making sure that they have an opportunity to find meaningful employment going forward and to assist them in this difficult time during this transition period.

* * *

*[Translation]***ETHICS**

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is a bit of a chameleon. However, when we have all the characteristics of a conflict of interest before us, we call that a conflict of interest.

The Minister of Finance is responsible for the tax treaty between Canada and Barbados. Barbados is a known tax haven. Morneau Shepell has a subsidiary in Barbados.

Did the Minister of Finance withdraw from the discussions on this tax treaty?

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the opposition is focused on me and my personal finances, I will tell the House what we are going to focus on.

We are going to focus on continuing to work for Canadians. The work we have done over the last couple of years is not finished, but it is a really great start. We have a situation where our economy is growing at a pace that was not seen during the years of the previous government. We have seen more growth in employment over the last year than we have seen in a decade.

Canadians are feeling better. Middle-class Canadians have the possibility of getting a job. We know there is more work to be done, and we are going to focus on that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see someone like the Minister of Finance think he is beyond reproach.

The Minister of Finance is responsible for the tax treaty between Canada and Barbados. We just learned that he finally decided to show some common sense thanks to our constant pressure. He finally realized that the noose was tightening around his neck and that he was in a conflict of interest.

Before he put his assets in a trust, did he bother to withdraw from any cabinet discussions related to the tax treaty with Barbados?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, it is important for Canada to have a system to deal with conflict of interest.

I acted on the recommendations of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. It is very important to follow those recommendations and to respect people in Parliament. It is an important approach. I will continue to do this, and I have decided to go the extra mile because it is very important to me to be sure I am not in conflict of interest. For example, I have decided to sell my family's shares and set up a blind trust to be sure that I am not and will not be in conflict of interest.

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was about the Minister of Finance being responsible for the Canada-Barbados tax treaty.

Now Canadians know the Minister of Finance owns millions of dollars of shares in his billion dollar family business, Morneau Shepell. Barbados is a well-known tax haven.

The Minister of Finance's company has a subsidiary in that country, which means he currently benefits from the tax treaty with Barbados. The question is clear, did the Minister of Finance recuse himself from all discussions about the tax treaty?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is firmly committed to combatting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance.

The fact that our government has invested nearly \$1 billion over the past two years is proof positive of the action we are taking—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order. I would like to remind members that making so much noise might take a question away from one of their colleagues, and I would not want that.

The hon. Minister of National Revenue has the floor.

• (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, in our last two budgets, our government invested almost \$1 billion, and that money has enabled us to take concrete action.

Oral Questions

We target four jurisdictions per year. We are on track to recuperate close to \$25 billion. We have transferred 727 cases to criminal investigation, secured 268 search warrants—

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that makes it clear the minister hid his money, and now he is still hiding from Canadians. The Prime Minister directed the finance minister to “uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.”

The finance minister directly benefits from the tax treaty with Barbados. He oversees negotiations that set the tax rules between these two countries: that is not impartial. He did not tell anyone: that is not honest.

I ask again, did the finance minister recuse himself from all discussions about the Canada-Barbados tax treaty?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the core of that question. The Prime Minister sets the highest standards for integrity of our government. He expects us to follow through on the commitments we have to make to ensure we do not have conflicts of interest. When we look at conflicts of interest, the way we work toward ensuring we do not have them in our system is by working with the Ethics Commissioner. That is why I did that. That is why I followed her recommendations.

I know that in order to do even more, I am going to take additional steps. What I can make absolutely clear to Canadians is our government remains committed to the highest standards of integrity. We are going to go above and beyond the recommendations to make—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the #metoo campaign continues to show the magnitude of sexual assault in our country, Canadian universities just got a grade of C minus for their campus rape policies. Sadly, this is not new. That is why six months ago, New Democrats called on the Liberal government to lead a national coordination of policies to prevent campus sexual assault. Women need more than feminist rhetoric, they need action.

When will this self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister truly stand up for women and lead this campaign?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, gender-based violence is preventable, and yet it remains a significant barrier to gender equality. Our government is committed to ensuring that our daughters, mothers, and sisters live free from all forms of violence, which is why we put aside \$100.9 million in the first federal strategy to address and prevent gender-based violence; to work on prevention, and support for survivors and their families; and to ensure more responsive legal and justice systems. The work continues, and we are committed to that work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the #metoo campaign continues to shed light on the magnitude of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

A Canada-wide student group gives Canadian universities a C minus for their campus sexual assault policies. There are no guidelines to accompany the policies. There needs to be national coordination by the government in order to prevent sexual assault at our universities.

Will the Minister of Youth, a self-proclaimed feminist, make the effort to coordinate sexual assault prevention policies on our campuses?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, gender-based violence is unacceptable on campuses, in our workplaces, in homes, and in communities across the country. We are working to coordinate our efforts with provinces and territories. We worked with them to develop the first federal strategy to address and prevent gender-based violence. We are investing in work that campuses across the country are doing. We have invested close to \$50 million in organizations across the country to do this important work. The women's movement has not been invested in for the last 10 years by the previous government. We are committed to changing that.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for two years, our government has been working to help grow the economy and strengthen the middle class. The economy is now stronger and growing in ways not seen in over a decade. Canadian businesses and investors can have confidence in our dropping unemployment, our rising GDP, and the strengthening of our investment culture and the environment.

[*Translation*]

Can the Minister of Finance provide the House with an update on our government's plan to ensure that the middle class and those working hard to join it can benefit from this growth?

● (1450)

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the member for Kitchener Centre, like so many of my colleagues, has been of enormous assistance over the last month as we have considered how to make sure our tax system is fair while encouraging competitiveness across our country.

The next step in that discussion really is about our fall economic statement. I am delighted to tell the House that next Tuesday, October 24, we will bring forth our fall economic statement to give Canadians an update on the progress we have made and the progress we want to continue to make.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

I am very pleased to announce to Canadians and the House that on Tuesday, October 24, we will have the—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Abbotsford.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Finance admitted that his ethical standards were in tatters. Ministers are not supposed to directly own shares in companies, especially those they regulate. To get around that, the minister hid his mega-million dollar fortune in an Alberta numbered company, dodging ethical guidelines and paying less tax than other law-abiding Canadians. Only a wealthy and entitled finance minister could pull off such a stunt.

With his integrity in shambles, will the minister now admit that he is still in a conflict of interest?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are numerous inaccuracies in that question.

Let us start with the very first fact that I disclosed all of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner. That was very important. I actually took the recommendations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps members did not hear what I said earlier about losing a question, because that could happen very soon.

The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, the second step, of course, was taking the recommendations from the Ethics Commissioner so I could make sure I was free of conflicts of interest.

This is about respecting the officers of Parliament. It is not a surprise to me that the members opposite did not respect Statistics Canada, did not respect science, and also do not necessarily respect an officer of Parliament. I am going to continue to do so and live up to the highest standards that Canadians expect of me.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister conveniently forgot to disclose the company with the French villa.

Last week, I was in Maple Ridge and heard the outrage residents had toward their missing-in-action MP over his government's hypocrisy on taxes. Small businesses are angry that the Minister of Finance, who is asking them to pay more taxes, receives tens of thousands of dollars per month from a company that he owns and regulates and that is registered in an offshore tax haven.

Why did it take him two years to admit that he failed to uphold the ethical standards expected of a finance minister?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the statement was entirely factually incorrect, but let me move forward and say what we have done for Canadians this week.

For small businesses across the country, we are moving forward to lower their tax rate. By January 1, 2019, they will have a 9% tax rate,

which is lower than the 10.5% presently. We are also making sure their system is fair. Businesses will be able to continue to save within their companies so they can actually invest in their businesses or have a retirement. However, we will do it in a way that does not advantage the very few that are already successful.

These are important measures that we are going to move forward to help—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two years, the Minister of Finance used fancy lawyers and fancy accounting schemes to secretly exploit an ethics loophole and maintain control of millions of dollars of Morneau Shepell shares that, as finance minister, he was banned from owning directly. Changing that scheme two years too late and only after his hand was caught in the cookie jar does not change the fact that this was corrupt and a conflict of interest.

Why did the Minister of Finance work so much harder to hide his conflict of interest than to actually avoid it in the first place?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, based on that question, I can only assume the member opposite is questioning the advice of the Ethics Commissioner.

What I did by exposing all of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner was I allowed her to give me advice on how best to move forward to ensure I did not have a conflict of interest. I took those recommendations, respecting the office and making sure I assured Canadians that I did not have a conflict of interest.

By taking the additional step of moving forward to do things not required of me, I want to make sure that we can continue to do the work we want to do for Canadians to make sure Canadian families have success and that we do better and better over the years to come.

● (1455)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are questioning the minister's clear conflict of interest. Morneau Shepell is a company that administers pensions. It is a company that would benefit from friendly legislation from the Minister of Finance, and that is exactly what happened.

The minister introduced a bill to allow target benefit pension plans, the very plans his own company administers. The Minister of Finance personally profited from the decisions he made as the Minister of Finance.

Why did it take two years for the minister to realize that he should not be both the Minister of Finance and the minister for Morneau Shepell?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are going to move on from the discussion around my personal finances. We are going to ensure we do the work that Canadians want us to do.

Oral Questions

We know that dealing with conflicts of interest is important. We have done that. I have taken an additional step. Now we are going to work to ensure that the growth we have seen in our economy continues, that the jobs we have grown in our economy help families, and that we can continue to add more new jobs. That is the work we are committed to doing for Canadians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, adjacent to the Sarnia industrial complex, has suffered high incidences of cancer, rashes, and respiratory diseases, yet there has been minimal enforcement action by Conservative or Liberal governments on repeated spills and pollution incidences. This first nation's calls for a health impact study mirror others being ignored.

The Minister of the Environment has a duty to regulate toxins. The Minister of Health has a mandatory duty to take action when toxins impact health. What is their excuse for failing to protect this suffering community?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Sarnia with the first nations is very worrying. We are encouraged by the steps the Ontario government is taking. We are working very closely with it.

This is exactly why we need to ensure we always have strong regulations for clean air and to protect human health. We are looking forward to strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

* * *

[Translation]

FOOD LABELLING

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Quebec organization Vigilance OGM said that five million genetically modified salmon were definitely sold in Quebec. However, Provigo, IGA, and Metro have said that they would not sell genetically modified salmon because Canadians do not want to eat it.

Did Quebeckers unknowingly eat genetically modified salmon? Did this genetically modified salmon end up in institutions such as hospitals and prisons? Canadians want transparency.

Why is the Liberal government not listening to Canadians and requiring mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods?

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the safest, most affordable, and most abundant food supplies in the world. That is due in no small part to our science-based regulatory system.

Our government is committed to studying the evidence and making decisions using the best available data. Health Canada scientists conduct a rigorous pre-market safety assessment of all genetically modified foods prior to allowing their sale on the Canadian market.

ETHICS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear. The Minister of Finance's letter was specific. In 2015, he told the owners of his company, Morneau Shepell, and Canadians that he would put his assets into a blind trust. He clearly knew what the right thing to do was. However, instead, he chose to use a loophole and continue to deliberately hide and control millions of dollars.

Another important question is this, and Canadians need to know. Was the Prime Minister complicit? When did he know?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be absolutely clear, disclosing all my assets was very important. That was exactly what I did with the Ethics Commissioner. That is the way the system works. I did that because the Prime Minister asked me and all the members of our government to live up to the highest standards of integrity.

Working with the Ethics Commissioner and taking her recommendations is really respecting the role of that officer of Parliament. We will continue to respect the role of Parliament and take her recommendations as opposed to the ill-informed recommendations across the hall.

● (1500)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to remind the Minister of Finance that I will not be shamed by his personal lack of respect for this Parliament. I am going to remind him that his job is to uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, that he should have arranged his personal and private affairs with the conflict of interest rules. It was just not beyond the letter. The letter of the law may be there, but his job was to go over and above.

Could the Minister of Finance confirm whether he was hiding this from the Prime Minister as well?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that the Prime Minister expects us to live up to the highest standards of integrity. That is what we have done here. He expects us to work with the Ethics Commissioner. He expects us to take the recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner and put them into place.

In my situation, the Ethics Commissioner gave me some very specific ideas on how I could best ensure that I did not have conflicts of interest. I followed those recommendations. Now I am going to take some additional steps to go even further. That will assure all Canadians of confidence in this role.

Oral Questions

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are the facts. The Prime Minister clearly instructed the Minister of Finance to arrange his private affairs in a way that would bear the closest public scrutiny. The finance minister told Morneau Shepell and the press that he would place his holdings in a blind trust to avoid conflicts of interest. However, two years later we now know that he did no such thing.

I will give the minister another opportunity to answer the question. When did he tell the Prime Minister that he chose not to put his assets in a blind trust, despite committing to do that?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to actually go to the real facts as opposed to the alternative facts and give an explanation to the member opposite.

The real facts are that I gave all my assets to the Ethics Commissioner so she could determine the best way to avoid conflicts of interest. She told me that the best measure of compliance was to put in place a conflict of interest screen, which is exactly what I did. Complying with the Ethics Commissioner, respecting an officer of Parliament, that is the way we will continue to comport ourselves. In fact, I am going to go some steps further than that.

* * *

[Translation]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Mary Ng (Markham—Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2017 was another fantastic year for Canada's tourism industry.

[English]

In my riding of Markham—Thornhill, we welcomed record number of visitors from around the world who came to visit family, to celebrate Canada's 150, in one of Canada's most diverse regions.

Could the Minister of Small Business and Tourism update the House with the latest news on Canada's thriving tourism sector?

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great day for the tourism industry.

[English]

Today's Statistics Canada data shows that from January 2017 to August, 2017, we welcomed over 14.6 million international tourists, up 4.3% from 2016. This is especially great news during Small Business Week, as most of Canada's tourism businesses are small businesses. More visitors means more growth in the sector, which means more jobs for Canadians. Of this year's visitors, 10.5% were from China. This is amazing news as we prepare for the 2018 Canada-China Year of Tourism.

As I am on my feet, I would like to wish everyone celebrating, happy Diwali.

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that negotiating a new softwood lumber agreement has never been a priority for this government.

In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, for example, about 5,000 jobs are connected with this vital sector. These jobs are highly vulnerable due to the U.S. government's new tariffs. The Liberals' inaction could have disastrous consequences for thousands of families who depend on forestry.

Will the current government do the only thing that makes sense: defend this vital industry against the pernicious attacks of foreign-funded groups and support the opposition motion to defend forestry workers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that softwood lumber is indeed a priority for me and our government. This issue is very important to us and to Canadians. I want to reiterate that the countervailing duties imposed by the U.S. Department of Commerce are punitive and unfair.

We are working closely with the Province of Quebec, the industry, and workers. I also want to emphasize that we want a good deal, not just any deal.

* * *

• (1505)

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is not the only one who is out of touch. Unfortunately, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is too.

On Tuesday, in response to a report in which the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage called for concrete action for the cultural and media sectors, the minister said she was exploring the options. After two consultations, three reports, and 3,000 people consulted over a period of 18 months, it seems to me she should have the lay of the land by now. The situation is critical, and the minister must act now. Instead, she is passing the buck to the CRTC so it can explore the options a year from now.

To do her job, she needs to see that this is urgent. When will she wake up and listen to the people she is supposed to protect?

She is the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his work in committee.

During our consultations, and following the great work the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage did, we heard from Canadians who feel strongly about local news and information. Our approach is based on the following two principles: healthy democracy depends on trustworthy journalistic content, and government measures must respect media independence.

Again, we thank the committee and the member.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former teacher and cadet officer and current member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I care deeply about the education of our military personnel. We must provide our soldiers with learning opportunities to increase their skills and enhance their military leadership.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell the House about the new partnership that will focus on university-level continuing education for our soldiers in the Montreal region?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his question and for his interest in education.

The Canadian Armed Forces recently partnered with the Université de Montréal to offer leadership programs beginning this fall for regular forces and reserve members. This high-level training offered in a challenging environment will give participants the skills they need to become better leaders both within the armed forces and in civil society.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister least capable of relating to the hardscrabble realities of middle-class small business, the Liberal's chief tax loophole closer, is finally closing a loophole through which he moved his great wealth, in clear violation of the spirit of ethical guidelines and the law. However, there is still the minister's unreported private corporation in France.

