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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: Leading us today in the singing of the national anthem is the hon. member for Essex.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

AUTISM

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is World Autism Month, and I know we are all committed to creating a kinder, more inclusive world for individuals with autism.

Events such as Autism on the Hill and the annual unveiling of the Faces of Autism banner have been unfortunately postponed, and many other events are being held virtually. Autism organizations have had to adapt, but they nonetheless remain steadfast on calling for the creation of a national autism strategy, which I fully support.

I am proud to say that budget 2021 provides funding for the creation of a national autism strategy. Consultations will include autistic Canadians, families and stakeholders, such as Autism Speaks and the Shining Through Centre for children in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. This broad and inclusive engagement process will help streamline diagnoses and treatment for Canadians with autism spectrum disorder.

I encourage Vaughan—Woodbridge constituents to find out more through the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. Together we will build a country that is truly inclusive.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure every Canadian has been looking forward to brighter days and warmer weather. In Cypress Hills—Grasslands,

we are starting to see another welcome sign of spring: Farmers are heading out to begin seeding their crops.

While driving in different parts of our rural riding, I am always happy to see their machinery out in the fields. It brings back fond memories of growing up and working on our family farm, and it is an encouraging display of their extraordinary effort.

Personally, I find it hard to give a better example of dependability than our farmers. In the second year of everyone feeling as though they are surrounded by uncertainty and instability, we can look to them for encouragement. These farmers know exactly how to get through good times and bad, having faced unpredictable seasons and conditions. One way or another, they always find a way to get the job done and make sure the rest of us have food on our table.

I wish all the best to the farmers in the southwest and across Canada. Here is to a bumper crop this year from plant 2021.

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NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every April 28, on the National Day of Mourning, we remember those who were injured or lost their lives on the job.

Every worker has the right to return home safely at the end of each of work day, and the last year has highlighted the need for safe workplaces more than ever. Working together to fight for improved workplace health and safety, we have seen injury rates decline in recent years, but workplace deaths still remain high.

In pre-pandemic days, in Oakville on the day of mourning, we would gather at the memorial on Navy Street at an event organized by the Oakville and District Labour Council, or at the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 793 memorial.

While we cannot gather in person, we will continue to work together to honour and reflect on the thousands of lives forever changed and renew our commitment to workplace health and safety.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic means that members cannot do all the things they would normally do in their ridings.

Nevertheless, thanks to some amazing organizations, I have been able to keep in touch with seniors in my riding. As we know, the pandemic has hit them harder than anyone else. They have been isolated for over a year. The death toll among seniors was the highest, and the federal government did very little to help them.

That is why organizations in the riding of La Prairie that work with seniors deserve proper recognition. Despite the pandemic, they have maintained close connections with their members to ensure their well-being despite isolation.

I want to thank the Maison des aînés, Café Liberté 50, Club Idéal, golden agers' clubs in Delson, La Prairie, Saint-Constant, Saint-Philippe and Sainte-Catherine, and FADOQ clubs in Candiac and Saint-Mathieu.

I very much look forward to seeing you all again during future events.

Long live these organizations and their members.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 19, the government presented a historic budget. It was historic because a female Minister of Finance did a great thing by breaking this glass ceiling for the first time in the history of Canada. This detailed budget is also historic because it sets out a plan to conquer the pandemic, punch our way out of the recession and build a better future.

Whether we are talking about Canadians, businesses or community organizations, there is good news for everyone in this budget. As the representative for the riding of Bourassa, I am particularly happy to see investments to combat domestic violence, build housing, support mental health, help our community organizations and provide significant support for Black Canadians.

Our budget is dead on. With our government, we are going to emerge stronger from this pandemic.

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[English]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week was National Volunteer Week. I would like to take a moment today to sincerely thank all of the incredible volunteers throughout West Nova. They have contributed their time, energy and talent over the past year to give back to those in need. Rain or shine, our local volunteers have always been very generous with their time. Whether it is lending a helping hand to seniors, at food banks, to people living with a disability or even to single parents, volunteers have always had their backs, no matter what.

As a public servant, it is important to me to recognize and honour the many volunteers in our communities, as they are essential and make a difference in our lives. I send a special congratulations to the provincial recipients in our riding: Daryl Crosby in Argyle; Mike Randall in Yarmouth; Tim MacKinnon in the town of Yarmouth; Joseanne Deveau in Clare; Megan Robinson in Digby; Al Dupuis in the town of Digby; Gini Proulx in Annapolis County; Sara White in the town of Berwick; and Heather Morris in Kings County.

While this is only a short list of volunteers honoured by our towns and municipalities, there are hundreds of folks who deserve our great admiration.

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● (1410)

MARCEL NIGRO

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to my friend, Marcel Nigro, who passed away a few weeks ago. Marcel used to work for the Children's Aid Society. He refused to go into administration, as he preferred to work with children on the street. Kids gravitated to him and trusted him. He was always sympathetic, always had time to listen and always tried to help those kids out, whether it was to help them get back together with their parents or find a place to live. He gave kids his cell number, and if they called him, even at 1:00 in the morning, and they needed his help, he would be out the door.

As a prominent member of Thunder Bay's great Italian community, Marcel really loved to entertain, cook, serve a good meal and perhaps enjoy a glass of wine with his guests afterward. Marcel, however, will best be remembered for the kind of person he was. He was an ocean of calm, always good natured and always more concerned about others than himself.

Marcel will sadly be missed by his wife, Lina, his brothers and many other people here in Thunder Bay. Although I have met wealthier Canadians and more prominent Canadians, I have to say that I wanted to speak about Marcel Nigro here in Parliament because I have seldom met a better or more decent Canadian.

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HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are no strangers to stepping up to help others in times of crisis, and this week is no different. I was so proud yesterday when I saw nine health care professionals step up and then step on a military aircraft to fly to Ontario to get to work supporting their stressed and over-worked colleagues in the Toronto University Health Network. That group included Bonnie Chalk of Deer Lake, which is in my riding in the Long Range Mountains.

Our province and our residents have done a great job of keeping the COVID-19 pandemic under control. That now allows our health care heroes to help others in their time of need. This pandemic is pushing doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and everyone involved in health care to their limits across the country. However, this is especially true in Ontario. It is clear that part of our Canadian family needed help and that is what these incredible individuals are doing. They are helping their colleagues in need.

To Bonnie and all the health care professionals who headed from my province to Ontario yesterday, on behalf of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I send our thanks. I am sure I can speak on behalf of all members in this House in giving our thanks as well. I urge them to stay safe.

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COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove are tired of the pandemic, now more than a year old, which is too old, and they are ready to get life back to normal. They are ready to get back to work, back to school, back to family gatherings and back to church. Hopefully, after a summer vacation, they will be back to university on campus in September. As we look to turning the corner on COVID-19, Canada stands at a crossroads. We must choose a path to recovery. Will it be the security and stability offered by the Conservative Party or a reimagined Canada, an idea floated by the Liberals?

The Liberal government would use the opportunity of a crisis to try the social experiment of reshaping Canada in their own image. Conservatives, on the other hand, have the proven track record of steering Canada through the last recession. Today we stand ready, willing and able to roll up our sleeves, do the hard work of getting Canada back, securing our economy and getting life back to normal, which is what we all want.

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[Translation]

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the Carrefour de la Miséricorde in Gatineau, which helps single mothers and their children, is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

This organization, which was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1980, helps more than 60 mothers and their children every year. It is an open, welcoming place that is accessible to everyone. Whether through individual support or group activities, the organization provides mothers with parenting support and helps them to develop the mother-child bond.

I have twice had the opportunity to be the honorary president at the organization's annual lobster supper fundraiser. This year, the lobster supper will be a box lunch event that will take place on May 28 and 29. Box lunches are still available at the cost of \$70 each.

Statements by Members

I greatly admire the important work that the Carrefour does, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers and staff who do such an incredible job.

Thank you and good luck.

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[English]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years in the making, the long-awaited Liberal budget is a serious letdown. Seniors have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and for those seniors who were already struggling to make ends meet, this pandemic has added financial constraint.

Conservatives called for increased financial supports for low-income seniors in the budget. Unfortunately, the proposed OAS increase does nothing to support low-income seniors under the age of 75. I share in the disappointment of those seniors who were excluded. It is time that the government made them a priority.

What is even more concerning is the Liberal budget's failure to deliver a real plan to open up our economy. Without it, their massive deficit spending threatens the long-term viability of important social programs such as OAS and GIS. Only Conservatives have a plan to secure jobs and secure a future for all Canadians.

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• (1415)

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the National Day of Mourning for all those who have died or suffered illness or injury in the workplace. In a year when so many have been deeply affected by workplace tragedy because of the pandemic, commemorating this day is more important than ever.

From our health care workers who have battled COVID-19 in their patients and among themselves, to long-term care workers who have suffered along with those for whom they care, we mourn with them. Their service cannot be appreciated enough. For all those families suffering due to any workplace tragedy, we carry their grief in our hearts.

In Sarnia—Lambton and across the country, Steps for Life is raising funds and awareness for families suffering from workplace tragedies. I want to commend it for all the work it is doing to provide support for those who have been affected by injuries in the workplace.

Today is a day to remember those we have lost and keep them in our thoughts as we strive to make the future safer for workers across Canada.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING**

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women in Canada are on the front lines of the COVID-19 battle. In the care economy and as essential workers, women have had to bear the brunt of both the disease and the economic impacts of public health measures. Women are more likely to get sick and more likely to lose their income because of the pandemic.

Universal child care will contribute to women's recovery, but it is not enough. We also need strong workplace protections including paid sick leave, elder care, the right to refuse unsafe work and, finally, a national pharmacare plan.

On this National Day of Mourning, we remember those whom we have lost and we fight for those who are still here on the front lines, in schools and hospitals, in care homes, in stores and in restaurants. Anything less is a betrayal of working women in Canada. One life lost at work is one too many.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, April 28 is the National Day of Mourning to remember workers who have lost their lives or been injured as a result of workplace accidents.

Every week, one Quebecker dies at work. There have been nearly 95,000 accident victims this year. Even one victim is one too many, and considering the current health crisis, my thoughts go out especially to health care workers.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I rise today to honour the memory of workers who have lost their lives while trying to save the lives of others. I want to salute the dedication of these women, mainly, but men too, who fell ill while protecting our loved ones from COVID-19.

When we finally get through this crisis together, Quebeckers will remember that, for over a year, these individuals put themselves in harm's way every day to protect us all. I cannot thank them enough.

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[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, without question this pandemic has been difficult for constituents in my riding of Kenora, and indeed all Canadians.

This past year has made clear the mental health crisis that we face. That is why, as we work to secure our future, Canada's Conservatives will ensure that supporting mental health would be a key pillar of our recovery from COVID-19. We would restructure how we support and fund mental health by enacting a national action plan. This would include boosting funding to the provinces and territories for mental health care, providing incentives to employers to provide mental health coverage and creating a nationwide three-digit suicide prevention hotline.

It is time we treat mental health with the seriousness it deserves and provide Canadians with the support they deserve. That is what Canadians need, and that is exactly what my party will deliver.

* * *

● (1420)

DANISH MEMON

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this holy month of Ramadan, I rise today to pay tribute to a trailblazer from Scarborough: the late Danish Memon.

Danish was a community builder, a dedicated community leader, entrepreneur and mentor to countless young people in Scarborough and beyond. Sadly, Danish struggled with mental health and ultimately took his own life.

Recently, Ahmed Ismail and Ginella Massa, two Scarborough trailblazers, hosted a virtual online event seen all around the world to acknowledge Danish's work and his impact in our community. They highlighted the necessity of challenging the stigma of mental health and ensuring proper mental health supports are available to all, especially to those from marginalized communities.

I want to thank his wife, Yasmin Merchant, and his children, Usamah, Mariam, Safiyyah and Aaminah, for their extraordinary courage in sharing their story so publicly. I thank Brother Danish for his inspiring work. We miss him and we honour him, his legacy and his family today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said yesterday that no one in his office was aware of a #MeToo complaint against General Vance, but that was not true. In fact, a number of emails confirm the opposite.

Did the Prime Minister misspeak?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the harassment, intimidation and assault faced by too many women and men serving in our Canadian Armed Forces is absolutely unacceptable. As a government, we have taken steps to provide greater support to anyone who comes forward. In budget 2021, we announced an investment of more than \$236 million to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the the Canadian Armed Forces. Our priority is to eliminate all forms of misconduct and create a safe work environment. We will have more to announce soon.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2014, the Prime Minister said, "I am aware of how difficult it is for people to come forward. I believe strongly that those of us in positions of authority have a duty to act upon allegations of this nature." He said that before firing two of his MPs for sexual misconduct allegations. He acted then, but has not acted for three years after direct allegations were brought forward by a woman serving her country in uniform.

Why did the Prime Minister fail in his duty to her?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, this government has always taken seriously the responsibility to support, provide resources to and follow up with anyone who comes forward with allegations of sexual misconduct or assault in the armed forces or otherwise. In budget 2021, we announced over \$236 million to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the CAF, including money to enhance internal support services to survivors and to implement new external oversight mechanisms. This builds on work we were already doing, including a strategy for long-term culture change to eliminate sexual misconduct and an implementation of the Declaration of Victims Rights.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is talking about work he is going to do. What about the work he failed to do for three years? He said he did not know the specific nature of the allegations, yet his office, on multiple occasions in March 2018, described the complaint as one of sexual harassment. His chief of staff knew. The clerk of the Privy Council knew. Everyone around the Prime Minister knew, but he suggested he did not know it was a #MeToo-style complaint.

Is the Prime Minister going to stand in the House and tell the women of this country that he does not think sexual harassment is a #MeToo complaint?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition is decrying the process that we followed in this case back in 2018, but it was exactly the same process followed in 2015 by the then Conservative government. The leader of the official opposition, who was then the associate minister of defence, heard a rumour of misconduct and told his staff, who then told the PMO and the Privy Council Office. The job of politicians and their staff is to ensure any allegation is given to the appropriate authorities. It is a little rich that the leader of the official opposition continues to decry a process that he undertook himself when he was in government.

• (1425)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of that is true and it is sad to see the Prime Minister trying to shirk his responsibility, which he said in 2014 was his duty before he fired two of his own MPs with just an allegation. In fact, a month before the ombudsman's allegation, he had to fire his top Quebec lieutenant in his office, his personal adviser, for sexual misconduct allegations. His office was even looking at further allegations with respect to sexual misconduct.

Did the fact that his office was preoccupied with allegations about his own team lead him to give General Vance a pass?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the examples highlighted by the Leader of the Opposition go to demonstrate the very point we have been making as a government over the past five years. We always take allegations of misconduct, harassment, intimidation or assault extremely seriously. We follow proper processes, and ensure support and resources for anyone who comes forward. We know that within the Canadian Armed Forces there is much work still to do to support the women and men who step forward, and we will continue to do just that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is much work for the Prime Minister to do, because he failed. For three years he did not act. The Minister of Defence knew about sexual harassment allegations. His top senior adviser knew. His chief of staff knew. The Privy Council Office knew. There was a timeline created. Emails were sent about sexual harassment.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister had the gall to suggest that he did not know the specific nature of the allegations. He either is not being straight with Canadians or his chief of staff chose to cover it up and keep him in the dark.

Will he fire his chief of staff?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet, again, the Conservatives will not let the facts get in the way of a good political argument. If the member opposite had been listening to the committee, he would have heard from the multiple witnesses for three months, including non-partisan public servants, that the details of the allegation were unknown.

The record is clear. The deputy secretary of cabinet testified, "I did not have information [even] about the nature of the complaint or specifics that would have enabled further action." The former ombudsman testified at committee that he could not provide any details. He said, "I took the investigation as far as I could with the complainant's authority."

This highlights why we need a better system for people to feel safe coming forward.

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[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the heart of the dispute at the Port of Montreal, is the urgent need to get Quebec's economy back on track and there are scheduling issues.

Oral Questions

Will the special legislation undo what management did to scheduling on April 9? We asked the question and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour told us that the content of the legislation meant that the unilateral changes made by either party in April 2021 were excluded. To me that means that the legislation will undo the changes made to the schedule. Can the Prime Minister confirm that interpretation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Port of Montreal plays a key role in the entire Canadian economy and especially Quebec's economy. The current work stoppage is causing serious damage that could last for quite some time.

This is not a decision we take lightly. We believe in the collective bargaining process and that is why we have spent two years working with both parties at the bargaining table. We made this decision after all other possibilities had been exhausted. We hope that we can all move forward together for Quebec and Canada.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will do him the courtesy of not thinking that he does not understand the question, and I will do us the courtesy of saying that he does not wish to answer it.

His special legislation is not being introduced after two years of intense effort to solve the problem; the government did nothing. It is being introduced on the planned first day of the strike.

Does his special legislation address the issue of schedules imposed unilaterally by the employer on April 9? The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour said that that is the case. As my esteemed colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska would say, can the Prime Minister answer yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to stick to the facts. Since October 2018, the federal mediation and conciliation service oversaw more than 100 days of bargaining through mediation. In addition, my colleagues and I communicated many times with the parties and urged them to work with the mediators to reach an agreement.

Will the Bloc Québécois agree to open up the Port of Montreal and Quebec's economy by letting port operations resume and continue safely through the establishment of a neutral mediation and arbitration process to resolve the differences and arrive at a new collective agreement?

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the National Day of Mourning, a day when we reflect on those who lost their lives while going to work. The fact is that no workers should ever lose their life going to work.

The experts agree that one way we can protect workers so they do not get sick when they go to work is better paid sick leave. This is something we have been long calling for the Prime Minister to fix. We know better paid sick leave will save lives.

Will the Prime Minister finally do the job of improving paid sick leave so we can save lives, so workers do not go into work sick and we can protect them and their families?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Every day, every day, but particularly on this National Day of Mourning, we recognize the essential workers who are on the front lines of this crisis. They should never have to make the choice between going into work sick or putting food on the table. That is why we brought in the Canada recovery sickness benefit, with up to four weeks of income support for people who were unable to work because they were sick or needed to self-isolate.

However, we know employer leave is the most direct support for workers. Effective September 2019, workers in federally regulated workplaces and industries have access to paid leave to treat an injury or illness. In parenthesis, the NDP voted against that. We will now work with the provinces so they can bring it in for their jurisdictions.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows very well that we have a federal program that experts agree is simply not working. It needs to be improved.

This is about saving lives. Workers are going into work sick. It is not a question of whether they are or they are not, they are. When they go into work sick, they risk infecting their colleagues and their families then end up getting sick. We could prevent all that. Australia and New Zealand have some form of national paid sick leave that works.

Will the Prime Minister get the job done, improve paid sick leave to protect workers and save lives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see the NDP completely befuddled about the division of powers in Canada, and the things that are the responsibility of the provinces and the things that are the responsibility of the federal government.

The federal government moved forward on sick leave that people could directly apply to, but we agree that best way to work with sick leave is for people to get it through their employers. That is why we brought in federal sick leave back in 2019, which the NDP voted against. That is why we are working with the provinces and encouraging them to bring in employer sick leave in the provincially regulated industries, which is most of our workforce.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to sexual harassment claims against Canada's top soldier and the fact that he believed he was untouchable and had Canada's top politicians under his control, as Vance did, the buck always stops with the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is positioning Katie Telford to take the blame. Lord knows, she is not the first woman he has thrown under the bus. However, is it not true that when the Prime Minister says he believes women, what he actually means is he is going to be covering up for the boys?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the member opposite highlight the responsibilities of the Prime Minister in these issues.

There were questions and allegations about General Vance before he was even appointed to the position of chief of the defence staff under the previous prime minister, in which the Leader of the Opposition was associate minister of defence. We know that there were follow ups, there were investigations and the Conservatives chose to move forward nonetheless.

We moved forward with processes back in 2018 that were not able to come through, because the complainant did not want more information disclosed.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is one of the boys. He knows these women, who are overly sensitive and emotional, just experience things differently.

The fact is that in March 2018, the Prime Minister knew the incident of him inappropriately groping a young woman in 2008 was going to be revealed, and he was going to have to explain that. Therefore, is it not true that the real reason the Prime Minister covered up for General Vance is because he knew he had skeletons he was going to have to deal with?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the respect and the support that this government has demonstrated every step of the way for people who come forward with stories of allegations, with experiences of mistreatment is consistent and will continue to be what we stand for.

That the official opposition needs to stoop to the level of disgusting personal attacks is yet another example of the loss it feels of being even slightly relevant at a time when there is a pandemic, where the solutions are based on science, at a time when the government has demonstrated, through a budget, that we are there for Canadians. All the official opposition can do is slight mud.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now the Prime Minister is the victim. Give me a break.

The fact is that the Prime Minister and his government covered up serious allegations of sexual misconduct against the chief of the defence staff, and now he is covering up his cover-up by saying that he did not know. It is just not believable.

What is believable is this: The Prime Minister only pretends to be a feminist when in fact he is at the top of the old boys club, just a wink and a nudge, do not worry, boys, their secret is safe with him. Is that not the truth?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no, that is not the truth.

The committee has heard from multiple witnesses for three months, including non-partisan public servants, that the details of the allegation were unknown. The record is clear.

Oral Questions

The deputy secretary of cabinet testified, “I did not have information about the nature of the complaint or specifics that would have enabled further action.” The former ombudsman testified at committee that he could not provide any details. He said, “I took the investigation as far as I could with the complainant's authority.”

We need a better system to better support complainants coming forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2018, a woman in the Canadian Armed Forces came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct against the highest-ranking officer in the military. The Prime Minister says that his office took those allegations seriously.

However, many people in his entourage were aware but did nothing. The Minister of National Defence, the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Prime Minister's chief of staff were aware. The Prime Minister is trying to claim that he did not know.

Was he aware of the allegations, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is mistaken. The Standing Committee on National Defence heard from multiple witnesses over three months, including non-partisan public servants, all of whom said that they were unaware. The record is clear.

The deputy secretary to the cabinet said, “I did not have information about the nature of the complaint or specifics that would have enabled further action.” Furthermore, the former ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces testified at committee that he could not provide any details. He said that he had taken the investigation as far as he could with the complainant's authority. This highlights why we need a better system.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when a woman makes a sexual harassment claim, there should not be a “wrong door” for her to knock on. She should be listened to, and she should feel safe. The Prime Minister has failed in that regard.

Can he imagine what a woman feels when she is harassed by her superior and then completely ignored when she dares to speak out? It is a nightmare. Is the Prime Minister aware of the message he is sending to women who have been sexually harassed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said all along, we will support and listen to anyone who steps forward with allegations of sexual misconduct or harassment, and we will provide them with resources.

Oral Questions

Our government has been taking concrete measures for many years. However, it is obvious that we need to do more. Very soon, we will be announcing even stronger measures to support everyone serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, who deserve greater support than they are getting now.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his government keep saying, with a straight face, that sexual harassment is not tolerated, and yet they gave General Vance a pay raise after the allegations were made. That seems to be how things are done in the old boys club, and, as a woman, I find that very disappointing. The Prime Minister is not keeping the promises he made to women who want to believe in his feminist government.

How can he call himself a feminist when he is not keeping the promises he made to the women in our Armed Forces?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been making investments for years now to improve the culture within the Canadian Armed Forces and the situation for victims of harassment, intimidation and assault in the Armed Forces.

We know we need to do more, and that is exactly what we will continue to work on. Our feminist government has always been there to believe and support women, and we will continue to be there for them.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I do not understand.

On April 9, management imposed a decision that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour says would be overturned by the special legislation. We know how this will end. The Prime Minister could put an end to the strike today, and the Port of Montreal could resume its operations tomorrow, thus saving tens of millions of dollars. That is what everyone wants.

The Prime Minister says a lot of things, but he never answers this one question: Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said for years that the best solutions are those found at the bargaining table. That is why we have been supporting negotiations between workers and employers for a long time, and that is what we will continue to do.

However, we are facing a crisis that could be extremely bad for Quebec's economy, its workers and its citizens. That is why we have had to take steps not to impose conditions of employment but to facilitate neutral mediation that will enable the parties to find the right solution. That is why we are going ahead.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I get it. The proof that the government thinks that disputes should be settled at the bargaining table is the fact that it is introducing special legislation. That makes no sense at all.

I have news for the House. The union asked management whether it understood the interpretation indicating that it should re-

verse its April 9 decision on scheduling. Management said it would answer that question after the passage of the special legislation.

Was this whole thing staged? Was the intention all along to impose special legislation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see that the Bloc is always there to defend the interests of Quebec with fine words. However, the Bloc cannot just settle for fine words in this situation, because we have the option to take clear action.

Will they support the bill to allow operations in the Port of Montreal to resume safely and to establish an impartial mediation and arbitration process that would settle the disputes and lead to a new collective agreement?

Will they help get the port and Quebec's economy back up and running?

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister cannot keep his story straight. First he said he learned of the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance in the media; then he said he just did not know the specific details. Now he is saying it was a #MeToo complaint, even though the senior staff in his office, including the Prime Minister's chief of staff, were using the term "sexual harassment".

Mr. Speaker, pick your poison. Did Katie Telford lie to the Prime Minister about the severity of the complaint, or has the Prime Minister been misleading Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand how desperate the Conservatives are to fall back on attacks. Instead of talking about a budget that is there to support Canadians through this issue and instead of talking about the COVID crisis and the science that is going to get us through, they are choosing to neglect what the committee itself has put forward from multiple witnesses, that the details of the allegation were unknown.

The deputy secretary of cabinet testified, "I did not have information [even] about the nature of the complaint or specifics that would have enabled further action."

The former ombudsman testified at committee that he could not provide any details and took the investigation as far as he could with the complainant's authority.

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Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is forgetting that we have had multiple witnesses, including the ombudsman and including the clerk to the cabinet, all saying that it was sexual misconduct in nature, and they have it in emails. The Prime Minister's chief of staff and his own senior adviser, Elder Marques, exchanged emails in March 2018 discussing sexual harassment allegations against General Vance.

Mr. Marques told the defence committee that even Katie Telford's assistant knew about the allegations; but somehow, the Prime Minister wants us to believe he was left in the dark. Is the Prime Minister telling us that the assistant to his chief of staff was aware of serious allegations against Canada's top soldier, but somehow the Prime Minister of Canada was not?

• (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we put forward a number of processes over the past years to strengthen and encourage the supports for anyone coming forward with allegations of mistreatment, including of harassment, assault, intimidation or anything. We know we need to strengthen that system because still people are not feeling supported as they come forward.

That is why we will continue to work properly and we will continue to respect the wishes of complainants who come forward to remain anonymous. We will also ensure that there are proper processes in place to follow up whenever possible, to ensure there are consequences.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is true unless the person is a woman in uniform in the Canadian Armed Forces. The Prime Minister ignores those complaints.

The Prime Minister claims to be a feminist, claims to believe all women and claims to have zero tolerance for sexual misconduct, but he took zero action and left General Vance in charge of our military and in charge of Operation Honour for years after these allegations surfaced. If the Prime Minister's claims are actually true and he had known General Vance was accused of sexual misconduct in 2018, would he have fired him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the Conservatives continue to complain about a process that they themselves used in 2015. The leader of the official opposition, who was then the minister of veterans affairs, had heard a rumour of misconduct. He told his staff, who told the PMO and the Privy Council Office. The job of politicians and their staff is to ensure that any allegation is given to appropriate authorities. The leader of the official opposition continues to decry a process that he himself undertook.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister had followed our process, he would have done as Stephen Harper did and sat down with General Vance and grilled him personally. We have again, that the Prime Minister fails to recognize that General Vance was in place during these investigations. We are calling for more accountability. The women and men who serve in uniform are calling for more accountability. We know that the Prime Minister's chief of staff lied to the Prime Minister and covered up these serious allegations about our top sol-

dier. The Liberals oversaw a salary increase of \$50,000 to General Vance and they extended his contract.

Again, if the Prime Minister's claims are true, and he had known General Vance was accused of sexual misconduct in 2018, would he have fired—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see the Conservatives simply have no grasp of process or responsibility in this, because it is not the business of politicians to investigate or follow up on a process. It is the job and responsibility of politicians to ensure that independent appropriate authorities follow up responsibly. That is exactly what we ensured in this case when the Minister of National Defence and the ombudsman forwarded that complaint to the appropriate authorities, and they embarked on a process.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day it is very clear the Prime Minister knew about the allegations against General Vance, but what we want to know is what the Prime Minister is going to do now. Right now the message being sent to women in the Canadian Forces is that if they raise a complaint, and even if it makes it to the highest level, nothing gets done. That will send a chilling message to women across this country, and currently sends the message that women are not safe in the Canadian Forces.