Could the finance minister tell us whether he has been served notice by the Ethics Commissioner of his violation of the Conflict of Interest Act?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have reported to the House, I disclosed all of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner. As I found out recently, we did have an administrative oversight around the approach I took to purchase a house, so we have corrected that oversight, and I have worked with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that is clear.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, cheese producers from Lac-Saint-Jean and throughout Quebec still have not been compensated for the losses they will incur in the wake of the free trade agreement with the European Union. Supply management is being threatened by both the TPP and NAFTA.

What does the Prime Minister do? He takes selfies.

Instead of acting like a rock star, when will the Prime Minister send a clear message to the U.S. and Asian negotiators: no supply management, no negotiation?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague is well aware that I announced in the House that the Government of Canada has put in place a \$350-million package for the dairy industry and the supply management sector: \$250 million goes to the dairy farmers for innovation, and \$100 million goes to the processing sector.

Our government has supported and will continue to support supply management in this country.

● (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of empty rhetoric. Where are the 40 phantom Liberal MPs from Quebec, the 40 subservient MPs?

While the gaze of the agricultural world is fixed on the NAFTA negotiations, other negotiations are under way to determine the future of the trans-Pacific—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It is time to listen.

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île has the floor. Let us listen, please.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, while the gaze of the agricultural world is fixed on the NAFTA negotiations, other negotiations are under way to determine the future of the trans-Pacific partnership, and supply management is still on the table.

Will the Minister of International Trade promise not to use supply management as a bargaining chip in the TPP negotiations at the expense of Quebec?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to salute my colleague.

We have been very clear: we will always defend supply management. We said so in French and we said so in English. The 40 Liberal MPs on this side of the House are working for farmers across the country. I can assure my colleague that we will always be there to defend supply management. We have always worked for farmers. People know that on this side of the House we do not just ask questions, we take action for our farmers.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2017 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case: Betsy Bury; Elizabeth Sheehy; Micheline Dumont; Linda Slanina; Melissa Sariffodeen; and Dr. Ramona Lumpkin.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the usual Thursday question, and I will keep it short today. I will just ask the government House leader if she could please tell us what the government has planned for the rest of this week and for next week.

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue the debate we began this morning on the Conservative Party's opposition motion.

Tomorrow, we will begin debate at report stage of Bill C-46 on impaired driving.

[English]

Next Monday shall be an allotted day. For the remainder of next week, we will resume debate on Bill C-46 and also commence debate at report stage of Bill C-49, transportation modernization.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SUPPORT FOR FORESTRY WORKERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock has four minutes remaining in his speech.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier about softwood lumber in my riding, we have a very diverse economy in northern Alberta. It is supported by three flags: the oil sector, the forestry sector, and the farming sector.

What a lot of people think, when they hear that, is that so-and-so works in the oil sector, so-and-so works in the forestry sector, and so-and-so works in agriculture. When we look at it from Ottawa, that is what it looks like, but when we get on the ground, it is often much more the case that it is a mixture of all three. For example, one of my constituents works as a local farmer. His family owns a dairy farm. However, I know that he also works as an auto mechanic on the farm as well. He takes some customers from off the farm and works on their trucks, for example. He also services eight or nine gas wells right around his home. That is an interaction between the farming community and the oil and gas industry.

I know many farmers who are good at running equipment. They have grown up driving tractors, running the combine, digging drainage ditches with the high hoe, and clearing land with the Caterpillar, and those skills they learned on the farm are then translated into jobs in the oil patch. Often many of those people will be building roads in the oil patch. They continue to farm during the summer. During the winter, they go off and take an oil patch job.

Business of Supply

Others take on a job with the forestry industry. Many farms in northern Alberta will have a logging truck parked on the farm somewhere. People will subsidize their farm with some logging income. Many of them already own a big truck to haul grain, and they learn those skills that can be translated into a job in a logging operation. All of these things come together.

Others will be in the service industry. I talked earlier about my friend Mark from Whitecourt. He works predominantly in the forestry sector. However, I know many people, including another friend of mine named Yelte. Many of the trucks he works on will be related to the oil patch, many will be for the farming community, and many will be for the logging operations that happen.

All of these together make up the vibrancy of northern Alberta, the vibrancy of the northern economy. The products that are produced in one sector are often used in another sector.

One of the things we were talking about was the very fact that some of the pulp and paper by-products are then used in the oil patch. For example, the Alberta Newsprint Company produces hundreds of thousands of litres of water through their processes. They can sell that water, and it gets used in the oil patch. It is all an intermixing.

If a log comes into Whitecourt on a logging truck, 99% of that log will be used, but it may be used by up to three or four, or maybe 10, different companies that get their hands on it before it is shipped out in the various products that get shipped out of Whitecourt.

Softwood lumber is integral to our rural communities. It is integral to life in northern Alberta. I ask for government support on this motion.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend for his speech and for articulating the importance of the forestry sector. Certainly I know that, and the people in Courtenay—Alberni know that.

The Alberni Valley once had the highest median income in Canada. Fort McMurray had the oil patch for producing great wealth for Canada. What we have seen, though, in the last 10 years, is a tenfold increase in raw-log exports. That has been under the previous Harper Conservative government, the B.C. Liberal government, and now the federal Liberal government.

My concern is that senior levels of government have downloaded to provincial governments and have washed their hands of responsibility. Most of the forestry is taking place on private land, and it is federally regulated. It needs to be a priority for the federal government, and we have not seen any action on it.

We have seen mill closures in our communities. Right now, Port Alberni does not have the highest median income in Canada; it has the highest poverty rate in British Columbia. Even people working in the forestry sector who have those few jobs in raw logs, almost the only jobs left in our community, are saying that this is not right.

We need action on investment in our technology so that we can process our fibre, and we need to stop raw-log exports at the speed it is going right now in our communities.

Business of Supply

• (1520)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I would also point out to the government that while we wait for a softwood lumber agreement, we are essentially pitting one region of this country against another in terms of the tariffs that have been imposed on individual regions. In some parts of the country, it is as little as 3% in tariffs, but in other parts of the country we are looking at 24% to almost 25% in tariffs. That is extremely detrimental. I know that the folks up in northern Alberta definitely do not feel that the government has their backs when it comes to softwood lumber. They are looking forward to a response and an agreement soon.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House know how important and vital the lumber industry is to communities and workers across this country and that support is needed. The member mentioned that in his speech.

The government has invested \$150 million over four years to support clean tech, and it has also invested \$867 million for a softwood lumber action plan. This, together with our 2017 budget, is an unprecedented level of investment in forestry.

Would the hon. member not commend the government for making these investments and recognize that this is a priority for us?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, what the people in my riding continually address is that they do not want subsidies. What they want is a fair playing field so they can compete in the international market. That is what they are looking for.

They feel penalized by the Americans with these high tariffs, and they want to ensure that the government has their backs. They do not want the government to pat them on the back and give them a handout. They want it to go out into the international community to defend our products and allow us to fight for our space in the marketplace.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

I would also like to thank the member for Richmond—Arthabaska for moving today's motion, which is timely and important, especially for my province's forestry industry in light of the impact that the softwood lumber dispute with the United States continues to have and the many ways in which our government is helping the industry transform at the dawn of the clean growth century.

Quebec's forests have helped define our province and its people for quite some time now, and with good reason. Two-thirds of our province's territory is forested, and thanks to prudent management and the natural diversity of our forests, the Quebec forestry sector has carved out an important place in our social, economic, and cultural traditions. Surprisingly, despite these deep roots, it was not until the 1820s that a provincial forestry management regime was created with the collection of royalties on softwood lumber harvested on crown lands. At the beginning of the 20th century, our forestry sector changed course somewhat with the development of pulp and paper.

Its spinoffs extend to every corner of the province today. This industry employs approximately 65,000 Quebeckers and exports nearly \$10 billion in forestry products every year. From softwood lumber to cardboard and veneer, as well as pulp and paper, the forestry sector is the main employer in many Quebec municipalities. Softwood lumber is essential to this sector. In Quebec, about one in six forestry workers is employed by the softwood lumber industry, which generates nearly a quarter of all Canadian softwood lumber exports, which nearly all go the American market.

That is why the imposition of anti-dumping and countervailing duties, which total an average of 26.75%, is a serious threat to our province's softwood lumber industry. That is why our government is doing everything in its power to resolve this issue and negotiate a deal that is fair for all.

We will vigorously defend Canada's softwood lumber industry against these unfair duties, including through litigation, and we expect to prevail as we have in the past. At the same time, we continue to support Canada's softwood lumber sector by introducing an \$867-million action plan to strengthen the industry, support its workers, and diversify the uses and markets for Canadian wood and wood products.

This action plan includes loans, loan guarantees, and other financial services for the industry under the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada; access to the work-sharing program to help employers and employees protect existing jobs; funding to provinces to help affected workers; new funding for the indigenous forestry initiative to support indigenous participation in economic development activities; extending the investments in forestry industry transformation program and the forest innovation program to support the development of next-generation Canadian wood products; and access to the expanding market opportunities program, which increases market opportunities for Canadian wood and expands wood use in construction.

We firmly believe in the Canadian forestry industry's abilities. We are determined to help the industry and its workers meet the challenges they are facing and come out stronger than ever. Our confidence in the industry comes from its ability to innovate and adapt to the clean growth economy. As the Minister of Natural Resources mentioned, there can be no global solution to climate change without the forestry sector. Why? The reason is that it is the only resource sector that takes carbon out of the air. Canadian forests are the lungs of the planet. That is why we are making strategic investments in this industry, including in several initiatives in Quebec that are the first of their kind in North America and the world.

Business of Supply

•(1525)

For example, through the investments in forest industry transformation program, we have already made significant investments three Quebec projects that help support a side of the forestry industry that is perhaps less well known and that achieves some rather unexpected results. In Thurso, we invested \$9 million in the Fortress Speciality Cellulose mill to support the creation of the first mill in North America that uses birch to manufacture dissolving pulp, a substance that is used in a wide variety of applications, such as automotive components, clothing, and even medical equipment.

This investment will save over 300 jobs, reduce energy and production costs, and is just one more example of how economic prosperity and environmental protection go hand in hand.

Similarly, in the Masson-Angers sector, we invested \$10 million to help S.E.C Papier Masson WB implement a new technology for producing a wood fibre for the production of wood-plastic composites, the first project of its kind in North America.

These wood-plastic composites will replace non-renewable polymers and will have a wide range of applications, such as the inside panels of car doors.

With these investments, the plant will be able to maintain over 110 local jobs and create new ones, while reducing its energy consumption by 15%.

The third investment is in a company called Bioénergie AE Côte-Nord Canada in Port-Cartier, where our \$44.5-million contribution will help with the construction of a commercial facility, the first of its kind in the world, that uses a technology specifically designed to convert forestry waste into a sort of renewable fuel.

This fuel will be a greener alternative to fossil fuels, and could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90% compared to conventional fuel sources. It will have many different applications, including heating and transport.

With our government's support, forestry companies like the three I just mentioned invest in research, develop new products, and find new marketing opportunities. The Origine project in the Pointe-aux-Lièvres eco-district in Quebec City opened just last month thanks to a \$1.2 million investment from our government. It is the highest residential condominium tower made of solid wood in North America. This 12-storey structure built on a one-storey high concrete footing is mostly made of cross-laminated timber panels, a technology that pushes the technical limits of wood construction and takes wood to new heights. By the way, all the wood used in this project stores 2,065 tonnes of carbon.

That is our vision for the forestry sector of tomorrow, a vision in which forestry is a high value-added, high-tech sector, a leader in innovation, and a key player in the fight against climate change.

Unfortunately, the motion before us makes no mention of these kinds of initiatives. Instead, it is all about finger pointing and, in my view, all comes down to petty politics.

I will vote against the motion because we have much more important things to do. We want to support an industry that, through innovation and clean technology, and given the worldwide trend and

the urgent need around the globe for everything having to do with wood, will help Canada pave the way for the low-carbon economy of tomorrow.

I am proud to say that Quebec is front and centre in these efforts.

•(1530)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

I am glad he mentioned just how much has been invested in innovation, and I would add that these kinds of investments did not just happen over the past two years. For 10 straight years, the Conservative Party invested in Quebec's forestry industry. We are the reason that these projects are now coming to fruition and playing a major part in innovation throughout the regions of Quebec.

My colleague stated that this motion is not important and that we are wasting our time. There is a byelection this coming Monday. Is he trying to tell people in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean that forestry is not important for their region?

Mr. Denis Lemieux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Obviously, the forestry sector is important for my riding. It is written in my DNA.

I remind my colleague that I am a mechanical engineer who dedicated 25 years of his life to the development of the forestry sector. About 7 or 8 years ago, I submitted an investment proposal of around \$20 million in solid biofuels to the minister responsible for my region at the time.

What feedback did I get? No one returned my calls. I will not take any advice from the party opposite on this matter.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in the House, my community has seen raw log exports go up tenfold in 10 years. Under the previous Conservative government and now under the Liberal government, we have the highest poverty rate in British Columbia. We used to have the highest median income in Canada. We used to outpace how Fort McMurray is doing today. We were thriving, but we processed our wood in Canada, instead of putting our wood on ships and sending it out of the country. We have seen mills close and the current government doing very little to protect those jobs. It is federal jurisdiction, because most of the forestry is happening on private lands.

Business of Supply

As I said earlier, even people working in those forestry jobs exporting raw logs do not want our wood getting shipped out without it being cut. I want to hear from the member what he will do to stop the shipment of wood out of our country and to create jobs here in Canada now. People cannot wait. A third of the kids live in poverty in my community right now, and it is because of the economy and the fact we are shipping our fibre out of our communities.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lemieux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me an opportunity to explain what I do on the ground to help my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

This week, I met with Unifor representatives to discuss the imminent reopening of the waferboard plant in Chambord. Members know that I always speak positively about the forestry sector because I have 25 years of experience in that area, as opposed to some of my colleagues opposite who are always talking it down whenever they speak in public.

This kind of attitude is making it increasingly difficult to encourage our young people to become involved in forestry and receive training in that field. My daughter and her spouse, who are both civil engineers with forestry training, wonder if they will have to leave the region and find work abroad because they are afraid of not being able to hold on to their jobs.

Eventually, my colleagues will have to realize that their negativity has an impact on the future of the forestry sector in Quebec and Canada.

[English]

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his last comment in particular about always being positive about forestry and softwood lumber and to engage our youth in this area, because it is so important.

In terms of the investments we have made, we know that our government has invested \$860 million in the softwood lumber action plan and that this industry is responsible for over 200,000 jobs. How have our investments created jobs for the middle class?

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lemieux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. In addition to the investments we are making and the enthusiasm we are creating, there is one man in my region, mayor Gilles Potvin, who encourages economic development and supports my positive message. He launched the “We Are the Forest” campaign throughout Lac-Saint-Jean to show that, contrary to what we keep hearing from the parties opposite, Quebec's forestry industry has a very bright future.

[English]

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is impossible to overstate the importance of the softwood lumber industry to our country, the Canadian economy, and the many communities that depend upon it. There are more than 600 softwood lumber mills in Canada. Many of them are in remote or indigenous areas and communities, including in my riding of Surrey Centre. In

fact, I am told that my riding has among the most softwood lumber employees in the country. A lot of these mills are family-owned, and some of them are particularly small and vulnerable operations. Together, these mills are a major employer, providing jobs for some 38,000 Canadians, along with another 32,000 jobs for those working in the forestry and logging operations at the core of timber supply. The result is that last year, Canada's softwood lumber industry generated more than \$10 billion in exports, more than three quarters of which were sold south of the border.

When my father Mohan Singh Sarai arrived here to make Canada his home so many years ago, he arrived in British Columbia, which was home to a thriving and vibrant forestry sector. My father found well-paying employment in several lumber mills, from Boston Bar to New Westminster. Later on, my brothers Par, Raj, and Paul; many cousins; and several uncles all found work in sawmills. In fact, I even married the daughter of a sawmill worker from Fort St. James. My family story is not unique. It is the story of tens of thousands of families who make their home in British Columbia and in many regions across Canada.

The member opposite is right to be concerned that the U.S. Department of Commerce, decided earlier this year to impose anti-dumping tariffs and countervailing duties on Canadian softwood lumber, totalling an average of 26.75%. For the hardest hit, those tariffs and duties climbed almost 31%. That is simply unsustainable.