What is the Prime Minister going to do? Will he let the minister who allowed this to happen remain? Will he bring in place some accountability? What will the Prime Minister do to protect women in the Canadian Forces?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, anyone who serves in our military and works in any office or workplace across this country deserves to have the supports and resources if they come forward with allegations or concerns, and indeed should be in a workplace free from harassment, intimidation or assault. That is why in budget 2021 we announced over \$236 million to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the CAF, including enhancing internal support services to survivors and implementing new external oversight mechanisms. I can inform this House and all Canadians that we will be coming forward very soon with concrete plans on how we deliver exactly that.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year has been a very difficult year with the global pandemic of COVID-19, and it has been a very complex tax season for a lot of families. We know that families that depend on benefits to keep food on the table and pay their rent need to file their taxes, but they just need more time. The deadline is fast approaching. It is this Friday.

My direct question for the Prime Minister is: Will he extend the filing deadline for taxes so families can continue to get the support they so desperately need?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic CRA has been there to support Canadians, including delivering the CERB, recovery benefits and the wage subsidy. For this tax season we are providing targeted interest relief to Canadians who received COVID-related income supports. They will not be required to pay interest on any outstanding income tax debt for the 2020 tax year until April 30, 2022. We will continue to be there for Canadians who need support, and get Canadians through this crisis.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a harsh reality that cancer is the leading cause of disease-related death in Canadian children. Pediatric cancers are different from adult cancers; for one thing, they grow faster. One of my constituents, Kim Vander Schelde, has watched her daughter Olivia struggle with cancer for most of her life. Kim asked our government to do more for childhood cancer research.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what the budget will do to support pediatric cancer research and help these brave children and their families?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for London West for all her work for her constituents, including Olivia's parents, whom I got to sit down with and have been advocating for a long time for this noble cause that affects far too many parents across the country.

Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$30 million over two years to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to fund pediatric cancer research that can lead to better outcomes and healthier lives for these young patients. This funding will support promising research projects with the greatest potential for fighting pediatric cancers.

I thank everyone who has advocated for this.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the Prime Minister try to dodge answering questions today. That is pretty consistent, because we have heard from him that he does not like the facts, and when he hears the facts on CNN or sees them in The

Globe and Mail, Postmedia or in Global News reporting, he calls it fake news.

If Canadians are expected to believe the Prime Minister that he did not actually know, here is a very simple question: If the Prime Minister had been made aware of the allegations of sexual misconduct by General Vance, would he have fired him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly important that there be a system and a set of resources for anyone who comes forward with allegations of misconduct or sexual harassment and it is incredibly important that processes be followed in that situation. When the ombudsman came forward with allegations, the defence minister ensured that those allegations were directed to the appropriate authorities, who had the capacity to follow up on a process.

It is important that women be believed and it is important that there be a process, and that is what we will always ensure.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ombudsman was crystal clear with the defence minister that the allegations were about sexual misconduct perpetrated by the chief of the defence staff on one of his subordinates. That information was given to the Prime Minister's Office and he failed to act. We hear a lot about ministerial accountability from the government. Now we are hearing about systems that it might implement someday, three years after this complaint was made and after it gave him a raise, extended the contract and then gave a high-five to the perpetrator on his way out the door.

Who is the Prime Minister going to hold accountable? Who is he going to fire?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly important that there be a proper process in all of these situations. Yes, we need to create the support and the resources for anyone who comes forward, who has the courage to come forward and push back against a terrible, toxic culture that has gone on for far too long in many institutions, including the Canadian Armed Forces, but we also need to ensure that process can follow through. In this case, the ombudsman was unable to provide further information to the people responsible for the process.

● (1455)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a process and it was exercised by the victim. She brought her complaints forward and the Prime Minister failed her. He failed to act. His office was made aware exactly of these allegations, that they were sexual in nature, and then he promoted the perpetrator, he extended his contract, he gave him a raise and no action was taken.

If the Prime Minister is to be believed and that he did not know, that means that the Minister of National Defence or his chief of staff perpetrated a cover-up. Who is he going to fire?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, this is the same process that was used by the then Conservative government in 2015. The leader of the official opposition heard a rumour of misconduct, told his staff, who told PMO and the Privy Council Office. It is the job of politicians and their staff to ensure any allegation is given to the appropriate authorities. Conservatives put forward that process in the same way that we did. The difference is they ended up appointing the individual chief of the defence staff.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about leadership. Prime Minister Harper heard a rumour, had the head of CSIS investigate it and then had the courage to sit down, look the general in the eye and ask him questions about it. What did the Prime Minister do? He hid behind his chief of staff and the Minister of National Defence. He did nothing. The difference between Prime Minister Harper and the current Prime Minister, among many, is Prime Minister Harper was presented with the rumour and the Liberal Prime Minister was presented with evidence and did nothing.

Who is he going to fire for this failure to these women in the Canadian Forces?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Harper was presented with a rumour and still appointed him.

The process involved in politicians checking with their buddies, checking with individuals to see whether they should move forward or not is not a process at all. It actually proves the entire point, that the system that we have right now is inadequate to support women and men who come forward with serious allegations regarding misconduct in the military. That is why we are moving forward with much stronger measures to change the culture in the military and support every survivor.

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[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is speaking to us with a sudden and unexpected passion for Quebec's interests.

Where was his passion for the will of Quebec when Quebec was calling for health care transfers in the budget?

Where was his passion for the will of Quebec when seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 got nothing?

We are giving him the solution. We made the phone calls that he did not make, and we found the solution to get the Port of Montreal back up and running tomorrow morning. He just has to implement it.

Why does he not do that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are a government that has always taken action to support Canadians and Quebecers.

We transferred billions of dollars to Quebec and the provinces to help them with their health care systems during the pandemic, and

Oral Questions

when the pandemic is over, then yes, we will sit down and talk about doing even more together.

We have been there for seniors by making transfers and providing assistance during the pandemic, and we are increasing old age security by 10% for older seniors.

We are there to support people, and we will be there to get the Port of Montreal and Quebec's economy back up and running.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us remember last year's rail crisis and the question I asked back then. Do we have a leadership problem in Canada?

A solution was found and implemented. Quebec does not want special legislation, Quebec wants people to get back to work. That would happen more quickly with our solution.

By delaying, the Prime Minister is working against Quebec's economy, Quebec's will and Quebec's workers.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would not want to contradict the leader of the Bloc Québécois when he says he speaks for Quebec, but I most definitely heard Premier Legault say that he wanted us to move forward to get people at the Port of Montreal back to work and to get Quebec's economy moving. That is exactly what he wants us to do and that is what we are doing.

We are making sure that there is a neutral mediation and arbitration process in place so that progress can be made while respecting everyone and ensuring that Quebec's economy is secure and prosperous.

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● (1500)

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what one permits is what one promotes. The Prime Minister is the most powerful man in the country. Rather than standing for women in the face of serious allegations of misconduct against General Vance, the Prime Minister has reinforced an entrenched and toxic military culture. His inaction has emboldened the military “old boys” and denied women the opportunity to be believed.

If the PM had known about the allegations against General Vance, would he have removed him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly important that we create a system that we do not have at this point. Even with all the improvements that have been made, we need to ensure that anyone who has been affected by misconduct, sexual assault or harassment is able to come forward in all comfort and engage in a proper process that will lead to consequences. We simply do not have that right now. We have worked very hard to ensure that there are processes in place, but we know there is more to do, and we will be announcing more extremely shortly.

Oral Questions

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated that his office, like him, takes sexual harassment extraordinarily seriously, but Katie Telford did not take the misconduct allegations against General Vance seriously. If she had, she would have informed the Prime Minister. Only he can replace a chief of the defence staff, not unelected members of his office. His staff made him complicit in the misconduct, denying him the opportunity to act.

If the PM's staff had not kept him in the dark about the allegations against General Vance, would he have removed him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of our time in office back in 2015, we have always taken seriously the responsibility to change cultures, both in the armed forces and in government, and across this country, when it comes to supporting survivors of sexual harassment and assault in terms of creating better processes for it. That is why Katie Telford herself has sat down with many members, women senior military leaders, to talk about the changes needed and has included me in many of those conversations. We will continue to work hard every single day to transform the “old boys” culture in the military and better support survivors.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are only two possible truths in the case of allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance. Either the Prime Minister knew, did nothing and allowed abuse of power at the highest levels to continue unchecked, or his staff did not inform him and his rhetoric about taking allegations of sexual harassment seriously is simply untrue. The process is that all roads lead to the Prime Minister.

If the Prime Minister had known about the allegations, would he have removed General Vance?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member opposite is not being forward with the truth. We heard allegations, we heard clearly from testimony at committee when the deputy secretary of cabinet testified that she did not have information even about the nature of the complaint. The former ombudsman could not provide any details. He took the investigation as far as he could with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am just going to stop the Right Hon. Prime Minister. I am having a hard time hearing him, as there is some bantering going back and forth. I will let him start over.

I want to remind hon. members that we all want to hear the questions and the answers.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, at committee, there were hearings from multiple witnesses for three months, including non-partisan public servants, who made clearly known that the details of the allegation were unknown. The deputy secretary of cabinet testified that she did not have information even about the nature of the complaint or specifics that would have enabled further action. The former ombudsman testified at committee that he could not provide any details. He took the investigation as far as he could with the complainant's authority.

It is important to support complainants in their desire for privacy, but it is also important that we create better systems in which they will feel properly supported.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many of my Brampton North constituents are concerned about the third wave of the pandemic. Across Ontario, hospitals are filling up, new cases continue to exceed 3,000 per day, and additional help is needed. I know that this federal government has often said that what is needed is a team Canada approach to addressing this pandemic.

Could the Prime Minister please tell the House what actions the Government of Canada has recently taken to provide support to the people of Ontario during this pandemic?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to begin by thanking the member for Brampton North for her leadership during this difficult time.

I want to reassure all Canadians that we will always be there to provide assistance to provinces and territories. Just this week, we approved a request to deploy immediate support to Ontario through deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces and redeployment of the Canadian Red Cross. Over the course of this pandemic, we have now approved 70 requests for assistance, including 22 from Ontario. We will continue to do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to help Canadians get through this COVID-19 pandemic.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an email from March 2, 2018, clearly indicated that there were allegations of sexual harassment, but the Prime Minister claims that he was not aware.

Even though senior officials knew, his Minister of National Defence knew and his chief of staff Katie Telford knew, the Prime Minister claims that he did not know.

Had he known, would he have fired General Vance?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the deputy secretary to the cabinet spoke about that email in her testimony at the Standing Committee on National Defence, where she said that she did not have information about the nature of the complaint or specifics that would have enabled further action.

We followed a process in this case. We must always follow up and provide support to people who file complaints like this one. We obviously now need to improve the support systems.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the processes, from my time in the Canadian Armed Forces.

If I were still in the military, I think I would resign. Soldiers want to trust the Prime Minister and the government. This is simply not the case right now.

The Prime Minister is talking about processes, papers and emails, but did he know that a sexual harassment complaint had been filed against General Vance? If not, would he have fired him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said this many times. I was not aware of the nature of the allegations against the general.

My office and the Minister of National Defence put this complaint through a rigorous process, the same one used by the Conservative government in 2015, to make sure that the complaint received adequate follow-up.

Unfortunately, the system was not sufficiently robust to reassure the person who made this complaint, but we will improve the system.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, someone said that there was no awareness that it was a #MeToo complaint and that nobody knew the nature of the complaint, of this allegation.

Who said that? Obviously, it was the Prime Minister.

However, documents obtained by Global News show that his office had asked bureaucrats to open a probe and that those bureaucrats had been informed the allegation was about sexual harassment. We have evidence of that.

If the Prime Minister maintains that he did not know, then I want to know the answer to this question: If he had known, would he have fired General Vance?

This is the eighth time we have asked this question.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time, I give the answer that it is important to have a rigorous process on which to base such decisions.

In this situation, the process did not work, unfortunately. It was the same process that was followed by the Conservative government, which chose Jonathan Vance to be the chief of the defence staff.

Unfortunately, we are in a situation where we need to recognize and greatly improve these systems, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on all Canadians, especially students and youth.

Our country's economic recovery depends on our young people's ability to pursue their studies and get the experience they need to start their careers.

Oral Questions

I am delighted that close to 450 jobs will be created this summer for young people in Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine thanks to an investment of more than \$2 million through the Canada summer jobs program.

Would the Prime Minister please tell the House what is being done to support young Canadians?

• (1510)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine for being so committed to our youth.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have given young Canadians over \$7.4 billion in support. Budget 2021 injects an additional \$5.7 billion for student debt relief and new training and work opportunities.

Today, we announced that a record-setting 150,000 jobs will be available through Canada summer jobs. That means more opportunities for young Canadians than ever before.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Laurentian University is essential to northern Ontario, and particularly to its indigenous and francophone communities.

Laurentian University is in a full-blown crisis right now; meanwhile, the Liberals sit back and do nothing. Northern communities deserve better.

Will the Prime Minister do something to save Laurentian University?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP leader is demonstrating that he does not understand the difference between provincial and federal jurisdictions.

We are obviously following the situation at Laurentian University very closely. We are in direct contact with the province on this issue. Our thoughts are with all of those who have lost their jobs and all of the employees and students who are facing this difficult situation.

We will continue to support post-secondary education institutions, because the future of our two official languages depends on it. We are ready to work with our provincial and territorial colleagues to achieve this, as education falls under their jurisdiction.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre is rising on a point of order.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

Privilege

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should introduce legislation and work with provincial and territorial governments and indigenous peoples to ensure that a guaranteed livable basic income (1) accounting for regional differences in living costs; (2) for all Canadians over the age of 18, including single persons, students, families, seniors, persons with disabilities, temporary foreign workers, permanent residents and refugee claimants; (3) paid on a regular basis; (4) not requiring participation in the labour market, education or training in order to be eligible; (5) in addition to current and future government public services and income supports meant to meet special exceptional and other distinct means and goals rather than basic needs, including accessible, affordable social housing and expanded health services be established on an ongoing and permanent basis in a concerted effort to eradicate poverty and ensure the respect, dignity and security of all persons in respect of Canada's domestic and international legal obligations.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert on a point of order.

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SPORT

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, following the allegations of psychological abuse, neglect, sexual harassment and racial discrimination of five former members of the Canada Artistic Swimming (CAS) Senior National Team by coaches and staff, the House:

- (a) recognize that national sports organizations are environments which, due in particular to the extremely intense competitive atmosphere and the presence of coaches with authority over the athletes, present a significant risk of psychological abuse and harassment, neglect, sexual harassment and discrimination;
- (b) recognize that it is the responsibility of the government to do everything in its power to protect our high performance athletes from situations of abuse and harassment and ensure that the ethical foundations of Sport Canada Strategy on Ethical Sport be respected; and
- (c) ask the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to undertake a study on the establishment of an independent body for handling complaints in sport which will establish a climate of trust so that victims can report without fear of reprisals.

• (1515)

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISLEADING COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege to address misleading comments made in the House by the Prime Minister.

At the heart of the issue is the Prime Minister's denial that he was aware, in 2018, that the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance were a matter of a #MeToo me complaint. I have evidence that will demonstrate that this is a false statement. Further, the facts clearly indicate that the Prime Minister had to have known of the situation, and therefore deliberately misled the House. Bosc and Gagnon, at page 82, states that it is a contempt of the House for a member "deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition.)"

During question period yesterday, the Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, as I have been saying for some time now, yes, there was a complaint against General Vance. Nobody in my office or in the Minister of National Defence's office knew the nature of the complaint.

Then he went on to say:

Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is putting forward is simply untrue. While there was awareness that there was a complaint against General Vance, there was no awareness that it was in fact a #MeToo complaint of a sexual nature.

I have emails on this matter, internal to the Privy Council Office, from Janine Sherman, deputy secretary to the cabinet for appointments, to various political staff in the minister of defence's office and the Prime Minister's office that I would be happy to hand over to you, Mr. Speaker.

I will refer to a few of these emails, beginning with one from Janine Sherman in which she proposed transmittal language from the minister to the ombudsman, dated March 2, 2018. This is what she wrote:

"Dear Mr. Walbourne, I am further writing to our discussion concerning allegations of sexual harassment that were brought to your attention. As the allegations relate to a Governor in Council appointee, I would ask you to please transmit the information to Ms. Janine Sherman, Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet for the Senior Personnel Secretariat, Privy Council Office, and provide her with your full cooperation."

In a March 5, 2018, email from Ms. Sherman to Mr. Walbourne, the first paragraph is blacked out, but I will quote, "I understand that you have information concerning the conduct of a GIC appointee that the Minister has asked that you share with me." Here there is another redaction. To continue, "...but given the sensitivity of this matter if it is at all possible to speak today or at your earliest convenience, I will make myself available."

There is also an email from Ms. Sherman dated March 2, 2018, although the recipient is blacked out. It states, “On behalf of the Minister, I am writing further to your discussion concerning allegations of sexual harassment that had been brought to your attention.”

Ms. Sherman confirmed that these email exchanges were with political staff in her testimony to the committee on national defence, dated March 26. Ms. Sherman is recorded in the committee's evidence as saying:

Those redactions are done on the basis of the statutory requirements in the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act, so public servants' names are not redacted. For non-public servants, that does constitute personal information and that is the reason it is redacted.

In the interests of being helpful, I could indicate in a generic way that those interactions were between myself and people in the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister's statements in the House, which predate Ms. Sherman's testimony of March 26, confirm her version of the events as stated above. The Prime Minister stated during question period on March 10:

Mr. Speaker, my office was aware of the minister's direction to the ombudsman to follow up with appropriate authorities, but my office and I learned of the details of the allegations over the past months only.

Then, on March 24, the Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, allegations of sexual misconduct or inappropriate behaviour need to be followed up by the appropriate authorities, and that is exactly what happened in this case.

That was the Prime Minister speaking on March 24. I am going to repeat that. He even said, “allegations of sexual misconduct”. Now I am going to go on to what he continued to say:

The ombudsperson was directed toward the right people in terms of following up on an investigation. The ombudsperson was not able to share further information with the investigators and, therefore, the investigation did not move forward.

We will continue to take very seriously any allegations that come forward, as we always have.

• (1520)

Ms. Sherman confirmed she had these discussions specifically with staff in the Prime Minister's Office later in her testimony before committee.

She stated:

As a matter of course, Madam Chair, in my responsibilities, I would not make a decision alone in that respect. I did meet with Mr. Walbourne myself. After that discussion, I would have briefed up to the people who had been involved in the discussion to pursue and try to get more information about the generality of the complaint.

I would have done a follow-up in terms of, certainly, the Clerk.

Later, in response to a question from the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman on whether the information was shared with the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, she said:

I have shared information to say it was within the Prime Minister's Office.

The emails from Ms. Sherman outline the substance of the information that she was discussing with staff in the Prime Minister's Office addressing the Prime Minister's assertion that no one in the defence minister's office was aware of the nature of the complaint.

Gary Walbourne's testimony to the Standing Committee on National Defence from March 3 states the following:

Privilege

The investigation process inexplicably moved at a snail's pace until March 2018, which just so happened to be the time when I personally met with [the Minister of Defence] to address an allegation of inappropriate sexual behaviour within the senior ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces, specifically, against the chief of the defence staff, and to discuss my concerns about this allegation.

He further stated:

To...conclude my statement, I will say that, yes, I did meet with [him] on March 1, 2018, and, yes, I did directly tell him about an allegation of inappropriate sexual behaviour made against the chief of the defence staff.

Finally, there is Michael Wernick's testimony at the Standing Committee on National Defence on April 6, replying to another question from the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman regarding the allegations being of a sexual misconduct nature.

Mr. Wernick stated:

I don't have the language of the emails in front of me. I think the language was “potential sexual harassment”. There is a back-and-forth of emails between Zita, Janine and Elder. I certainly would say that it was in the realm of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment, but I couldn't speak to the exact language.

Also, as to whether the Prime Minister's statements about his office should extend to the PCO, Wernick had this to offer, which appropriately places the PCO as responsible to the Prime Minister.

He stated:

The Privy Council Office is the Prime Minister's department. It's part of the executive branch of government. It is the Prime Minister's department, and the Prime Minister is the minister, just like any other department, and the Clerk is the deputy minister, just like any other department.

It's not independent in the sense of the courts, but it is separate from [the Minister of Defence]. I guess that's the argument he was making. It was somebody from outside.

Mr. Wernick later responded to a question from the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke as to why Elder Marques had gone to the Clerk instead of to the NSA.

Mr. Wernick stated:

That would be because I'm the boss of the Prime Minister's department. That would have been going right to the top and saying, “We have this very serious issue. The minister wants it looked into. What's the best way to proceed?”

On February 1, 2002, the Speaker then ruled on a matter regarding the former minister of national defence. The hon. former member for Portage—Lisgar, now the current Premier of Manitoba, alleged that the then minister of national defence deliberately misled the House as to when he knew that prisoners taken by Canadian JT-F2 troops in Afghanistan had been handed over to the Americans. In support of that allegation, he cited the minister's responses in Question Period on two successive days.

The Speaker considered the matter and found there was a prima facie question of privilege.

He stated:

The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House.

Privilege

The authorities to which Speaker Milliken referred to include, but are not limited to, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which states on page 115:

Misleading a Minister or a Member has also been considered a form of obstruction and thus a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

• (1525)

On February 25, 2014, the House leader of the official opposition raised a question of privilege regarding statements made in the House by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville had deliberately misled the House during debate on Bill C-23, the Fair Elections Act, when he stated that he had witnessed evidence of voter fraud first hand. He further argued that the matter was not resolved by the statements made by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville later on February 24 and 25, when he admitted that contrary to his original claim, he had not actually witnessed what he had originally claimed to have witnessed.

In the Speaker's view, this was not a simple case of someone misspeaking. He argued, rather, that it was a case where the member deliberately chose to take something he knew not to be true and present it as eyewitness evidence, something so egregious it constituted contempt. On March 3, the Speaker delivered his ruling and found the matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege.

On November 3, 1978, the member for Northumberland—Durham raised a question of privilege and charged that he had been deliberately misled by a former solicitor general. The member had written a letter in 1973 to the solicitor general, who assured him that, as a matter of policy, the RCMP did not intercept the private mail of Canadians.

On November 1, 1978, during testimony before the McDonald Commission, the former commissioner of the RCMP stated that they did indeed intercept mail on a very restricted basis and that the practice was not one that had been concealed from ministers.

The Speaker ruled on December 6, 1978, that this was indeed a *prima facie* of contempt.

On the final analysis, does this meet the test for a *prima facie* question of period? The evidence above does clearly establish that the Prime Minister provided information that was misleading, and there is no doubt about that. Therefore, the first test is met.

On the second test, did the Prime Minister know that the information he provided was false?

On March 10, in questions from the official opposition, the Prime Minister specifically had to address the awareness of members of his office, Elder Marques and his department, Michael Wernick and Janine Sherman, and the defence minister. The Prime Minister's answer included the following, "The ombudsman came forward with allegations, the minister said that he needed to take those to independent authorities able to follow up on this investigation, and that is something my office was aware of.":

Gary Walbourne's statement of March 3 to the Standing Committee on National Defence details specifically that the allegations

brought forth were sexual in nature. The testimony predates the statement by the Prime Minister by a full week.

This was followed on March 11, in response to a question in the House, the Prime Minister named members of the Prime Minister's staff, as I said, Elder Marques and his department, Michael Wernick and Janie Sherman, and the defence minister, as having personal knowledge of the nature of the complaints. In that exchange, the defence minister speaks directly to his knowledge of the substance of the allegations and the actions he took with regard to it.

There is a strong case that the second test is met.

On the third test, was the Prime Minister intending to mislead the House?

The Prime Minister's answers on this matter have repeatedly changed, not only in the press but in the House. They have gone from "not being aware of allegations" to "not being aware of specific allegations" to "his office being aware."

However, the public statement issued to the media by the Prime Minister's Office on February 23, and published in its entirety by Mercedes Stephenson, states the following, "The Prime Minister confirmed on March 10, in the House of Commons, that his office was aware of the concern raised by the defence ombudsman in 2018."

That means the Prime Minister has issued a public statement prior to his statement in the House that his office was aware, as the defence minister has stated, that he raised concerns of a sexual nature regarding the chief of the defence staff.

In the face of a public statement by the Prime Minister, which contradicts the statement made yesterday in the House of Commons, there is an argument that the third test has been met.

In conclusion, it is just not believable that the Prime Minister was unaware that these allegations were of a #MeToo sexual complaint nature.

Let us remember, this was in 2018 at the height of the #MeToo movement, the very height of it. It was also during this period that allegations surfaced that the Prime Minister had inappropriately groped a young newspaper reporter. In addition, sitting on the Prime Minister's desk for three years was a report from former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps that categorized the culture in the military as "sexualized".

• (1530)

The second edition of Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, at page 227, states:

In the final analysis, in areas of doubt, the Speaker asks simply:

Does the act complained of appear at first sight to be a breach of privilege...or to put it shortly, has the Member an arguable point? If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should...leave it to the House.

In the House, the Prime Minister is being accused of something very serious, something that should not be treated lightly or dismissed as a matter of experiencing something differently.

Let us not forget who we are dealing with here. We are dealing with a Prime Minister who has frequently breached our ethics laws. I am, of course, referring to the SNC-Lavalin scandal, his family vacation on billionaire island and the investigation about his family ties to WE Charity.

All things considered, I believe I have more than an arguable point. If you rule this matter to be a prima facie question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for her submission. I will take it under advisement and return to the House.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you would allow us some time, we would like to come back with some comments to this question of privilege.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois would like to take a day or two to prepare its response and comments on the question of privilege raised by the Conservative Party.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege, I would like to make some initial remarks.

It is obviously true that misleading the House is always a serious matter and any instance of misleading the House by a minister, or in this case by the Prime Minister, would clearly affect our ability as members to do our jobs as parliamentarians.

In this case, the answer to the question of what the Prime Minister knew about the allegations against the former chief of the defence staff is critical to the larger issue of the government's failure to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct against the former chief of the defence staff and then allowing him to stay in charge of Operation Honour, a program to combat sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, for another three years.

Knowing whether the Prime Minister was aware of the nature of the allegations against General Vance is critical to our power as parliamentarians to hold the government accountable. This case of misleading the House may constitute obstruction, as previous Speakers have found to be the case in other instances of misleading the House.

Obstructing what? The obstruction would be in allowing members to determine who was responsible for the government's failure to act on allegations of sexual misconduct at the highest level in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to look carefully at the evidence on this question found in testimony before the defence committee, which on its face appears to contradict the Prime Minister's statements in the House that neither he nor anyone in his office knew that General Vance was accused of sexual misconduct.

Again, whether the Prime Minister misled the House in this question is critical. If what the Prime Minister says is in fact true, it is hard to see how necessary reforms to stamp out misconduct in the military can have any credibility if the Minister of National De-

fence, who took no effective action on allegations of sexual misconduct at the highest level, remains in place.

Therefore, we need a clear answer of whether the Prime Minister has in fact attempted to mislead the House on this critical question.

• (1535)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention. It will help with coming to a decision.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to one petition. This return will be tabled in an electronic format.

While I have the floor, I move:

That the House do now proceed to Orders of the Day.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I request that the motion be passed on division.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I therefore declare the motion carried on division. (Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROCEEDINGS ON A BILL ENTITLED AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS AT THE PORT OF MONTREAL

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.) Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 5, I move:

That debate be not further adjourned.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1) there will be now a 30-minute question period.

We will start with the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day here in the House of Commons.

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The Syndicat des débardeurs du port de Montréal has been trying for years to negotiate in good faith, but five big companies belonging to the Maritime Employers Association, with combined assets in the hundreds of billions of dollars, refuse to play ball.

The Liberals claim to be on the side of workers, but they are abandoning them today and imposing an agreement that these unionized workers already democratically rejected.

Why is it that the Liberals always support unions and workers up until the interests of the employers are at stake? Why are the Liberals imposing this special legislation instead of letting the union's good-faith negotiations play out?

• (1540)

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to reply to the hon. member's question in a number of ways.

Our government has been there every step of the way on this. The date I begin with is October 11, 2018. That is when the government appointed a conciliation officer on this matter. Then, on December 11, 2018, two federal mediators were appointed. Therefore, the federal government has been there every step of the way, trying to assist the parties to reach an agreement. I want to thank the conciliation officers and mediators. We have been there for the workers.

With respect to the impact on workers, we understand this is very difficult. I have said a number of times in the House that this is our least favourite option, but we are taking this step because of the dire situation we are in. This is an impact on—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to go to other members.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is sad to see special legislation being pushed through to put an end to discussions between employers and employees.

Workers are not being allowed to exercise their right to strike. Worse still is the federal government's failure to take action on this issue. It has done nothing for the past eight months. The Prime Minister has been nowhere to be found. He left everyone hanging when this dispute could have easily been resolved if he had shown some leadership. That is unfortunately not what he did, so here we are.