The countervailing duties, which average just a fraction under 20%, expired at the end of August. The U.S. has indicated that it will render its final decision on them by mid-November. That is why our government plans to continue fighting vigorously for the softwood lumber industry and those whose livelihoods depend on it, including through litigation, if need be. This is the fifth time that Canada has had to defend its softwood lumber industry against U.S. claims in the last 35 years. Independent trade panels have repeatedly found U.S. claims to be baseless. We have prevailed in the past, and we will do so again.

Unfortunately, the motion before us, however well intended, is flawed in two key ways with respect to softwood lumber. First, it accuses our government of failing to negotiate a new deal on softwood lumber with the United States. If the member for Richmond—Arthabaska is suggesting with his motion that we should just accept any terms with the United States for the sake of a negotiated settlement, then he is simply wrong.

We do not want just any deal for Canada's softwood lumber; we want the right deal. We want a durable and equitable solution that is fair to softwood producers, downstream industries, and consumers on both sides of the border, nothing more, nothing less. We continue to work toward that end, which is why the motion before us is also flawed in suggesting that the softwood lumber file is not a priority of our government.

Business of Supply

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Trade speak regularly with their American counterparts in an effort to solve this impasse on softwood lumber. In the meantime, we continue to demonstrate our commitment to Canada's softwood lumber industry in the most powerful way possible, by stepping up to the plate for its workers and their vulnerable communities with an \$860 million softwood lumber action plan.

I would like to highlight some of these measures. Under our plan, the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada have made a combined \$605 million in financial products and services available on commercial terms to help viable companies make capital investments and diversify into new markets. There is also more than \$160 million to help the Canadian forest industry expand both its product lines and market opportunities.

• (1540)

As well, we continue to work with the provinces to ensure that affected workers have the support and adjustment services they need and deserve. This includes almost \$90 million in new funding to extend work-sharing opportunities to help companies retain their employees and assist affected workers who are upgrading their skills for jobs in other fields. Finally, there is \$10 million for the indigenous forestry initiative to help indigenous communities pursue economic opportunities in the forest sector. This is real action. It is meaningful support and reflects the priorities we have placed on an industry that has helped to shape our country and define our people.

This motion fails to recognize any of that, but I am pleased to note that Canada's softwood lumber producers, their workers and communities, are appreciative of our efforts. Look at some of the media coverage our action plan has earned, headlines such as, "Forestry Industry Embraces Canada's Nearly \$870M in Softwood Aid", or comments such as this one from New Brunswick's softwood lumber association, "We appreciate the federal government's focus on this issue." The British Columbia Lumber Trade Council has said that everything we can do to expand markets for our products around the globe helps us decrease our reliance on the U.S. market. We agree.

That is why the Minister of International Trade was in China in the spring to promote the use of Canadian wood in home construction while his parliamentary secretary travelled to Vietnam, Singapore, and Brunei to pursue new export opportunities for Canada's forestry sector. That is why the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has been in the U.K. and mainland Europe to sell Canadian wood and wood products and why the Minister of Foreign Affairs followed up on those efforts with her own trip to Europe. That is why the Minister of Natural Resources recently renewed a memorandum of understanding with China to use Canadian wood in sustainable eco cities.

Our efforts and industry's resilience have us headed in the right direction. Together we are going to ensure that Canada's softwood lumber industry emerges stronger on the other side of this. In fact, it is already happening. As the Minister of Natural Resources has previously indicated, the uptake of our softwood lumber action plan has been limited to date as Canadian producers continue to find ways to overcome this unwarranted trade action by our neighbour. It also

helps that softwood lumber prices are currently well above their 52-week highs.

It does not mean we can let our guard down. There have been some mill closures and job losses. Even one job is one too many, so we will continue to work closely with the industry, provinces, and communities. We believe that the long-term future of Canada's forest sector is bright, built on some of the world's leading sustainable forestry practices, ongoing technological advancements, and a global urgency for wood and wood products that can help lead in the fight against climate change. Today's motion is remarkably silent on many of these fronts, and I will not be supporting it.

• (1545)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wish I could share my colleague's optimism about his government's support for the softwood lumber industry. Does he really believe that his government is making the softwood lumber industry a priority when it was not even mentioned in the ministers' mandate letters? How can he really believe it is important to the government when it is not even mentioned in those letters?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I am very confident. Our Prime Minister spoke several times with the previous president of the United States, with the current president of the United States, and trade commissioners. I just met with the premier of British Columbia, the newly minted one and the previous premier, and both have been very satisfied with the federal government's efforts in this matter. I have met with COFI, the Council of Forestry Industries, in British Columbia. It is very pleased with the way our government has taken a stand and upheld its interest. I have spoken to owners of sawmills in my riding and a number of them have been very happy with the direction we are going and the support the government has offered to them, their industry, and their workers.

I am very confident that our government is doing an excellent job and I completely disagree with my colleague's comments that the government is not taking this seriously.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my community in the Alberni Valley, we have seen raw log exports go up tenfold in 10 years. We now have the highest poverty rate in British Columbia. This is after 10 years of a Harper government. Now the current Liberal government says it has a plan of real action. This is what real action looks like right now: jobs leaving forestry communities. If we want to support this motion, which is support for forestry workers, that is creating jobs in forestry communities; that means stopping raw log exports and investing in research and development, marketing, and retooling in that sector and obviously coming up with a softwood lumber agreement, which is urgently needed.

Business of Supply

I want to hear from my colleague and friend across the way. What does it take to create a sense of urgency when we had a community like the Alberni Valley and Port Alberni that had the highest median income in this country in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, sending buckets of money to Ottawa, and right now the communities are being left with nothing? There is no help, jobs are leaving our communities, mills are closing, and one-third of the children are living in poverty. What is it going to take to get real action?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, my colleague from British Columbia is right. Port Alberni has been a booming town and a valley where the forestry sector was very strong. It was very diversified. It has struggled, and we need to do more to help that industry grow. I know a lot of pulp and paper mills have also closed, and it is a place that is struggling to merge with the new emerging markets, but a lot can be done. I am confident that our government is committed to working with the forestry sector in that market and to ensuring that job growth is there, so that we get the most for the industry, that it is sustainable, that it grows, that it prospers, and that his area as well will prosper once again.

The softwood lumber industry has been a tough sector, and the previous Harper government neglected that. It is time to take action on it, I agree, and we will be lobbying as much as possible to make sure it is a healthy sector in the member's region.

• (1550)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the motion talks about the damage Greenpeace is doing to the forestry industry. We have a mayor in Saint-Félicien in Quebec, in the Saguenay Valley, who says that Greenpeace wants their total death. I wonder what the member can tell us the government is going to do to stand up to Greenpeace to end the lies from Greenpeace and end the attack on Canadian jobs in the Canadian forest industry.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, this country stands on free speech, this country stands by science, and this government stands by free speech and science, so people have the right make their views known out in the open. They are allowed to protest. They are allowed to mention their views, and it is this government's duty to act on science and research and data. That is where our government is doing an excellent job. Every environmental agency has its right to free speech.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

I am happy to be here today to speak about the softwood lumber situation, which directly affects my riding of Yellowhead. We are one of the largest areas of Alberta. Along with my colleague's riding of Peace River—Westlock to the north, we have mostly all of the logging in the province of Alberta, which employs well over 100,000 people. Therefore, I am very concerned.

Back on October 12, 2015, the softwood lumber agreement between Canada and the United States expired. It was an agreement made by the previous Conservative government. Here we are two years later with no softwood lumber agreement. Now, to add insult to injury, the U.S. is back to its old tricks of hammering Canadian forest companies with U.S. duties of 24.12%, which is pretty high, and some of those affect the mills in my area, such as West Fraser Mills Ltd.

When the Conservatives were in government, there was no softwood lumber agreement. They actually developed a softwood lumber agreement with the U.S. government in three months of negotiating. It was a softwood lumber agreement that was very good for Canada. It was a deal that saw the softwood lumber industry grow from coast to coast.

In fact, I was on the city council for the City of Fort St. John when this deal was ratified. I remember that, just prior to that, they were thinking of closing the mill in Fort St. John. The markets were poor and there was no chance of expanding. The mill just up the road from us in Fort Nelson closed after being open for many years. Then the softwood lumber agreement was signed. Lo and behold, we saw company owners looking at the future and thinking they could invest, modernize their technology, expand operations, and make money. In fact, shortly after that, two major companies in northern British Columbia came together. One was an American company. They built a new plywood facility in Fort St. John, employing close to 400 people.

This is what a softwood lumber agreement does for us. It gives companies security. It gives them a long-term forecast. We do not have that today.

Close to 400,000 jobs are at risk across Canada, because we do not have a softwood lumber agreement. The current government has failed Canadians and the softwood lumber industry. Now, the government is into NAFTA, trying to get it signed, but it still has this softwood lumber agreement in the back, and we are being hit hard by our U.S. counterparts. I am afraid that the softwood lumber segment of our country is going to hurt.

Close to 20% of Canada's GDP comes from Canada's natural resource industries, which are energy, mining, and forestry. Therefore, a big portion of the money that this country runs on comes from forestry.

Today I believe the Prime Minister is in Lac Saint-Jean, a community of more than 5,000. It is a softwood lumber community and region. Yet, to go back to the Prime Minister's letter of intent, he never mentions softwood lumber at all.

• (1555)

Does the Liberal government have a plan regarding softwood lumber? It makes me wonder, because two years of negotiations have failed to give us a softwood lumber agreement.

The three sectors I just spoke about employ almost two million Canadians. What is alarming is that all three are declining because of the current government, a government that states it is here for the environment and sustainability for Canadians.

I was at a breakfast this morning with the minister and I listened to her speak very eloquently about sustainability, Canada's future, and industry working to protect the environment. That is not happening. I do not think there is anybody in this room who can say that industry can survive without the environment. We know it relies on the environment. Industry in Canada has proven that we are probably the best example of stewards of the environment when it comes to industry anywhere in the world.

Business of Supply

Industry can help Canada be sustainable. We know that. As noted before, industry is a large contributor to our GDP, approximately 20%, and it can do so well protecting the environment. It has proven that time and time again. Yet we have a government that has put hurdles in front of our companies, which make it financially not feasible for some of them to exist. Energy east has gone south. Northern gateway is in limbo, because there is a moratorium that says no ships can haul crude oil on our west coast, but they can do it on the east coast.

We must have environmental laws. The government must work with Canadians and industry to develop a sustainable economy. It cannot do it in a silo, making up all the rules itself, and then dumping them on Canada's society and Canada's industries and telling them what to do. We know exactly what happens. All we have to do is go back to Energy east. The government put in some rules in the middle, and the company closed its operations.

The Liberals are failing us in the softwood lumber industry. I fear for the 171 municipalities across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, that are directly derivative of the forest industry. These communities are already hurting and they will hurt in the future. I can go back to before our Conservative government initiated the softwood lumber agreement, and I remember when 15,000 people in the province of British Columbia, where I lived for 40 years, lost their jobs. I do not want to see that happen today.

The Liberals need to get their act together. Maybe they should take their partisan attitudes and spend more time talking to MPs on the Conservative side who have successfully negotiated deals such as the softwood lumber deal and NAFTA. After all, are we not all working here together for the betterment of Canadians? The Liberals could learn a lot if they just sat down and talked to the hon. member for Abbotsford about how to make international deals.

I am concerned even further when it comes to softwood lumber, because the Liberal government is failing in other areas. The Liberals are failing us.

I have been working for two years with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, to take some serious action with respect to the pine beetle in Jasper National Park. It has destroyed the forest there. It has now moved into the province of Alberta and, in one year—if the members across would listen—it has increased tenfold.

The government needs to take some action to support Alberta's forest industry.

The government needs to take a look at our caribou, which is now an endangered species. The government is doing nothing to work with the provinces to ensure that these animals are protected. If the Species at Risk Act goes into play, and if the Province of Alberta gets its way, it will close down close to 4.9 million acres of our forestry land due to the caribou.

● (1600)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, about halfway through my hon. colleague's speech, he asked if the government has a plan for softwood lumber. Yes, we do.

We can agree with this motion that the forestry sector is a major employer in Canada, and it is a world leader in sustainable forestry practices. We have invested \$150 million to support clean technology. We are supporting it with \$876 million toward an action plan. We are taking this very seriously in terms of our negotiations. We have met with the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross. The Prime Minister has spoken with President Trump about the industry. As mentioned, we are looking for a good deal for Canada. Therefore, it would be irresponsible for us to stand in favour of this motion. I hope the member opposite can see why, with the investments and the conversations we have been having.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, it will not take too long to answer that. There is no softwood lumber deal. You can talk, but unless you can talk the talk and walk the walk and develop a plan for the Canadian softwood lumber industry, you are not doing your job.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I hope that the member was addressing that through the Speaker.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Yes, I was, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that the member for Yellowhead is concerned about the pine beetle epidemic that is now expanding in Alberta. We suffered through it for a decade or more in British Columbia. The unprecedented expansion of that epidemic killed off millions of acres of forest in British Columbia.

What we found in British Columbia was that no matter what we threw at that epidemic, it just kept on going until the weather helped us. To fight the beetles, we need very cold weather. At this time of year, we need short, cool summers. I am wondering what he is asking the government to do to stop this epidemic in Alberta, when we found in B.C. that we could only sit and wait for the climate to answer back.

● (1605)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I am asking for a couple of things. One is that the federal government step up to assist the province of Alberta, like it assisted the province of B.C. We know a lot more today than we did when the outbreak started in 1977 in B.C. in the Spatsizi area of the province. Over the last three years, the Province of Alberta and the forestry companies in the area where the pine beetle have been coming through the parks have held them at bay, until this year, because we do not have the financial resources provincially or through the companies. They knocked down 40,000 trees last year and kept them at bay. This year it was 540,000 trees.

Business of Supply

They are running rampant. Where did they come from? They came through Jasper National Park. I have been working with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and other groups to do some active burning there. We could have stopped them earlier on, but it was not done due to ecological integrity or something like that, I was told. However, if the government had taken some action, we could have slowed them down. We may have even been able to stop them, because we know a lot more about them today than we did when they attacked us when I lived in B.C.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion that affects many workers in Canada, and not surprisingly, in Quebec and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, in particular. We are talking about 370,000 direct and indirect jobs in Canada, including 60,000 in Quebec.

I represent a riding that shares a border with the state of Maine, which makes the flow of trade extremely important to us. We have enjoyed a free trade partnership with the United States for the past three decades, but its future is once again uncertain.

It is disappointing, then, to see the government opposite handling this file like amateurs. It neglected to negotiate a softwood lumber agreement as soon as it came to power, and now, Canada was caught off guard on the NAFTA file.

I would like to remind the House and Canadians who are watching us that the dispute around softwood lumber is not new. The previous government at least made it a priority. In April 2006, only three months after being elected, the Harper government ratified an agreement on softwood lumber which made for ten years of peace in that sector. In 2015, my colleague for Abbotsford was the minister in charge and he began discussions with his American counterparts which led to negotiations to renew the agreement. We all know what happened next.

The Liberals across the way came to power, but we still had hope that the initial discussions would bear fruit. When the current Prime Minister met with President Obama in June 2016, he had given himself 100 days to sign a new agreement. There was a smell of victory in the air, as some would say. However, the Liberals chose to double down. Michael Froman, who used to be the U.S. Trade Representative, said last May that the Government of Canada had received an offer from the Obama administration in order to find an agreement before the new administration took over, but the Prime Minister and his colleagues decided to wait and see if they could get a better deal with President Trump. Is the government proud of its decision today? I am not so sure.

We realize how out of touch this government is with the reality of the regions of Quebec and Canada. When he appointed the Minister of International Trade, the Prime Minister sent him a mandate letter. Of 2,731 words in that letter in French, not a single one is about the forestry industry. The English version contained 1,873 words, but the percentage remained the same: 0% of words about the forestry industry in both official languages. However, the letter contained a lot of jargon. I quote the Prime Minister: “advancing Canada’s progressive trade agenda to create jobs for the middle class and those working hard to join it”.

They have been talking for two years about the middle class and those who want to join it. Clearly the current Government of Canada does not recognize that forestry workers are part of that middle class, as they are not mentioned anywhere in the Minister of International Trade’s mandate letter.

In my riding, there are forestry producers and processors, such as Bois Daaquam in Saint-Just-de-Bretenières, Maibec in Saint-Pamphile, and Matériaux Blanchet. They offer very high-quality jobs in a setting where, it must be said, the population is aging and new workers are hard to find. So it is essential that this agreement be signed as soon as possible.

Those people in Saint-Pamphile and in the northern part of my riding are Canadians who live specifically off the forest. They are Canadians just like people in Montreal or Toronto. They pay their taxes like everyone else and it is the government’s duty to not forget them. However, it is in fact the interests of Canadians like them that are forgotten instead of defended when the government enters into NAFTA negotiations.

• (1610)

We currently have a Prime Minister who is trained as a drama teacher and who repeats platitudes ad nauseam in the belief that every opportunity is a time to share his so-called progressive virtues. He must deal with an American President who has made billions of dollars throughout his life negotiating agreements, and who is now threatening to abolish free trade.

Instead of ensuring that our \$2 billion in commercial trade can continue and that our forestry sector is defended, what is the government doing? The Liberals instead go to Washington demanding that the United States amend their laws to meet the so-called progressive criteria and values of the Liberal Party of Canada, and that the new agreement contain clauses to that effect.

Knowing the role of the large unions that directed all their resources to get them elected in the last election, the Liberal government even asked the American federal government to invalidate legislation, right to work legislation that exists in 28 of 50 states. In those states, workers are free to decide whether or not to belong to a union.

If U.S. President Donald Trump were to ask Canada to strike down labour laws in Quebec, New Brunswick, British Columbia, or Ontario, imagine the media outcry. It would be an abuse of power, an affront to our sovereignty as a nation, and an insult to our federation, which guarantees a certain level of provincial independence. This Liberal government is trying to do exactly that, but with a country whose population is 10 times greater than ours. Do the Liberals really expect to save NAFTA by making such demands?

Business of Supply

I want to make it clear that what Canada has put on the table will most certainly not help negotiations with the United States. What the Liberals should do is drive home the fact that trade agreements between Canada and the United States have resulted in truly reciprocal trade. The numbers show that Uncle Sam's trade deficit with Canada is virtually non-existent. It is \$11 billion out of \$545 billion, which is barely 2%.

Our Canadian wood is needed to meet one third of the current demand in the U.S. construction industry. We in Canada have what they need. These are points that need to be hammered home in order to be convincing during the negotiations. That is how we know that the government does not care about the forestry workers. In fact, the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord just said that we were wasting our time talking about this motion to defend the workers in the industry. He said it was unnecessary and unimportant.

Forestry workers can count on us to defend them. The sector is so unimportant to the Prime Minister that he did not even include the two little words “forestry industry” in a lengthy mandate letter to all of his ministers, including the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, not to mention the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. He could not be bothered to include the forestry industry.

Inevitably, we must absolutely vote in favour of this motion. I hope, at the end of the day, that all of my colleagues, and all members, both in government and in the second opposition party, will find this motion to be justified and justifiable.

In any case, it must be said, people—not only in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, but particularly in that region—have seen innovation. We have seen innovation in my riding. Investments have been made over the last 10 years and more to make businesses more productive and more innovative. Billions of dollars were invested when we were in government. Obviously that must continue. Clearly, we will continue to defend people in this industry.

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, we all knew that the softwood lumber agreement was set to expire in October 2015, so it is certainly reasonable to criticize the Liberal government for failing to negotiate a new agreement in the two years since then. However, I would like to ask my colleague why the former Conservative government did not negotiate a new agreement before leaving office.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The reality is that we had already begun negotiations. The 10-year agreement that was signed after three months of negotiations by the Harper government included a one-year extension to allow for negotiations, which we had already begun.

We, the Conservatives, never let down people in the forestry industry in negotiations with the United States, quite the contrary.

[*English*]

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we know that softwood lumber is vitally important for our communities and workers across the country. Ministers on this side of the House have said over and over again how important it is to ensure we get the right agreement and the right deal. The time we are spending is to ensure we get this right, because it is so important.

We have invested \$867 million in a softwood lumber action plan. Is this not, at the very least, an indication of the importance we have given to this file and an acknowledgement that this industry is very important to Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Actions speak. The Liberals have been in power for two years, and an agreement has still not been signed. Those are real facts. After two years of negotiations, there is still no agreement signed.

My colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia said that the linear price of wood had risen from \$500 to \$650 and that that means the industry is doing well. That is the government's response to the concerns of the industry and of workers across Canada. He says that things are going well, that the exchange rate is good and that wood is selling for \$650.

The day when things go really badly and this government is not ready, jobs will be lost and it will be no laughing matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, \$867 million is a significant amount of money, and it should not be a surprise. From day one, this has been a priority issue for us. We know that over 200,000 Canadians are directly employed in this industry, let alone the tens of thousands indirectly employed.

The government is very keen to get not only an agreement but a good agreement, and there is a difference. The Conservatives seem to be determined to sign an agreement. Would the member not agree that it is better for us to ensure we get a good agreement? That is how we will protect the industry and those middle-class jobs, and in fact expand the industry. Should we not try to achieve that?

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that we want to have a good agreement.

Business of Supply

An agreement was proposed when President Obama was in office. The Liberals must table that agreement so that we, Canada's parliamentarians, can evaluate it. The Liberals say that only they determine if it is a good agreement, but there are 338 members here in the House. We are able to all decide together whether or not it is a good agreement. The Liberals are saying that they decided that it was not a good agreement. Let them tell us, then, what constitutes a good agreement for Canada.

[English]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

When we think of forestry, Saskatchewan is not necessarily the first province to come to mind. However, the northern half of our province is almost completely forested, as is very well represented on our provincial flag. My grandfather, Mike Kalmakoff, was the general manager of the Saskatchewan Timber Board under the government of Premier Tommy Douglas. The goal of that provincial timber board was to get the best possible price for Saskatchewan's resource and also to encourage processing in the province, such as sawmills and also the development of a pulp mill.

I would like to talk about the importance of forestry to Canada in terms of those same two concepts, collecting revenue for the people who own the resource and also encouraging processing activity and the good jobs associated with that.

Under the first point of revenues from forestry, provincial governments charge stumpage fees for the timber. Of course the systems vary a bit from province to province. It is subject to provincial jurisdiction. However, certainly as Canadians, we would want to be collecting the best possible return for this resource. Stumpage fees are also at the heart of the current softwood lumber trade dispute. The American allegation is that Canadian stumpage fees are too low, that they are below the market value of the timber, and that they are an unfair subsidy to our industry.

Anytime this has been adjudicated by an international trade tribunal, Canada has won. Canada needs to be prepared to stand up to the United States on this issue. It was disappointing when the former Conservative government capitulated to the United States after all these tribunals victories.

However, the bigger point I want to make is that the reason we should want to optimize our stumpage fees is not actually to make the Americans happy in a trade dispute. First and foremost, the reason to ensure we have the best possible system of stumpage fees is to ensure that the Canadians who own the resource are getting the best possible return on it.

A side benefit of doing that might be to satisfy the Americans, although it is not clear the Americans will ever be totally satisfied. They probably have a desire to try to protect their own industry regardless of what Canada does.

Our first goal should be to ensure we collect as much revenue as possible from this resource that belongs to Canadian citizens through our provincial governments. Different provinces have tried different things in this area. Some have better systems than others. The federal government definitely needs to respect provincial jurisdiction.

We also need to recognize that having stumpage fees in provincial jurisdictions creates the risk of competition between the provinces and a race to the bottom on stumpage fees, where provinces are giving away their timber at lower and lower prices to try to attract investment away from other provinces. In the end, this does not increase the total pool of investment. It simply shifts investments and jobs around between provinces, ultimately leaving all provinces with less revenue from that economic activity.

There is a role for the federal government to try to coordinate between the provinces to maintain stumpage fees at some sort of reasonable level, and to try to discourage this sort of race to the bottom among provincial governments. There is a constructive role for the federal government to play in ensuring that all Canadians, regardless of which province they live in, derive the greatest possible revenue from our timber resources.

The second thing I want to talk about is the benefit we derive from forestry, not simply as revenue but also through processing that timber into lumber or into pulp and paper products. This is a major contribution to Canada's manufacturing sector as well. It is worth recognizing that it is a particularly important contribution to many forestry communities. There are many rural communities where the forest industry accounts for a majority of the local economy.

• (1625)

Therefore, it is important nationally but it is really important locally in some instances, and we need to have policies in place that encourage the processing of timber in Canada.

One major problem has been raw log exports, timber being taken out of our country in raw form, processed offshore and then maybe sold back to us as a finished product. To some extent, provincial governments can address this by putting processing requirements on the timber at source. The Government of B.C. had not been doing this. I am optimistic that now we have a progressive government in power in B.C., it will start requiring more and better processing of timber and that this problem may be resolved.

However, another aspect of this whole question of raw log exports, which is very relevant to us at the federal level, is the environmental question. Clearly, it is not very good for the environment to be shipping raw logs across the ocean, processing them in China or in some other offshore jurisdiction with lower environmental standards, and then using a bunch more energy to ship them back to North America as finished products. This obviously is increasing greenhouse gas emissions and worsening climate change. One of the potential unintended consequences of the federal government requiring a carbon price in all provinces would be to create a further incentive for that processing activity to happen in some other jurisdiction that fails to price carbon.

Business of Supply

Fortunately, there is a policy solution to this problem, and that is for the federal government to also extend its carbon price to the carbon content of imports from countries that do not have carbon pricing and rebate it on Canadian exports. Right now, sawmills and pulp mills in Canada will have to pay a carbon price. That does create an incentive for them to reduce their emissions. The problem is that lumber or paper products coming in from the United States, or from China or from other jurisdictions will not be paying that same carbon price. However, the federal government has jurisdiction over international trade and the federal government can and should apply that same carbon price to the carbon content of these products coming into our country.

Of course, our forestry industry is not just about serving the Canadian market; it is also an important export industry. Therefore, another aspect of the border adjustment I am talking about would be for the federal government to rebate that carbon price on exports from Canada to ensure our forest products are competitive and have a level playing field when they are sold in other parts of the world.

Ensuring that the federal government's carbon price is adjusted at the border would allow us to use it as a tool to reduce emissions in Canada, while at the same time ensuring it would not create an incentive for industry, including the processing of timber, to simply relocate to other jurisdictions that fail to put a price on emissions.

We have seen a major challenge with raw log exports. That challenge could actually be aggravated by putting a price on carbon in Canada that may not exist in other jurisdictions. The federal government can and should solve that problem by extending its carbon price to the carbon content of imports and rebate it on exports. This is a solution that would allow us to ensure that carbon pricing reduces emissions in Canada, without pushing jobs and pushing industry outside of the country.

What have I talked about today? Forestry is an extremely important industry to Canada. One aspect of that is collecting revenue from our timber resources. This is done through provincial stumpage fees. The federal government can and should play a role in coordinating between provinces to ensure there is no race to the bottom, to ensure that all provinces are collecting the best possible return from their forest resources.

Second, we have talked about encouraging the manufacturing and processing of timber in Canada. There are things that can and will be done at the provincial level to require processing. The federal government also needs to ensure that its carbon pricing system does not create an incentive for that processing to leave the country and apply the carbon price fairly at the border.

•(1630)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that our colleague from Regina—Lewvan is talking about reducing emissions at the same time that the energy east pipeline, which would have been produced by EVRAZ in his riding, has been turned down. The member talks about not supporting pipelines in this country while at the same time we are getting foreign oil from countries like Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. We know those countries have no emissions standards whatsoever, yet he can stand in the House today and talk about forestry when he

would not defend the pipeline that EVRAZ would have produced in his riding to give Canadians a chance to work and prosper.

I would like the member to talk about energy east and the pipeline that would have been produced in Saskatchewan and made Canadians prosper from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Erin Weir: Madam Speaker, certainly the amount of pipeline capacity that is built in Canada depends critically on the projected future production of oil. That depends on the price of oil, which certainly no Canadian politician can control, but we do have a number of pipelines going ahead, significantly Keystone XL as well as the Line 3 replacement project. The analysis I have seen suggests that with those projects going ahead, there simply was not enough demand to support energy east. That is the assessment that TransCanada made. It is also building Keystone XL and many of its customers are being included in that project rather than energy east. That may be unfortunate. There is not a lot we can do about it.

We can try to ensure that all pipelines that are built get built with steel produced by EVRAZ in Regina. That is something I have advocated for regularly in the House. I am quite disappointed that my Conservative colleagues have never done so. They have been cheerleaders for any and all proposed pipelines regardless of where the steel is produced. They would be fine if the steel were coming from offshore. I have stood in the House and advocated that the pipeline review process consider where the pipe is made, which would certainly help support good jobs in Regina.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I look forward to the day when we see an opposition day motion talk about the importance of our oil industry and to hear more about pipelines.

It is interesting that we are having an opposition day dealing with our forestry industry. We on this side of the House understand and appreciate how important that industry is to Canada. As I mentioned earlier, it creates 200,000 direct jobs and many more indirect jobs. This is a government that has come to the table since day one. We have now invested well over \$800 million in a fund to assist the industry.

Can we anticipate an NDP opposition day motion on the oil industry? The member may be a little offside with some of his colleagues on the pipeline issue, but I can appreciate and love Regina too. It is a great city. Could he provide his thoughts on the importance of the jobs in the forest industry?

•(1635)

Mr. Erin Weir: Madam Speaker, that was a somewhat convoluted question. The member for Winnipeg North criticized the Conservatives for bringing up the oil industry in a debate about forestry and then he tried to ask me about the oil industry instead of forestry and then came back to forestry at the end of his question.

Business of Supply

I am not entirely sure how to respond to this, but I would say that all of us in the House recognize the importance of forestry. All of us recognize the importance of having a strong energy industry. To the extent that pipelines such as Keystone XL and Line 3 are being built, we should be working to make sure they are being built with steel produced right here in Canada, because it is cleaner and safer than pipe imported from offshore. I am proud of the fact that I have stood up in the House for Canadian steel and pipe production.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Carleton, Taxation; the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Indigenous Affairs.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague ended his response on the need to acknowledge the importance of the country's forestry industry. Naturally, it is important in Quebec, though we often forget that it is even more so in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and in the James Bay area, both of which are in my riding.

My riding covers more than half the area of Quebec, which leads us to conclude that forestry is also important there. I can attest to this almost every day. In addition to the 14 Inuit and 9 Cree villages, and two Algonquin reserves, most of the municipalities located there, in one way or another, depend on forestry, and mining.

In light of all of this, I cannot help but acknowledge the importance of the forestry industry, which I talk about often, even in the House. However, there are several things missing from this motion, and I will come back to that.

First of all, I would like to highlight that in the NDP, we have always supported the forestry industry. We have always spoken in favour of this industry in the House, as much in our statements as in our questions. We will continue to do so.

The Conservative motion proposes to attack some NGOs, which is a little disappointing because it is not necessary. We should be talking about many other issues pertaining to the forest industry. So the motion misses the mark, in my view.

Also, we deeply regret the lack of progress in resolving the softwood lumber dispute with the United States. It is especially sad to see that after two years of Liberal government, there seems to be no progress on this issue. It is absolutely deplorable for the industry as well as for workers.

I would like now to speak to an item which looks crucial to me in the debate on the forest industry in Quebec as much as in the country as a whole. Discussions about the forest industry often revolve around the environment and environment-friendly methods of harvest in all regions of our country. However, the rights of aboriginal people is often overlooked in those discussions.

I do not know how many people in the House remember the struggle of my people, the Cree, against the forest industry in the

James Bay area of Quebec. At that time, around the end of the 1990s, 27 forestry companies were operating in the James Bay area, which is covered by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. The methods used by those companies were not compatible with the rights and interests of the Cree, as defined in that first modern treaty, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

The Cree had to resort to litigation, and the Quebec Superior Court ruled in their favour in December 2000. The Court said that provisions of the Quebec Forest Act were incompatible with the terms of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement because of the established rights and interests of the Cree.

A new forestry regime had to be negotiated for the James Bay area. There is currently a law of general application in effect everywhere in Quebec, but there is also a specific forestry regime for the area covered by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. I am proud to say that I negotiated that regime with the Government of Quebec myself.

● (1640)

There is a different regime for the James Bay area, and it helped us to strike a balance between the Cree's rights and interests and the long-term viability of the forestry industry in the area.