As a member of Parliament, I am sad that the government announced this special legislation in advance, which pushed everyone in this direction.

Are they not a little embarrassed about this situation?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, first let me say that we have taken action. I have just said that since October 11, 2018 we have been engaged on this file. We have appointed two mediators.

In February, I took the extra step of appointing two senior-level mediators on this file, and we have had conversations with both employer and employees saying that we really need them to reach an agreement at the table and we want to provide all the supports we can to get them there.

The second thing is with respect to the member's allegation that there is no dialogue. The dialogue is going to continue. Mediation is going to continue. This legislation would actually allow the parties 21 days to continue that mediation, 14 days with an option for an extension of seven days. We want the parties to come to an agreement with the assistance of the mediator, and we encourage them to do that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, could the minister advise the House when and how she first communicated to the parties about her intention to bring in back-to-work legislation?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I would say that we have been very clear with the parties from day one. We have told the parties that we are going to support them but we want them to come to an agreement at the table. We know that is the best resolution of this. We have told them we are going to provide them with those supports, and that is exactly what we have done. We have repeated those messages through a number of phone calls and dialogues that we have had with both parties, because we wanted the parties to reach an agreement at the table, and we still do. That is the message we are still giving.

The mediator is still available. We want the parties to come to an agreement at the table. This legislation would help mediation continue.

• (1545)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, like the minister, I would prefer not to have to take this legislative route, but I do not believe we are offered any other solutions.

I have reported to the minister that I have been hearing from the agricultural community and fertilizer companies that fertilizer crop protection products are tied up in the Port of Montreal. If they do not get delivered, we will have a disaster on the ground in terms of crop production in Atlantic Canada.

Has the minister heard those same kinds of concerns, and is that part of the reason why this must be done?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. In fact, the P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture has written to me talking about the dire consequences this will cause if farmers do not receive the seed and the fertilizer. They want to get their crops planted. This will have an impact on the food that is produced for Canadians across this country.

In addition, I have heard from ministers in both Ontario and Quebec indicating the hundreds of thousands of jobs that will be impacted by the work stoppage at the port. We do not want these workers to lose their jobs. We want these workers to continue and we want the parties, of course, to come to an agreement.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, the situation has grown tragic, as it often does.

I have been an MP for scarcely a year and a half, not even two. We continually find ourselves faced with a government that fails to take action, waits for the situation to become explosive and then drives us into a corner. Naturally, everyone agrees that the Port of Montreal must reopen. However, we are in this situation today because the government failed to take action in the past.

Today, at a media scrum, my leader said that the solution is very simple. The Prime Minister must pick up the phone, call the employer and explain that the special legislation, assuming it has not changed, will prohibit any unilateral changes to the work schedules set out in the current collective agreement. If the Prime Minister does that and the employer stops that practice, we have a written guarantee from the union that the workers will return to work tomorrow morning. That resolution is even better than special legislation, as it does not trample on workers' rights and shows the Prime Minister and the government that it is possible to get results by being proactive.

Why did we not take those steps? Why do we not do it now? It is 3:47 p.m., so there is still time.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

Let me be very clear: We have engaged on this file, and I have said the date, since October 11, 2018. Mediators have been there. There have been over 100 negotiation sessions that have taken place that were mediated through the federal mediator who was present at the table. In February, I appointed additional mediators, two senior-level mediators. We have communicated to the parties on an ongoing basis.

The reality is that the parties have not been able to come to an agreement and progress has not been made. The situation now is dire and consequences are going to be very hurtful for Canadians across this country, both economic, with an estimated amount of \$40 million to \$100 million per week, as well as the health and safety of Canadians with respect to goods and products that we have to get to Canadians, particularly in the environment of a pandemic, where supply chains have already been compromised.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing has to be very clear. When it comes to workers and unions, their only real power is the right to withhold their labour when it comes to situations like this. The government is choosing this draconian step and removing that one key power that workers have.

Is the minister not aware of the cruel symbolism of her being the Minister of Labour and introducing this measure on April 28, a day when the whole country is supposed to be coming together to mourn workers who have been in workplace accidents? Is she not aware of the cruel irony of introducing such a measure today of all days?

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• (1550)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for acknowledging that today is the day to mourn workers who have been injured, lost their lives or suffered illnesses in the workplace. I am happy to say that the federal government has put a number of measures in place to help protect workers and keep them safe. In fact, during this pandemic, that has been my number one priority.

With respect to workers, we understand the impact this is having on workers. In fact, I have a letter before me from the ministers in Ontario and Quebec, the economic ministers as well as the labour ministers, and the numbers of workers who will be impacted as a result of the stoppage of work is 215,000 employees in Montreal and 273,000 workers in Ontario.

I would say to the member that this situation is dire. The impact is deep. We have to take action. Of course, the preferred course is to have the parties come to an agreement. This legislation is going to allow mediation to continue, as I said, for up to 21 days. The message still remains that we want the parties to come to an agreement at the table and—

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the minister has a history of being part of the labour movement, particularly in the riding she represents. I know she would not do this unless she felt it was absolutely necessary to take this course of action.

She just talked about the number of jobs that would be directly impacted by this action if the stoppage was to occur. Could she highlight the economic impact of this, especially in light of the fact that we are currently going through very challenging times with the pandemic?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, there is no question that Hamilton has a proud history with the labour movement. I am the daughter of a proud steelworker, and I very much value the labour movement and the values that it has espoused throughout its efforts, such as fairness and a number of other things.

However, moving forward, the economic harm here is estimated to be \$40 million to \$100 million per week. In addition to that, we are talking about the health and safety of Canadians across this country who are relying on goods that are now not able to go through the port. Diversion is happening and a lot of complicating factors are causing goods not to be shipped. I am hearing not only from businesses but from individuals, including farmers and those who are delivering medicine and dialysis equipment for—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is ironic that today, April 28, is a day when we mourn workers who lost their lives or were injured on the job.

The right to strike is fundamental. It is the tool that unionized workers have when negotiations fail, and these workers have been negotiating in good faith. Back-to-work legislation lets the companies off the hook.

S. O. 57

It is really unfortunate that it has come to this situation. I understand that there are a lot of economic implications to this, but I am wondering whether the government could have done more in advance to avoid this situation.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the concerns he has raised. I share the concerns in terms of supporting collective bargaining, and we have done that. I want to assure the member that we have been there since 2018. We have offered the support of mediators. I appointed two extra mediators in February to help the parties reach an agreement. We have been in communication with the parties, urging them.

I cannot impress upon members enough that this situation is dire. There is the economic impact, as well as the health and safety of Canadians, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The supply chains are critical, and we have to keep goods moving. This is really a situation where, for the health and safety of Canadians and the economy, we must take this action.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the general strike began when the employer took a clearly provocative action defying long-established conventions around workplace conditions and hours of work. There is not a lot of evidence that the government felt there was any sense of urgency there, or picked up the phone to ask why the employer was doing this and making the situation worse. I mean, it is the least that the government could have done.

Meanwhile, this is the kind of action that one would expect an employer who knew that a government was willing to step in with back-to-work legislation might undertake in order to get the government to act and end negotiations with legislation. This just has stink written all over it in terms of the way the government has intervened.

There was a question earlier that did not get answered, about whom the government informed when. When did it inform either party as to its readiness to bring in back-to-work legislation? I would like a clear answer from the minister on which sides in the negotiations knew that the government was prepared to introduce this kind of legislation and when they knew it.

• (1555)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, again, we have been involved since October 11, 2018. We have been monitoring the situation. We then put extra mediators. I appointed two extra mediators to put at the table in February. Notwithstanding that, the parties have negotiated. We have been in communication with the parties, myself, the Minister of Transport and other ministers, encouraging them to come to a resolution. We want that deal to be made at the table.

Notwithstanding that, the reality is that little progress was made. The parties were nowhere close to an agreement. The harm being suffered by the economy and potentially by Canadians across this country, including farmers and patients who are waiting for medical equipment and medicines, is dire. We must take action, and the action we are taking provides for mediation to continue.

We want the parties to continue to mediate, and we want the agreement to be made at the table with the mediator. This is why

we are acting. This is a matter of significant impact on Canadians across this country, so we are moving forward with this legislation.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that the Minister of Labour is saying that she is hoping that we could come to a resolution. On Sunday the two sides were still negotiating. It has come to my attention that a proposal was sent yesterday that would have put workers back to work immediately. The only party that disagreed was the company.

Why is the minister still pursuing this, knowing that free collective bargaining could still be done? Instead, she has given the weight of the hammer to the company itself, which now knows that it does not have to negotiate any further because the government wants to proceed with this legislation.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, the member is from Hamilton as well, so he is very familiar with the strong labour movement that we have here. We respect the collective bargaining process, we have to let the parties bargain, negotiate, present their positions and make decisions at that table concerning what positions they will take. The mediator is there to assist them with this.

It is not my role to enter into those negotiations and make decisions for the parties. That is up to the parties to do. We are supporting that through the mediator, who is present at the table.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, this back-to-work legislation is an attack on the workers at the Port of Montreal. It is an attack on all Canadian workers. We know that the right to bargain collectively, to bargain fairly, is a fundamental right of working people. We know that it is a fundamental constitutional right.

The Liberals are out there talking about the middle class, and today they were out there talking about the National Day of Mourning, yet on this same day, they are bringing in legislation on the side of the employer. Let us not kid ourselves that is not exactly what it is, and it is taking the power away from workers.

How can the government claim to be on the side of working people, on the side of the middle class, while bringing in back-to-work legislation against the port workers of Montreal and against working people in this country?

• (1600)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I would say a couple of things. First, we do this as a least favoured option. I will be very clear that we are not hiding that. Of course, we want the parties to reach an agreement at the table, but that clearly, after two and a half years of negotiation and over 100 negotiation sessions, with mediation support provided by the federal government, the parties are not close to reaching an agreement. We have to look at the reality of the situation, and the reality is dire.

Second, if we want to talk about workers, there are hundreds of thousands of workers whose jobs come into jeopardy when the work stoppage starts at the port. Yes, we want the parties to continue to negotiate. Yes, we want workers to be supported in this. This is why we continue to say to the parties to reach an agreement, and in the legislation we are putting forward there are up to 21 days during which they can still negotiate and come to an agreement in the presence of a mediator and arbitrator.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate, particularly on this important National Day of Mourning, that the government is pushing back-to-work legislation and violating the rights of workers. This is really an unfortunate step, and it is certainly another indication of how the government privileges its corporate friends over even the rights of workers.

I am wondering why the government, knowing all of this, still chooses to push through archaic, draconian back-to-work legislation that violates the rights of workers.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I would say first and foremost that, as Minister of Labour, my priority throughout this pandemic has been the health and safety of workers. We have taken measures, including \$2.5 million for the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, to improve health and safety during the pandemic. The government has moved forward in a number of ways to protect workers.

I will read a portion of a letter I received from Ontario ministers, as well as ministers in Quebec, in which they write, “Close to 250,000 employees in Greater Montréal and 273,000 workers in Ontario employed in the production of shipping container products could be affected by a new labour dispute at the Port of Montreal.”

These are hundreds of thousands of workers across this country whose jobs would be put in jeopardy by a work stoppage at the port. We are concerned about these workers, of course. These workers are putting food on the table during a pandemic and paying for rent, so we have to be aware of the impact that this is also having on workers across this country. That is absolutely factored into our decision to move forward with this legislation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am interested in the minister’s thoughts. I realize how difficult this is for all of us, in regard to it not being our first choice. This is not something we want to do, and it is not something that is unique to governments.

There have been New Democratic provincial governments, for example, that have brought in back-to-work legislation. There have been provincial Liberal administrations that had to bring in back-to-work legislation. This is to emphasize that, when legislation of this nature is brought in, it is not because there is this deep desire to do it. Rather, we are put into a position where we have to go beyond the talks and deal with what is in the best interests of the country.

If the minister could pick up on that particular point, I would appreciate it.

S. O. 57

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, there is no question on this. As I have said repeatedly, this is our government’s least favoured option. This is our last option. However, we are compelled to act because of the dire situation we are in. The health and safety of Canadians across this country is at stake. We have seniors who are relying on medicines and things such as dialysis equipment. Their health and safety are at stake.

We have farmers who are waiting for grain and fertilizer, and they are expressing concern. They are ringing the alarm bells. We have Canadians who are waiting for food, and they will rely on the farmers to grow it. The season is upon us. As well, and as I have said, we have workers across this country who are a part of the supply chain and their jobs are going to be at stake. There are hundreds of thousands of workers whose jobs rely on the work that takes place at the port and in the supply chains.

This is a situation in which I wish the parties could come to an agreement. I encourage them to. I have the same message today that I have had all along. I encourage the parties to come to the agreement. The federal mediation service is there, and it is available 24-7. I would like to thank the workers in the mediation service, because they have been offering—

● (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, there has been a lot said about how this is the last possible option and this is the least favourable option. Could the minister comment on how this is always the last option for those workers? They do not want to strike either, but it is a tool that is used to fight for rights and for recognition.

There was a mention about her involvement in the labour movement in the Hamilton area. Could she comment on just how important it is to maintain the right for Canadian workers to strike, what that can lead to, and how it is absolutely the last option for them as well?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, there is no question that we believe in the collective bargaining process. We believe that parties should be supported to make the deals at the table. When parties are negotiating, they know what is dear to them and what they cannot compromise on, and they know the things they can be flexible on.

I have been very clear with the parties since the very beginning on this file, and that was to say two things. The first is that they have to be flexible at the table. We all know that. We are never going to come to an agreement, unless there is some flexibility. Second, they have to have a desire to come to an agreement. That message was communicated, and I want to thank the parties for the days they have spent at the table.

The reality now is that the situation is dire, and we have provided the support. For two and a half years the federal government has been there. Over 100 days of negotiations have taken place, and the federal government has been there. That support has been there—

S. O. 57

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, with respect, I have some news for the minister: Strikes are intended to cause economic disruption. That is the whole purpose of a strike. A strike that does not have economic impacts is a strike that has no value whatsoever.

There is no right to collectively bargain without the right to back that up by withdrawing services. If that right is neutered, there is absolutely no pressure that workers can bring to bear to match the employer's power to unilaterally determine the conditions of employment. The other thing, of course, is that it is always open to the minister to declare essential services, which would allow the workers to exercise their right to strike while ensuring there is a minimal workforce there ensuring essential goods get delivered.

If workers do not have the right to withdraw their services, what possible pressure could there be on this employer to resolve this dispute?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I would say to the member that, in fact, those measures have been taken. Over the last two and a half years, there has been action where there has been a work stoppage. There has been a partial and a full strike. The economic impact of that was a loss of \$600 million. That is the estimated cost with respect to the previous action that has been taken.

What elevates this now is that we are in the midst of a pandemic. This has been a very difficult year for all Canadians, not only from an economic point of view, with respect to businesses working very hard to recover, but also for Canadians who are relying on things such as medicines, which they need desperately in order to get through this pandemic. Supply chains have been impacted. For example, the rail to the port has been minimized because of a lack of products moving at the port.

I think it is important for the member to realize that the impact of this is grave and the situation is dire. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation, and we must take action.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forth with the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

• (1610)

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (1650)

[*English*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 99*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Besette	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Bratina
Brière	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Garneau
Gerretsen	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sangha	Sarai

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Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
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Sorbara
Tabbara
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Young
Zann

Schieffe
Serré
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Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
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Brunelle-Duceppe
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Charbonneau
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Fortin
Gaudreau
Gill
Harris
Johns
Kwan
Lemire
Manly
Masse
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Michaud
Pauzé
Plamondon
Simard
Ste-Marie
Therrien
Vignola

Ashton
Bachrach
Beaulieu
Bérubé
Blanchet
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Cannings
Champoux
Davies
Desbiens
Duvall
Garrison
Gazan
Green
Hughes
Julian
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*English*]

RESUMING DEBATE ON THE PROCEEDINGS ON A BILL ENTITLED AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS AT THE PORT OF MONTREAL

The House resumed from April 27 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I finished yesterday, I was talking about the history of the Port of Montreal and the dispute that has led us to this legislation. The government made a strong and concerted effort to help both parties come to an agreement over two and a half years. We did this because we firmly believe that the best agreements are the ones reached at the bargaining table. However, in some cases, despite our best efforts, the parties remain at an impasse and turn to their last resort, which is to take

job action. Those are exactly the circumstances that we are facing now.

Let me explain why this work stoppage is so detrimental. The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. As I mentioned, every year it handles over 1.6 million 20-foot equivalent units and 35 million tonnes of cargo, representing approximately \$40 billion in goods.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

The Port of Montreal is central to the economic well-being of Canadians across the country, in particular in Ontario and Quebec.

The work stoppage at the Port of Montreal is causing major and permanent damage to Canada's economy, further disrupting the supply chains, which are already considerably affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

The longer this work stoppage lasts, the more likely it is that commercial activities cannot resume, which would cause lasting damage.

We must act quickly, since the negative impact on the economy will only increase and become significantly worse in the coming days.

[*English*]

The port is an enormous operation involving enormous costs and the potential for enormous loss. We are not just talking about temporary losses either. Some shippers forced to reroute shipments to other ports may not return. Others may not return in the short term. This means that economic harm could continue long after any work stoppage has ended.

As I mentioned, the rerouting of container cargo is a major factor. The redirection of cargo has been occurring for weeks, even before any job action had begun. Some businesses have been rerouting containers to other ports in Canada, such as Halifax. Others have been going to ports in the United States, such as Boston, to avoid becoming stranded in Montreal.

It is not only rerouting cargo that is a problem. There is also a cost that comes with the delay of imports. Interruption to supply chain flows can be particularly costly to manufacturers and retailers, especially in the case of a more prolonged dispute. We also have to consider export delays. Missing delivery deadlines, potentially losing sales and wasting products, such as perishable goods that cannot be properly stored or handled, all spell out significant losses.

Government Orders

A prolonged work stoppage would also have a serious impact on jobs. The port sustains tens of thousands of jobs. This includes both direct jobs, such as people who work for terminal operators, and indirect jobs, such as people who transport goods to and from the port, and those who work for companies that are serviced by the port. The first workers who are expected to experience job impacts are those in employment that directly support ongoing operations at the port. This includes terminal operators, tugboat operators, freight forwarders and truckers, among others.

As the stoppage continues, these impacts are expected to spread to indirect interests, such as local companies that provide services to the port, such as refuelling services to vessels and tugboats. A backlog at the port would have additional impacts, such as reduced hours or temporary layoffs on workers and businesses that are unable to reroute necessary production inputs through other ports, particularly those in the manufacturing, construction and sales sectors.

In short, the longer a work stoppage continues, the more damage will be done. The work stoppage at the Port of Montreal is resulting in economic loss to the Canadian economy and it will grow more with each passing day that the work stoppage continues. The fact of the matter is this is a loss no one can afford these days. All of this comes at a precarious moment in Canada's economic recovery from the ongoing pandemic. Supply chains have been disrupted for over a year now and industries are working hard to recover from and manage these complexities.

Following the job action notice from the parties on April 12, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters issued a news release calling on the government to step in. In its news release it stated that some manufacturers had already incurred millions in additional costs every week as a result of redirecting their containers to the Port of Halifax. This was before the work stoppage even began. It noted that while industry will have to absorb these costs and delays, it will ultimately hurt consumers. We must take these warnings seriously. While our government agrees that the best agreement is always one that is reached by both parties at the bargaining table, the fact is that is not always possible.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Our government provided considerable and ongoing support and encouragement to the Maritime Employers Association and the Syndicat des débardeurs, also known as CUPE Local 375, during the collective bargaining process to help them reach an agreement satisfactory to both parties.

As I said before, our federal conciliators and mediators have been working with the parties for more than two and a half years. They provided support at more than 100 bargaining sessions. Unfortunately, in cases like this, despite our best efforts, the parties have been unable to reach an agreement. The reality is that the negative impacts of a work stoppage on the economy could be severe, widespread and long-lasting. There has been no agreement, and there is no end in sight.

For all these reasons, our government must protect the Canadian economy and minimize losses to businesses. That is precisely why we are tabling back-to-work legislation. Once it has received royal

assent, the bill will order an immediate return to work and the resumption of operations at the Port of Montreal. The most recent collective agreement will be extended until a new one is adopted.

[*English*]

We have tried all other avenues. We have put our conciliators and mediators at the table. They have much skill, but it has not worked. We cannot stand by and do nothing. We cannot allow thousands of Canadian jobs to continue to hang in the balance.

Believe me, introducing legislation to end the dispute was a difficult decision. We were very much hoping for a different outcome. Unfortunately, we find ourselves in an impossible situation. It is at times like these that we must balance the needs of workers with the needs of the Canadian economy, and while we continue to hope the parties will reach a deal before this legislation is adopted, we must move forward with it in the meantime.

It is absolutely necessary that we keep this port open and fully operational. National and regional economies depend on it for both the immediate and distant future. We cannot afford such an economic loss, and we cannot afford to sully our reputation as a reliable trading partner.

In conclusion, I ask the members of the House to give careful consideration to the points I have brought up today. I ask them to think about the severe and lasting damage we are facing here, both in the short and long term. I ask them to do what needs to be done to get the Port of Montreal fully working again and pass this legislation now.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the member has been a very strong advocate in many ways, and I appreciate his comments.

How does he interpret the law in terms of guaranteeing procedural fairness for both sides? If he could he provide his thoughts on that, I would really appreciate it.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I have heard this question from a number of people in this debate. How does the law guarantee procedural fairness to both the union and the employer? I am going to mention four ways.

First, it provides the parties with meaningful input into the selection of the mediator. Each party will have 48 hours to provide a list of three people to the Minister of Labour, and if both parties agree on one person, the minister will need to name that party.

Second, the law allows each party to put all of the matters that it wishes to on the table. The mediator-arbitrator needs to consider every single issue put forward by both parties.

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Third, it provides a 14-day period for the parties to continue to work things out in mediation, and allows the parties to extend that by seven days, by mutual agreement.

Finally, it allows the mediator to have the discretion to determine what is the best way to resolve each and every matter, by either using one method or another method that the mediator-arbitrator judges best to solve a particular issue.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier in his speech, Mr. Housefather said—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I remind the hon. member that he is not to mention the names of his colleagues in the House.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I sometimes forget.

When my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville asked the hon. member for Mount Royal whether the bill would contain guarantees for workers that the employer would not start imposing shifts again, he said yes. However, when pressed on the issue by our leader, the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly, during question period, the Prime Minister refused to answer.

Why did the Prime Minister refuse to answer and repeat what the hon. member for Mount Royal guaranteed my colleague?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I can only speak for myself, but I am pleased to tell my hon. colleague what happened.

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville asked me a question and asked for the department's response. We received the response and I passed it on. The current collective agreement will be reinstated and extended. This means that any actions not permitted by the collective agreement will no longer be possible.

For example, the employer told employees that it no longer guaranteed a weekly minimum income and that they will be paid only for hours worked. That is not allowed under the collective agreement, so that agreement will be reinstated. That is what the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville wanted to know, and I was pleased to hear the public servants at the department confirm it.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, when it comes to collective bargaining, the one great bargaining chip that unions have in the power imbalance that is usually in effect with their employers is the ability to withhold their labour. This is something that unions have used for centuries to gain collective rights and powers for workers. Now that the government has stepped in and ordered the workers back to work, it has effectively crushed the ability for them to strike.

What incentive does the employer now have to negotiate in good faith when the workers have had this key bargaining chip removed from them by the government?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to hear from my good friend from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Our Minister of Labour is the daughter of a steelworker, and this is the last option the government wanted to take. It is the last option she wanted to take. We essentially had no choice in the matter.

For those who say we rushed to judgment, last August we allowed a strike of 13 days to continue at the Port of Montreal. However, now, in this situation, there are critical issues with respect to COVID that have required us to make sure the operations at the port continue.

That being said, the employer has every incentive to reach an agreement, just as the employees do. Not only will the employees' right to strike end, but so will the employer's right to lockout. The employer cannot be sure at all of where the arbitrator will go if it leaves issues to go to arbitration. It may be that the arbitrator will take the union's side on every position. We do not know that, so it is a gamble for both parties—

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated the last answer from the parliamentary secretary because it really sets the stage accurately for where we are in this.

Concerns have been brought forward about supplies, in particular supply chains of medications and necessities. The Bloc and the NDP have suggested that there should not be concerns about this because necessities and medications will still make their way through.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary can provide his comments as to whether he has concerns about that.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, our minister has received correspondence from companies that provide life-saving dialysis products. They are worried their goods are going to be unable to reach Canadian hospitals. We really appreciate the good faith of the union in offering to unload cargo that has medical supplies. However, the issue is that some cargo is bundled with all kinds of other cargo that does not have medical supplies. It would be very difficult practically, as it was in the strike last August, to locate exactly where there are medical supplies.

That is not to be said of the other practical issues, such as transport. Trains to the port are now being rerouted elsewhere. There are no trains to just transport goods coming—

• (1710)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary whether the government has considered the solution the leader of the Bloc Québécois proposed today.

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My colleague, the hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, asked a question earlier. He was told in no uncertain terms that the special legislation would reinstate the collective agreement. As a result, the special legislation would prevent the employer from modifying schedules the way it has.

The union committed in writing to ensuring workers would return to work immediately if the employer were to reverse this decision. We therefore have an opportunity to ensure that workers return to work tomorrow morning, more quickly than if we were to pass special legislation.

Does the government not wish to call the employer about this?

I would like an answer to my question. I do not know why we cannot get an answer. I think it is a very clear solution.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I would like to repeat that the special legislation will reinstate the original collective agreement. The parties will have the powers they had under the collective agreement, but will not be able to make unilateral decisions. I gave the example of the guaranteed minimum weekly income. Under the original collective agreement, the employer could not make changes in that regard. That provision will be reinstated.

The minister spoke to the parties for two and a half years, as did other ministers. The mediator is still there—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary and move on to a final question.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals continually say there have been two and a half years of bargaining, but, of course, that ignores the context in which the bargaining occurs. This is not the first time the Liberals and the Conservatives have ordered workers with significant economic power back to work. They did it before with Canada Post.

Employers know they do not have to sit at a table and bargain in good faith when they know the government will take away the only weapon the union has. The Port of Montreal guessed correctly in this situation. That is why it took two and a half years. The employer was not bargaining because it knew the government would come in and take its side.

The language that has been used is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. parliamentary secretary an opportunity to answer. The time is up.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I do not think any good employer is going to sit there and not bargain, hoping that two and a half years later a government is going to adopt legislation. I think that is far out.

NDP provincial governments and Liberal governments across the country have sometimes used back-to-work legislation. However, we do it reluctantly and sparingly.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today.

I rise to address an important matter that is significantly impacting our nation and our economy. After two years without a contract, a 19-day strike and a seven-month truce, over 1,000 workers at the Port of Montreal are on strike. Although the Port of Montreal is located in Quebec, it is an essential pillar for western Canada and the constituents I represent. As a matter of fact, this port is responsible for over 19,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The Canadian agriculture sector, in particular, relies on exporting its commodities. Every year, our country exports \$56 billion in agriculture and agri-food products. Transportation by water is an essential factor in getting those products to market. Over 90% of Canada's farmers are dependent on exports, with one in every two jobs in crop production depending on exports. As the second-largest port in Canada, the Port of Montreal handles nearly \$900 million in containerized agriculture activity every year. Without uninterrupted access to this essential port, Canadian agriculture will continue to experience a devastating impact.

The stark reality is that the government was warned by the agriculture sector of the impact that a strike would have, but failed to address its concerns. It was nearly two months ago when countless agriculture commodity groups called on the Minister of Labour to facilitate an agreement between the union and the employer. Farm groups such as Pulse Canada, the Western Canadian Wheat Growers, Soy Canada, Cereals Canada and the Prairie Oat Growers Association all expressed their concerns with the situation that was unfolding and urged the government to do something. Unfortunately, their concerns fell on deaf ears, and as a result we are here today debating back-to-work legislation.

Agriculture saw this coming, but the government did not. As a matter of fact, opposition members on this side of the House predicted this and raised it with the government. In March, my colleague for Calgary Midnapore pressured the minister in question period to take this matter seriously. My colleague from Quebec also asked the government why it was dragging its feet on this matter. He mentioned the further economic hardship this situation would cause if it was not resolved and he was correct, but the government did nothing. At this time when farmers across the country begin seeding this year's crops, they once again are left in the dark on what the future holds. This is another illustration of the lack of support the government has shown Canadian farmers.