After the Cree won their case, they could have chosen to sit back and say that, if the forestry industry was ultimately not viable in the James Bay area, then so be it. However, they did not. We believed and still believe in the importance of forestry jobs. That is why we thought that it was necessary at the time to negotiate with the Government of Quebec on this issue.

It is important to keep working and to support forestry workers, who, I believe, play a major role in Canada's economy. They represent an estimated 200,000 jobs in the country, including about 60,000 in Quebec, according to the most recent data I have seen, which was for 2012, if I recall correctly. Many rural communities in my riding are forestry dependent. We are talking about roughly 200,000 jobs in Canada, many of them in my own riding.

What I want to underscore is that there is a major flaw in this motion, because it does not take into account indigenous peoples' rights vis-à-vis the forestry, mining, and oil industries, as was mentioned earlier. We must never forget that these constitutional rights exist, that they belong to Canada's indigenous peoples, and that they must be respected. That is what I mean when I say that a fundamental aspect is missing from the motion.

I would therefore like to move an amendment to the motion. Let us see if it is in order.

Business of Supply

I move that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after “the Minister of International Trade; and” and substituting the following: (d) our natural resources must be developed in collaboration with indigenous peoples and in an environmentally sustainable manner; the House express its support for forestry workers abandoned by the government.

• (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou moved an amendment. After reviewing and discussing the amendment, I must inform the hon. member that the amendment is beyond the scope of the main motion and is therefore out of order.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my community of Nanaimo—Ladysmith we have a great success story. This is a community built on forestry. It is the foundation of our settlement.

In recent years, Harmac Pacific Mill was purchased largely by its workers. Since that happened in 2008, they have added 150 new jobs. They are using residual wood waste from the pulp mill to invest in a sustainable energy system, one that is big enough to power 18,000 homes. It is at the heart of our economy.

We had one of Harmac Pacific Mill's reps, Cameron Milne, testify at the trade committee a year ago. He talked about the importance of a softwood lumber agreement and how it would support local milling, and thus the production of more sawdust and residual waste. That is the kind of material that is helping to supply pulp mill companies like Harmac Pacific.

I would like to invite my fellow member to comment about some of the collateral benefits of a good softwood lumber agreement that not only helps us with the export side, but also helps with the economy and jobs close to home.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Given that my amendment was rejected, I want to emphasize how much this motion is missing some fundamental elements, which is why I oppose it. I think something fundamental is missing. It is unfortunate that my amendment was rejected, although I fully understand the reasoning behind it.

My colleague raises an important aspect of the forestry industry. In many communities, including in my riding, success stories do exist. Take, for example, Chantiers Chibougamau, a lumber yard which has been investing heavily in innovation for many years now. It is known and highly regarded around the world for its construction materials. To give an example, the roof of the Buffalo Sabres training centre was built using Chantiers Chibougamau products, which is why it is so important that we have a good softwood lumber agreement.

[*English*]

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to assure the member that softwood lumber and forestry are very important to this government, which is why we have invested more than \$800 million in a softwood lumber action plan. Also, we have heard both the Minister of Foreign Affairs

and the Minister of International Trade talk about the importance of taking the time to ensure that the agreement we come to is the right agreement for Canadians.

I would ask the member if he agrees that it is important, because this is such an important file and industry for us as Canadians, that we take the time to get this agreement right for Canadians.

• (1650)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Madam Speaker, I do not think it is a question of taking our time, but rather a question of not taking time forever. The Liberals have been in power for the last two years, and time, according to me, is running out.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Durham.

The forestry industry is extremely important. The amount of forest land in Canada is 347 million hectares. We cut 594,000 kilometres a year, about 0.6%. That is all, and 60% of the land we harvest in the commercial forest industry is reforested. The forest industry has a great environmental track record.

In fact, I am going to focus on the environmental track record of the forest industry. Previous speakers spoke at great length about the economic issues related to the forest industry. I will look at the environmental side.

Some 321,000 people are directly and indirectly employed in the forest industry, with \$8.6 billion in wages and salaries. The value of exports is about \$28 billion a year. That is the economics of the forest industry, which is truly remarkable.

In my own life, I had the honour of being the environmental director at a forest company. It was the Pine Falls Paper Company in Pine Falls, Manitoba. It used to be part of the venerable Abitibi-Price Inc., the greatest newsprint company in the world. It fell on hard times and divested itself of the mill in Pine Falls. The employees bought the mill. It was a tremendous experience. I joined the mill shortly after the employees purchased the mill, and I became the environmental director at the mill. I managed the environmental operations of the mill itself. I managed the waste-water treatment plant. My comments on the forest industry are coloured by my direct experiences with the forest industry.

In my own constituency, I have two great forest products companies. There is Louisiana-Pacific, which produces oriented strand board, and now produces SmartSide siding for the international market. The other is Spruce Products, which is a softwood lumber company. Both are extremely efficient producers.

In addition, I had the honour of owning 300 acres of forest land myself. I have lived on my farm since 1979. One needs to do that in order to understand forestry from the standpoint of forests having a life cycle of their own, and very few people have experienced the life cycle of a forest.

Business of Supply

For example, in 1987, on our own farm, my wife and I clear-cut a small piece of the farm, about half a hectare, for firewood for a year. This was large forestry, but in our case it was very small. Nevertheless, about four or five years ago, I went back to that clear-cut and saw a stump we had cut. I could see it was rotting away. It was about 30 years after we had cut it. Standing beside that stump was a brand new tree. I felt so heartened by that, because it told me the management that I was doing on my land was appropriate. I actually knelt beside that stump, grabbed that tree, and had my wife take a picture of me. I will admit to the House of Commons right now that the member of Parliament for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa is a tree hugger, and I am very proud of that statement. Conservative and conservation, the two words work well together.

Let us expand this small example of my own little farm to forestry across the country. There has been an ever-increasing improvement in technology in the forest industry. I saw that as the environmental director at the Pine Falls Paper Company. For example, before a forest company can harvest forest over a large piece of land, it goes through an environmental process. There are hearings and licensing, and what comes out of that are terms and conditions that the forest company must follow.

The notion that it is a free-for-all in the forest is nonsense. Every single commercial forest company has to follow the terms and conditions of a publicly provided licence, and there are inspections.

● (1655)

Reforestation in Canada is largely a responsibility of the forest companies. For example, in the last couple of years 594,000 hectares of forest have been harvested in Canada and forest companies replanted 347,000 hectares of forest land. The rest of the forest land was regenerated through natural regeneration. Our industry exemplifies sustainable development.

The woodland side of forestry is one part of what the forest industry does. The second part is the processing. Again, I use my own example of the Pine Falls Paper Company that I used to work for. Unfortunately, the Pine Falls Paper Company does not exist anymore. It was a newsprint company that only produced 500 tonnes of newsprint a day. As a result of smart phones and the Internet, we are using far less newsprint than we used to. The loss of the newsprint industry in Canada is tragic in my view but inevitable perhaps because of technology. When I think of these venerable mills across the country that are now defunct, I am quite saddened. To see a site that used to be a flourishing town and a paper mill lying vacant is truly saddening.

Nevertheless, I go back to 1995, when I joined the Pine Falls Paper Company. By the way, I would remind the House that Brian Mulroney was named the greenest prime minister in Canadian history. Brian Mulroney's Conservative government in 1989 implemented the pulp and paper effluent regulations that mandated every single pulp and paper company in Canada to construct wastewater treatment plants. The company that I managed for three years did exactly that at a cost of \$25 million. Our effluent went from being a somewhat toxic effluent to effluent that you could actually drink. That is the progress that the forest industry has made over many decades. That is a feature of modern industrial societies, constant environmental improvement, and again today, we see the

results of that: blue skies and clean waters. We have not solved every environmental problem by far but advanced industrial societies are one of constant environmental improvement.

I have two major forest product companies in my constituency. One is Louisiana-Pacific, which is located in the Swan River area. It has produced in the past oriented strand board but recently it converted to creating a product called SmartSide siding. It is a hardwood mill that uses poplar pulp. What was interesting about the SmartSide siding conversion was that wood consumption was decreased, it increased value-added, and increased employment at that mill, the essence of sustainability.

The other company in my constituency is Spruce Products Limited. It is a small softwood lumber-producing company. Many members, regardless of which party they belong to, have toured lumber mills to see the laser technology they have employed to minimize waste. I saw logs come off the line and immediately the computer said 2 two-by-fours would come out of it, a two-by-six, and so on. The forest industry is not a sunset industry by far. It is an industry that is on the march.

The last part of our motion talks about the effect of environmental groups on our industry. There was an article in the March 3 edition of the *National Post* that described the Greenpeace attack on Resolute Forest Products. This was an interesting article. Greenpeace went after one of the largest forest companies in this country. The article reads "Greenpeace admits its attacks on forest products giant were 'non-verifiable statements of subjective opinion'." One of the largest environmental groups in this country basically lied about what a forest products industry did and it admitted it.

I am going to paraphrase what Greenpeace said in the lawsuit that was filed. The publications used the words "forest destroyer". It is of course arguable that Resolute did all of this. Greenpeace adds that its attacks on Resolute, and this is important, "are without question non-verifiable statements of subjective opinion and at most non-actionable rhetorical hyperbole."

● (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the member's time is up. He will probably be able to finish any comments within the comments and questions period.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my friend from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa has given an excellent summary of the forestry industry and how it works. He talked about his 300 acres, which I assume used to be 600 acres before it was worked on. With all this great understanding of the forestry industry, which is a huge part of my riding as well in the Laurentians, as we have tens of thousands of kilometres of forested lands, why is he supporting a motion that calls for an agreement now instead of a good agreement when we can get one?

Business of Supply

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, I deeply respect the hon. member's attachment to his constituency and the rural community he comes from.

We do not trust the Liberal government, to be quite honest. For the last couple of years, the government has talked about getting an agreement. It has not done so. Again, one of the reasons we lost some of our mills was the lack of an agreement with the Americans in terms of the softwood lumber dispute.

The government had better come forward with something concrete, or else we will not support it.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member and I have had a number of great conversations. He is a fantastic and interesting guy, clearly demonstrated by his life cycle of a forest speech.

Unfortunately, I will have to oppose this motion, even though I am a tree hugger as well. I oppose this motion because of the language in it saying that we have failed the softwood lumber industry. We have made investments of \$150 million to support clean technology in the natural resources sector, something the company Louisiana-Pacific can appreciate, which is located in his riding. We have made investments of \$850 million in an action plan. We will continue to raise the issue of softwood with the U.S. administration and the President.

Does the member not agree that it is important that we continue to negotiate until we get a good deal for Canadians?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, the member's kind words are certainly reciprocated. I have a deep and abiding respect for her work in mental health, and in my view, she is a member of Parliament for all the right reasons.

I am not going to dispute what she said in terms of how important it is that we get a good agreement, but quite clearly, the sooner the better.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to hear the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa talk about the environment, because he is a Conservative and an environmentalist. He is to be commended for that.

Unfortunately, his time was cut short in talking about some of the falsehoods that have been repeated by environmental NGOs. I would like him to take some of the time he has left to continue where he was cut off.

• (1705)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, let us take a forest that has been harvested. It looks bad initially. In fact, a clear-cut has been described as a bad haircut, but haircuts come back. What happens in forest succession is that an old forest starts to become a young forest. The biodiversity in a young forest is significantly greater than it is in an old forest. What I mean by biodiversity is the number of plant species. What happens when the biodiversity in a forest increases in terms of the number of plant species is that the number of wildlife species increases as well. Species that people really want, such as ruffed grouse, moose, white-tailed deer, and many songbirds, prefer young forests. The creation of young forests from forestry is actually a good thing, under the proper management regimes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Durham. I will advise the member that I may have to cut his time short.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to follow my friend from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, one of the most passionate and knowledgeable people in the House on the environment, forestry, hunting, and angling. I am very proud to call him a friend and to have explored with him a lot of really innovative approaches to the environment and forestry, which he discussed in his speech, but also alternative land-use systems and a whole range of issues that I think we will be hearing more about from him in the coming years.

The opposition party has brought to the floor today an opposition motion on the softwood lumber sector and forestry workers. The current government is now at the two-year mark, and it has failed those Canadians, almost 400,000 families that rely on our access to the U.S. market. As all members of the House should know, 96% of imports of softwood in the U.S. are generally Canadian. A few lumber barons in the U.S. from time to time try to stop that, which ends up raising prices and actually makes home affordability less accessible for Americans and will halt and make more expensive the rebuilding in Texas and Florida. Therefore, we have to articulate why it is in the American national interest to secure a deal on softwood.

As much as I respect the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for two years she has been saying that they are working hard on it, but there are no results after two years. I remind the government, at its two-year mark, that it took the last Conservative government three months in office to secure a deal on softwood. We know it is a complex issue, but for the 400,000 families that have been hearing the minister's constant line that they are working hard on it, it is not enough. We need a deal.

I will spend a few minutes on why this is one example of the U.S. relationship eroding terribly under the current government. Image, state dinners, photo ops, and magazine covers are one thing, but we are not getting results for Canadians and families in this relationship. This is turning into a one-sided relationship, regardless of which party is in power in Washington.

The motion today talks about how we are world leaders in forestry sustainability. My friend from Manitoba just mentioned that. He talked about the importance of this deal to our economy. There are 370,000 direct and indirect jobs related to the forestry sector, and our softwood lumber exports, from west to east, are critical to the economies of those provinces. Let us not forget that. This is not an issue for just one region of our country. It is truly a Canadian issue.

We all know that in April, the U.S. commerce department introduced tariffs as high as 25%, effectively barring our exports to our largest market. Under the Conservative deal, 96% of all imports in the U.S. were Canadian softwood, the best in the world. We need a deal desperately.

Business of Supply

In 2006, as I said, three months into the Harper government, a deal was struck with the Americans, and then in 2012, that deal and the terms of it were given an extension to 2016. As much as the Liberal government likes to kick the can down the road, it had a full year of a mandate to at least extend the terms further. That is usually what parties can do when there is a renewed agreement between two friends and a renewal period, which the Conservatives had already accessed. The government could not even get a renewal period, let alone a new deal. We have now seen that deal collapse. We have now seen layoffs, and we now see duties of up to 24%.

The minister was charged with this from day one, first in her role as Minister of International Trade and now as Minister of Foreign Affairs. What did she say on February 26? She said that the Prime Minister of Canada brought it up in a meeting with President Obama and that they were working hard on it. The last time she raised this issue was in committee in August 2017, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. She said that it is a priority of hers personally and that they are working hard on it. I have no doubt that they are, but they are not getting the job done, and there are thousands of families seeing that first-hand.

We all remember the Prime Minister introducing President Obama in this chamber and talking about the bromance and talking about dudeplomacy. We did not get a deal. We got *Vogue* magazine covers. We got state dinners. We did not get a deal for our people. This is what concerns me.

• (1710)

Even the press gallery is fooled by the image branding of the government, making it look like it is doing a lot in the United States and continuing the work actually started by Rob Merrifield, who started working with governors, tracking how much we export to states, and building congressional relationships. In fact, Rona Ambrose and members of this caucus worked with the government to continue the work started under the Conservatives. It did not start with the election of the government two years ago. I applaud the Liberals and have continued to applaud them for continuing, but unlike in the past, under both Conservative and Liberal governments, this is not a relationship of mutual respect anymore. We have had two years of a priority and working hard on it, and zero results on softwood.

What else did we have under the bromance between Barack Obama and the Prime Minister? We had him cancelling Keystone XL. That is what his dude buddy did. He cancelled a key job for our energy sector. We had a carbon tax introduced in Canada, praised by the U.S. president, but the U.S. president did not introduce a carbon tax. He let the Canadian Prime Minister put his own economy at a competitive disadvantage to our friends in the United States. They probably laughed all the way to the bank, praising it, but certainly not mimicking it.

However, I think the most egregious action under the Prime Minister and former President Obama was that our Prime Minister went to Washington and signed away 10% of our Arctic waters and 17% of our land mass in our Arctic, and banned any development, even if it was in the interest of Inuit, first nation, and indigenous peoples or the territorial leaders. Despite the language on reconciliation, which we hear from the Prime Minister, and the

duty to consult, he gave provincial and territorial leaders and first nations leaders a cursory phone call while he was in Washington. We have heard my friend from the NDP try to insert a change on “duty to consult” today.