Thousands of tonnes of fertilizer are received through the Port of Montreal, and farmers rely on fertilizer to produce abundant crops. If this strike continues, it is estimated that up to one million acres in eastern Canada alone may go unfertilized. If fertilizer cannot make it to the farms, crops will lose yields, farmers will lose revenue and grocery store shelves will lose products. The government claims that it stands shoulder to shoulder with Canadian agriculture, but I have yet to see that.

How do we as a country expect Canadian agriculture producers to supply the world with the highest quality products if we do not support their supply chains? How do we expect Canadian agriculture producers to continue to be world leaders when they cannot access global markets?

The Grain Growers of Canada recently told me, “We simply cannot afford any more setbacks. Our customers made it clear they were losing faith in Canada as a reliable shipper. Interruptions like this only worsen that reputation. If our international customers can source products from other markets, they will. We risk losing customers and this will be detrimental to Canadian grain, pulse and oil seed farmers who depend on international markets.”

This is really unfortunate, because we have witnessed the government's failure to support agriculture exports before. It was just last year that the federal government allowed illegal rail blockades to halt the transportation of products across our country. Customers no longer had a reliable shipper for their products, and this damage rippled throughout our economy. The government also failed to act when China banned the importation of Canadian canola. As a result, Canadian farmers were unable to access one of the largest markets. To this day, farmers in my constituency remain skeptical about planting canola because they have lost trust in the government to support their supply chains.

• (1715)

It is important to note that this uncertainty impacts more than the economy. It impacts peoples' lives. Farmers continue to face an increase in mental health challenges through stress and anxiety when they continuously do not know what the future holds.

The lack of action by the government has damaged our economy and also our global reputation. Businesses and industry require certainty to successfully function. Unfortunately, this government fails to provide our industries with the certainty they need. Global customers have already diverted their purchase orders elsewhere due to supply chain uncertainty. Canada is once again perceived as an unreliable country to do business in.

The lack of action that resulted in the matter we are discussing today will continue to harm our reputation on the world stage. It is evident that the Prime Minister is damaging our reputation as a reliable global trading partner, which will without doubt decrease future investment into our country. I am truly concerned by what this trend is signalling for the future of our economy. When business is not predictable, when supply chains are threatened and when the government does not provide assurance to industry, investment walks out of our country. My colleagues in Alberta can attest to the investment leaving our country because of the Liberal government.

The government knew that the truce between the union and the employer was ending. It knew that a potential strike was looming, but instead of working with both parties to facilitate an agreement, it waited for things to get worse. Every day that this strike continues, our economy will lose \$29 million in economic activity, according to recent reports.

The last strike that occurred at the Port of Montreal was in August 2020. It only lasted 19 days, but in those 19 days the Canadian economy lost \$600 million. After that strike, it took three months

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for operations to return to normal and the backlogs to be cleared. I cannot stress how important the Port of Montreal is to our country and to our economy. Thousands of businesses across our country will experience further supply chain disruption if this strike continues.

The extreme economic devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic has left our economy vulnerable. The last thing our businesses need is more vulnerability. I can assure the House that if the government does not act on this matter, we will witness future job loss as demand for labour decreases. I am very disappointed that the government had months to facilitate an agreement, but failed to do so.

I believe in a collective bargaining process. I also believe that the best deals are made at the bargaining table. However, this government has failed the two parties and, as a result, our country. No government should have to force people back to work, but the government has left us with no choice but to debate this legislation. We must support our economy, we must support our industries, we must support supply chains and we must support jobs. We have to keep our economy moving.

• (1720)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have to say for the record that the Conservatives are once again revealing their true colours. They have always disliked unions. They have always favoured big business.

The funny thing is that the current leader of the Conservative Party has made a pitch to unionized workers across the country saying that they should join the Conservative Party. The only key power that organized labour has is the power to withdraw its services, and free collective bargaining means that we let the parties run their course and do not interfere when the power of labour actually has some economic bite.

I would ask my hon. colleague this. What does he say to his leader, who says to union workers across the country that he has their backs, when the Conservatives are so quick to take away the rights of unionized workers when they want to exercise them?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, I would say to my leader and to all the workers who are involved that I, too, have worked in the labour force. I worked for a union out of a plant in Brandon, and I experienced two strikes. I can tell members first-hand that strikes do not only impact those people, and these government people who sit around and talk about this stuff, but they impact families. Every day, there are no winners when it comes down to a strike, and people have to decide what is the best thing to do. What I tell my leader over and over again is that I am standing up for jobs, I am standing up for our economy and I am standing up for our country.

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We cannot continue on with the government's inaction on things that we see coming. Our farm leaders told the government for months that this was an issue, and that this was going to cost us another growing season. What did the government do? It just turned around and ignored it and let it come to this. I am just as devastated as my colleague by having to talk about this today.

• (1725)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, as my colleague just articulated, this situation comes as no surprise. Farm groups across the country have brought it to the government's attention.

Can he comment as to why the government seems to exhibit no proactivity when it comes to situations, particularly with agriculture, but with so many different situations? This is not a surprise. Why are we here, in his opinion?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, this is just another scenario and situation where we in agriculture are being ignored. The government and the Prime Minister have a certain blind spot when it comes to agriculture, that is for sure.

I cannot imagine, as a farmer, sitting there today wondering where my fertilizer is going to come from next week when I have the drills set up with seed. I am ready to hit the field and I have no fertilizer. That means I have no crop that I can actually sow, and it puts me behind the eight ball. It puts me at an uncompetitive advantage. It seems like the government really likes doing that to Canadians, and it does it to industry after industry. As my friends from the west can attest, from Alberta and the oil and gas industries straight through to agriculture, rural Canada has very much been neglected by the government. It is certainly a sad day to see this happen over and over again. The port is just another fine example of neglect and how the government is out of touch.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to point out that in Hamilton the first new flour mill in 75 years was built in the province of Ontario with major federal government assistance. Parrish & Heimbecker built that new mill. How can my friends from western Canada state that this government is not interested in, or ignores, the agricultural sector? They are pretty happy with us in this part of the world.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, again, I guess it is in southern Ontario, but the fact is we have got to get the products out to the markets. When we shut down a port, such as the Port of Montreal, which does major exporting, we have to get to the markets, and that is where our value-added is. The government can support all the internal trade it wants to, and one company got something out of it. It was probably a friend of the Liberals, so that is how it got it. Why not support it?

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa did a good job of emphasizing the importance of this issue and what it means to those in the agricultural sector. I am wondering this. Does he want to expand on that a bit more? Maybe he could share specific concerns or things he has heard from folks in his riding about the impact this will have on the agricultural sector.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, as far as expanding on agriculture goes, agriculture is very much cyclical and seasonal. What

is going on in the Port of Montreal right now is delaying our sales from last year. Those prices were actually set almost a year and a half ago, and those suppliers were looking for those peas, that grain, that flour or whatever they were looking for, but all of a sudden someone came into the middle of the supply chain and said they were not going to be supplying that, so it really has an impact. It starts impacting farmers when they are trying to do projections for next year or seeing what is actually coming in from last year's inventory. It also impacts the bids we are going to get for next year's crops. It starts actually backing up in Canada, and then the bids back up, which means we are not getting full value from our product as well, so it is very much a chain reaction.

* * *

[Translation]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I have the honour to table a notice of a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19 and other measures.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ) moved that Bill C-254, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am both proud and humbled to begin, with my colleagues, the second reading of Bill C-254, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act, to apply the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated workplaces.

I am proud because I care deeply about French and this bill could be a way to help this beautiful language with the accent of the Americas to be more highly valued and to flourish. I am proud because I am keeping the commitments that were so dear to my grandmother, Cécile Gagnon-Vignola, a proud protector of the French language. Finally, I am humbled because this bill continues the work that has been done by my great predecessors, from Camille Laurin to my colleague Mario Beaulieu.

What is more—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the member. Did she mean to say, “the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île”?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Yes, Madam Speaker, I meant the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île. Thank you very much.

The purpose of this bill has the consensus of the National Assembly of Quebec. Every living premier and every union is calling for the Charter of the French Language to apply to federally regulated businesses. It is the express and unanimous demand of Quebec.

In this debate, I will explain the changes the bill will make. I will provide some current examples of the French fact in Quebec and I will take the liberty of debunking some popular myths.

The bill we are debating today is nothing new. This is the fourth time the Bloc Québécois has introduced such a bill since 2007. When it passes, I hope, it will ensure that the Charter of the French Language is applied to federally regulated businesses operating in Quebec.

In 2007, the former member for Drummond, Pauline Picard, introduced Bill C-482. In 2009, the former member for Joliette, Pierre Paquette, introduced Bill C-307. Lastly, in 2011, the former member for Ahuntsic, Maria Mourani, introduced Bill C-320. Even the NDP has proposed similar legislation, including a bill in 2009 that was introduced by Thomas Mulcair but never debated, and another in 2012, introduced by Robert Aubin, which imposed bilingualism and included the possibility of an exemption for certain businesses by means of a government decision. This last bill may have nothing to do with the Charter of the French Language, but I wanted to stress the efforts made at the time.

Bill C-254 amends the Canada Labour Code to clarify that any federal work, undertaking or business operating in Quebec is subject to the requirements of the Charter of the French Language. It is important to mention that, right now, approximately 33% of these businesses apply the charter voluntarily. However, that means that 67% do not. Tens of thousands of employees in Quebec do not even have access to workplace communications in their first language.

Also, as long as businesses are not legally required to apply the Charter of the French Language, any change in management or managerial vision can mean a decrease in the number of businesses that apply it voluntarily.

Bill C-254 amends the preamble to the Official Languages Act to recognize that French is the official language of Quebec and the common language in Quebec. Here the legislator is clarifying its will and its expectations of the authorities that apply the act.

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Bill C-254 also adds to the Official Languages Act a formal undertaking on the part of the federal government not to obstruct the application of the Charter of the French Language. This is a legislative reference, a legal and constitutional measure already applied in various areas, in particular the federal minimum wage, which is set on the basis of the provincial minimum wages. This undertaking not to obstruct the application of the Charter is essential to make federally regulated businesses understand that compliance with the Charter of the French Language is no longer optional in Quebec.

Bill C-254 amends the Canada Business Corporations Act to clarify that the name of a corporation that carries on business in Quebec must meet the requirements of the Charter of the French Language. There is nothing outrageous about that. Many international companies register in the language of the country in which they are doing business. Quebec will simply join the ranks of these countries.

In recent months, we have all heard talk about protecting the French language from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Official Languages, as well as from members of every party. I have also seen many of my colleagues making efforts to learn French, and I would like to thank them for that. After all, learning a new language is never easy at any age.

In November 2020, the Prime Minister said, “we recognize that, in order for Canada to be bilingual, Quebec must first and foremost be francophone. That is why we support Bill 101 in what it does for Quebec”.

• (1735)

He says the Liberals support Bill 101, but to translate those words into action, they would have to allow it to be modernized and applied as is to all institutions and businesses in Quebec. His statement highlights a trend I have noticed. Until now, a bilingual Canada has mainly meant francophones and allophones learning English and anglophones speaking English. The rate of bilingualism in Quebec is around 44%. It is the highest rate in Canada, which bears out my observation.

The members of the House may think I am exaggerating, and that is their right. I will, however, share a few examples from everyday life. Forty-four per cent of federal public servants are reluctant to speak French because they feel uncomfortable. They think that it might upset their anglophone colleagues or hurt their chances of promotion.

Even today, in both private and professional life, if there is just one anglophone at a meeting, that meeting will take place in English, regardless of the number of francophones present. There is a word for this, and that word is hegemony.

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In recent months, I have seen members roll their eyes when another member rises on a point of order because there was a problem with interpretation into French. However, I have never seen members roll their eyes when another member rises on a point of order because there is a problem with interpretation into English. Do not get me wrong, I am not playing the victim. I am simply describing situations that some of my colleagues may not have noticed. I am just pointing out something that may appear trivial but that is a reality experienced at various levels in many different settings by francophones, both in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

Incidentally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the translators and interpreters for their amazing work and excellent service.

I am going to ask my colleagues to use their imagination. I want them to imagine that they are going to attend a meeting in their riding. If 10 anglophones and one francophone attend this meeting, which language will they speak? Chances are it will be English.

However, in Quebec, when 10 francophones and one anglophone attend a meeting, English will be spoken most of the time even if most of the people attending are French. Why is that? I am not going to speculate as to why my fellow Quebecers automatically react in this way. It may be out of courtesy or the remnants of a not-so-distant era where workers were told to speak English if they wanted to keep their jobs. I am thinking of the infamous and very nasty phrase, "speak white", which we unfortunately still hear today. I recently read the following on social media: You lost the war. Deal with it. Assimilate. That is a daily occurrence, sadly.

Recognition of the importance of promoting the use of French must come from all sides, including citizens, businesses and also all levels of government.

I now want to dispel certain very persistent myths. A few years ago, we heard it on the streets and now we are reading it on social media. According to the first myth, by introducing this bill, the Bloc Québécois wants to eliminate English culture in Quebec outright because it hates anglophones.

Anglophone culture is not under threat, neither in Quebec nor elsewhere in Canada or America. In fact, it is omnipresent; no efforts need be made to access it. Communicating in French in the workplace will never prevent anglophones from speaking English.

Wanting to protect the French language does not imply hating English. I would like to make an analogy, although a somewhat poor one. Suppose I like lynxes because I find them beautiful. Lynxes are iconic animals of our extraordinary boreal forest, but there are not many of them. In the boreal forest, there are also caribou and moose. If I like lynxes, does that mean I hate caribou and moose and that I wish they would disappear? No. The same goes for my language. I love it, but that does not mean that I want all other languages to disappear from the world.

I will paraphrase the words of Pierre Bourgault. Fighting to protect the French language means fighting to protect all languages from the hegemony of a single one, whichever one it may be.

• (1740)

The second persistent myth is that applying the Charter of the French Language will cause Quebec to turn inward, that it will no longer be able to communicate with the rest of the world and that its economy will collapse.

To demonstrate the irrationality of this myth, did speaking Russian, Spanish, Mandarin, Portuguese or any other language cause those countries to turn inward and cause their economies to collapse? Of course not. In trade relations and at international summits, companies and politicians manage to get by, particularly thanks to interpreters, who do an excellent job.

The third myth is that the Bloc Québécois is being selfish and not standing in solidarity with Franco-Canadians and Acadians by demanding that the Charter of the French Language apply to businesses located in Quebec. On the contrary, promoting the French language in Quebec will encourage francophones across Canada to not be afraid to assert their own rights.

The fourth and final myth, at least for today, is that the bill is unconstitutional because Quebec cannot impose French as the official language given that Canada is bilingual.

In fact, the only officially bilingual province is New Brunswick. Quebec is francophone, and all the others are anglophone. The bill is constitutional, and it respects and promotes constitutional standards pertaining to languages. It does not violate the division of powers in our federation. On the contrary, it seeks to take advantage of one of Quebec's assets, its unique status as a francophone province, and benefits will undoubtedly accrue to other Franco-Canadian and Acadian communities.

In a nutshell, Bill C-254 will ensure consistency of word and deed in Quebec and across Canada. The bill officially recognizes the incalculable value of the French language, so it encourages people to feel at ease speaking French. This bill will support interpersonal and intercultural exchange by sending a clear message that Canada endorses the application of the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated businesses. It delivers on statements made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Official Languages in recent months.

This bill will encourage Quebecers of all ages, regardless of how many generations their families have lived in Quebec, to feel confident about using Quebec's common language, French, at work.

I would like to leave my colleagues with this thought. When we love someone, we take special care of that person. We build them up, help them through tough times, congratulate them when things go well and celebrate their successes. The same applies to the French language. Taking care of it is like loving someone. French is who we are. It is our culture. Let us take care of it.

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• (1745)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her heartfelt speech in defence of the French language.

Our party obviously agrees that Quebecers should be able to work and communicate in French regardless of who they work for. I thank the member for pointing out that the NDP previously supported three similar versions of this bill. We introduced two bills on our own to ensure these equal rights.

However, I do want to share some valid concerns from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, which wonders whether the approach taken by the Bloc Québécois might open the door for other provinces to give precedence to their own provincial laws on official languages. This could ultimately undermine the rights of francophone linguistic minorities elsewhere in the country.

Would it not be wise to look at this issue from the perspective of ensuring that workers have equal rights in the workplace, regardless of whether the workplace falls under federal or provincial jurisdiction?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I mentioned in my own speech, it is important to protect the French language everywhere. It would be despicable if a province acted in retaliation and decided to subject its francophone minority to a law to protect the English language. French is a linguistic minority in North America, not just in Canada, while English is in the majority everywhere.

We hope that this bill will help francophones across Canada stand tall and demand equal rights.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on introducing this very important bill.

At one point, the federal government hinted that it was considering applying the Charter of the French Language, or Bill 101, at the federal level. In the end, this was not at all the case, according to the Liberals' famous white paper. In it, the government indicated that its vision was rather to give francophones the right to work in French. However, having the right to work in French does not mean that the institutions function in French.

Am I mistaken in saying that?

I would like my colleague to talk about the Liberals' plan for the French language and about its impact. In my view, their plan will not change much.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant and interesting question.

Indeed, the white paper does not go far enough. The best way to put words into action and walk the talk is to support the passage of Bill C-254, so that federal institutions in Quebec will apply the Charter of the French language.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert has time for a brief question.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I will be able to ask a brief question because this is a very important and fundamental issue.

I fought for the preservation of French for about 20 years. As the former spokesperson for Mouvement Montréal français, I organized protests and performances to protect the French language.

Anglophones may not necessarily understand the situation of French in Quebec. Only 3% of North Americans speak French. Anglophones may not realize that we live in proximity to U.S. culture, which we access through music and movies. It is a hegemonic and conquering culture, one of the most powerful in the history of humanity, and it has significant means at its disposal. Fending off this culture is no easy task, which is why every small step is extremely important. The bill represents a small step.

I want to share a statistic from the Office québécois de la langue française. Unless something is done, the percentage of people who speak French at home will decrease from 82% to 74% by 2036.

A bill like this one is fundamental, important and, above all, urgent.

• (1750)

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very pertinent comments.

Indeed, if nothing is done, the number of people who speak French will continue to decline in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. It is true that the bill is a small step, but it should not and cannot be the only step. A suite of measures will make it possible for French to shine and take its place.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with the House a few remarks about Bill C-254, which was introduced by my colleague from Beauport—Limouilou, with whom I have the good fortune of serving on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. We are missing a committee meeting right now because we are both giving speeches here in the House.

I heard my colleague mention francophone and Quebec culture, and I also want to point out the work and accomplishments of a great Franco-Ontarian, Bob Hartley, who just won the Gagarin Cup. He is from Hawkesbury, in my community, and I want to congratulate him before I begin my speech.

Bill C-254 was introduced before our reform document on the Official Languages Act, which was released in February 2021.

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That is an important consideration in determining our strategy, as a government, on the best way to protect French across the country, including Quebec, in the workplace and in our cultural and community life. Our strategy was developed following exhaustive analyses of the concerns expressed by Canadians, stakeholders, and provincial and territorial governments, as well as on the studies of parliamentary committees.

Our strategy essentially aims to strengthen our official language communities across the country, but also to protect the vitality of the French language wherever it is spoken in Canada, from coast to coast to coast.

These are not just intentions or wishful thinking, but a formal recognition of the undeniable fact that French is a minority language in North America and that it deserves to be protected by any means necessary. We have followed through by making 56 proposals, including 33 concrete legislative proposals to reform Canada's official languages regime as a whole.

These proposals include options for modernization specifically to strengthen the place and status of French across Canada, as well as to protect this language in workplaces with a strong francophone presence, including in Quebec, where French is the official language.

I am sure my colleagues have had an opportunity to scrutinize the document we released on the reform of the Official Languages Act. I would still like to highlight a few of the key measures proposed by our government to strengthen the place of French within our businesses and in service to Canadians.

Our first proposal is that the next version of our act recognize linguistic dynamics in the provinces and territories, including the official status of French in Quebec, bilingualism in New Brunswick, and all the provinces' efforts and accomplishments relating to official languages.

We then put forward no fewer than five legislative and administrative measures laying out how we will work with the provinces and territories to improve opportunities to learn both official languages, including French, of course.

Third, we proposed a suite of legislative and administrative measures to strengthen institutions in official language minority communities across the country, with a special focus on francophone communities from coast to coast to coast.

I really want to highlight the fourth proposal in our modernization document today. It relates directly and specifically to the issue of protecting French throughout Canada, including in Quebec. Our proposals include recognizing the predominant use of English in Canada and North America and the fact that, given this context, it is imperative that French receive increased protection and promotion.

We also proposed strong, concrete measures that list areas in which the federal government can take action to protect and promote French in Canada, such as broadcasting, culture and diplomacy. That is not all. Another of our proposals is to recognize the importance of the contribution of francophone immigration to the vitality of French and francophone minority communities and to legislate the government's obligations in this specific area.

This last point is so important to my community. We have to increase francophone immigration outside Quebec and attract francophones to our communities, including the one I represent. I am proud to have a welcoming francophone community, Hawkesbury, in my riding.

All of the measures identified and detailed in our modernization document will help achieve my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou's objectives, those of Bill C-254, and much more besides.

● (1755)

In this case, I think it is worth highlighting our proposal about official languages and federally regulated private businesses, including those established in Quebec.

Our government fully understands the key role that Quebec plays within the Canadian francophonie, and we believe that the private sector in Quebec has a role to play in protecting and promoting the French language in Quebec and in the rest of the country. Our government primarily expects federally regulated private business to play this key role.

Our reform document is crystal clear. Specifically, we are committed to specifying the federal government's power to encourage federally regulated private businesses to promote the equal status of the official languages in order to increase the use of French as a language of service and work everywhere in the country.

We propose some concrete measures to achieve this commitment. We will give workers the right to carry out their activities in French in federally regulated private businesses established in Quebec and in other regions with a strong francophone presence in the country, including in my community. We will also oblige the employer to communicate with its employees at least as much in French as in English in federally regulated private businesses established in Quebec and in other regions with a strong francophone presence.

We will vigorously prohibit discrimination against an employee solely because he or she speaks only French or does not have sufficient knowledge of a language other than French in federally regulated private businesses established in Quebec and in other regions with a strong francophone presence in the country.

The Government of Canada, its public service, its businesses and its Crown corporations must be exemplary in their implementation of the Official Languages Act across Canada, including Quebec. The issue of businesses under federal jurisdiction in Quebec and in regions with a strong francophone presence in the country is important to us, particularly to give consumers of goods and services the right to be informed and served in French.

Our reform document mentions the creation of a committee of experts to develop recommendations with respect to the implementation of these commitments, after consulting with unions, employers and relevant stakeholders on modernizing the Official Languages Act. This committee is at work and will wrap up by April 30, a few days from now. We are certain that it will submit meaningful recommendations for a modern act that will be up to the challenge of protecting French for years to come.

In addition to all these major legislative and administrative measures, it goes without saying that the Government of Canada, its public service and its Crown corporations will have to ensure an exemplary implementation of the act across Canada and Quebec.

As we study Bill C-254, we cordially invite the House to consider the broader context of modernizing the Official Languages Act and its related instruments to protect French from coast to coast to coast.

As a Franco-Ontarian, I am pleased to share my opinion and the government's opinion of Bill C-254 with you.

• (1800)

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be in the House today to speak about Bill C-254, introduced by my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. At the same time, I am surprised that we are talking about it here, in the House, because Bill 101 is a Quebec provincial law.

That said, it is still commendable for wanting to ensure the federal government does not interfere in provincial jurisdiction, especially since, only a few moments ago, we heard the Liberal member try to use any means possible to divert the debate toward the modernization of the two official languages. In fact, that is another extremely important subject that the Liberal government should concentrate on to deliver the bill that we have been awaiting for many years.

Let us get back to the substance of Bill C-254. Its main purpose is essentially to ensure that the federal government does not interfere or contest Quebec's objective of protecting and promoting the French language. Indeed, as it has been so aptly said, Quebec is the only place in America where French is the primary language. Quebec is a francophone province, while New Brunswick is bilingual and the other provinces in Canada are English-speaking, as is every U.S. state.

The Government of Quebec's desire and goal to protect and promote French are commendable and legitimate because, unlike what some may think, French is in decline in Quebec. It is true that there are francophone communities across Canada and that we need to protect and help them. That is set out in the Canadian Constitution and is part of the federal government's role. Quebec, on the other hand, needs to work to promote and protect the French language and make sure that all the conditions are in place so that every individual, family and worker can live a full life in French in Quebec. I applaud my colleague's initiative in that sense.

However, I will repeat that, although we are discussing it here in the Parliament of Canada, this issue falls under provincial jurisdiction, and it is part of the Conservative Party's DNA to not interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction. That is why our leader wasted no

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time in telling Premier François Legault that a Conservative government will work with Quebec and help it implement administrative measures, but that there will be no challenges from us.

We support this initiative. We encourage it and commend Quebec for making such a great effort to protect and promote the French fact and to make sure that workers are able to work in French in federally regulated businesses in Quebec.

My colleague gave a very good example. If there are 10 francophones and one anglophone in a room, everyone will accommodate the anglophone. We know very well that this type of thing would not happen elsewhere.

I would like to respond to a concern the NDP will raise as a reason for not supporting such a bill. The NDP will cite fears that people in other English-speaking provinces will use it as another excuse to attack Quebec. It reminds me of childish taunts like "my dad is stronger than yours" or "whatever you do to me, I will do right back to you". If someone jumps off a cliff, should I follow, like a sheep? I do not believe that. Why not?

First, it is because people are smart. It is natural to want to defend one's language, and people will not sink to that level. Second, it is because there is a country, Canada, that has two official languages and has a law called the Official Languages Act, and we have been waiting for years for it to be modernized.

Consultations were held by the Senate, the Standing Committee on Official Languages and the Commissioner of Official Languages. All the francophone advocacy groups in the country have been consulted and have submitted their recommendations. We all expected a bill before the holidays.

In a surprise move, our Minister of Official Languages decided to water it down and instead tabled a white paper, a consultation document. Our Liberal colleague doubled down on this earlier by trying to shift the debate, saying that we should look at this as part of the big picture of the Official Languages Act.

• (1805)

I disagree. Bill 101 is a provincial statute, and Quebec is responsible for promoting and protecting French. That is the essence of the bill introduced by my Bloc Québécois colleague because this is Quebec's responsibility.

For people who are into numbers, this would affect about 200,000 workers in Quebec. Nearly half of the private, federally regulated businesses in Quebec already have administrative agreements and respect Bill 101 or have made appropriate arrangements. I think Quebec wants to send a strong signal about the importance of French and is working hard to do that. We should all be very proud of that.

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Our country is blessed with a francophone province, Quebec; a bilingual province, New Brunswick, with its many francophone Acadian communities; and francophone communities in Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia and Ontario. They all champion this wonderful language and are trying to make things better for people all across the country.

I invite the Liberal government to show some courage and clearly state that it supports Quebec in this initiative. Let it stop using all sorts of speeches to deflect the issue. I invite the NDP to do the same, to clearly state that it agrees with Quebec applying Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses in Quebec. I could write down what I just said and send it to the NDP so that it can make an official statement. That would solve the problem once and for all.

Then we would not be forced to debate the issue this evening because, I repeat, it is a provincial jurisdiction. We must respect the Quebec government, which was legitimately elected by its own people. Federal MPs from Quebec, whether Liberal, Bloc, NDP or Conservative, were all elected by those very same people, whose choices deserve respect.

Conservatives agree that Bill 101 should apply to federally regulated businesses. We think that the Canadian Parliament should not put up obstacles in Quebec, or any other province that wants to implement legislation in their jurisdiction. We should instead be proud of these provinces and encourage them. We should be their partner.

I urge the Liberal government and the Minister of Official Languages to introduce a binding bill on official languages that acknowledges the challenges faced by francophones living in Quebec, since these challenges are not exclusive to francophones outside of Quebec.

The Minister of Official Languages will not stop promoting the white paper she presented early this year. However, her government's budget does not allocate a single cent to help francophones in Quebec. The Liberal government claims to be proud of francophones in Quebec. It claims to be proud of having almost 40 MPs from Quebec, 10 of whom are ministers.

I am not going to get into the WE Charity scandal, in which the Liberals awarded an untendered contract to an organization that could not process French applications. I will also not get into the COVID-19 tests for foreign workers, which are being administered by a Toronto company that is unable to provide services in French in Quebec. The Minister of Labour was so proud to announce this week that this issue would be fixed as of April 28.

This pandemic has been going on for over a year. The Liberal government needs to get moving and implement its powerful Official Languages Act for all francophones across the country, and it needs to let Quebec enforce Bill 101 in federally regulated businesses. That is all we are asking for. We want it to support this bill.

• (1810)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues who spoke this evening, and I especially want to thank my Bloc Québécois colleague, the member for Beauport—Limoulo, for introducing Bill C-254.

This bill is very similar to others that the NDP supported in 2007, 2009 and 2011. We introduced two similar bills ourselves. I will get to that later.

We may not agree on the process or way of doing things, but we do agree on the objective, which is fundamental for any francophone in Quebec and North America. We need provisions that not only guarantee equality and equal rights, but that also ensure that the resources required to protect and defend French are allocated.

Let me remind the House that, outside Quebec, French is definitely a minority compared to the U.S. cultural behemoth, which I might even call U.S. cultural imperialism. We see this more and more with social media and the new digital platforms that are invading our lives, entering our homes and invading the lives of our children and teens. We must work together to move forward and ensure that French will be defended and not just survive, but thrive and continue to enrich our lives.

I say this in light of the many debates in Quebec about living together in harmony. We use a variety of terms and definitions. Recently, I spoke in the House about the concept of interculturalism, which is part of the NDP's statutes and bylaws. We recognize that it is a way of expressing the concept of living together in harmony that is unique to Quebec and on which everyone agrees. I remember the words of Gérard Bouchard, the well-known historian, who wrote a great book about interculturalism. He said that it contained some fundamental elements, like the idea of a common foundation. In this common foundation, there is equality between men and women. This equality applies to all citizens, male and female, regardless of the colour of their skin, their religion, their sexual orientation, or whether they have been here for two years or 200 years.

Then there is democracy. We have a government elected by citizens. That is a part of our fundamental values. We have representative, democratic parliamentary institutions, we have freedom of expression during election campaigns, and we have the ability to form political parties.

The third part of this common foundation is the French language as the customary language, the common language, the public language and the language of work. That brings us to the crux of the issue. I believe we have a chance to solve a problem that has been dragging on for far too long.

I think that our love and affection for the French language and our desire to preserve it were recently expressed in the House. I moved a motion to recognize the fragility and decline of the French language in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, and it was unanimously adopted by all 338 parliamentarians, including the members from all of the political parties represented here and the independent members.

We took a strong stand on this in the past, foreshadowing what we would do in the future. In 2005, the NDP adopted the Sherbrooke declaration. I will not read it in its entirety because it is dozens of pages long, but here is an excerpt: “The national character of Québec is based primarily...on: 1. a primarily Francophone society in which French is recognized as the language of work and the common public language”. That was a fundamental value for us, and we voted accordingly five times, on three Bloc Québécois bills and two NDP bills.

Here is why it is so important. Earlier, our Conservative Party colleague gave some statistics about the number of Quebecers working in federally regulated businesses. We are talking about big banks, telecommunications companies, airlines and shipping companies, among others. We could bicker about the statistics, but a large percentage of them already apply the spirit, if not the letter, of the Charter of the French Language. What we want to avoid is inequity when it comes to the language rights of workers.

Right now, there is a two-tier system where most Quebecers are covered by the Charter of the French Language, but about 10% of the workforce is not, because it is not recognized.

• (1815)

The NDP protects and promotes the French language throughout Quebec and across the rest of Canada in francophone minority communities.

However, we also stand up for the rights of workers. Our political party was founded largely by the union movement and the labour movement, so working conditions and workers' rights are very important to us.

There is a bizarre situation that has existed for several years. Employees of Caisses Desjardins have the right to work in French and to communicate with their employer in French. Of course, that would not normally be a problem. However, people who work for the big Canadian banks do not enjoy the same rights and are not entitled to the same protections. A manager, assistant manager, department, new employer or new boss at a bank could suddenly decide to send their emails in English and hold their meetings in English. If that happened, it would be hard for employees to assert their rights because the Charter of the French Language does not apply to their employer and they have no recourse under the Official Languages Act or the Canada Labour Code.

The NDP has chosen to take a slightly different approach to this. Our desire to stand up for the French language stems from the right of all workers to have similar access, recourse and defences.

This bill could give rise to a problem. I heard my colleague from the Conservative Party say earlier that we should not be afraid because it would probably not happen, but if provincial language laws are allowed to take precedence over the Official Languages Act, there could be cases where the language rights of francophones outside Quebec are violated. I mentioned this concern earlier when I asked a question, and it has been raised by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne. Obviously, that is not what we want to happen.

Private Members' Business

It might be much simpler and safer for the Canada Labour Code to give Quebec workers the same protections laid out in Quebec's Charter of the French Language without compromising the potential recourse available under the Official Languages Act to minority francophones.

As the member for Beauport—Limoilou said, it would be despicable to use a debate on this issue to make things worse for minority francophones. I share her concern, and I would be just as angry if that happened, so I would like us to be prudent as we seek to achieve the greatest possible benefit while minimizing unintended consequences and negative outcomes.

Getting back to the issue of protecting French, I am coming up on 10 years as an MP, and I want to remind the House that, in recent years, the NDP has fought for greater recognition and protection for French. I talked about the motion that was unanimously adopted a few months ago.

I also want to remind everyone that the NDP introduced a bill requiring all officers of Parliament to be bilingual. That bill was passed. Officers of Parliament include the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Auditor General. That progress came about thanks to the NDP's initiative.

For years we have been calling for Supreme Court justices to be bilingual, to be able to understand and speak French. We believe it is part of the fundamental right to defence. In a country that has two official languages, judges on the highest court of the land should be able to understand us.

It is odd that when it comes to protecting francophone workers in federally regulated businesses, Supreme Court justices and the modernization of the Official Languages Act, it seems like the Liberals have just woken up after a 10-year nap, just in time for an election. My guess is that this might be a political calculation. The Liberals have been in power for nearly seven years. They started off with a majority government, and now they have a minority government. Despite their promise to introduce legislation to modernize the Official Languages Act, the Liberals have done nothing more than present a working document that will result in more consultations. The government just completely changed its position on the rights of francophones working in federally regulated businesses and on having bilingual justices on the Supreme Court.

We have to be cautious. Let us judge the Liberal government on its actions and on the way it votes on various bills. Let us see what it will do to save Laurentian University and the University of Sudbury in order to uphold the rights of francophones in northern Ontario.

• (1820)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for introducing this bill, which would make federally regulated businesses subject to Bill 101. This is the fourth time this type of bill has been introduced in the House.

Private Members' Business

I want to start by saying that the principles of the Official Languages Act are at odds with those of Quebec's Charter of the French Language. The purpose of the charter is to make French the common language in the workplace. French must not only be the primary language of work, but it must also be used when people who speak different languages have to communicate with each other. In the rest of Canada, English is used in these cases.

Almost all authorities recognize that the two language planning models are in opposition. Studies of such models around the world show that systems based on institutional bilingualism and individual rights—as is the case with the federal government's linguistic policy, the Official Languages Act—invariably lead to the assimilation of the minority languages.

Most countries operate in one common language, the official language. Places where there are a number of national languages and where we do not see the assimilation of minority languages are places where the language management approach is based on collective territorial rights. That is the case in Belgium, Switzerland and many other countries. In a given territory, the official language is the common language, the language of public institutions. However, that does not prevent people from learning any number of second languages and getting by quite well.

As soon as the Official Languages Act was implemented, we saw an increased rate of francophone assimilation and language transfer toward English, which grew with every census.

Outside of Quebec, approximately 40% of people whose mother tongue is French use English as their main language at home. That is also becoming increasingly common in Quebec.

Until just recently, the federal government denied that French was in decline. The Liberals were saying that everything was fine and that Canada is a model for the treatment of linguistic minorities. However, we are witnessing the decline of French everywhere, including in Quebec. We are pleased that the government finally admitted that in the throne speech. However, since the government did not provide any statistics, it is all still quite vague. The Minister of Official Languages presented a proposal for reform, but that is still just good intentions, just rhetoric.

The reality check was the Bloc Québécois's bill requiring knowledge of French to obtain citizenship. They opposed it. Now, they are preparing to vote against the application of Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses.

To date, in Quebec, the Official Languages Act has only served to promote and defend English, as evidenced by previous throne speeches. We know that programs based on the Official Languages Act, such as the development of official-language communities program, the enhancement of official languages program and the official languages health program, receive between \$80 million and \$100 million a year, paid for by federal taxes collected from Quebec. This only serves to strengthen the English language. One hundred per cent of amounts allocated to these programs only serve to strengthen the English language. That clearly does not help in any way.

The Government of Quebec has stated its expectations for the modernization of the Official Languages Act. The government is

primarily asking that Quebec have sole authority over linguistic development and management in the province. It is also asking for recognition of the fact that, of the two official languages, French is the only one in a minority position across Canada. This implies full respect for the legislative authority and the specific responsibilities of Quebec with respect to language.

● (1825)

Our bill moves us in that direction. For example, we are asking to change the preamble of the Official Languages Act to recognize that French is the official language of Quebec and the common language in Quebec. We are also asking that the Government of Canada undertake not to obstruct the objectives of the French language, specifically positive measures, that the federal government spending that only serves to strengthen the English language be changed, and that all this be done with the approval of the Government of Quebec, and not on a unilateral basis.

Virtually none of this is present in what we have seen of the good intentions of the Minister of Official Languages. We need only to read all the proposals. The Liberal government is saying that it will amend the Official Languages Act instead so that federally regulated businesses afford a greater degree of respect to the French language.

On the one hand, as we speak, the Government of Quebec is preparing to strengthen Bill 101. That means that it is trailing behind the federal government with regard to these businesses. On the other hand, even within federal institutions, we can see that French is far from being the common language.

At the Standing Committee on Official Languages, we heard from people from the Quebec office of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. They explained that systemic and deep-rooted discrimination exists within the federal government and that, even in Quebec, their members sometimes struggled to be able to work in French.

A study by the Commissioner of Official Languages even found that 44% of francophones living in designated bilingual regions do not feel comfortable working in French. I have witnessed this firsthand. People working at transportation companies, which are not subject to Bill 101 but rather to the Official Languages Act, have reached out to me. They were unable to work in French, and were even given safety instructions in English.

André Dionne, a long-time employee of the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, complained for 30 years that he could not work in French. Every time he needed to communicate with his team of investigators in Toronto, he was forced to do so in English. He took his case to court, but lost. He was told that the Official Languages Act did not apply to him because he was part of a majority.

The Official Languages Act is for so-called official language minorities. In Quebec, only anglophones are recognized as a minority. Even the UN does not recognize them as a minority because they are part of the English-Canadian majority.

The right to ensure the future and vitality of a language is a fundamental principle of the self-determination of peoples. This is really incredible. People sometimes tell me that it is because of the Constitution, but the 1982 Constitution was forced on Quebec. No Quebec premier signed it.

The government constantly promotes institutional bilingualism, and that shows no sign of changing. The Bloc Québécois wants the federal government to, at the very least, stop hurting French in Quebec, but that has not happened. I strongly urge my fellow Quebecers to take a good look at what is happening.

Bill C-254 would not fix everything, but it is a small step in the right direction. If even that small step is too much for the Liberals and they manage to block this bill, I think we can draw some conclusions from that. We will have to accept that it is impossible.

• (1830)

They say we are a majority. As long as Quebec is not a country, we are not a majority but a minority subordinate to the federal government. The federal government is using its spending power and its legal authority to impose English everywhere and make Quebec bilingual. That has to stop.

Right now, Bill C-254 just might pass because the opposition parties support it. We really have to do our best to rally and make sure everyone is here to vote and pass it. It would be [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PROCEEDINGS ON A BILL ENTITLED AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS AT THE PORT OF MONTREAL

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today. I want to start by thanking my Conservative colleagues for sharing some time with me today. This is the first time I have ever shared time with a member from another party. I would not have had an opportunity to speak had they not extended that opportunity to me, so I greatly appreciate my colleagues across the way and the Conservative Party for doing that.

The government is acutely aware of the severe economic impact of the Port of Montreal work stoppage. The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. Every year, it handles over 1.6 million 20-foot equivalent units and 35 million tonnes of cargo, representing approximately \$40 billion in goods. The port is critical to the economic well-being of Canadians across the country, particularly those in Quebec and Ontario.

We know that Canadians need a resolution as quickly as possible. That is why the government is introducing legislation to end, with-

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out further delay, the work stoppage at the Port of Montreal. The Syndicat des débardeurs, also known as CUPE Local 375, and the Maritime Employers Association, also known as MEA, have been negotiating the renewal of the collective agreement since September 2018.

Despite our government's repeated efforts to help the parties reach an agreement over the last two and a half years, they remain at a significant impasse. Considering this, along with the significant and potentially lasting economic harm this work shortage is inflicting on regional and national economies, our government has taken the decision to introduce back-to-work legislation. This was an extremely difficult decision, but we must act in the best interest of Canadians, who depend on activities at the port to run their businesses, keep their jobs and feed their families.

We are talking about a work stoppage at a port that is critical to the well-being of our economy and crucial to the continuity of supply chains. I will remind members of this House that supply chains have been disrupted for over a year now and industries are still working to recover from and manage these complexities. Ensuring the uninterrupted flow of commodities and goods through the Port of Montreal is essential to the economic well-being of Canadians across the country, particularly now, as we continue to deal with the impacts of a serious health and economic crisis.

Every day the work stoppage continues, the more likely it is that the shipping traffic will simply not return if more economical routes are found, resulting in long-lasting damage. That damage had a direct impact on so many workers and their families. Today, the work stoppage at the Port of Montreal is impeding the flow of 270 million dollars' worth of goods per week, harming the transportation industry in Quebec and imposing significant costs on Canadian businesses that use the port because of increased transportation costs and lost sales due to import and export delays. It is also affecting the livelihoods of approximately 19,000 Canadians whose jobs depend directly or indirectly on the Port of Montreal.

The consequences of this work stoppage will reach far and wide. For example, railways that normally operate on a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week basis have already been impacted by the work stoppage. Eight container trains that were supposed to arrive during the first week of the work stoppage, on April 17 and April 18, were cancelled to avoid terminal congestion. To put that into perspective, that is the equivalent of 2,400 truck trips.

Even before the full work stoppage began, the partial work stoppage at the port had already generated truck congestion at CP's Vaughan terminal in Toronto with the accumulation of more than 1,000 containers. The railway is not accepting any more cargo destined for Montreal, leaving truckers to find warehousing space for their loads. Food production, both imported and intended for export, are the most commonly impacted containerized products and that food is spoiling.

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Beyond the transportation and logistics industry, temporary layoffs or reduced hours can be expected to begin shortly in other sectors that are dependent on cargo transiting through the port. The Retail Council of Canada has been vocal about the impact that the August 2020 work stoppage had on its members, as well as its concerns with the continued disruption at the port. As the work stoppage continues, production in manufacturing and natural resource sectors, such as forestry, can also be expected to come to a halt, and temporary layoffs and reduced hours will emerge in those sectors as well.

• (1835)

The ripple effect will not end there. Other sectors of the economy dependent on cargo transiting through the Port of Montreal will find it increasingly difficult to access key production inputs, forcing industries such as construction and sales to reduce and/or shut down operations.

This can be seen in different ways. In August 2020, Produits forestiers Résolu noted that its main export route runs through the Port of Montreal, and that its products for exportation were immobilized entirely during the work stoppages. At the same time, les Serres Toundra was seeing its greenhouse construction timelines delayed due to containerized imported materials being drastically slowed down at the port.

Then there are the impacts of the long-term health and viability of the Port of Montreal, which stands to suffer irreparable reputational harm. Let me explain. Shippers forced to reroute to other ports because they are unable to do business at the Port of Montreal may find that it makes sense to maintain the alternative arrangements that they were forced into out of necessity. If that is the case, we might see permanent loss of business at the port, even when operations are back to normal.

As I have said, back-to-work legislation is the last resort and not something the government takes lightly. However, we also have an opportunity to protect the economy. The initial partial work stoppage reduced port capacity by approximately 30%, representing loss of cargo volumes worth an estimated \$90 million per week.

The situation has recently deteriorated to a full work stoppage, which is now impeding the flow of \$270 million per week in cargo through the port. This simply cannot continue. Canadians and Canadian businesses are counting on us. Rest assured, we will continue to support the parties through every means possible. We strongly encourage them to reach an agreement as soon as possible, but failing that, we simply cannot afford to have this work stoppage continue.

As I mentioned, the government has been assisting the parties over the last two and a half years in an effort to help them reach an agreement at the bargaining table. Despite that assistance, there is still no agreement in sight. The conflict has already had serious negative effects on businesses. In light of the recent escalation of job action, resulting in the full shutdown of the port, we can only expect those impacts to worsen dramatically if nothing changes.

Given this, we cannot afford to wait any longer. The many Canadians who depend on this port to earn a living cannot wait any longer. We need to act now.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague. We really do not like having things forced on us.

That said, how many times did he call the union over the two years of discussions? The union is prepared to have longshoremen back to work by tomorrow morning if the employer agrees to stop dictating the shift schedules.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I think the member knows that I do not have the specific details as to how many times the union was called.

If we go back to the minister's speech and the questions she answered during the 30-minute round, back and forth, she stressed on a number of occasions that her office, her department and she herself, personally, had been involved to get the process moving. They have been trying. They have been running into roadblocks, continually, on both sides.

Now is the time, reluctantly, that a decision has to be made to implement legislation to this effect, to ensure that we do not disrupt the flow of goods through the port any longer.

I have full faith in this minister. She indicated how passionate she is about labour. She is the daughter of a steelworker. She understands and values the right of labour to coordinate and to assemble through the union process. She feels that we have reached that point where we just need to do something that requires legislation. I stand with her in that regard.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my good friend from Kingston and the Islands that last year the Prime Minister made a statement on Labour Day, where he said, "thanks to the hard work and advocacy of unions, we've taken action to protect collective bargaining rights".

Doing what we are doing today is forcing them back to work, so how can the government say it supports labour rights on the one hand, while working to suppress them on the other?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it is entirely appropriate. As the Prime Minister said, and I was not there but I will take the member's word on the quote, we do support labour and unions and their ability to assemble and unionize in order to properly protect themselves. At the same time, a government has multiple responsibilities. It also has responsibilities to Canadians who are dependent on getting medical supplies. It has responsibilities to Canadian businesses that are dependent on the flow of goods through this port.

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Yes, if one tries to look at things in silos, one can try to make the argument the member is making, but when we start to look at things holistically and considering everything, it certainly changes the dynamic of it. Yes, it is possible to strongly advocate for and support unions but at the same time recognize that from time to time we do have to make exceptions to bring in legislation such as this, regrettably, in order to protect other Canadians and other businesses through the process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will try to refocus the debate.

I am sick of hearing that the Minister of Labour is the daughter of a steelworker. I have heard that four times today. My father was a worker, too. To me, this sounds like someone who wants to appear important and smart or appear as though they have a connection to this issue because their grandfather had a farm. That is not relevant, though.

Take a look at the situation. This government did nothing and we are now about to vote on special back-to-work legislation, all of which is slower than if the government had gone with the solution proposed by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who showed some leadership today.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary why the government is not considering that solution. Are they too embarrassed because the solution was suggested by the Bloc Québécois? Why is it?

● (1845)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if the member is tired of hearing about it, but it does not change the fact that it is reality. It is quite germane to the discussion to bring up the fact that the minister is the daughter, not the granddaughter but the daughter, of somebody who was heavily involved in organized labour.

We are influenced by our parents quite dramatically and I believe that, through the influence of her father, our minister had imposed upon her the importance of unions having the right to organize and properly represent the employees. Therefore, she has done a tremendous job in trying to advocate for a resolution to this through the bargaining process, through the negotiating process, but regrettably has come to the conclusion that there are other factors that weigh into this that she has to consider at the same time, which she has done and which has informed her to get to this conclusion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address some of the issues that have been raised. I really appreciate the Minister of Labour providing great insights as to why we have the legislation before us, as well as the previous speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands, who provided excellent background with respect to why the legislation is before us.

Before I get into some of that, I want to pick up on a couple of the questions that were posed to my colleague, because I think it is important to really emphasize some issues that I have fundamental

values with. One of those is with respect to collective bargaining and the process involved.

The idea of free collective bargaining is something that is not new to me. In fact, I have said so in the past. I have been a parliamentarian for about 30 years. I was first elected back in 1988 at the provincial level. Maybe a bit later in my speech I will get a bit more into one of my very first labour issues, which took hours of debate, sitting at committee almost around the clock dealing with final offer selection. I am very much aware of it. I am a member of Parliament who comes from the north end of Winnipeg. We remember the general strike of 1919. I understand the valuable role unions have played in the past, play today and will continue to play into the future.

I do not believe my opinions are that far off from those of many members of my caucus, including the Prime Minister of Canada. We believe in the collective bargaining process. This legislation is something that was not our first choice. We did not want to have to do this. Members try to give the false impression that the Liberals really wanted to do this, as if we did not believe in the bargaining process. That is not the case.

My colleagues, the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Mount Royal, had asked the leader of the New Democratic Party a question. I thought it was a really important question. It is important for us to understand the significance of the question on this, because I think it is important to the overall debate we are having. There are some individuals within the chamber who, through their questioning and their comments, are trying to paint it in a very political fashion, asking how the Liberals dare to do this. Then there are other members who are making presentations and articulations as to why it is necessary for us to do it.

What was the question that was asked of the leader of the New Democratic Party? If members check Hansard, they will see that he did not answer the question on the legislation. He avoided it, as did the following speaker when I posed the very same question—

● (1850)

The Deputy Speaker: I will interrupt the parliamentary secretary momentarily to ask him, for sound quality, if he could raise the microphone wand up an inch or so and get it a bit closer to where his voice is, and we will see if that improves the sound quality.

We will go back to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I hope this works better.

The question is pretty straightforward. Let me encapsulate it: Are there any circumstances whatsoever where the national New Democratic Party would support back-to-work legislation? I think that is a very important question, which the NDP went out of its way not to answer.

I am interested in the answer to that because I believe there are situations that come to the floor or are raised within society that ultimately compel the government to take action. It is not because there is this great desire to do it, but because of the consequences of not taking action.

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Why was the question that the NDP leader refused to answer important to me? It was because NDP governments at the provincial level—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West, on a point of order.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I was here at that time. The leader of the NDP did answer that question; it is just that the member does not like the answer. If someone were to check Hansard, there is a response.

The Deputy Speaker: That is probably more in the category of debate. There will be a 10-minute period for questions and comments, which is likely the time for this type of intervention.

We will now get back to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is a reason this is so important. As a legislative body, do we recognize that at times circumstances dictate that there is a need for back-to-work legislation? My New Democrat friends are going to be voting no to this legislation, and I think Canadians have a right to know where the national New Democratic Party is on this particular issue. Members can read exactly what the leader of the Liberal Party said. The member does not have to believe what I am saying; he can read the answer. He will find that there was no answer to the question.

When the New Democrats have been in government and have had to make decisions with regard to labour disputes, they have on numerous occasions brought in back-to-work legislation. Are they saying that the Liberals are bad and anti-union because we brought in this kind of legislation? I do not think that is a fair assessment. I am a very strong advocate for the union movement, and I believe that in the society we have today, many of the rights workers have, whether they are in union shops or non-union shops, are in place because of our union movement. I do not like to be told by the New Democrats that I am anti-union, because that is just not true. I believe that my record shows this, from day one.

The member who stood up will have an opportunity to review the answers by the leader of the New Democratic Party. I challenge him or any New Democratic member of Parliament to stand in his or her place and say that some circumstances call for the government to bring in back-to-work legislation. I would have a great deal of respect for that sort of comment, because NDP governments in more than one province have done so. In Ontario, I believe on a teacher's issue, the NDP brought legislation in on three different occasions. Please do not quote me on this, but I believe that to be the case. However, they were not alone.

I have talked about my first experiences as a legislator in 1988. Members can look them up. The wonderful thing about Hansard in Ottawa is that everything is recorded. In the Manitoba legislature it is the same thing. There, members will see that there was a significant debate about final offer selection, which I am a big advocate of. I love final offer selection. I think it is a great tool, and I wish that unions and the people sitting across the table from unions would agree to adopt some form of it. It is a great tool that could be in the tool box, and I encourage everyone to give it serious consideration where there are negotiations taking place. Some unions, from what I understand, do actually have it.

I can tell colleagues that back in 1988, it was the Liberal Party that tried to save that particular tool. We were ultimately sabotaged by my New Democrat friends back then. It was a minority government, and they sided with the Conservatives to defeat the motion we put forward that would have ensured there was a chance for final offer selection to continue on.

• (1855)

I remember the debates quite well, because the representation sat not too far from where I am right now, inside the Manitoba legislature. In committees, we listened for hours and hours as to why it was so important.

Last year, on more than one occasion I attempted, through unanimous consent, to recognize a very significant event. It was the 1919 general strike in Winnipeg. It was an event that made news not only in Winnipeg but indeed in all of Canada and beyond. I like to think it is one of the ways that Winnipeg as a city contributed to the debate on the environment in which workers were being compelled to work and why it was so important that there be labour advocates. I suspect it is one of the reasons that labour advocates have come out of the north end of Winnipeg. I think of the Ukrainian Labour Temple, where many of those meetings were conducted. It has been around for over 100 years now. People back then were trying to organize and ensure that the rights of workers would be respected and expanded.

The legislation has come before us because despite a genuine attempt from a number of different stakeholders, to this day they have not been able to achieve an agreement. It is unfortunate. I hope I do not get myself into trouble for saying this, but I personally have a sense of disappointment. I would have liked to see an agreement. With one, we would not have been put in the position we have been put into.

Unlike some members within the chamber, I believe that at times there is a necessity for legislation of this nature, and I think it should be very rare. However, the impression the Bloc and the NDP are trying to give that the Government of Canada has not done anything and is suddenly finally getting engaged and bringing in back-to-work legislation is far greater than a stretch of the imagination. The words I would like to use are unparliamentary, so I cannot use them, but my friends in the Bloc and the NDP are trying to mislead, and some would even suggest intentionally.

The Government of Canada, through the Minister of Labour, has been on this file for well over a year. I commented on the Minister of Labour's comments. She talked about the many different efforts that the government has made to try to facilitate and encourage both sides to come to an agreement. I believe that every member in the Liberal caucus shares my desire to have seen that take place.

• (1900)

Call me an eternal optimist, but it is still not too late. Back in the day, I used to say that we have the greatest potential for growth. I can tell members that there is still an opportunity, and I hope the negotiators will take advantage of that opportunity and somehow come to an agreement.

I note that there were dozens of meetings, well over a hundred, and they were assisted through facilitation. The mediators involved were directly funnelled in from the national government. To imply that the efforts put in were meaningless or showed a lack of interest from the national government is therefore wrong.

I believe that our Minister of Labour, since her appointment, has been very much aware of the file, the issues and the importance of trying to get them resolved. That is the reason that so many of the appointments were made by the Government of Canada through the Minister of Labour. They are important. Montreal is one of Canada's economic hubs. Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax have ports that are critical to Canada's economy and our lifestyle. Personally, I hope that someday more stuff will come out of Churchill, Manitoba.

I do not think it comes as a surprise that the impact of a prolonged strike would be significant, and in the back of our minds we should also take into consideration what has been taking place over the last year. We have been listening to our constituents and staying focused on the pandemic, and we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We know we are going to get at least 40 million doses of vaccine before the end of June, which is going to be very helpful in our recovery. Things are starting to turn around. Yes, there have been some disappointments with regard to the third wave, but our ports are absolutely critical to enabling us to get back on our feet.

Extending the parties' expired collective agreement until a new collective agreement comes into effect is a good thing, I believe, at this time. The same is true for prohibiting further work stoppages until the expiry of the extended collective agreement and imposing fines on any employer, union or individual who contravenes the provisions of the bill. We are a government that does not want to take sides on the issue. We want to see it resolved. However, we recognize that, unfortunately, in certain circumstances there is a need for legislation, and I am hoping members will see that need.

• (1905)

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which might seem commendable if we did not know what we know about this file.

I say with humility that I studied labour relations. During my undergrad, one of the fundamental notions I learned is that bargaining is done in good faith, with a firm resolve to reach a settlement and a profound willingness to do the work.

The longshoremen in Montreal, the union and management have been talking about the working conditions of the longshoremen for more than 800 days. We now know that the longshoremen would be at work tomorrow morning if management agreed to drop their stance on scheduling and respect work-life balance.

We know that the government is very much in favour of work-life balance. It says it works for middle-class families. Then why are workers and families being dealt the blow of special legislation that wipes out more than 800 days of bargaining that is on the table right now? Why?

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[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I respect the level of expertise that my colleague brings to the table on this issue. We have demonstrated great respect toward the negotiations and we see that by the participation of federal mediators who have been participants, encouraging the two groups ultimately to come together.