The Prime Minister of Canada went to Washington and did not consult indigenous leaders before he told them what they could do in their lands and their waterways. It is probably the most egregious action I have seen from a Canadian prime minister in dealing with our American neighbours. At the very least, there should have been a summit of territorial and indigenous leaders before the Prime Minister acted unilaterally on a priority of the U.S. president.

That is how well the relationship went under the bromance between this Prime Minister and President Obama. How has it been with the new U.S. President? Well, we stand on the brink of losing NAFTA, with two million jobs dependent on that trade relationship. A speech by this minister, with help from the Prime Minister's Office, no doubt, did not even mention the auto industry as a priority in July. We would not have free trade in North America were it not for the auto industry.

Between NAFTA, the tax and competitiveness imbalance, and the softwood lumber lack of a deal, we have seen a relationship erode. I want to see that rectified and the government start standing up for workers in forestry and all other industries.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

Business of Supply

(Division No. 368)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Allison
Benzen
Bernier
Bezan
Boucher
Carrie
Cooper
Doherty
Eglinski
Fast
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Hoback
Kelly
Kitchen
Lake
Leitch
Lobb
MacKenzie
McCaughey (Edmonton West)
Nicholson
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Saroya
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Van Kesteren
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Wong— 67

Albrecht
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Block
Calkins
Clarke
Diotte
Dreesen
Falk
Finley
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Jeneroux
Kent
Kusie
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lukowski
Maguire
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
O'Toole
Poilievre
Reid
Shipley
Sorenson
Strahl
Trost
Van Loan
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cuzner
Davies
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Benson
Bittle
Bossio
Bratina
Brisson
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Di Iorio
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Gould
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen

Hutchings
Johns
Jones
Khalid
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Mathysen
May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs
Monsef
Morrissey
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Picard
Quach
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sohi
Tan
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Iacono
Jolibois
Jowhari
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Malcolmson
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Murray
Nassif
Ng
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Philpott
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sikand
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesniewski
Zahid— 182

PAIRED

Members

Gill Sorbara— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[English]

FEDERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-57.

Routine Proceedings

● (1800)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 369)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultaif	Albrecht
Aldag	Alghabra
Allison	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Bossio
Boucher	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carr
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cooper
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Davies
DeCoursey	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Eglinski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk
Fast	Fillmore
Finley	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gladu	Godin
Goldsmith-Jones	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Hajdu	Hardcastle
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jeneroux
Johns	Jolibois
Jones	Jowhari
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kusie
Lake	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leitch	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Liepert	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Malcolmson
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)

Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Medicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nault	Ng
Nicholson	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
O'Toole	Ouellette
Paradis	Paul-Hus
Peschisolido	Peterson
Philpott	Picard
Poilievre	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Rankin	Ratansi
Raves	Reid
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Saroya
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shipley
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sikand
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Tootoo
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Viersen
Virani	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Wrzesniewskij
Young	Zahid— 244

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Gill Sorbara— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all parties and I think you would find unanimous consent that the 40th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: It being 6.03 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

SUPREME COURT ACT

The House resumed from March 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-203, an act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-203 today. It is an important bill and it seems to me that it reflects a value shared by the members of the House, who believe that it is important that Canadians across the country truly have access to the courts in the official language of their choice, and that includes the Supreme Court of Canada. I congratulate the member for Drummond for bringing forward this issue.

That said, although I applaud the objectives of this bill, I believe that the focus on the Supreme Court of Canada is misplaced and that it would be better to redirect these efforts in order to strengthen the bilingual capacity of Canada's superior and appeal courts.

First of all, the government has already taken real steps to ensure that judges appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada are actually bilingual. Focusing on superior courts across Canada will ensure that this benefits a greater number of Canadians and that there is a larger pool of bilingual judges that could be future candidates for the Supreme Court of Canada.

I am proud of everything our government has done to support official language minority communities. I am especially proud that our government has again demonstrated the strength of its commitment to enhancing the bilingual capacity of Canadian superior court judges at all levels.

On September 25, the Minister of Justice announced the action plan for enhancing the bilingual capacity of the superior courts. During her announcement, the Minister of Justice emphasized that all Canadians are entitled to have fair and equitable access to the justice system, which should be able to respond to their needs in the official language of their choice, and I think we can all agree on that.

The action plan initiatives will enable the government to assess the situation with respect to equal access to the superior courts in both official languages and take concrete action to close any gaps. I would also note that September 25 was Franco-Ontarian Day. I think it was smart to announce the action plan that day.

The seven-point action plan includes strategies for enhanced tools to verify and assess the bilingual capacity of judicial applicants,

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examine language training for current members of the judiciary, and confirmation of the minister's commitment to collaborative consultations with chief justices with respect to the bilingual capacity needs of their courts. The government is also committed to consulting with provinces and territories on relevant bilingualism initiatives in superior courts.

The action plan builds on our government's commitment to make every effort to develop a superior court judiciary with a sufficient bilingual capacity across the country in all trial and appellate courts. That is part of the government's overall objective of having a judiciary that reflects the face, voice, and reality of the Canadian population.

Of course, increasing the bilingual capacity of the Canadian judiciary will ensure not only greater access to justice in superior courts in both official languages, but also a rich pool of bilingual candidates for Supreme Court of Canada appointments.

The vast majority of Canadians will not bring a case before the Supreme Court, but will more likely have civil or family law cases before superior courts.

Allow me to paint a picture of the strategic measures that the government has already taken to ensure that candidates who are functionally bilingual are appointed to the Supreme Court.

Our government believes that the Supreme Court of Canada should reflect the linguistic duality of this great country. That explains the mandate of the Independent Advisory Board on Supreme Court of Canada Judicial Appointments, whereby the committee is to submit a list of qualified, functionally bilingual candidates to the Prime Minister for consideration.

The government's commitment to appoint functionally bilingual judges only is also part of the statement of merit criteria for evaluating candidates, a list that accessible and easily obtained on the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs website.

During the implementation of the new appointment process, Justice Malcolm Rowe appeared before parliamentarians gathered at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa and clearly demonstrated that he was functionally bilingual.

• (1805)

Furthermore, our government confirmed this commitment on June 13 when it tabled its response to the report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on the new process for judicial appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada.

On July 14, 2017, the Prime Minister of Canada launched a second process to select a Supreme Court justice in order to identify the ninth member of the court who will fill the vacancy created by the upcoming retirement of Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin. This advisory board will follow the same appointment process to ensure the appointment of jurists who are of the highest calibre, functionally bilingual, and who reflect the diversity of our great country.

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I would now like to elaborate on measures introduced by our government following the changes made in October 2016 to the process for judicial appointments to the superior courts. The objective of these measures was to bolster public confidence by making the process more open, transparent, and accountable in order to foster diversity and gender balance in the judiciary.

Among the reforms was a requirement for greater detail regarding applicants' self-identified bilingual capacity, the possibility of language assessments, and a new reporting requirement. The action plan announced on September 25 builds on those changes and takes important new steps in the areas of information gathering, training, and collaboration for and among many stakeholders.

The changes made in 2016 are already delivering results. For example, during question period in the House of Commons on September 25, the minister said she was very pleased that the critical reforms to the judicial appointments process had led to increased bilingual capacity, with five out of the eight judges in northeastern Ontario being fluently bilingual.

When the action plan was unveiled, the minister also said she was pleased that it addressed many of the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages in his 2013 report, entitled "Access to Justice in Both Official Languages: Improving the Bilingual Capacity of the Superior Court Judiciary". The report was produced in partnership with the commissioner's Ontario and New Brunswick counterparts. I understand this report was highly useful in the development of the action plan.

In closing, our government remains strongly committed to ensuring that Canadians across the country have real access to justice in the official language of their choice. I believe that our approach is the best way to fulfill our shared commitment to making sure our courts reflect the linguistic duality of this country.

Our government has kept its promise to appoint only functionally bilingual justices to the Supreme Court. Now it is time to expand that initiative to our superior courts and courts of appeal.

• (1810)

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to speak to Bill C-203, introduced by the member for Drummond. Bill C-203 would amend the Supreme Court Act to require that judges appointed to the Supreme Court understand both English and French, without the aid of an interpreter.

The Supreme Court as an institution already fully functions in both English and French. All services and communications of the court are provided in English and French. All those who appear before the court are free to use English or French in written or oral submissions. All judgments of the court are issued in English and French. All factums submitted to the court are translated, and during oral proceedings, judges and lawyers at the court have the benefit of simultaneous translation.

Therefore, it begs the question, if the court as an institution already is fully functional in both English and French, what benefit would Bill C-203 serve? Proponents of Bill C-203 seem to make the crux of the argument that judges who rely upon professional

translators may somehow miss nuances in oral argument, which in turn would lead to rendering of improper decisions.

The Supreme Court was established in 1875. For 142 years, the Supreme Court has heard and decided upon thousands of cases. During the debate around this bill and identical bills that were introduced in previous Parliaments, not one proponent of the bill could cite a single case that was decided wrongly, definitively on the basis of translation errors. There is not one case. Moreover, in the event that a case was decided wrongly, there is a remedy available. That remedy would be a rehearing of the case.

Therefore, it again begs the question that, if there is no case that has definitively been decided wrongly on the basis of a translation error, and if there is already a remedy available in that very unlikely event, what purpose would Bill C-203 serve? I submit that in the face of those facts and the evidence of what Bill C-203 is, however well intentioned, it is a bill in search of a problem that does not exist.

What Bill C-203 would do, however, if it were passed, is create many problems. First, it would significantly reduce the pool of qualified candidates for appointment to the Supreme Court. The fact is that, outside the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick, very few Canadians are fluently bilingual.

• (1815)

Indeed, had Bill C-203 been the law, some of Canada's most distinguished jurists would never have been appointed to the Supreme Court, including Chief Justice McLachlin, not to mention former chief justices Duff, Laskin, and Dickson. Justice Moldaver would not be qualified to sit on the Supreme Court, as he presently does. Justice Major from Alberta, who served on the court with distinction for 13 years, would not have been qualified. I could go on.

• (1820)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Sopinka.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Justice Sopinka is another, as the member for Durham correctly points out.

While the purported objective of Bill C-203 is to ensure that nuances of oral argument are not lost in translation, I would submit that the likelihood of nuances being lost are much more likely to occur in the event that Bill C-203 were passed. If translators at the Supreme Court, who are among the best translators in Canada, make mistakes, then what is the likelihood that a judge hearing a highly technical, highly complicated legal argument in his or her second language might also miss nuances of oral argument? Common sense dictates that it is a certainty, and I submit it is a certainty that will occur much more regularly if Bill C-203 is passed.

Then there are serious practical issues. Would a test be administered to determine proficiency in English and French? Who would be the arbiter of that test? What would happen to the current nine members of the Supreme Court? Would they have to take a test? If they did not pass, what would then happen? That is just touching the surface of some of the practical issues that would be faced.

While Bill C-203 is well intentioned, it is a fundamentally flawed bill. I fully agree that being able to understand English and French is a highly valuable skill for a Supreme Court justice to have, and I believe that it should be a consideration that goes into determining whether an applicant should be appointed. However, linguistic characteristics must not trump experience, competence, and excellence in the law, not to mention the many other personal characteristics that are essential for a jurist to serve on the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court of Canada.

As I say, Bill C-203 is well intentioned, but the problem with it is that it searches for a problem that simply does not exist, to the detriment of appointing the most qualified candidates to the Supreme Court of Canada, and it is on that basis that I oppose Bill C-203.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-203, an act to amend the Supreme Court Act, which deals with the understanding of official languages.

I would like to start by congratulating and thanking the member for Drummond for introducing Bill C-203. He has taken up a cause once championed by Yvon Godin, our former colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, who introduced the same legislation in 2008, in 2010 and again in 2014. This just goes to show that principles matter. On those three separate occasions, the NDP voted in favour of the bill, and the Liberal members, too, three times voted in favour of this very same bill we are discussing today.

That said, some of the speeches I have heard coming from the Liberal benches lead me to believe that they may not do so again. I wonder, if the Liberals believed this legislation to be sound on three separate occasions over a 10-year period, why would they cease to think so now that they are in government? It should be noted that this bill is very similar to one that passed in the last Parliament, a bill that was sponsored by Alexandrine Latendresse, then member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, and dealt with the language skills of officers of Parliament. Some of the points argued by my Conservative colleagues remind me of some of the ones I heard back then, when we were debating this same bill that would have required officers of Parliament to be bilingual.

The same applies today. The issue of the bilingualism of Supreme Court judges is a fundamental one. It involves not only sitting judges and those who may one day be called to the bench, but also the right of every Canadian to be served in their language of choice when appearing before our country's highest courts. It is one thing to be able to plead one's case in a given language, another thing entirely to be understood in that language.

To my mind, bilingualism is not an asset but rather a required skill, which is why the words “understanding the official languages” appear in the bill's title. This is about a specific skill among judges that will be called upon to hear cases in English and in French.

I will only read two quotes in my 18 allotted minutes. The first one comes from Serge Rousselle, former law professor at the University of Moncton, currently serving as the member for Tracadie-Sheila and Minister of Education in the Liberal government of New-Brunswick. I have known Mr. Rousselle since my days at

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the University of Ottawa. I know him very well, and I know how committed he is to advocating on behalf of francophone minorities.

This former law professor and dean of the University of Moncton's faculty of law said the following:

Bilingualism is a required skill for Supreme Court judges. To fully grasp an oral argument in a field where the subtleties of one official language or the other can be critical, the importance of being understood directly by the members of this court, without the assistance of an interpreter, seems obvious.

Moreover, how can one fully grasp a case in French when many documents have not been translated in English and cannot be directly accessed by unilingual anglophone judges?

This is a fundamental question that runs counter to what my colleague for St. Albert—Edmonton mentioned moments ago. From a logistical standpoint, it can be difficult to ensure the availability in both languages of all of the documentation needed to hear a case while sitting on the country's highest court. This is not only about translating documents, but also interpreting oral arguments. As competent as interpreters are, when they are called upon to interpret arguments that sometimes rely on extremely technical language, that can lead to disagreements over the meaning of what was said. I could quote several members of the legal profession who are of the belief that interpretation simply failed to reflect their arguments' level of sophistication.

That is entirely understandable. Interpreters are only human. Though I may consider myself to be bilingual, I do not envy them their work, which is extremely difficult. That said, the fact remains that some cases that end up before our country's highest court, the court of last resort, are inadequately heard by some Supreme Court justices.

• (1825)

Michel Doucet, a most esteemed law professor at the University of Moncton specializing in linguistic rights, said the following not too long ago:

I have had the opportunity to appear before the Supreme Court on at least seven occasions. I've also gone before a number of tribunals. I believe that my specific experience in the courts has enabled me to see to what extent it is important for judges to be able to directly understand the submissions made by the various parties.

In the week after I had argued a case before the Supreme Court, I had an opportunity to hear the English version of my arguments on CPAC, and I understood why I had lost the case five to four. The translation did not allow me to understand my own words. I wonder how justices can fully understand the matter at hand when they have to go through translation in which significant aspects of a submission are missing. When you win 9:0, there is no problem, but when you lose 5 to 4, you automatically wonder whether you should not have argued in English.

These words from a highly respected legal expert should be reason enough for us to want to study, at the very least in committee, the amendments that our colleague from Drummond proposes in Bill C-203.

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I am asking government members and even my Conservative opposition colleagues to at least give the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights the opportunity to debate this fundamental issue. It is not enough for government members to say that the issue is resolved because we have bilingualism programs for lower court judges that are ultimately supposed to help put more judges in superior courts. Nor is it enough to say that the problem will go away because the current government has a process to appoint bilingual judges. The same argument could have been used in the context of the bill on language skills for officers of Parliament.

If the government is going to appoint bilingual judges, why do we need a bill? Because it is not enough. We need to enshrine this requirement, this recognition in law to make sure it really happens and to make sure the changes stick. I do not know if other Liberal members will be speaking to this bill, but I would urge them to consider some of the facts I mentioned, which I will now recap.

First of all, while in opposition, the Liberal Party supported this same bill three times in the past 10 years: in 2008, 2010, and 2014.

Did their principles change when they were elected? I certainly hope not. It is not enough that this government is willing to appoint bilingual judges to the Supreme Court; we need to enshrine this principle in the law. Otherwise, there is no guarantee that a future Liberal, Conservative, or NDP government, or any other governing party, will be able to guarantee bilingualism within the Supreme Court, thereby guaranteeing that francophone and anglophone litigants will be understood in the same way and provided an equal playing field.