I do not think it is in the government's best interests to say that we support this side and we will do something for it rather than the other. Governments should not be doing that. As much as possible, we need to facilitate, encourage and promote that sense of bargaining. However, as a member from Quebec, surely to goodness my colleague sees that at times there are circumstances where one needs to have this tool and use it with respect to back-to-work legislation.

Even though I focused my attention on New Democrats, and I think I scared them off because they do not follow on the questions, does the Bloc support situations where it might want to bring in back-to-work legislation? I do not know if René Lévesque ever did. I believe at times it probably has seen provincial—

• (1910)

The Deputy Speaker: We will need to get on to some other questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not scared of my hon. colleague. Sometimes I am scared of what he says in this chamber, and there is no doubt about that.

With regard to this situation, how can the member talk about PPE being at risk when the union has identified that all of it will pass, that it has been moved along. That is part of its overall strategy and part of the compromise of ensuring public safety.

Second, most of that material is coming in by plane. Today, Canada received more vaccines by air shipment. Therefore, how can he be so disingenuous in his so-called camaraderie with unions when he uses scare tactics about PPE, about this union and about its situation in this port?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, hopefully I will get more questions and the member for Windsor West might be able to provide some clarity on the issue that has been posed to his leader. Having said that, let me attempt to provide an answer for the member.

I do not claim to understand and appreciate all the logistics of a port. What I do know is that when relatively large ships are full of containers, what is in the containers varies quite significantly. It is not as easy as saying ship one has 25 containers, let us manipulate it around, get it to the dock and unload those containers. I just do not have that kind of expertise. I suspect it is a little more complicated than the member has just indicated.

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Again, I do not know the details of the negotiations, so there could be far more to it than that. I am not able to point it out at this time.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour said earlier on that the scenario that the member for Windsor West was creating overlooked the logistics of it. If PPE were the only materials coming in, then everything else that happens from that point, that the routes from there get significantly limited because there is no ability to move stuff because it is not moving with other stuff. The member for Windsor West is oversimplifying the issue.

The parliamentary secretary has asked the question of NDP members. I have asked the question of NDP members. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour has asked the question of the NDP members. I asked the question for the leader of the NDP. I asked him what his threshold was, at what point would he eventually say okay, that we need to bring in legislation. Does such a threshold exist? Every time we ask that question, NDP members skate around the answer. They just refuse to answer the question. They stay as far away from it as they possibly can.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could give his insight as to why he thinks the NDP might be doing that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is an important question, as I tried to point out in my comments. NDP provincial governments, not one or two but a number of provincial NDP governments, have agreed that there are circumstances where it is necessary to bring in back-to-work legislation. We have seen NDP governments do that. Therefore, the principle of using it is very widely accepted with the provincial NDP.

On the other hand, the national NDP does not want to answer the question, and it is simple one. Are there circumstances in which the federal NDP would bring in back-to-work legislation? It is a very important question.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Winnipeg North, and I would like to refresh his memory.

He stated that he followed the process and the evolution of the negotiations. On August 10, his colleague, the Minister of Labour, stated that the best deals are made at the table. However, today, there are no negotiations, we have only special legislation. The government is clearly being inconsistent.

Not that long ago, on April 9, the situation changed when the employer decided to impose schedules on the workers. The union agreed that its members would return to work tomorrow morning if the employer would agree to reconsider its position on shift scheduling.

The question is simple. Did anyone in cabinet or from the Minister of Labour's office call the employer and ask him to back down on shift scheduling?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on the specifics of the two offices, the member would have to pose that question to them directly.

Ultimately my friend needs to answer at least in part the question that I posed to my New Democratic friends. The only example that I can give would be René Lévesque and I do not know if he, or any other separatist government, ever brought in back-to-work legislation, but the people of Quebec need to know and have a right to know.

We know that members of Parliament from Quebec in the Liberal caucus are a powerful group of people. They are very influential, and they will stand up for the Province of Quebec and Montreal, the economic hub and one of Canada's greatest communities. However, I do not think that the Bloc in the House of Commons is prepared to do that, and I find that somewhat disappointing and sad.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not happy to speak on this issue tonight, but I am glad to have a slot to do so.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

I come from a port city. The city of Windsor has one of the most robust ports in the Great Lakes system. The residents have been maritime people for many years, since the founding of the country.

I want to talk about this back-to-work legislation, Government Business No. 5, in a number of different contexts. The first thing I want to talk about, though, are the interventions we have just heard by the parliamentary secretary, who represents the Prime Minister, as well as other Liberals, who have referred to PPE being withheld or at risk at the Port of Montreal despite CUPE giving assurances about that.

Recently in an exchange, the parliamentary secretary said that he did not have the expertise or the details. That he did not profess to know them, but here is the thing. How disingenuous is it to say that someone is a friend of labour, a friend of CUPE or a friend of any organization and use a threat like that in this debate. Ontario is suffering through this situation as well as Quebec and other places across our country, and to suggest, without knowing or having specifics or details, that it is a sinister approach by CUPE to withhold PPE in this labour dispute is an affront to all labour across the country.

I hope labour unions of all stripes take up this debate along with some of the things that have been said, because I cannot think of a bigger insult right now. Those who do not have specific information cannot point to some of these things and insinuate something like that after spending 10 minutes before that, saying what great friends they are of labour but, by the way, they are holding up the safety of Canadians right now. What a disingenuous way to profess one's love and support of labour. What a disingenuous thing to say about the men and women who serve every single day, who have had this hanging over their heads for a number of years.

Do people think they want to be on strike right now? Do they think they want to get up every single day and worry about strike pay, about the future of their jobs, about their benefits or what their loved ones will have? They are all at risk. The risk is not just with Canada, it is with these workers. What are these workers doing? Historically, we are looking at dangerous situations in ports. Internationally, we have most recently seen Beirut, but domestically we have also seen things at our historic port in Halifax. Recently, the Port of Vancouver had several major accidents. That is because of the working conditions are very difficult for these men and women every single day.

Why do workers go on strike? They go on strike because of grievances. Historically, those grievances include child labour, 12-hour days, sexism and racism at the workplace. They include a whole series of things, which is why workers have to band together and it is why we have Labour Day.

We have Labour Day in this country, like many other countries in the industrialized world, because workers had to band together to get safer conditions. Today, on the National Day of Mourning, for the Liberals to say that those workers are using PPE as a negotiating tactic against Canadians is insulting, at best. It is irresponsible.

This dispute has been going on for some time now. There is potential for a solution, but what we have here is no different than scabs. It is where a piece of paper is going to make people have to get up and go somewhere when they do not think they are being treated right at the workplace and the only leverage they have is what they give up. They give up their life, their time and their safety. They want to go to work every single day and be productive citizens, but it has come to this point for a lot of different reasons. It did not just materialize overnight. People do not want to give up their pay, they do not want to give up their job security and they do not want to a workplace where they are stigmatized. They are using the only thing they can, which is not working, unless they are made to do so. That is what is happening now. It is no different than scabs.

● (1920)

They want to go to work every single day and be productive citizens, but it has come to this for a lot of different reasons. This did not materialize overnight. Nobody wants to give up their pay or their job security. It is no different than scabs. They are being made, by a piece of paper, to go in or lose their jobs. They lose everything: their pensions, their benefits and all the security, and during this uncertain time. That undermining of the leverage will create animosity. It will undo all the work that has gone into trying to negotiate a settlement.

Coming from a port town, where ports are regulated under the Marine Transportation Security Act, they have a lot of power. They have a lot of leverage. What do people have as their one thing to do? To band together and demand a fair bargained agreement, and this situation right here is being taken from them. It is being taken from them and it is not fair to those individuals. It is not fair to their families and it is also not fair to businesses.

I come from a labour town, and we have had various strikes. We have had sit-down strikes, have helped create the Rand Formula and have done a series of different things. I was most recently on a

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picket line for Local 195, where a hedge fund bought a company in the auto sector and shut it down, which created a loss of over 60 jobs. I want to thank Emile Nabbout and Local 195. All the men and women there lost their jobs because a company took part of their pay and benefits and they had to negotiate a settlement. They did not want to be out on the streets in the winter. During COVID they wanted to be making money for their families to ensure their safety, but had to band together and stop vehicles from being taken out of the place, despite being owed benefits, money and so forth.

One of the things we have to understand and appreciate is this is a last resort for unions. Taking away this as a collective right, as the government is doing, is the wrong policy. In my city, I have seen difficult strikes. Once they get through those, an agreement is set and a principle laid down, it makes for a better, longer relationship than it does by something being enforced and imposed.

Who wants the will of someone else to force a settlement? Imagine buying a car or a house and being forced into a settlement, not having a choice at the end of the day. Nobody likes that. Nobody likes that imposition. If later on there is agreement to go to binding arbitration, that is one thing, but to use the powers of Parliament right here and right now and choose this moment against the men and women in Montreal is unbelievably brutal.

There is no doubt not everybody is going to agree with this position, but they have this collective right, which is part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It has been part of successful negotiations that have ended major grievances against working people and have uplifted many people across this country, whether it be about time off work, proper pay or safer working conditions.

As I mentioned, today is the National Day of Mourning. According to 2019 stats, the last stats available to us, just under 1,000 Canadians went to work that year and never came home. They never got a chance to say goodbye. They went to work and never came home, leaving children and loved ones and estates not settled, just for trying to put food on the table.

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Today of all days, there should be recognition by the government. If it has any ounce of credibility with regard to this issue, it should actually apologize to the people of CUPE and other labour organizations for using PPE as a tool in this dispute over how to be best compensated. At the end of the day, everybody wants a successful solution. Making people do things with a piece of paper is not it. I ask the government to rescind and go back to having honest brokered negotiations and a settlement that will be lasting not only for the people of the Port of Montreal but all of our country.

• (1925)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member probably knows what my question is going to be. It is going to be very simple and I would really appreciate a direct answer because no NDP member has given a direct answer on this.

Is there a threshold by which the NDP would support legislation like this? Is there ever an opportunity that NDP members would and, if so, what is that threshold? If the answer is no, that the NDP will never, ever support it, that is fine but I would just like the member to say that. Will the member ever support this type of legislation, or not?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the question is a hypothetical. I am supposed to come up with an answer to a broad-ranged hypothetical. What hypothetical child care plan do the Liberals have? What hypothetical pharmacare would they ever support?

What we have right now, in our situation, in the palms of our hands, is a piece of legislation that would make men and women in the Port of Montreal go back and have to work. We would force them to do that.

I am supposed to respond to some improbable hypothetical question of all kinds of unlimited situations and scenarios. It is immature in terms of the actual question in itself. It is really not genuine to the issue here and it is disrespectful to the men and women of CUPE where we have very particular and very specific information about them. That is what is at stake here.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot today certainly about the minister being the daughter of a steelworker. I also come from a family and a father who were in strong support of unions, who taught me not to be a scab, not to turn our backs on workers fighting for their rights. This seems to be a pattern with the current government.

I will give an example: 2018, the postal workers, and putting in emergency legislation to force them back to work. Now we have the port. It is the same behaviour. The current government is demonstrating that it does not respect workers and when they are not toeing the line the Liberals will just abuse their rights, throw a rickshaw on our Constitution and impose emergency back-to-work legislation.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could respond to that.

• (1930)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, my father was a marketing and incentives manager for Chrysler, in management. That is part of who I am, but is it relevant to this debate here today? It is generally a shield that is used at different times to justify a position.

The reality is we have the facts in front of us from the Port of Montreal and CUPE, and we have all the facts about what the government wants to do here. They do not add up to being a good situation in what is taking place. Instead of diversions like that, what we need to do is focus on whether this bill is the right thing to do for those individuals and also our country; and it fails on both tests.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am upset. I cannot believe that this government has issued formal notice this past Sunday on its intention to force through expedited legislation to force the workers at the Port of Montreal back to work before they even begin to strike.

The motion before us is an act to provide for the resumption and continuation of operations at the Port of Montreal. This back-to-work legislation would force workers back to work who had just commenced their general strike on Monday. As if it is not enough that this government is using back-to-work legislation, it is attempting to ram it through. The motion states that if the bill is adopted here at second reading, it shall be deemed as passed at all stages in the House.

As background on this, CUPE 375 represents 1,100 employees, and those employees are working for several different employers in the Port of Montreal who are represented by the Maritime Employers Association. Negotiations have been ongoing now for about three years to obtain a new collective agreement. From the employees' perspective, the objective of these negotiations is an improvement of working conditions, what I would call work-life balance, particularly in terms of working hours, the right to disconnect and job security for new workers. The previous collective agreement for these workers expired in 2018.

Fast-forward to April of this year. After good-faith negotiations on behalf of the workers, the employer undermined the negotiation process by suspending the job security regime provided for in the collective agreement. Despite the fact that negotiations were continuing, and both sides were seemingly happy with the mediation process, the employer decided to give a 72-hour notice of its intention to not honour job security provisions in the collective agreement. In response, the union launched a partial strike, particularly because the Maritime Employers Association abolished the job security regime, which was acquired in 1970 and constitutes a pillar of their collective agreement.

The union made it clear that the workers would not strike if the employer reverted back to the working conditions applicable before April 10, 2021. The union gave the employer the opportunity to bring down the temperature, stop the pressure tactics and come back to the table to continue negotiating in good faith.

However, instead of respecting the workers' right to free collective bargaining, the Liberal government is introducing a bill that would force employees on strike back to work. From then on, the employer no longer has any incentive to negotiate in good faith, because the government has just sent the signal that negotiations are coming to an end.

The NDP has always defended the interest of unions and workers, and the Liberal government's back-to-work act is a serious denial of the right to strike. On January 30, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada released a landmark labour law decision in *Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan*. The Supreme Court ruled and concluded that the right to strike is a constitutional right.

The minister, on Sunday, said on Twitter that "...a work stoppage is causing significant economic harm to Canadians." It is very important to note that the general strike had not yet commenced. It was not until 7 a.m. the next day that the workers walked off the job. Now, I suppose the minister could have been referring to the action taken by the union to refuse overtime and weekend work, which was in response to the notice of suspending the job security provisions.

The first thing I would like to say about the impact of the refusal to work overtime and weekends in this general strike is that there will undoubtedly be disruptions. This is the very nature of how strikes work. For a government that proclaimed itself as being friends of labour, I would expect it to understand this. If governments applied back-to-work legislation every time a workplace went on strike, there would be no strikes. This kind of attempt at justification leads to a clear and sweeping disregard for the right that all workers are supposed to be afforded under the charter.

Second, if the Minister of Labour feels that she is in some sort of unprecedented situation where the impacts of a disruption would be so severe that she has to remove a charter right for strikes, then I would expect that she would have the data to back it up. For a government that says it believes in science and repeatedly talks about an evidence-based decision-making approach, I would surely hope that the minister had data and objective impact assessments before her when she deliberated on whether she would pre-emptively give notice for back-to-work legislation before these workers started their general strike.

● (1935)

I think, given the importance of this debate, all members should be afforded the data and information the minister had before she brought forward this motion and bill. I would ask that the minister table here in the House all the data and information she received before taking the significant step of fast-tracking back-to-work legislation, as part of an attempt to provide what I have heard the minister of fearmongering refer to as medicine and personal protective equipment that will not be able to get through. Again, if she has specific information to corroborate this, she can please share it with the House.

The minister, just one day after the general strike commenced, said, "The work stoppage we are seeing right now is causing harm." She did not go on to cite any data whatsoever to support that claim. How could the government have collected data on the im-

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pacts the day after the strike started? This is one of many illustrations of the government trying to rationalize with speculations in order to explain away a decision to introduce this back-to-work legislation long after the decision has been made.

I also want to talk about what the Conservatives are saying in the chamber. The following is a quote from the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent:

It is not a victory for workers, for the employer, or for the business people and companies dealing with the problems resulting from the dispute, and it is certainly not a victory for parliamentarians.

It is important for Canadians to know the Conservatives appear to be planning to become complicit in this whole affair. They have made it very clear that they will be supporting this legislation.

I am happy to see the Bloc will not be supporting this legislation now, and it is in line with what I am saying: that the minister is fearmongering. My Bloc colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville called out the minister with the following:

The minister was saying that drugs will not get delivered. That is not true and it ignores the facts, because essential services are still being provided. All medical equipment...[is] being handled.

I have some understanding that if the minister believes otherwise, she should provide any related data or facts to the House.

I want to go on. I could go on forever about this, but I want to make an amendment.

I move:

That the motion be amended by replacing paragraph (d) with the following:

(d) if the bill is adopted at the second reading stage, it shall be deemed referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported with the following amendment:

That Bill C-29, in Clause 11, be amended

(a) by replacing line 39 on page 4 to line 10 on page 5 with the following: "such matter, hear the parties on the matter, arbitrate the matter and render a decision in respect of the matter; and";

(b) by deleting lines 15 to 17 on page 5; and

(c) by replacing lines 25 to 36 on page 5 with the following: "(4) every decision of the mediator-arbitrator under paragraph (1)(b) must be worded in appropriate contractual language so as to allow its incorporation into a new collective agreement."

that this be deemed concurred in at report stage as amended, and be deemed read a third time and passed.

● (1940)

The Speaker: The amendment is in order.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question of the previous speaker, the member for Windsor West, about whether there was any situation in which he would support such legislation. He responded to that by refusing to answer, because he insisted it was a hypothetical question.

It is not a hypothetical question. This is a question of whether or not someone supports the ability of a government to do this at any juncture in time. They either support the process of doing it or they do not.

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My question to this member is the same. Is there ever a scenario in which he, or the NDP, would deem it necessary? If there is, what is that scenario? If not, that is fine, too. The member could just say no, there is no such scenario and that he will always refuse to support legislation such as this.

I am looking for a clear answer on this. I have not gotten it in the seven or eight times I have asked it of NDP members. Maybe this member could help me out.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, I am going to give the member the same answer everybody has been giving him.

It is a hypothetical question. However, for me, personally, it is a constitutional right, done by the Supreme Court of Canada, so I do not think we have the right to eliminate anybody from striking in a labour dispute.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech and the amendment. The NDP is endeavouring to right what has been a most egregious siding with big, multinational billionaire corporations rather than with the workers at the Port of Montreal, who have been so dedicated.

I note, as many of the NDP speakers have, that today is the Day of Mourning. It is particularly egregious that the Liberals have brought in this draconian legislation on a day when we should be mourning the nearly 1,000 Canadians who die each year due to unsafe workplaces. Often, the labour movement has made the difference in putting in place health and safety regulations that help to address that.

I know the member comes from the shop floor. He has a keen understanding of what the women and men, the workers who have built this country, are subject to. I have a simple question for him.

Why has the government intervened so clearly on the employer's side, with big billionaire corporations? How and when did it signal to the employers that it was going to take their side in this dispute?

• (1945)

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent question. The signal that it gives them is absolutely wrong, and it is disappointing that any government would go forward and take away the right of a union even before a strike has happened. That is deplorable and it is unconstitutional, but, from the letters that I have received, this has been going on for a couple of months. The employer has sent letters to the minister, basically asking the government to do something. It looks like the Liberal government has bent and given that upper hand to the employer and taken away 1,120 employees' rights to bargain in good faith.

I am really disappointed in the way the company has handled this. That is because there was a resolution done yesterday, but it still refused that. The company does not want to bargain in good faith. It has no intention of bargaining in good faith, and it knows that it has the Liberals in its back pocket to exercise their big muscle and do away with any of the employees' rights.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak on behalf of Davenport residents on Bill C-29, which would require employees and employers at the

Port of Montreal to resume operations. There is currently a work stoppage due to a long-standing dispute between the Montreal longshoremen's union and the Maritime Employers Association. Unfortunately, this bill is urgently needed.

The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. Every year it handles around 40 billion dollars' worth of goods. The current work stoppage is causing dire economic impacts in Montreal and across the country. It has health implications, and it is threatening the viability and reputation of the port. These reasons and more are why it is important to pass this bill immediately.

I know the Minister of Labour introduced this bill with a very heavy heart. She is the daughter of a steel worker, and I know she felt it was her last option. I also know it was our government's least favoured option. We believe in the collective bargaining process. We believe in our workers' right to strike. In the heart of my own riding of Davenport, which is mostly composed of working-class communities and has many first-generation Canadians, many constituents are part of a union. Unions protect them, ensure safer and better working conditions, and ensure fair pay for their valuable working contributions.

To this day, Davenport continues to be home to working people. I, myself, am the daughter of working-class immigrant parents. I grew up appreciating the value and dignity of labour, and the need for fair, safe and healthy workplaces. There are many unions in my riding that are active. They are pillars of the community in Davenport. I want to thank them now for everything they do to protect the rights and interests of our workers.

In the case of the Port of Montreal, our government has demonstrated our commitment to the collective bargaining process. In this case, through over two and a half years of mediation, CUPE Local 375 and Maritime Employers Association have been at the table since September 2018. Our federal government has supported the mediation process since October 11, 2018.

Our government provided significant support in making our top mediators available to them to help them reach a new collective agreement, and this amounted to 100 days of mediated bargaining. Very little progress has been made. Both parties remain far apart, and there is now a work stoppage with enormous implications. The broad economic and health consequences of the current work stoppage have left us with no choice but to take this step.

I want to echo something the Minister of Labour said when she introduced this bill. When a work stoppage impacts only the workers and the employers in question, there is no justification for the government to intervene, but in this case, the dire, long-lasting impacts to the economy of Quebec, eastern Canada and the entire country are so severe that the government must protect all the other jobs that are at stake.

Let us talk numbers. Right now, the current strike is halting the flow of around \$270 million per week. Economic modelling puts the cost to our economy between \$40 million and \$100 million per week. The port has experienced a 10% decrease of container volume, estimated to be worth \$30 million per week for the month of March 2021, compared to the previous year. The volume of containers arriving at the port bound for the Canadian market has declined by 9% year over year, while the volume of containers bound for the U.S. market has declined by 19%.

The work stoppage is paralyzing the port, forcing companies to reroute their supply chains and incur significant additional costs in the process. In addition, this is happening during a pandemic when our businesses are already under enormous economic strain and stress. This only adds additional, unwelcomed pressure at a time when too many companies are just trying to survive.

Let me bring it back to my own riding and the people I have the absolute honour of serving. My riding of Davenport in downtown west Toronto is home to many Portuguese speakers, including those from the Brazilian-Canadian community. They, and many stakeholders specifically from the Brazil-Canada Chamber of Commerce, have raised with me over the past year the issue of the disruption of trade between Canada and Brazil and the impact it is having on many small businesses here in Toronto and the broader GTA.

There are so many other stakeholders who are being impacted in Canada, including farmers, who have been waiting for seeds and fertilizer, which they need to arrive on time. It impacts their livelihoods. It impacts our food supply chains and business contracts.

• (1950)

There are 19,000 direct and indirect transportation jobs at the Port of Montreal that are being impacted, including rail and trucking jobs. As well, there are 250,000 jobs in Montreal and another 273,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario that are also very much impacted.

Other industries in Canada also depend on the goods that flow through this port. Many, as I have mentioned before, are already struggling to adapt and recover from the COVID recession. The diversion of ships to other ports, including those in the United States, could permanently change shipping routes and cut Montreal out of important supply chains for the long term. Canada's reputation as a reliable trading partner is at risk, and the reputation of the Port of Montreal is at risk as well.

The work stoppage also has implications for the health of Canadians. As the minister has mentioned a number of times, right now there are ships waiting that are holding life-saving medicines and medical equipment, some of which is COVID-related. I understand that the minister has heard from many who have said that this strike has life-and-death implications as many hospitals are waiting for medicines and medical equipment.

Let me touch on the key things the bill would do. It would extend the expired collective agreement until a new collective agreement comes into effect. It would prohibit any other work stoppages until the extended agreement expires. It would require the minister to appoint a mediator-arbitrator, one who is jointly approved by the par-

Government Orders

ties or, failing that, a neutral person of the minister's choice. It would refer all disputed matters to the mediator-arbitrator, and it would require them to attempt to resolve the dispute within 14 days.

It would also empower the mediator to resolve outstanding issues to arbitration if mediation fails. It would provide for the new collective agreement to become binding for the two parties when the mediator-arbitrator reports back to the minister. If, on the other hand, the parties reach a new collective agreement before the mediator-arbitrator reports back, that new agreement would be binding instead.

There have been a number of objections raised over the course of our discussion yesterday and today, and one of them is that the government has not done enough. I think that the minister and many of my colleagues from all parties have pointed out, particularly colleagues from my side of the House, that we have spent an exorbitant amount of time trying to make sure that we have offered every available tool to allow the two sides to come together. We have offered our best mediators, and they have accumulated over 100 hours of mediation time. We have also offered whatever other tools are available that could be at their disposal. Unfortunately, the two sides are still too far apart.

Some may also say that this legislation takes away bargaining powers from the parties. I would say that, on the contrary, the parties are still negotiating now. The minister has strongly encouraged them to reach an agreement before this legislation is passed because that is the best way to actually reach an agreement. We know that the bill also contains several key provisions to keep the collective bargaining process going.

The bill creates a clear path to finally resolve the dispute in a way that is fair and that is neutral. We do not want to disrupt the collective bargaining process. Our government believes that both sides getting together to reach an agreement is one that is good for both of them without the government getting involved. To us that is absolutely the very best outcome. Hopefully that is where it will end up.

If circumstances were different, our government would not be intervening. We would let the bargaining process continue, but in this case, unfortunately, the cost of the work stoppage to other Canadians is too great. Therefore, our government is introducing the bill to mitigate those harms to other Canadians, workers and businesses, and to give the parties a pathway to a new and fair collective agreement.

• (1955)

I trust that my colleagues in all parties will agree that these dire circumstances leave us no choice but to introduce this bill in this House. We have to have this debate and this vote. We are asking for all sides to say that this is a reasonable step for us to be taking at this point, as we have exhausted all other options.

We are coming to the end of my time. I think I probably have about a minute left. Is that right, Mr. Speaker?

Government Orders

The Speaker: You have 10 minutes.

I will ask you to wait one moment. We have the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Does this not end at 8 p.m.?

The Speaker: For the final speech, the hon. member who is presenting can continue until the end of his or her speech, so whenever the hon. member is ready, she can stop and we will continue from there.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, will there still be questions and comments?

The Speaker: No, that is it. After 8 p.m. there are no questions. She can finish her discourse, and then we will have the vote.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the point of order from my hon. colleague, as well as your clarification, as I am not sure I have enough speech for another 10 minutes.

I will conclude. The Port of Montreal is an economic hub. It is very much critical to the economic well-being of Canadians across this country, particularly in Quebec and eastern Canada. The current work stoppage at the port is unfortunately causing significant long-lasting impacts to Quebec's economy and Canada's economy. It is adding a lot of stress to the supply chains that are already under significant strain due to COVID-19.

For over two and a half years, our government has provided extensive support to help both sides, to the Montreal longshoremen's union as well as the Maritime Employers Association. We have provided extensive help to try to get them to reach an agreement. That help includes over 100 days of mediated bargaining. However, despite substantial support and multiple work disruptions in the past, both parties remain far apart, and there is a new work stoppage under way.

That is why we have put forward a bill that would end the economic harm to the Canadian economy, ensure the safe resumption of operations at the port and establish a neutral mediation arbitration process to finally resolve the parties' disputes and conclude a new collective agreement. I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-29.

● (2000)

The Speaker: It being 8 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 5 now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division, or that the amendment be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Mr. Speaker, the NDP requests a recorded division.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (2045)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 100*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chabot
Champoux	Charbonneau
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duval	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Harris
Hoback	Hughes
Jansen	Jeneroux
Johns	Julian
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Manly
Marcil	Martel
Masse	Mathyssen
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater

Normandin
Patzler
Pauzé
Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Ruff
Sangha
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Shiple
Singh
Stanton
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Thériault
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wilson-Raybould
Yurdiga

O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saroya
Scheer
Seeback
Shin
Simard
Soroka
Steinley
Strahl
Sweet
Therrien
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Vignola
Wagantall
Waugh
Williamson
Wong
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Members

Alghabra
Anand
Arseneault
Badawey
Bains
Battiste
Bendayan
Bessette
Bittle
Blois
Brière
Casey
Champagne
Cormier
Damoff
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Gould
Hajdu
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lalonde
Lametti
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lefebvre

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arya
Bagnell
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blair
Bratina
Carr
Chagger
Chen
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gerretsen
Guilbeault
Hardie
Housefather
Hutchings
Ien
Joly
Jordan
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound

Government Orders

Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Monsef
Murray
O'Connell
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simms
Spengemann
Tassi
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Young
Zann
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
Oliphant
Powlowski
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
Tabbara
Trudeau
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan
Weiler
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi — 152

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

[English]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion as amended be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

● (2100)

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am asking to change my vote to yea.

The Speaker: Does the member have unanimous consent to change his vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*Government Orders**(Division No. 101)*

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison	Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Albas	Alghabra	Lauzon	Lawrence
Alleslev	Allison	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Amos	Anand	Lefebvre	Lehoux
Anandasangaree	Arnold	Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Arseneault	Arya	Lightbound	Lloyd
Badawey	Bagnell	Long	Longfield
Bains	Baker	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lukiwski
Baldinelli	Barlow	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKenzie
Barrett	Battiste	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Beech	Bendayan	Maloney	Martel
Bennett	Benzen	Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
Bergen	Berthold	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Bessette	Bezan	McColeman	McCrimmon
Bibeau	Bittle	McDonald	McGuinty
Blair	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	McKay	McKenna
Block	Blois	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
Bragdon	Brassard	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Bratina	Brière	Melillo	Mendès
Calkins	Carr	Mendicino	Miller
Carrie	Casey	Monsef	Moore
Chagger	Champagne	Morantz	Morrison
Chen	Chiu	Morrissey	Motz
Chong	Cooper	Murray	Nater
Cormier	Cumming	Ng	O'Connell
Dabrusin	Damoff	Oliphant	O'Toole
Dancho	Davidson	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Deltell	d'Entremont	Petitpas Taylor	Poilievre
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Diotte	Doherty	Ratansi	Rayes
Dong	Dowdall	Redekopp	Regan
Dreeshen	Drouin	Rempel Garner	Richards
Dubourg	Duclos	Robillard	Rodriguez
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Rogers	Romanado
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz	Rood	Ruff
Easter	Ehsassi	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sahota (Brampton North)
El-Khoury	Ellis	Saini	Sajjan
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Saks	Samson
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Sangha	Sari
Fast	Fergus	Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Fillmore	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Scheer	Schiefke
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan	Schmale	Schulte
Fisher	Fonseca	Seeback	Serré
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Sgro	Shanahan
Fraser	Freeland	Sheehan	Shields
Fry	Gallant	Shin	Shiple
Garneau	Généreux	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Genuis	Gerretsen	Simms	Sorbara
Gladu	Godin	Soroka	Spengemann
Gould	Gourde	Stanton	Steinley
Gray	Guilbeault	Strahl	Stubbs
Hajdu	Hallan	Sweet	Tabbara
Harder	Hardie	Tassi	Tochor
Hoback	Holland	Trudeau	Turnbull
Housefather	Hussen	Uppal	Van Bynen
Hutchings	Iacono	van Koevorden	Van Popta
Ien	Jaczek	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Jansen	Jeneroux	Vaughan	Vecchio
Joly	Jones	Vidal	Virani
Jordan	Jowhari	Vis	Wagantall
Kelloway	Kelly	Warkentin	Waugh
Kent	Khalid	Webber	Weiler
Khera	Kitchen	Wilkinson	Williamson
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Wong	Yip
Kram	Kurek	Young	Yurdiga
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Zahid	Zann
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		Angus	Ashton
		Atwin	Bachrach

NAYS

Members

Government Orders

Barsalou-Duval
 Bergeron
 Blaikie
 Blanchette-Joncas
 Boudrias
 Brunelle-Duceppe
 Chabot
 Charbonneau
 DeBellefeuille
 Desilets
 Fortin
 Gaudreau
 Gill
 Harris
 Johns
 Kwan
 Lemire
 Manly
 Masse
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 Michaud
 Pausé
 Plamondon
 Simard
 Ste-Marie
 Therrien
 Vignola

Beaulieu
 Bérubé
 Blanchet
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Boulterice
 Cannings
 Champoux
 Davies
 Desbiens
 Duvall
 Garrison
 Gazan
 Green
 Hughes
 Julian
 Larouche
 MacGregor
 Marcil
 Mathysen
 McPherson
 Normandin
 Perron
 Savard-Tremblay
 Singh
 Thériault
 Trudel
 Wilson-Raybould— 58

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PORT OF MONTREAL OPERATIONS ACT, 2021

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of operations at the Port of Montreal, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, two members of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may each speak to the motion for not more than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of questions and comments. Members are permitted to split their time with another member.

We will now begin the debate.

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize that today is the National Day of Mourning. Thirty years ago, the Parliament of Canada passed the Workers Mourning Day Act, making April 28 an official day of mourning in Canada. Since that day, every year we pause to pay our respects to and remember all workers who have lost their lives, been injured or suffered an illness on the job because of a work-related tragedy. We honour them and acknowledge the grief felt by the family and friends who miss them.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadians and workplaces have developed a greater awareness of the importance of workplace safety, so today we also reflect on and mourn the tragic loss of workers because of COVID-19. That is why today we renew our commitment to improving health and safety measures in workplaces to prevent injuries, illness and death. The health and safety

of all workers across this country is not only our responsibility, but our priority, which brings me to the subject of today's legislation.

The Government of Canada is strongly committed to free and collective bargaining and the constructive settlement of labour disputes as the basis for sound industrial relations. We firmly believe that negotiated agreements are the best solution. That is why during the collective bargaining negotiations between the Syndicat des débardeurs, also known as CUPE Local 375, and the Maritime Employers Association, we have been providing extensive and ongoing support, encouraging the parties to reach an agreement that works for everyone. This commitment of nearly two and a half years to the negotiation process is evidence of our belief that the best deals are made at the negotiating table. Over the last two and a half years, the federal government has provided mediators who have supported over 100 bargaining sessions.

A lot has been said over the last couple of days about taking sides. I can assure colleagues that our government is not taking sides. I grew up in a community forged by the steel industry and the labour movement. I know and treasure the values of decency, fairness, inclusion and progress that the labour movement represents. I feel great empathy for all workers affected by the inability of the two parties to come to an agreement after two and a half years and over 100 sessions with federal mediators. That is why I so very strongly encourage the parties to come to a negotiated agreement as soon as possible.

I will begin by outlining some of the key milestones over the last two and a half years.

Collective bargaining between CUPE 375 and the MEA began in September 2018, with the existing collective bargaining agreement expiring on December 31, 2018. To reiterate some of my earlier remarks made in the House, the agreement covers approximately 1,100 workers employed by member companies of the MEA engaged in loading and unloading of vessels and other related work at the Port of Montreal.

On October 11, 2018, the Government of Canada appointed a conciliation officer from the federal mediation and conciliation service to assist the parties. Once the conciliation period expired on December 11, 2018, we appointed two mediators to continue the work with the parties, with a view to assisting them to resolve their differences and reach an agreement.

On October 23, 2018, the MEA filed an application with the Canadian Industrial Relations Board, the CIRB, to determine which activities would need to be maintained in the event of a work stoppage at the port in order to prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety or health of the public. In June 2020, the CIRB ultimately found that the parties did not need to maintain any activities in the event of a work stoppage beyond their statutory obligation under the Canada Labour Code to continue servicing grain vessels. However, the CIRB did acknowledge the union's commitment to continue servicing two vessels that supply Newfoundland and Labrador.

Government Orders

Less than a month after the CIRB decision was released, with the support of 99% of the membership, the union commenced a partial strike on July 2, 2020. Four work stoppages followed throughout the summer, each one with an increasing duration and impact. This ended in an unlimited strike that started on August 10, 2020.

● (2105)

There was also an increase in tension around the port. On August 13, 2020, eight people were arrested and charged with intimidation, mischief and assault, following a confrontation between union members and managers who were brought in as replacement workers. Eleven days later, on August 21, 2020, the parties agreed to a seven-month truce period during which they would keep bargaining and resume all port activity. That truce ended on March 21, 2021. Throughout this truce and since it ended, the parties have continued to receive intense mediation support from the federal mediators.

On February 4, 2021, I appointed two additional senior level federal mediators to assist with the negotiations. I also wrote to both parties, urging them to work with the mediators to reach an agreement as soon as possible. However, despite these ongoing mediation efforts, at the start of February, the MEA filed a bad faith bargaining complaint with the CIRB asking it to order the parties to binding arbitration. The CIRB issued a ruling on March 17, finding that any determination of bad faith bargaining would be premature and that parties are still working to negotiate a new collective agreement. Mediation therefore continued and the parties met a number of times.

On April 10, 2021, the employer gave 72 hours' notice of its intention to modify the conditions of employment for the members of CUPE 375. According to the notice, employees would no longer be guaranteed a minimum weekly income and would instead be remunerated only for hours worked. Later, on April 10, 2021, the union gave 72 hours' notice of its intention to no longer perform overtime work and work on weekends or participate in training. The union committed to maintaining services for vessels coming to and from Newfoundland and Labrador, and services for grain vessels that must be maintained in accordance with the Canada Labour Code.

On April 13, the parties implemented the actions described in their respective notices, and recently the situation has escalated.

On April 22, 2021, the employer advised the union that it would be invoking the provisions of the collective agreement that impose a specific shift schedule requiring workers to work an entire shift. The following day the union gave notice of its intention to stop all work at the port beginning at 7 a.m. on April 26, and on Monday morning that is exactly what happened: A complete general strike, unlimited in duration, began at the Port of Montreal.

The parties have reached an impasse, and it is clear that despite ongoing and extensive assistance from federal mediators that has lasted two and a half years, they remain unable to find common ground. We urgently need to find a path forward.

The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. Every year it handles over 1.6 million 20-foot equivalent units and 35 million tonnes of cargo, representing approximately \$40 billion in goods. The work stoppage at the port is causing significant harm to Canada's economy, further disrupting supply

chains that have already struggled through the COVID-19 crisis. Every day that it continues, the more likely it is that some of the business will simply not return, resulting in long-lasting damage. These disruptions to supply chains are not only affecting businesses; they are affecting the livelihoods of workers who are employed by those businesses. The jobs of hundreds of thousands of workers depend on the goods coming through the Port of Montreal every day.

With Canada's large volume of overseas trade, the smooth operation of our major ports is critical to our economy. The Port of Montreal is one of our main access points to international markets, and a prolonged shutdown of this gateway for containerized goods and bulk exports is detrimental to Canada's reputation as a reliable trading partner. If trade declines, then jobs disappear, and this affects hundreds of thousands of workers across Canada.

These are the factors that are leading the government to take action with legislation that will require the parties to resume operations at the port while providing a neutral mediation arbitration process to resolve the differences between the parties. I want to emphasize that nothing in the legislation prevents the parties from coming to an agreement before the legislation receives royal assent or at any time in the mediation arbitration process.

Our government does not take back-to-work legislation lightly. We believe it should only be used as a last resort. Unfortunately, given the overall context, we believe it is the only remaining course of action.

● (2110)

This work stoppage is impacting more than 19,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with transit through the Port of Montreal, including in the rail and trucking industries. Facing high initial costs, shippers forced to reroute to other ports may not return immediately, or even in the long term, meaning that the negative impacts could last long after the work stoppage has ended.

The partial work stoppage had reduced port capacity by approximately 30%, representing a loss of cargo volumes worth an estimated \$90 million per week. With no slack in the Canadian supply chain for adjustment, the economic disruption is extensive and can only be expected to worsen. This means the temporary and possibly permanent loss of jobs for thousands of workers whose families depend on them and their salaries. The longer the work stoppage continues, the longer it will take to recover.

Government Orders

As previously mentioned, the Port of Montreal is a major link in the Canadian and U.S. supply chain of raw materials and consumer goods. The August 2020 strike had a disruptive and protracted effect on the east coast transportation system. Further, we heard that some shippers, such as Ikea, had already diverted traffic to U.S. ports on the east coast earlier this spring.

The port authority further noted that other clients had done the same ahead of the March 21 end of the truce between the parties. Ultimately, there is a risk that these diversions could be permanent, if shippers find more stable and economical routes.

Permanent diversions to the U.S. ports could have long-lasting negative effects on the integrated transportation system around the Port of Montreal. This would translate to lower demand for rail and trucking services in Canada that support the movement of cargo between Canada and the U.S.

This would have a serious impact on employment in these industries. Thousands of workers across the supply chain could lose their jobs. We know that these challenges increase as the stoppage continues. Sectors of the economy dependent on cargo moving through the port may find it increasingly difficult to access key production inputs such as machinery, equipment and construction materials, which would force industries such as manufacturing, construction and sales to reduce and/or shut down operations. Shutting down manufacturing operations means workers' jobs and livelihoods are lost, perhaps permanently.

We also know that the disruption comes at a critical time in the agricultural sector. With the spring dictating much of the year's harvest, from imports of key inputs such as seeds, greenhouse components and fertilizer for the season, to the need for cash flow from exports that are now stalled, this is a serious concern for farmers and associated industries. Again, this would mean the loss of thousands of seasonal workers' jobs, and of course the consequences of this would be a threat to the health and well-being of Canadians.

We are hearing that small and medium enterprises are feeling the impacts of this work stoppage, and their concerns are particularly heightened given the already precarious economic recovery from COVID-19. Losses stem from not meeting delivery deadlines, lost potential sales and wasted product in the case of perishable goods that are not properly stored or handled as their movement is inevitably slowed, if not prevented altogether.

Canadian exporters are also facing increasing losses and delays in getting their exports to market and from the use of less-efficient transit options. As the work stoppage continues, the impacts on the manufacturing and natural resource sectors, such as forestry, are also likely to be significant. The ripple effect will not end there. As I mentioned earlier, challenges accessing key production inputs have the potential to cause temporary layoffs and job losses in industries such as construction and sales.

The economic numbers I am citing are not abstract: They represent the jobs of thousands upon thousands of Canadian workers who depend on the port. Workers may never get their jobs back. Stakeholders have also expressed concerns about the impacts. Medical suppliers have described this in letters as a life-and-death situation if products do not get to hospitals and patients.

Canadians need farmers to put food on tables to feed their families. In Ontario and Quebec, ministers of labour and economic development have written to me saying that this will cost hundreds of thousands of jobs, and they have urged us to take action. We cannot afford not to act.

● (2115)

Ensuring the uninterrupted flow of commodities and goods to and from international and domestic markets through the Port of Montreal is essential to the economic well-being of Canadians across the country, particularly now as we enter into a period of economic recovery from a serious health and economic crisis.

The government has provided significant assistance to the parties. Despite our efforts, with over two and a half years of support from federal mediators and over 100 mediated sessions between the parties, there is no agreement in sight as the parties remain unable to find common ground. While the government firmly believes that the best deals are reached at the bargaining table, back-to-work legislation is sometimes necessary when the parties are at a significant and long-standing impasse and a work stoppage is causing significant economic harm.

We must act before irreparable damage is done to our economy and thousands upon thousands of jobs are lost, which will mean that thousands and thousands of families are affected. The government understands the serious negative effects of this work stoppage at the Port of Montreal, and the need for a resolution as quickly as possible. This is why we are taking action with legislation to ensure safe resumption of operations at the port and to provide the parties with a neutral mediation-arbitration process to resolve their disputes.

This legislation would order an immediate end to the work stoppage, and the resumption and continuation of all operations at the Port of Montreal following royal assent. The most recent collective agreement would be extended until a new collective agreement could be established. A mediation-arbitration process would begin in which the parties would jointly choose a mediator-arbitrator. If no agreement could be reached, I would appoint one.

The mediation would last for 14 days with the right of the parties, by agreement, to extend this another seven days for a total of 21 days in which all outstanding issues could be decided through the mediation process. If that fails, then it is on to arbitration. The new collective agreement that would result from this process would contain unmodified provisions from the expired agreement, all arbitration decisions and all agreements reached between the parties at any point in the current round of collective bargaining.

Government Orders

I want to be very clear. There is nothing in this legislation that prevents the parties from reaching an agreement on any issue or agreeing to a new collective agreement before the mediator-arbitrator's final decision is rendered. I strongly encourage the parties to reach an agreement before we pass this legislation, but we cannot afford to wait. We must act now.

Our government does not take this decision lightly, and I have repeated this many times. We take this decision with a heavy heart. This work stoppage is causing serious harm. It jeopardizes the jobs of over 19,000 Canadians directly and hundreds of thousands of Canadians indirectly. This is at a time when industries are still struggling to recover from the major economic disruptions over the past year.

We believe in the collective bargaining process. In this case, the government has provided assistance in the process for over two and a half years, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the mediators we have at that table who have worked tirelessly and were available 24-7 to work with the parties to come to an agreement. However, with no agreement in sight after over 100 federally mediated bargaining sessions, we must act.

I urge everyone here to support this legislation so that it passes as quickly as possible to ensure full resumption of activities at the Port of Montreal and prevent further economic harm. Canadians and Canadian workers are counting on us.

• (2120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour regarding her speech.

She said that she has the best interests of the workers at heart and that she is doing this with a heavy heart. However, the bill that we will be debating for the next few hours was avoidable. According to the minister's own timeline of events, the employer recently unilaterally and fundamentally changed the rules of the game on two occasions, with regard to the work schedules.

We have been reminding the House for some days now that this is when dock workers at the Port of Montreal started to use pressure tactics, while clearly indicating that if the employer withdrew these changes and brought the parties back to where they were before April 9, the union would stop—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I have to give others a chance to ask questions.

The hon. Minister of Labour.

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon colleague for her advocacy.

This has been going on for two and a half years and, throughout this whole process, we have been there every step of the way with the parties. We have provided the supports of the mediation service. The mediators have done a fantastic job and I think both parties are grateful for their presence.

Yes, both parties in this dispute have taken action and they are able to take that action. That is open to them and they did that in a way to put pressure so that an agreement could be reached. However, the reality is that we are no closer to an agreement today than we were two and a half years ago. This is why we must take action now.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I cannot help but wonder that two and a half years, and 100 hours of mediated time, would not cause a thought process that perhaps action should be required a bit sooner in our critical infrastructure sectors. Is this really the only way that disputes can be resolved in sectors that are so important to the country? Do we have to let it go this long?

I have spent 20 years in other sectors where mother nature dictates an annual cycle, and we have found other ways. I just wonder if the minister could comment. Is this really the only way that we can get to a point that respects both the workers' rights and the rights of the employer?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, just to be clear, it was actually over 100 mediated sessions. Each of those sessions was hours long, so this is countless hours.

In addition to providing the mediation support, we also reached out to both sides and impressed upon them the importance of reaching an agreement, so we had conversations and communication and expressed that very clearly.

With respect to where we are now and moving forward, on top of the mediation support and that communication, this really is the only option left. It is an option of last resort, but we must take it in light of the circumstances we are facing, with respect to the harm.

• (2125)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister has stated many times that there is nothing stopping the two parties from reaching a collective agreement before this legislation is passed, yet she has supported the company's request to interfere, which the company wants.

The union has lost all its constitutional rights. Does the minister understand that she is taking away union rights to reach a good-faith collective agreement between the two parties?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, we have been there for both sides throughout this whole process. We have been impartial. We are not taking sides. Our role is to provide the supports. We have provided those supports to both sides. The mediation service has been there, helping both sides negotiate. The bottom line is that there has been no progress at the table. This has been going on for two and a half years, with the extra level of support of two additional senior mediators at the table. As a result of the lack of progress we have to take action, particularly with the strike taking place and the impact on the economy and health—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I think the hon. minister misled the House in her speech.

Several of her Liberal colleagues have also done so today, when they used the argument that medications would not be unloaded. That is not true. First, 90% of medications delivered to Canada arrive by plane, landing at Pearson Airport. Second, the union has confirmed to the employer that any medications shipped in containers through the Port of Montreal would be unloaded, strike or no strike.

Therefore, I would like to ask the minister to retract her comments.

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I completely disagree that there is any misleading going on here. Look, I appreciate the spirit and the willingness of the union to say it will unload those containers. Practically, there are problems with that.

Number one, one container does not have one resource in it. These are containers filled with many different things, so to say that a container is going to dock, part of it is going to be unloaded and then the rest is going to be taken abroad and continue to be shipped is just not practical. Second, the supply chains have been impacted. CN and CP are not sending the railcars and the truckers are not going there to transport, so when the stuff is unloaded there is nowhere to take it, because the supply chains to transport those goods are gone.

Finally, I have written correspondence from stakeholders saying these are life-and-death situations. They talk about medicine for heart conditions and talk specifically about dialysis, saying that if these machines and supports are not given to patients in hospitals across the country, we are in a life-and-death situation. That is what I have been told by my stakeholders.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. minister knows the great respect I hold in my heart for her, but I cannot agree with this at all.

How long did our Parliamentary Protective Service workers, shuttle bus drivers and House of Commons workers go without a contract? The negotiations were protracted. Our Protective Service workers, the people who protected us when the House of Commons was under assault, went four years without a contract. Their protest was in violating their uniform requirements, and we all remember seeing them wear those badges.

Sometimes it is protracted, sometimes it is difficult, but the employer provoked this situation by changing fundamental parts of the collective agreement. Is there not some way to force the employer to do the right thing, instead of punishing the workers?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, I have great respect and admiration for the member.

We are not taking sides in this. We are not saying we are supporting one side or the other. We are encouraging both sides to come to an agreement.

What makes this situation different is the economic harm, as well as the health and safety of Canadians. We know that a full work stoppage is going to have an impact that we cannot be responsible for, which is what mandates us to take action. This is on top of having a year of fighting a pandemic, where supply chains are already compromised.

We cannot stop the flow of goods. We must act for the safety of Canadians.

• (2130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister told us that the government is not taking sides in this labour dispute. However, introducing a back-to-work bill when unionized workers have the right to strike is taking sides. That kills the employer's incentive to negotiate in good faith.

That is what we saw on Sunday when the minister irresponsibly announced the bill even before the general strike began.

Why do the Liberals always side with the employer?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, again, we are not taking sides in this instance. We have had mediators at that table who have done an incredible job in supporting both parties in an unbiased way, to offer support and to try to bring the parties together to come to a resolution. There have been two and a half years of negotiations.

In this legislation, there are potentially 21 days for mediation. The parties can still sit down and mediate this with the appointment of an arbitrator or a mediator—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Midnapore.

I would like to acknowledge today as the National Day of Mourning, a day we honour the memory of workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness as a result of workplace incidents.

As I rise today to speak to Bill C-29, I am once again hit with an unwelcome feeling of déjà vu. There have been empty words and empty promises, and now empty railcars and empty trucks are leaving the Port of Montreal. I feel an unsettling realization that we have been here many times before with the current government. The government delays, gets pressed up against the timeline and then things are a rush and a crisis. Once again, our supply chains are at a standstill, and importers, exporters and workers are once again faced with uncertainty.

Government Orders

When activist-led rail blockades brought transportation networks to a standstill early in 2020, the government sat idly by. We heard it took an average of four days to just catch up for every day our transportation networks were down, and the cost to our economy was in the hundreds of millions of dollars. We heard concerns from businesses and workers about getting essential goods across the country, concerns that are especially relevant now, during the pandemic. Farmers cannot wait for seed or for fertilizer.

If the government chose not to take the situation at the Port of Montreal seriously when it first started over two years ago, it should have adjusted course last year when a strike lasting 19 days took place. This strike resulted in \$600 million in losses for our exporters and wholesalers, and left workers with a lot of uncertainty. This should have been a wake-up call to the government to take meaningful actions to provide professional assistance to help the parties come to an acceptable agreement.

In March 2021, a German international shipping and container transportation company said in an email to customers that it expects “terminal performance in the port will be severely impacted”. This was based on just the potential risk of a shutdown.

In an article in March 2021, in *Automotive News Canada*, Brian Kingston, head of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers’ Association, is quoted as saying, “The situation in Montreal is deeply concerning.” He further went on to say, “We just came out of a massive economic downturn and having a critical piece of our transportation network shut down will not help the Canadian economy recover”.

On April 5, Pulse Canada sent a letter to the Minister of Labour urging immediate action. In the letter, they note that they had been advocating since February for the government to take “every approach necessary to mediate a negotiated agreement” and that “it was imperative to avoid a labour disruption that would damage [our industry], our international reputation, and the wider Canadian economy.” The letter further outlined how, even then, the industry was experiencing significant damages with customers asking them to avoid the port at all costs. The letter notes that these costs can be as high as \$1,600 per container to utilize another port, not to mention costs associated with the logistics of such an endeavour. Avoiding the port means not only disruptions, but less work and potentially permanent job losses.

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

The Port of Montreal is essential for Montreal, Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

This port is the second-largest in the country and is responsible for approximately 19,000 direct and indirect jobs. The roughly 40 million tonnes of cargo that passes through every year, which represents billions in economic activity, travels across the entire country, including to my home province of British Columbia and into my community of Kelowna—Lake Country.

What is troubling is that the concerns I mentioned above are not the first time Canada’s trade reliability has been called into recent question. I have heard this from numerous stakeholders, with the

uncertainty of jobs and investment on the line, but after the government’s track record, it is clear to see why.

Trade, like so many other important things, seems to be continually an afterthought for the current government. It is truly unfortunate, and it does businesses and workers across the country a serious disservice. With one in five jobs in Canada dependent on trade and nearly a third of our GDP relying on our exports, the government needs to do more. However, as we saw in the recent budget, there was little importance placed on trade, instead of working to secure our future.

We see time and again how little importance the Liberal government places on ensuring exports can get to market. We saw this with the rushing of the CUSMA legislation, and the recent example of the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement. The U.K. is our fifth-largest trading partner and third-largest export market. Implementing that agreement was critical to businesses and workers across Canada who rely on trade with the United Kingdom.

The government had years to get a new trade agreement signed with the U.K. after the U.K. had voted to leave the European Union, which meant that the terms of the existing CETA agreement would no longer apply. What did the Liberals do? They did not lead. They mismanaged the file, and even left it to the eleventh hour to introduce legislation.

This failure was embarrassing and caused needless and avoidable uncertainty. The Liberals left it to the last week of the last month of the last year to table the legislation. This led to missing the deadline and having to sign a memorandum of understanding. The memorandum was about to expire with no plans by the government to put it on its legislative agenda. Therefore, Conservatives showed leadership and sought unanimous consent, which we received, in order to move the legislation along so that our Canadian businesses and workers were not again left with uncertainty.

Government actions, or inactions, have once again led to uncertainty. The Minister of Labour, who is responsible for employees at the Port of Montreal, made unfortunate comments suggesting the government may bring forth back-to-work legislation should a resolution not be reached, and here we are now. We have heard that these comments took the wind right out of the sails of the negotiating position of the workers in the Port of Montreal.

Instead of making legislative threats, the government should have been actively involved in the negotiations and doing everything possible to secure an agreement and create certainty and stability. We heard from the minister that government representatives attended many meetings. It does not matter how many meetings are attended; what matters is results.

The union representing the workers called the minister's comments "an affront to all workers in the country." Marc Ranger, the Quebec director of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, stated, "Fundamental rights are being denied. This is shameful for a government that calls itself a defender of the middle class."

As much as it pains me to say it, there is a clear pattern here. What is definitely noticeable is that the certainty of business is so important. It is very important for the free flow of goods to be maintained.

We find ourselves in another avoidable situation caused solely by the government's complete and continuous mismanagement of its files. Right now, at a time of so much uncertainty, we know that businesses and workers need predictability. We need to give certainty and predictability at a time when, over a year into this pandemic, there is still so much uncertainty.

While the pandemic is still occurring, businesses are still in jeopardy and are still really hurting across the country. This ultimately leads to layoffs. Farmers cannot wait. Other businesses cannot wait. Workers cannot wait. With one of the worst records on unemployment in the G7, we need to do all we can to keep our current levels of trade, our businesses viable, and workers employed. It is of utmost importance that the free flow of goods is maintained.

Whole provinces are locked down due to this third wave of COVID-19, due to poor decisions and mismanagement of the pandemic over the past year, including on vaccine procurement. Businesses and families are struggling. Costs are going up. Importers and exporters are having to make tough decisions due to uncertainty. Food security is at risk without a dependable and reliable transportation and supply chain system. We have heard that medical supplies are at risk being distributed.

Unlike other countries that are well into recovery, Canada is still full-on dealing with an economic and health crisis. Parliamentarians now have this difficult situation today, having to look at back-to-work legislation because of the government's failure to facilitate an agreement between the parties.

• (2140)

[*Translation*]

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

I know that a typical Conservative is perhaps not the type of parliamentarian who is the most open to labour unions. However, I would still like to ask my colleague a question.

During question period, the member for Beloeil—Chambly proposed a solution. Workers are ready to go back to work tomorrow morning and put an end to the dispute, if the government would make it clear to the employer that it is not to make any more changes related to work scheduling. That is a solution that could easily be implemented and that would spare us from having to take the blame for implementing special legislation.

Would my colleague agree to go with such a pragmatic solution?

Government Orders

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the government was at the table assisting with these negotiations and, as we have heard, after many meetings, in the end, there was no facilitated agreement.

We need to be pro-Canadian economy, and if there is no agreement and the port is not open, we have heard how that is going to affect businesses all across the country. This is the government that, at the table, was not able to come to an agreement and facilitate an agreement.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I oppose the legislation before us, and I will make that clear.