Equal access to justice in both official languages is a fundamental principle. In this country, our laws are not written in English and then translated into French. Laws introduced by francophone members are not drafted in French and then translated into English. Both versions are equally valid. This principle matters when interpreting legislation. That is why we must enshrine it in law.

Now, we are the first to admit that this bill may not be perfect, as I know the member for Drummond is aware. For instance, there is the issue of whether it may create barriers to the appointment of indigenous judges. On this side of the House, by which I mean me, the member for Drummond and the rest of the NDP, we are open to amendments that would allow us to address this issue. Such amendments could be moved in committee, for example.

The bottom line is that the House should not dismiss the member for Drummond's proposal out of hand, because it touches on a fundamental element on which the Liberals and the NDP have agreed for 10 years.

Let us pass this bill at second reading so we can tweak it in committee with a view to affirming the principles of providing justice in both official languages and of equality between both official languages in this country, and to ensuring that no case in Canada is lost, or suspected of having been lost, because a judge failed to understand the legal arguments presented because of the language in which they were presented.

● (1830)

I urge the House to vote for Bill C-203 so we can have this important discussion in committee and then return the bill to the House.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to this very important topic and to an institution that is dear to me. You will see why in a moment.

Although I support the intent behind Bill C-203 introduced by the hon. member for Drummond, I sincerely believe that at the end of the day, legislation is neither necessary nor even advisable under the circumstances, even though having bilingual Supreme Court justices is very important and something we should all work toward.

This is the second time I have said as much. I said that the Supreme Court is an institution that is very dear to me. I had the opportunity in my life to be a clerk to a Supreme Court justice from 1989 to 1990. I worked for Justice Peter deCarteret Cory, an Ontario judge who was bilingual.

I would like to correct something that the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton said. Justice John Sopinka was perfectly bilingual. That year, he did not have a clerk so I worked with him, too, and even attended in camera meetings with him in French. It is true that he had an accent that at the time was called the “John Diefenbaker accent”, but his French was impeccable.

Having had that experience, I agree with many of the ideas my hon. colleague just put forward. It is very important that all lawyers' arguments, whether oral or written, be understood without the use of translation. Yes, texts are translated, and yes, much like here, the Supreme Court interpretation service is very good.

However, this is about the process of making legal arguments. When a lawyer seeks to impress the merits of his case upon a judge, every word is carefully selected, which makes legal arguments particularly difficult to translate. It is of the utmost importance, then, for judges to be able to understand both written and oral arguments without the use of translation.

I also participated in a case that was before the Supreme Court and I helped draft a submission to the court. I can assure you that every word is carefully weighed, because there are limits. Once again, it is very important to be able to understand the speaker's arguments and style. The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton has a certain style when he makes his speeches. He should understand why it is so important to protect the integrity of an argument's style.

Even if the interpretation is good, it is about convincing someone, so it is very important that our goal be to have bilingual Supreme Court judges.

That said, as a former law professor in a bilingual, bijural faculty, the first thing I have to point out is that the law does not always offer the ideal solution to a problem. In our case, I do not believe this kind of law is necessary.

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As my colleague from Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs just told us, we have already taken steps to change the selection process for Supreme Court judges and the process to select a successor to Chief Justice McLachlin to ensure that bilingualism is a central consideration. We have already done that, and it worked well in the case of Justice Malcolm Rowe, and it should continue to be part of the system itself.

● (1835)

My colleague also described the action plan we introduced for superior courts, which is where people have their first contact with the legal system. Supreme Court Justice Cory always said that he was not the most important person in the system and that superior court judges play the most important role because they are the ones that have contact with the people.

While we may agree on the purpose of the bill, and while I would like us to have nine fluently bilingual, or at least functionally bilingual, Supreme Court justices, that is not advisable. When it comes to the Supreme Court, a careful balance must be struck.

What my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques just said is also true in some respects. It is not uncommon for the Supreme Court to call on a criminal law expert or a trade law expert to help in its understanding because of both the complexity of the subjects it addresses and the language that is used. When the Supreme Court needs such experts, then it is rather significant. In that respect, a bilingual candidate does not necessarily meet the current needs of the court.

I would like for us to maintain this flexibility that allows us, in some cases, to fill some of the possible gaps left among the nine justices. It is also very important to consider the substance of the cases that are brought before the Supreme Court.

The future can be unpredictable. We have to be prudent. That is what are doing with regard to the measures that are already in place. It would be premature to act before seeing whether people fully adopt these measures.

Law students and lawyers already know that they have to be bilingual if there is any hope of being appointed to the Supreme Court. Perhaps in the future it will not be a problem. It is better to be prudent for now.

Finally, there are constitutional issues. If we tried to change the criteria for selecting Supreme Court justices, it is highly likely that the provinces would say that it is unconstitutional. It is best not to open Pandora's box.

The government already has the rather significant burden of justifying the appointment of non-bilingual judges to the Supreme Court. It shifts the emphasis to the judges who are already bilingual. To justify the choice of a judge who is not bilingual, the government has to have a convincing reason. It is already a weighty standard that has the same effect as what the hon. member for Drummond wants to entrench into law. For these reasons, I believe that such a measure is neither desirable nor necessary in the current context.

● (1840)

[English]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to this bill this evening. I believe that my colleagues from Drummond and Rimouski have already laid out a positive case for this legislation. I would like to use my speech to respond to some of what we have heard in opposition to the bill from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, as well as from the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun.

The first argument we heard was that the Supreme Court is already bilingual, so there is no problem to solve here. In a similar vein, the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun pointed out that the Prime Minister has already promised to appoint bilingual judges to the Supreme Court. I fail to see these as arguments against the bill. In fact, I think they show that the bill is entirely realistic and achievable, and if the Prime Minister is promising to do this anyway, why not codify it in law? That is the question that I would put back.

It is currently the case that eight of the nine Supreme Court judges are functionally bilingual. New appointments are going to be bilingual. Why not put that into law? The member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun said that, rather than a requirement, it should be left as a primordial criterion. Maybe one needs to be a lawyer to understand the difference between a requirement and a primordial criterion. However, it sounds to me as if we all agree that this is something pretty essential for Supreme Court judges.

The second argument we heard from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton is that there is not a single case that was definitively decided incorrectly, based on a problem with language. I think this is a very strange standard. For a case to get to the Supreme Court, it has to go through a couple of other courts first. The Supreme Court is not adjudicating cases based on the evidence. It is not as though a Supreme Court judge is going to miss a piece of evidence based on not understanding the language. Cases are appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada based on issues of legal interpretation.

It would be difficult to establish that any case before the Supreme Court was definitively decided incorrectly. At that level, it comes down to interpretation, and at that level of nuance, language can be quite important. Again, this notion of proving that a case was decided incorrectly because of language is the wrong standard for this debate.

The third argument we heard from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton was the notion that this bill would reduce the pool of qualified candidates. I think the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun was trying to make the same point when he talked about how specialized certain Supreme Court justices need to be in particular areas of law.

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Beyond stating the obvious point that we in the NDP view functionality in both official languages as a very important qualification, I also note that the bill proposes to hold appointees to a very reasonable standard of bilingualism. We are not saying that people appointed to the Supreme Court need to be able to translate Molière or need to be able to speak perfectly in French or in English. What we are saying is that they need to have a basic understanding of both official languages without interpretation. I believe that this is the standard that otherwise qualified candidates for Supreme Court appointments can achieve. I believe that this is a realistic thing to expect of people, and that it is not going to unduly reduce the number of qualified candidates.

The fourth argument we heard from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton was that this bill would result in more errors because Supreme Court judges would be relying on their own imperfect understanding of the other official language, rather than relying on the excellent interpretation services already available at the Supreme Court. However, this bill is not talking about taking interpretation out of the Supreme Court. This bill is talking about adding to that excellent interpretation service a base level of knowledge of both official languages on the part of the judges themselves.

• (1845)

That leads to a more robust system. If someone with a base level understanding of the language is also listening to interpretation, they are going to understand it better and will be able to better detect possible problems with interpretation or translation. We have a better system when we have people with their own understanding of the language who also have access to excellent interpretation and translation services.

The fifth point we heard from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton was about how we are going to test people, if we are going to administer some sort of language exam to people who are going to be appointed to the Supreme Court. I answer this question in two ways. First of all, yes, we do this all the time in the Government of Canada. Every year, we have thousands of public servants who take language exams to establish their proficiency in both official languages. There are certainly tests available that we already administer to determine whether someone can understand both official languages.

The other point I make is that this is a very technical question about what kind of testing we are going to use. If this is really the concern of the Conservatives with this bill, then the solution is to vote to send it to committee so that the committee can look at the different types of tests that might be available. That is not a reason to vote against the bill at this stage of deliberation.

The last argument we heard from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton was that, of course, command of both official languages would be an important consideration, but that we should not make it an official requirement. That was also the fundamental argument we heard from the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun this evening, that it is a consideration, that it is part of the mix, that it is really important but should not be an ultimate requirement. In fact, I think the member went so far as to suggest that it is so important that de facto it is almost already a requirement, that it would be very difficult

for a government to justify appointing a Supreme Court judge who is not bilingual.

I make the case that if it is already a kind of de facto requirement, that if as a practical matter one does need to be able to understand both official languages to become a Supreme Court justice, it would actually be better to make it an official requirement because that would send a clear signal to everyone in Canada's legal community that it is a requirement they need to meet to qualify for appointment to the Supreme Court. The worst case scenario would be for someone who is otherwise qualified to go forward in the appointment process thinking that it is not a requirement, only to not be appointed for all the reasons the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun articulated. It is better to just put the requirement out there explicitly in law so that people who aspire to serve on the Supreme Court know this is something they will need to learn, a skill they will need to develop. If as a practical matter it basically already is a requirement, it is better just to have it be an explicit requirement for people, rather than allow for possible confusion about whether candidates for the Supreme Court actually need to be able to function in both official languages.

To sum up, bilingualism is clearly a fundamental cornerstone of our country. We expect federal institutions to be bilingual. That does not necessarily mean that every single person who works in those institutions needs to be bilingual, but we certainly would expect the top people, such as Supreme Court judges, to have a basic understanding of both official languages.

The court already is bilingual. The Prime Minister has already promised to appoint bilingual judges. That shows the feasibility of this bill. It shows that it is realistic and achievable. We have heard the argument that we cannot prove that cases have been decided wrongly on linguistic grounds, but again, Supreme Court cases are decided on interpretation so we cannot really prove anything is wrong. All we can do is to say that the adjudication would be better if justices had an understanding of both languages, in addition to having access to the translation and interpretation services that already exist.

Having debunked the arguments against this bill, I invite all members of the House to vote in favour of it.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I must inform the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie that she has six minutes left to speak. I will have to interrupt her at about 6:58 p.m. to allow time for the right of reply.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to rise today to speak to Bill C-203, An Act to amend the Supreme Court Act regarding the understanding of the official languages.

Fair and equitable access to justice is one of the basic tenets of democracy. That is what this bill seeks to ensure, by requiring Supreme Court justices to be able to understand arguments in both of our official languages and enshrining that requirement in law.

Supreme Court justices play a major role in our democracy. They need to meet numerous qualification criteria. One of those criteria is, in my opinion, the ability to understand Canadian citizens in both official languages, which, I will point out, have equality of status under our Constitution.

The NDP is not alone in thinking that. I would like to quote some people who know much more about this topic than me. For example, Serge Rousselle, a renowned Université de Moncton law professor, said:

Bilingualism is a required skill for Supreme Court judges. To fully grasp an oral argument in a field where the subtleties of one official language or the other can be critical, the importance of being understood directly by the members of this court, without the assistance of an interpreter, seems obvious.

This is not a theoretical question.

Michel Doucet, another Université de Moncton law professor and a language rights expert, has argued many cases before the Supreme Court. He said:

In the week after I had argued a case before the Supreme Court, I had an opportunity to hear the English version of my arguments on CPAC, and I understood why I had lost the case five to four. The translation did not allow me to understand my own words. I wonder how justices can fully understand the matter at hand when they have to go through translation in which significant aspects of a submission are missing. When you win 9:0, there is no problem, but when you lose 5 to 4, you automatically wonder whether you should not have argued in English.

That is why bilingualism is essential to ensure equal access to justice, and why judges of the Supreme Court, the highest court, must be able to serve all Canadians in either official language. Once again, we are not the only ones saying so.

In his report on access to justice, Graham Fraser, former commissioner of official languages, said that since the Supreme Court is the highest court in the country, it is crucial that its judges be able to understand all the information and arguments presented, in both official languages without the help of an interpreter, including the nuances that can affect the outcome of a trial.

Mr. Fraser also strongly supported Bill C-232, which had exactly the same objectives and which the Liberals supported at the time.

I am running out of time and I see that I am going to have to cut my presentation short. I would like to point out that the Barreau du Québec and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada support this bill, which is very important.

Our Liberal colleagues are telling us that they promised to appoint bilingual judges. There is a small problem. Our Liberal colleagues always seem to think that they will be in power forever. That is the first problem. At some point, another government could decide to do things differently.

• (1855)

There is one more problem. The member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun said that yes, we are going to appoint bilingual judges, but that we also need some flexibility to not do it. This too seems like a very Liberal thing to say. They make a promise, but they may or may not keep it.

I think this is one more reason to recognize that this is a fundamental issue of access to justice and that this needs to be put in

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law. This bill could certainly be amended, but I urge all of my colleagues to vote for it so it can go to committee.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and wind up the debate on this bill to require Supreme Court justices to be bilingual.

For the past two years, I have been on a quest to persuade all of my colleagues of the merits of this bill. I have received support from all sides over the past two years. Some 200 Canadian municipalities, regional county municipalities, and regions have sent letters of support for this bill. Bar associations across Canada, including the Barreau du Québec, support this bill. It is also backed by many renowned lawyers and constitutional experts.

I want to thank all of the members who spoke to this bill today, whether for or against. I hope those who were against will change their minds by next Wednesday. However, I want to thank them for taking the time to debate this extremely important bill that will advance not just the French language, since we often focus on French alone, but the cause of bilingualism as well. Canada has two official languages of equal status. That needs to be recognized and cultivated.

I will quote Graham Fraser, the former commissioner of official languages, who stated why it was so important to have legislation requiring Supreme Court justices to be bilingual.

• (1900)

[*English*]

He said that the Supreme Court was the final court of appeal and that it was imperative that its judges understand, in both official languages and without the assistance of an interpreter, “all the information and arguments presented, including any nuances that may have an impact on the outcome.” He went on to say that simultaneous interpretation and translation had their limits.

[*Translation*]

We understand where he is coming from, successive official language commissioners have long been calling for the same thing. Even the Liberals voted three times in favour of bills introduced by Yvon Godin, the former member for Acadie—Bathurst. He has been fighting for this for 15 years and I just want to acknowledge his excellent work. Not only did he promote bilingualism, but he also promoted equity and equality before the courts, including the Supreme Court.

I also want to mention how important respecting the rights of indigenous peoples is within the framework of this bill. We do not talk about it enough, but it is absurd that the First Nations and the Métis cannot speak their own language here in the House of Commons.

I hope that the government will change its mind because it is inconceivable that this is not possible. I am calling on all members of the House to refer this bill to committee so that we can propose an amendment along the lines of the following:

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[English]

Section 35 of the Constitution recognizes aboriginal rights, including rights with respect to the languages of indigenous peoples. If the bill passes, I will bring an amendment at committee stage to confirm that nothing in this law infringes aboriginal rights as recognized by Section 35 of the Constitution.

[Translation]

Progress on this issue is vital. Speaking of progress, I would like to talk about a law that I am very proud of, a law that the New Democrats put forward. New Democrats managed to convince all MPs to unanimously pass Bill C-419 on bilingualism for officers of Parliament. Back then, people raised the same arguments about how we would be better off with a single policy and about how the pool of candidates would not be big enough to appoint all 10 senior officers of Parliament. In the end, everyone agreed that there were 10 senior officers of Parliament and that they all absolutely had to be bilingual.

Now we are talking about the highest court in the land, and the same principle applies. There are nine justices, and they absolutely must be bilingual. That is why I am grateful to my former colleague, Alexandrine Latendresse, who introduced the bill, and to all the members who had the courage to improve bilingualism in Canada by passing the bill on bilingualism for senior officers of Parliament. Let us take another step forward. Let us vote in favour of this bill for bilingual Supreme Court justices.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 25, 2017, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (1905)

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, community volunteers and local governments, tired of waiting, took action themselves by cleaning up abandoned vessels despoiling shorelines in the district of Oak Bay.

Oil spills and marine debris from thousands of abandoned vessels pollute our waterways and put local fishing and tourism industry jobs at risk. For too long, jurisdictional gaps have left coastal communities with nowhere to turn when they need help cleaning up abandoned vessels. It is taking a huge financial toll on local governments and volunteers. Oak Bay's local government paid \$4,000. The Province of B.C. paid \$10,000. Last fall, the neighbouring municipality of Saanich paid \$50,000 to clean up abandoned boats along its shoreline. The Oak Bay local government said that there are more derelict boats to deal with in its area, but it will not be able to afford to pay what it did for this past weekend's cleanup every year.

Coastal volunteers have carried the load of abandoned vessels for too long, when provincial and federal governments should have been taking the lead on this long-standing coastal pollution problem.

Josie Osborne, mayor of the District of Tofino, wrote to me saying:

Derelict and abandoned vessels present a significant and costly risk to coastal communities and marine ecosystems. It is far beyond the capacity of local governments to pay for the removal of derelict vessel or even to navigate the complex, multi-jurisdictional nature of derelict and abandoned vessels. Despite society's wish to deal with wrecked vessels, there is no practical or reasonable framework to preventing and responding to wrecks. Bill C-352 would change this.

From Tofino, B.C., to Fogo Island in Newfoundland and Labrador, coastal communities are urging the Liberal government to adopt my legislation, Bill C-352, to clean up abandoned vessels and protect our waterways and coastlines. These include the Union of BC Municipalities, which last month, at its 1,800 member convention, endorsed my bill; the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities; the District of Oak Bay; the District of Tofino; and altogether more than 50 coastal organizations from both sides of the country. I also have the support of the Ladysmith Maritime Society and marinas, harbours, and port authorities from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and British Columbia.

These endorsements highlight that coastal communities cannot wait any longer to fix the abandoned vessels problem. When will the government heed coastal communities' repeated calls for action and adopt my legislation to solve the long-standing problem of abandoned vessels?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the member that our government is actively implementing a comprehensive strategy to address abandoned and wrecked vessels under the oceans protection plan. Budget 2017 invested in this priority.

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Problems with these vessels have persisted for decades. The issue is indeed complex. The causes are multi-faceted and therefore demand a robust solution. We have studied the problem, worked with our partners and stakeholders, and are now taking meaningful actions that will make a real difference to our coastal communities.

This government launched two funding programs this year to address legacy abandoned, wrecked, and hazardous vessels. We have dedicated funds for these programs to support provinces, territories, indigenous organizations, local communities, and other partners in removing and disposing of smaller high-priority abandoned boats and wrecks. These programs were launched this year. To implement our comprehensive strategy, we are taking steps. These were just the first.

While this funding will help address the legacy problem, it is not enough on its own. We will need to take the burden off taxpayers. This is why we are also exploring long-term funding options financed by vessel owners to pay for any future cleanup costs.

However, cleanup efforts are only one element of our strategy. We cannot wait for problems to occur before taking action. We are also focused on prevention. We must turn off the tap and stop the flow of these vessels in the first place. We have modelled our strategy on leading international initiatives. We recognize that the majority of vessel owners act responsibly and, in fact, are among the advocates for action on this issue. Like all Canadians, boaters and commercial vessel operators expect our oceans and harbours to be clean and free of abandoned and wrecked vessels. It really is a minority of vessel owners who are creating this problem.

We are working on a comprehensive legislative solution, one that goes far beyond any previously considered by the House. There need to be consequences for owners who choose to walk away from their vessels. Gaps in our federal laws have encouraged the problem for far too long. Existing laws address some of the specific impacts of these vessels, such as pollution discharge and navigation hazards, but not the vessels themselves.

Our objectives are to strengthen owner liability for their vessels and wrecks, address irresponsible vessel management, and ensure the ability to take proactive action before problem vessels pose greater hazards and costs.

As members of the House are aware, the Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks, 2007, was just recently tabled in our Parliament. This important step signals how serious we are in our approach to addressing this issue.

●(1910)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, these are all good words, but without any legislation to back them up, I am afraid that coastal communities are going to be asked to wait again. The money announced by the government for abandoned vessel removal is a drop in the bucket, given the scale of the problem. There are thousands of abandoned vessels. The number is growing as recreational and commercial fleets age, but the budget announcements were only, to Transport Canada, \$300,000 for this year and, to Fisheries and Oceans Canada, \$260,000 for this year. The price tag for the *Viki Lyne II* removal alone was \$1.2 million.

Given the tiny budget announcement and the backlog of thousands of abandoned vessels, it will take multiple decades to deal with them all at this pace.

My legislation would get taxpayers off the hook by fixing vessel registration and creating a fee to help cover the cost of vessel disposal. In the absence of the government having its own legislation to offer the House, will it adopt my legislation, Bill C-352, to solve the long-standing pollution problem of abandoned vessels?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, we need a comprehensive approach to addressing this complex issue of abandoned vessels and wrecks, and it requires engagement with those most directly connected to the problem. We have established very strong working relationships with the provinces and territories on the issue. We continue to work with them on implementing a national strategy.

We have taken very meaningful steps to address the issue, including by providing funding for, and acting to deal with, legacy problem vessels. We are actively working to improve vessel ownership information and we have tabled the Nairobi convention in the House, demonstrating our commitment to ensure owners are strictly liable for remediating wrecks.

Our commitment is clear, our action has been meaningful, and we have not finished yet.

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned this week that the Minister of Finance had been keeping a secret from the House. Since the last election, he has held in his possession stocks in Morneau Shepell, his billion-dollar family business. His holdings amount to tens of millions of dollars. The finance minister has vast powers and long, far-reaching tentacles into all aspects of economic and financial policy in our country. In short, his decisions can make a lot of money for financial companies, like the one in which he had invested tens of millions of dollars.

Morneau Shepell administers pensions. The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, which reports to the finance minister, decides who will administer the pensions of bankrupt federally regulated companies. The finance minister sets policies to collect \$300 billion worth of taxes. The specificity of these tax policies have the potential to help or hinder individual businesses. For example, one policy the government promoted under this finance minister would encourage small businesses to put their money in individual pension plans. Morneau Shepell, his family business, sells those pension plans. It is one of the unique companies that do so.

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The finance minister proposed a bill creating something called targeted pension benefit plans. Morneau Shepell is one of the only companies in Canada that administers targeted benefit pension plans. For example, when these plans were created in New Brunswick, it was Morneau Shepell that set them up, and it would be Morneau Shepell that would profit from them if we did it at a federal level. We know this because Morneau Shepell has bragged about that fact on its own website. The finance minister spoke about it when he was the executive chairman of Morneau Shepell.

For these reasons, the minister was in an obvious conflict of interest, in a position that he was able to use his powers to profit a company that was paying him dividend cheques monthly. According to David Akin, a respected journalist, that company was paying him \$65,000 a month in dividends, while he was finance minister regulating that same company. Worst of all, he did not tell anybody outside of the Ethics Commissioner.

When Paul Martin was the finance minister and he had vast holdings in Canada Steamship Lines, we all thought it was a conflict of interest. However, at least we knew about it so we could debate it. When he introduced bills that affected shipping lines, we knew what he was up to. The current minister told the media that he was putting his interests in a blind trust. He told Morneau Shepell that all of his holdings would go in a blind trust. He sent out parliamentary secretaries from the Liberal government on Twitter to claim that his holdings were in a blind trust. Only after the truth was uncovered by numerous investigative reporters did the finance minister finally admit he still held those shares and they were not in a blind trust. The minister always does the right thing after he is caught doing the opposite.

This conflict of interest allows the minister to enrich himself at the expense of everyone else. He has not lived up to the standards that are expected of someone with his authority. How does his parliamentary secretary defend the actions of the minister?

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is a man of great integrity who, even before taking office, took the initiative and contacted the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in order to obtain her advice and recommendations. Following that meeting and the disclosure by the Minister of Finance of his assets and investments, she sent him the letter made public today, in which she does not recommend setting up a blind trust. She says that there must be a screen to avoid conflicts of interest and any appearance of conflict of interest, and it must be made public.

That is what the minister did. He followed to the letter the recommendations of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who he has worked with since taking office. When opposition parties started raising questions, the minister, to avoid any distractions, contacted the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner proactively. He made a commitment today to put his assets in a blind trust and to maintain the conflict of interest screen, which is public and has been in place since he took office. He has also committed to divesting himself of his shares in the company in question.

This proves that the Minister of Finance has always been transparent with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, in whom we have the utmost confidence and who parliamentarians and Canadians trust to ensure compliance with our laws and the rules governing all of us in the House. That is what the minister did and that is what he will continue to do in the interest of integrity and transparency.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner should enjoy the full confidence of Parliament. When her recommendations are followed, it means we are doing the right thing, and that is what the minister has been doing since taking office.

We could also talk about other things the minister has done. As soon as he took office, he kick-started our economy, helping create 400,000 jobs across the country over the past two years. He cut taxes for nine million Canadians and raised taxes for the wealthiest 1%. He reduced child poverty by 40% thanks to the Canada child benefit, which is much more generous and more progressive than the previous program and is definitely helping more people who need it most.

We could also talk about the infrastructure investment policies that have contributed to Canada's exceptional growth. The Minister of Finance, who has dedicated the past two years to serving Canadians, deserves to be lauded for leading Canada on the path to inclusive prosperity.

As for tax reform and our support for small businesses, the Minister of Finance announced this week that we are going to cut the tax rate for small and medium-sized business from 10.5% to 9% by January 1, 2019, as part of our ongoing efforts to support Canada's small businesses, SMEs, and entrepreneurs. He also announced a number of changes to our tax reform, because we are a government that believes in the importance of consulting and listening to people. We have faith not only in our caucus, but in Canadians from coast to coast as well. However, our goal remains unchanged: to improve tax fairness in certain areas.

• (1920)

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about this ethics screen that was supposed to prevent the Finance Minister from involvement in any matters touching upon Morneau Shepell. He committed in writing to the Ethics Commissioner that he would do nothing that would affect the interest of his family business in which he continued to own approximately \$20 million in shares.

Well, he has been involved in the Canada-Barbados tax treaty. Morneau Shepell has a subsidiary in the tax haven of Barbados. He was the person who introduced the target benefit pension plan legislation. Morneau Shepell is one of the very few companies that administers those plans. He introduced tax policies that would force small businesses to take their savings out of their companies and invest them in individualized pension plans. Morneau Shepell is one of the only firms that administers those pension plans.

Does the member believe that in those three cases the minister actually respected the ethical screen he committed to when he became minister?

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I believe in the integrity of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and her ability to indicate the right path to follow and to provide the right recommendations. The Minister of Finance followed her recommendations at all times and was very transparent with her.

Today, the minister even went above and beyond what was expected of him to avoid any distraction from the important work that he does by announcing that he was going to put his assets in a blind trust and divest himself of his shares in Morneau Shepell.

This shows that from day one the minister has always been proactive about co-operating with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, whom we fully trust to ensure compliance with the rules and laws that govern us and that the Minister of Finance has always complied with.

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back in May, I stood to reflect on an article in *Maclean's* about Canada's inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women falling apart before it had even begun. At that time, I asked the minister what she intended to do to help right the ship.

We continue to be very concerned. I will go over some of the things that have happened in the months since that original article came out that caused us great concern.

It is important, first, to point out that this was right after the last election. We were concerned about how the inquiry would move forward, what it would do in terms of supporting family members. We came on board and said that we would support it, that we wanted it to be successful. It must be successful because there can be nothing more traumatic for the families that have already undergone so much to have an inquiry that does not do what it needs to do. That is a big concern.

Since then, just last month there was another story that discussed the meltdown inside the inquiry. These two articles describe how it went off the rails before it even began.

Since then, we have had a commissioner resign. The executive director, two communications directors, the director of operations, and both the director and manager of community relations all resigned. Moreover, just a couple of weeks ago, the director of research and the inquiry's lead counsel resigned. If that is not a red flag to the government, I do not know what could possibly be a red flag.

It was in August last year that we welcomed the inquiry's moving forward. Most reasonable people thought it would take a few months, that they would get their offices set up, get their computers going, and create a plan that would see them on the road in January to hear the horrific, tragic stories from the families and to move forward. Instead, months and months went by with no move by the inquiry to even hear from the families.

We had a chance to talk to the commissioners when they came to committee. We heard a number of very disturbing things from them.

They talked about their trouble with support from the PCO, the fact they have old BlackBerrys and computers that do not work. They did not even have the basic logistics in place.

This question is as timely as it was back in May. There are red flags. The minister is responsible. What is she going to do to ensure that the inquiry will be a success? It is very clear that some action must be taken.

• (1925)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising this issue. I know it is very important to all people in our country.

Our government is committed to ending the ongoing national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We have launched a truly national independent inquiry, and we are going to make sure that the voices of families are heard. The important work of the commission is crucial to getting the answers for which families have been waiting for decades. The commission's mandate has been clear, that families must be at the centre of the commission's work. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs met with the commissioners over the summer and discussed directly with them the concerns raised by some of the families and survivors. They acknowledged those concerns and assured the minister that they have a plan and are dedicated to learning and adapting as the inquiry progresses. They are committed to finding solutions to address the families' concerns, and many family members who have participated in the hearings are now feeling heard. The families must and will get the answers they need.

The terms of reference authorize the commission to inquire into the circumstances of individual cases in order to identify systemic issues at play, be they institutional issues or otherwise. They are also authorized to examine and report on the root causes of all forms of violence that indigenous women and girls experience, and their greater vulnerability to that violence. The commission is looking for patterns and underlying factors that explain why the higher level of violence occurs.

Moreover, we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the commission has all the supports it needs to succeed. As announced previously, the federal government has provided the commission with more than \$53 million over two years. The commission has full access to its funding and we are confident that it has the tools it requires. Furthermore, officials have been working with the commission to identify the bureaucratic processes that can be streamlined to better support them in achieving their mandate.

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However, we know there are important initiatives that we can implement now, and without waiting for the commission to complete its work, our government is already taking immediate action with investments in women's shelters, housing, education, and child welfare. For example, we recognize the need for safe transport along B.C.'s Highway 16, known as the Highway of Tears. We have committed \$1 million to B.C.'s transportation action plan for improvements that will keep those who use the road safe. These include additional transit, shelters, lighting, and support for community shuttles, which impact the nine first nations along that stretch of the highway. The government is also making investments in new initiatives, such as the family information liaison units, which assist families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls to find the answers they need from government agencies, and with other help such as services to address the trauma they are experiencing. We are committed to helping ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to live in a safe, supportive, and inclusive community.

• (1930)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on one very important point, which is that families must be at the centre and must be heard. This week in Winnipeg we heard the horrific story of a family who lost their daughter nine years ago on her 18th birthday. The family has a heartbreaking story. They had agreed to go to the inquiry. They wanted to tell their story, and then they had their time reduced to just minutes. I do not know how that is an example of hearing effectively from the families.

When we met with the commissioners, we said, "Listen, please, have a phone number so that if people come in from a remote community they can get a live person on the line." I know we have been checking regularly to see if we can ever get a live person on that line, but it has never happened. If we cannot get through to the

commission to a live person, how can individuals who have made a big effort to make that phone call, who might come from a community that has less access, get the access they need?

Again, the red flags are there. The minister must listen and, please, pay attention and make some changes that will create the success that families so desperately need.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that the member opposite supports the inquiry now, because families and survivors fought for a very long time against the previous government, which she was a part of, for this inquiry. In fact, at the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo actually dismissed the need for an inquiry at all and characterized it as just spending more time and money on another process. We never believed that, and we do not believe that today.

We believe that family members have to be heard, and we are giving them that opportunity. They wanted this inquiry and they want it to continue. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that the commission has the support it needs to make it a success.

The Government of Canada will also continue to work in partnership with the provinces and territories, indigenous governments and organizations, and other partners to develop more effective, appropriate, and collaborative solutions in responding to ensure the safety of women and girls in Canada. We know there is a lot to do, and we are prepared to do it.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now 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 7:34 p.m.)

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