When I think about the various ways in which this debate tonight is being politicized, I recall what really did affect British Columbia, affected a lot of my constituents and I am sure those in Kelowna—Lake Country as well. It was the failure of the Harper government to anticipate that when the Conservatives got rid of the Canadian Wheat Board we would lose the ability to have wheat supplies and grain that had to move on trains. I am sure the hon. member will remember December 2014 when we had acute shortages of grain, which was because of a decision made by the previous government.

Our supply chains in this country are really important, but it is not all one-sided. Always, I think, collective agreements need to take place. We need to allow both sides to negotiate and not force workers back to work.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, here is the situation that we are in right now. We know that the supply chains are really stretched. We have gone through a difficult time. It all started a year ago, as I mentioned, when we did have rail lines that were down. We have gone through this pandemic. We are hearing that there are container shortages, and this just exacerbates the problem.

Because we are so stressed right now, we do not really have the luxury to be waiting. There are also timelines here where we have farmers who need fertilizer and seed, and they cannot wait. If they do not plant within a certain time period, they do not have a crop. We have heard that there are medical supplies that have to get across the country as well. So, we do not have the time to—

• (2145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): One last question, the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, businesses in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove, almost as far away as we can get from the Port of Montreal, are being negatively impacted by labour disruptions at the Port of Montreal.

Government Orders

I was talking to Mr. Van Noort of Van Noort Bulb Co. Ltd. the other day. He imports bulbs from the Netherlands for sale across North America. This is, of course, a very seasonal product. His business has already been negatively impacted by pandemic-related supply chain challenges, and the strike is the last thing they need.

I wonder if the member has a comment about how important it is to have good labour relations in this country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, absolutely, this just shows how important our supply chains are, and we cannot wait.

I am also speaking to people from companies in my riding, such as irrigation companies that are waiting to get missing parts from Europe. This is across the country, and we do not have the time. There are timelines when businesses need product, and if they do not get it, then workers are going to be laid off. So—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country is also our shadow minister for export promotion and international trade; I will probably step on her toes a bit, talking about supply chain. She was also the 2006 RBC Woman Entrepreneur of the Year and, like me, she is an alumni of the University of Calgary, so to her I say:

[Member spoke in Gaelic]

[English]

“I will lift up my eyes” is a translation from Gaelic.

I will also be stepping on the toes of our shadow minister for infrastructure, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Unfortunately, this is a situation today where the government could not fail. The stakes were just too high for the government to fail. We have talked about it a lot today, but I will repeat some of the core facts again.

The Port of Montreal is the second most important port in Canada. The previous 19-day work stoppage last summer cost wholesalers over \$600 million in sales over a two-month period. It took three full months to clear the backlog created by the stoppage. I am also sure we have heard previously today that every day the port is shut down, the economy loses \$10 million to \$20 million. The words of my leader earlier this week are true: Because of the Prime Minister's failure to get a deal done, jobs and contracts are at risk and millions of dollars will be lost.

I am going to approach this from the transport perspective today, as I am the shadow minister for transport. I am going to look at three things in particular: imports, which affect the cost of living; exports, which affect our economy; and then processes and infrastructure, which of course also affect our economy.

When we are talking about imports and the cost of living, and Canadians are seeing the cost of living increase, RBC expects that groceries alone will go up 2% to 2.5% in 2021. We can look at a couple of things. The first thing is the change in demand that we have seen over the last year. Canadians have been at home throughout the pandemic. They are unable to travel. They are unable to go to the theatre or to their favourite restaurants, as a result of several

lockdowns, and so we are seeing a much greater demand for consumer goods. Of course, this is putting additional pressure on our supply chain.

The second thing, and this has been brought up previously, is the container shortage which is having significant impact on supply of goods. For example, India, the world's second-largest sugar producer, exported only 70,000 tonnes in January, less than a fifth of the volume shipped a year earlier. In addition, Vietnam, the largest producer of the Robusta coffee beans used to make instant drinks and espresso, is also struggling to export. Shipments dropped more than 20% in November and December, so we are seeing very big changes in supply there.

As well, we are hearing that:

The strike at the port isn't necessarily going to shut down (auto) production, it's just going to make the supply chain even more inefficient and increase costs.... Canada, as a manufacturing jurisdiction, we have to constantly compete with the United States and Mexico. And a critical component of being a competitive manufacturing jurisdiction is having a reliable trade infrastructure.

That was in the Financial Post.

We have seen action from the U.S. government in regard to the container shortage, but not here. Perhaps that is the reason why the Freight Management Association of Canada sent a letter to the Minister of Transport, using the example that, “pulse growers and lumber exporters are 'losing international sales' while shipping companies are sending empty containers back to Asia”.

One last example I will give of the strain on supply is right here in my hometown of Calgary. Bowcycle cannot import enough bicycles. Have members tried to buy a bicycle last spring or this spring? I have, for my son. They are almost impossible to come by, but these are the problems we are seeing as a result of the government's inability to handle supply chains and to handle our port capacity. That is why it was so critical that this deal get done.

Port backups are described as the worst ever, and delivery times are the longest in 20 years of data collection. In addition, a federal maritime commissioner described the west coast backups as the worst that we have ever seen.

Finally, I have the following quote:

In December, spot freight rates were 264% higher for the Asia to North Europe route, compared with a year ago, according to [a] risk intelligence solutions manager at [a] supply chain risk firm.... For the route from Asia to the West Coast of the U.S., rates are up 145% year over [last] year.

• (2150)

Again, we are seeing a decrease in supply, resulting in the cost of living being driven up as a result of the government's inability to handle its supply chains. Let us talk about the impacts, which I know that my colleague who spoke previously heard about, in terms of stakeholder quotes, as well as in conversations with stakeholders.

Karen Proud, CEO of Fertilizer Canada stated:

Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fertilizer enter Canada through the Port of Montreal during the spring seeding season. These fertilizer products are destined for farms across [Ontario and Quebec and the Atlantic provinces] ... and ensure that farmers are able to produce the crops that keep our grocery aisles full.

These products are now in jeopardy as the result of the strike at the Port of Montreal, so we are seeing the impact of the government's inability to manage the port's supply chains and, unfortunately, this dispute is having on our exporters.

Brad Chandler, CEO of Hensall Co-op stated that, "Hensall Co-op is Canada's largest exporter of edible dry beans and non-gmo soybeans.... We have established relationships with customers in over 40 countries." These relationships are currently at extreme risk. That is what businesses need right now. They need certainty. They need stability through supply chains. The government is not providing the means for these exporters to have it and it is putting the economy at risk.

Greg Cherewyk, President of Pulse Canada said that, "it was imperative to avoid a labour disruption that would damage the Canadian pulse and special crops industry, our international reputation, and the wider economy." That is another example of the failure of the government to manage supply chains and this dispute.

Finally, from Ron Lemaire, President of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, "There is also significant concern that a labour stoppage at the Port of Montreal would aggravate backlogs in other shipping modes, including rail as shipments are forced to be diverted, particularly as Canada continues to grapple with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is of utmost importance that the Government of Canada use every tool at its disposal to avoid job losses, increased food insecurity and higher food prices, all which could result from a strike."

Let us talk then for a couple of minutes about processes and infrastructure of our supply chains which touch closer to the transport file.

KPMG recently made some recommendations in regards to how businesses can adapt to these supply chain challenges. What are businesses doing? They are examining micro supply chains. They are starting to reduce risks, rather than costs, which is a scary thought to consider that businesses are doing this. The KPMG CEO outlook survey indicated that around two-thirds of CEOs believe that their supply chains are in need of a complete redesign. The government should take note from these CEOs.

Government Orders

Many stakeholders believe that the government does not have a handle on its supply chains. Were I the minister of transport, my first task would be to map out all modes of these supply chains, so that we would understand completely where the faults lie. In addition, stakeholders believe that the government does not use data and metrics to the greatest benefit possible, in an effort to amplify and maximize our supply chains.

Finally I will go to infrastructure. In conversations with the Port of Vancouver, unfortunately, I must say that the expansion of the Port of Vancouver, which is so desperately needed, is currently under review with the current environmental minister. Increasing capacity is crucial. Many members of the Port of Vancouver board believe that they will run out of capacity by the mid-2020s. Our infrastructure capacity gap is growing and other countries believe that our ports do not have the capacity for the current demand of goods.

In closing, I will say that the government and the Prime Minister's actions have been too little, too late. I have seen it with the aviation sector. I have seen it with the supply chain capacity and, unfortunately, we have seen it here with the Port of Montreal dispute resolution.

• (2155)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question is the following.

My colleague spoke at length about the impact on the economy and supply chains, yet workers are part of this chain.

In her opinion, what is the impact of this bill on the workers?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. She raises a good point.

There are no winners. The workers lose, the union loses, the businesses lose, and, ultimately, Canadians also lose.

Unfortunately, there are no winners.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Calgary Midnapore did a really good job of highlighting a lot of the concerns we have and a lot of the issues we have seen come up when it comes to the Liberal government's inaction. It has failed to move quickly on a number of concerns, and that is where I would like to pick up my question. Obviously, the government has truly failed to facilitate a negotiated settlement. It has had plenty of time to act, and it has failed to do so.

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I am wondering if the member could speak a little more to her frustrations in that regard and to some of the concerns she has from seeing the government's failure to act, given how much time it has had to deal with this crisis.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the member for Kenora has done incredible work for the north. I have worked hand in hand with him on the northern airlines, and he has been a fantastic partner.

This is one of my greatest frustrations in my role as shadow minister for transport. I think we saw the greatest example of the government's inaction on this file in regards to coming up with a plan for the aviation sector and the workers. There is a similarity between the situation of the aviation workers and the situation of the workers at the Port of Montreal. There are no winners here. There are only losers.

[*Translation*]

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

I am not sure that I share her point of view. If I recall correctly, in the Saskatchewan case, in 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the right to strike and to take job action is a fundamental right, even a constitutional right.

Why would my colleague want the Liberals to violate the constitutional rights of workers when pressure tactics are part of modern labour relations?

People should not have to avoid striking because it is inconvenient to others.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Unfortunately, I believe that there are similarities between the situation in the airline sector and the current strike. I also see similarities between this bill and Bill C-10. I absolutely agree with my colleague from Quebec. The current government finds it difficult to respect Canadians' rights, both the rights of individuals on the Internet and the rights of workers.

● (2200)

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to again express my great disappointment and bitterness that we should have to debate a bill this evening that is completely inappropriate and represents an extreme solution to a problem that could have been solved long before tonight.

Earlier I asked about the implications of the bill, which deals with fundamental rights, namely the right of association and its corollaries, the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike.

Once again, the government has failed to show leadership or interest and it did not present any solutions to the dispute, which could still have been resolved a few days ago, before the unlimited general strike was called. The government has failed to act. It decided to stand back and instead choose a legislative path that de-means workers and deprives them of their fundamental rights.

Members will understand that it is out of the question for our political party, the Bloc Québécois, to accept this so-called last resort based on the pretext that everything else has been tried, when we are firmly convinced that everything has not been tried.

Yesterday, we were at the eleventh hour. The course of events could still have been altered. The government says it is impartial and wants free bargaining, so it has to walk the talk and make sure workers regain the right to negotiate under conditions that are conducive to success.

Everyone is feeling the effects. When the parties have known for a month that cabinet has special legislation in the works as a solution to the inevitable, that sends a strong signal to the bargaining table and lets the employer know that it need not bother finding a solution to the dispute.

Special legislation was announced before workers even started their first strike day, and along with that announcement was one about mediation sessions. Yesterday evening, however, after the union did its duty and spent the whole day negotiating in defence of its position, the employer walked away from the bargaining table. That suggests a power imbalance between the parties, and we find that unacceptable.

I also want to point out that these 1,100 Port of Montreal workers are men and women who work many hours every day to ensure the well-being of the entire population, of all Quebecers and Canadians. We need these workers. Any conversation about Quebec's or Canada's economy is also a conversation about these workers.

The Port of Montreal is a vital institution. It is also unique because, as we all know, it is Quebec's only container port. That makes the work these people do pretty important.

● (2205)

I want to say that they are watching tonight and wondering how we are going to take care of them. I would also like to take a few minutes to talk about these workers.

Do members know what a dock worker's job entails? Do they want to know what dock workers do?

I found something very interesting. It gives a good idea, a good picture. I will take the time to talk about it because, when we vote tonight, we should be thinking about dock workers.

In Port Window magazine, I found the following description: "Dockworker: a well-paying job that takes concentration and dexterity." I want to talk about Manon Comtois, because there are also women in this trade. Here is what a day in her life looks like.

Wedge in the driver's seat in the glassed-in cab, between heaven and earth, her hands gripping levers, Manon Comtois keeps her eyes fixed on the container hanging from the long cable of her crane. She needs all her concentration as she lowers the heavy 40-foot long metal box into position, 20 metres [or 65 feet] below, onto the trailer of a truck that looks like a toy. All four corners of the container must absolutely and perfectly match the four corners of the trailer. Slowly ... Click!

Even though she followed in her father's footsteps and became a longshoreman, she says that she is not doing the same job that he did in his day. She already has 21 years' experience. She added:

...before automated equipment came along, dock work was much more physically difficult. To unload a ship, the longshoremen had only the strength of their two arms. Cargo arrived in bulk, in bags or in wooden boxes. It took weeks to empty a vessel. Now unloading time is calculated in hours!

...The tasks are many and varied.... The biggest challenge in the dock work profession...is the scheduling. A dockworker must be available 19 days out of 21 and may have to work an eight-hour shift at any time of the day or night. Loading and unloading vessels can be done 24/7 depending on when the vessels calls at the port. Freight transport doesn't wait! The difficulties directly related to performing the tasks are the whims of Mother Nature...

This shows that the dispute at the Port of Montreal is not about wages or benefits, but about hours of work, work-life balance and the right to disconnect.

Angelo Soares, a well-known professor in Quebec, conducted a study on these workers and looked at their work and their working conditions. It is unfathomable that, in the age of automation, workers are required to call in to get their shift schedule and are required to work 19 out of 21 days, and those two days off are not guaranteed to be a weekend. How are they supposed to plan for anything with that kind of schedule?

I am sharing this because I want to reiterate that our focus needs to be on these workers. This is their fight. They sounded alarm after alarm about the need to resolve the problem, and then there was that disgraceful move during negotiations. After they signed a truce and negotiations resumed, there was one last offer from management, which 99% of the workers rejected. More than 90% of the 1,100 members voted. The workers made it clear that the solutions put forward were not acceptable. Did the union threaten to call a general strike then? No, it did not.

● (2210)

In the chronology of events, we forget that the employer was so scared that it tried to seek an injunction just in case. The longshoremen did not trigger the strike.

The union called a full general strike recently because its priorities were work-life balance and the employer had to nerve to impose a measure to change work schedules during negotiations and while the collective agreement still applied.

Yes, the longshoremen were outraged. They announced that they would go on a full general strike, but that they were prepared not to if the employer dropped this measure. That is not nothing.

Since yesterday and the day before, the Bloc Québécois have been saying that there is a solution for resuming free, unconstrained bargaining without fear of back-to-work legislation. Departmental representatives confirmed that, according to their interpretation, the legislation that was introduced would prevent management from imposing such measures. If that was the government's intention, it could have easily taken action. It claimed that its hands were tied.

It could have easily forced the employer to lift this measure. The longshoremen would have been back to work today if the government had the will to find a solution. Instead it raised the threat of special legislation that would force them back to work and impose conditions as well as mediation and arbitration. That does not nec-

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essarily promote free bargaining. A solution was available to the government.

Workers in Canada fought for a very long time to get freedom of association, the right to negotiate freely and the right to resort to job action. In turn, the employer has the right to declare a lockout. The Canada Labour Code is outdated and does not adequately protect workers. The Canada Labour Code gives the employer the right to lock out.

Quebec dealt with that issue in 1977, and that right no longer exists. The right to disconnect has to be included in the Canada Labour Code. We must also improve conditions for precarious workers and on-call workers who have to work long hours unsupervised. Employees who do not comply with these requirements are subject to disciplinary measures. It is time to change that. We have to recognize that the rights that are being violated today are basic rights that must not be taken lightly.

There have been crises. Recently, there was the rail crisis, which had repercussions for CN. Pressure had to be applied to the government to intervene and find solutions because the situation was unacceptable. The goal always has to be finding a way out of the crisis, but this evening, the government wants us to pass a bill that will not only fail to resolve the situation, but also violate some very important rights.

As others have said, if the government champions free, informed, impartial negotiation, it has to demonstrate impartiality.

● (2215)

What does it mean to be impartial? Passing special back-to-work legislation in a situation where bargaining would ensure these rights and would allow workers to negotiate freely is tantamount to picking one side over the other.

If that is what happens tonight, I would describe it as a cowardly act, and I apologize for the strong language. It would mean abdicating our fundamental role as parliamentarians, which is to be the guardians of the rights of the entire population, including workers.

I appeal to my colleagues and remind them that this can be avoided by voting against the special legislation. We must not wash our hands of the problem. Instead, we must focus on possible solutions. If the government, the Prime Minister or even the Minister of Labour had intervened without taking sides at the first sign of trouble, there would have been possible solutions.

When both parties sit down, say what is wrong and a message is sent, and the experienced negotiators say nothing can be done, that is the time to act. The government has had plenty of opportunities to take action since the end of last year's truce. We deplore this lax attitude and lack of leadership.

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This bill makes no sense and denies dock workers their rights. Tonight's bill will not send Port of Montreal dock workers back to work in a spirit of co-operation to do a good job; rather, it will just be strong-arming them. I do not think we have the right to force these employees back to work when there is no reason for it and there are other solutions available.

If we want to make sure that the Port of Montreal gets back up and running like everyone wants, let us reject this bill. Let us vote for a solution that involves free bargaining. Let us give the parties the tools to go back to work with a good balance of power, rather than giving all the power to one party.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member was very thoughtful in her words. The right to strike is a pillar that has taken years to build, and we must absolutely protect it. It is a right for workers to improve their conditions of employment and their wages, and creates important things for our whole economy.

Could the member share her thoughts on how this bill could impact and weaken the gains for which workers have fought hard for so many years?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, this bill will have a major impact. The government is forcing a return to work with conditions that are not the same as those discussed in the negotiations.

The member is quite right in saying that what was accomplished in Canada was historic. Workers fought to improve their rights, which are even recognized by major conventions and by the International Labour Organization. This is a hard-fought battle that dates back over 100 years. That is significant.

We cannot overlook everything these and other workers bring to our economy. That is true of all workers. We have the responsibility and the obligation to protect vested rights.

The impact would be that the employees would be forced back to work. This will have a major impact on quality, motivation and not even—

• (2220)

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

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the impacts workers have on our economy, and she is absolutely correct. There is a tremendous impact that comes from the incredible work these workers do, but what about the other impacts this has on the economy?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order because there is no interpretation.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is it working now?

[Translation]

Do we have interpretation?

An hon. member: Yes.

[English]

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I was saying that I would completely agree that the work that is being done by these workers is incredibly important to our economic activity, which is what the member was saying in response to the last question. However, what about the other impacts? What about the farmers who are saying that it is going to impact their abilities to do their work? What about small businesses, when they refer to the impacts this will have on their businesses?

Is it not the role of parliamentarians to look at the whole picture, to consider everything that is involved and to consider the rights of workers and their contributions, but also the other ways this impacts society and our economy?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, the role of parliamentarians is to look at the bigger picture.

We need to think about restaurant workers, farm workers, temporary workers and workers at the the Port of Montreal. There is an economic chain, and everyone is part of it. It is an integrated system, which is precisely why we need to make sure that these rights are protected. Protecting them will ensure that the economy keeps moving, which is important.

While we do not deny the economic ramifications of this situation, it simply does not justify reverting back to where we were 100 years ago in order to fix the issues, which can indeed be fixed.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. She knows her portfolio inside and out, she is passionate, and I thank her for that.

I just heard a question from the member for Kingston and the Islands that is fundamental, because he was asking about the role of parliamentarians. I asked the Minister of Labour a question earlier, and she replied that it was a matter of life and death because medication and medical equipment would not be unloaded at the Port of Montreal.

That is not true. Immediately after her response, I called the president of the Syndicat des débardeurs, Michel Murray. He confirmed that the union had told the employer that the longshoremen would have no objection to unloading containers that the employer designated as essential for humanitarian purposes, thus maintaining the supply chain and allowing truckers to pick up those containers.

One of two things happened. Either the Minister of Labour is misinformed, or she is calling the president of the Syndicat des débardeurs a liar. Could my colleague comment on that?

• (2225)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right to raise this fundamental question.

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We do indeed have emails confirming this. As I was saying yesterday, drugs are not floating on the water, and they will not be held up by the strike. The longshoremen have confirmed that they will unload anything medical or pandemic-related. It is not true that this is a matter of life and death, as I heard someone say yesterday.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, we heard several times this evening that clients of the port wanted this strike to end. Apparently, they are sending messages to the government, but I think that these messages should have been sent to port management, to inform them that they have paying clients who want service and the employer should find a solution with its employees.

These messages should not be sent to the government, but to port management. They need to sit down at the bargaining table and find a solution. It seems pretty obvious to me. I find it frustrating that the government thinks that it has a responsibility to find a solution here. It tried to do that for a few years. That did not work, and now it is telling us that the solution is to pass back-to-work legislation—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for speaking in French.

Was there any response when the workers were sounding the alarm? There was not. Everyone came out and said that a labour dispute made no sense. Well, that is how our labour laws work.

The pressure was in no way related to how this negotiation was managed. In fact, eight months ago, there was pressure on the government to get a solution negotiated.

What has the government been doing these past eight months?

That is what is shameful. I completely agree—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to work with the member for Thérèse-De Blainville, even though we do not agree on this matter.

We do agree that the Canada Labour Code needs to be modernized in many respects, including the matter of whether workers have the right to be paid if they are available for work, as is the case under the Quebec Labour Code.

I understand the member for Thérèse-De Blainville's principles very well. Can she imagine a situation in which the Bloc Québécois would vote in favour of special legislation, or would they oppose such legislation on principle, regardless of the circumstances?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, our positions are not ideological or dogmatic. That would be too easy. The answer would be no. The Bloc Québécois is all about finding solutions. We are not voting no just to be contrary, and we are not voting no for ideological reasons. We are voting no because this is not the right solution. What is happening is quite a harsh solution, because we, as parliamentarians, are denying workers their rights. There are other solutions.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Hamilton Mountain.

I would like to come back to an earlier exchange. The Minister of Labour was accused of misleading the House on the dockworkers' ability to deliver medical assistance, vaccines, drugs and personal protective equipment if needed. Obviously the dockworkers are able to do that.

Of course there may be several things in any one container, but generally the containers are identified and we know what they contain, in large or small quantities. If we absolutely need something in a container it can be delivered. It is not witchcraft. This is 2021, we are able to send a small helicopter to Mars. I am sure we can find the right container at the Port of Montreal.

I would also say to our Liberal colleagues that the possibility of bargaining on issues related to essential services is not new. Essential services have always been negotiated during labour disputes, at the Port of Montreal or any port, whether in Halifax, Vancouver or the United States. We are not reinventing the wheel here. This is negotiated between the parties. Maybe I should provide a bit of background for the situation we find ourselves in. This round of bargaining over essential services at the Port of Montreal is a bit odd.

I will note that today is April 28, International Day of Mourning for Persons Killed or Injured in the Workplace. There are still hundreds of people every year who are victims of workplace injuries and illnesses. I must admit that it is rather sad that we have to have a debate on this day on a bill forcing people back to work that breaks the back of union members who were exercising a fundamental, constitutional right. I was going to say that it is ironic, but it is worse than that. It is absolutely disgraceful.

The minister and the Liberal government claim that they are not taking sides in this labour dispute, that they like everyone, and that they want the issue to be resolved. They claim that they introduced this back-to-work legislation to respond to other concerns about the supply chain, the economy, and so on. They say that is the reason they introduced this bill and that they are not upsetting the balance of power between the parties.

Normally, when someone tells a story, they start at the beginning, and then there is a development and an ending. This time, I will start at the end, because something happened today that, to me, is extremely telling. The Liberals threw their whole weight behind the Port of Montreal and the interests of the management side. They trampled the fundamental rights of working men and women who were acting in a way that was very respectful of the law.

Today, these workers must be so angry because they have been had by the Liberals. When they were in the opposition, the Liberals would tear their hair out the moment the Conservatives introduced back-to-work legislation. However, today, they are doing the exact same thing.

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It is important to point out that pay is not really the issue, nor is the Port of Montreal losing millions of dollars. Its executives are not acting out of desperation because the port is on the verge of bankruptcy. The Port of Montreal is doing well.

As members know, the economy is struggling right now, particularly SMEs and the cultural and tourism industries. However, containers continue to arrive at the Port of Montreal, and business is good.

Workers had one main demand, and it had to do with work schedules. As my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville said earlier, dock workers have a demanding job that requires an extremely high level of availability, which makes it very difficult to maintain any kind of work-life balance. Dock workers always need to be available and ready to work on call. They need to get to their job site as quickly as possible.

The union is asking the employer to put an end to the punitive measures in relation to the work schedules that were imposed. Obviously, that is the crux of the problem. Management put pressure on workers by being much stricter and imposing certain types of work schedules that went against the dock workers' legitimate requests.

• (2230)

The union asked the employer if, should the special legislation come into effect, it intended to immediately revert to the shift schedules that were in place before the Maritime Employers Association announced changes on April 22, rather than implement the new schedules until a new collective agreement takes effect.

The employer responded that it had taken note of the questions and would reply in due course depending on whether Bill C-29 passed and came into force. That is a typical example of an employer that has no interest whatsoever in negotiating or even answering questions. The employer made it clear that it would respond to the union once the bill was passed. This is not the first time we have seen this kind of thing.

This shows just how badly the government's actions have upset the balance of power between the parties. The mere threat of back-to-work legislation killed the Port of Montreal's interest in finding a solution and finding common ground with the other party. Now it is biding its time, waiting for the Liberals to do the work. Then it can force the workers to accept whatever it wants.

I also deplore the irregular work schedules that are being imposed at every turn. Workers cannot even take a day off to spend time with their families. I am not an expert on the subject, but as far as I can tell, it would be very unlikely for a 250-foot cargo ship to show up at your dock unannounced. From the moment it enters the Gulf of St. Lawrence, we have an idea of when it will arrive, so we can plan schedules accordingly. These container ships are massive. Unfortunately, it is much easier for the employer to maintain all the flexibility it needs to change the schedule as it pleases and shove it down the workers' throats.

The Minister of Labour and the government did not even wait for the general strike to begin before threatening special legislation, which they did the day before. Last Sunday, the Liberal minister

said that if there was a strike the next day, there would be special legislation. There had not yet been a single minute of unlimited general strike. There was an overtime strike and a weekend strike. The union was using progressive and partial pressure tactics legally. It wanted to send a message to the employer that if the employer wanted to keep the freighters coming, the containers being unloaded and the supply chain working, they had to sit down at the bargaining table and work out a solution to the work schedules. It does not take a rocket scientist to find solutions. I was going to make a connection with the Prime Minister, but I will refrain.

The constitutional rights of these workers were undermined. Not long after, the employer left the bargaining table and negotiations came to an end. The employer only needs to wait for special legislation. It does not even want to reply to the union's emails and legitimate questions.

What are the Liberals doing in light of the 2015 Supreme Court ruling on the Saskatchewan case? The court recognized that union members had the right to use job action and that our labour relations and collective bargaining system was based on both parties having appropriate opportunities, depending on the circumstances, to put pressure on one another to find a solution together.

The solutions are not always perfect, and neither is our labour relations system. We recognize that improvements to the Canada Labour Code are needed. Nevertheless, in general, the parties make concessions and find a compromise. This is how workers' movements can improve their working and living conditions, fight for social justice and create a fairer, more equitable and more balanced society. This has been true of many disputes and struggles throughout history.

If we take job action away from workers because it could have repercussions elsewhere, the right to strike becomes theoretical. Job action will obviously cause disruptions and have an impact on others. That is how the system works. If workers cannot use job action to force their employer to sit down at the table to negotiate a solution, then these workers are being denied their right to strike. This means that the Liberal government is violating a Supreme Court of Canada ruling.

• (2235)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, listening to the last speech, we would think this was a brand new event: something that had just happened within the last few days, and the government suddenly jumped in with this draconian measure. The reality is that this has been going on for two and a half years. There has been so much back and forth. The government has been giving supports all along the way.

What I really wanted to touch on was the issue the member brought up at the beginning of his speech, when he said that CUPE said the workers would let products go through and would allow shipping containers to come up. When someone says that, they are massively oversimplifying the situation. They are assuming too many things when there are many variables going on at the same time.

For example, when something comes off a shipping container, we are relying on an entire train's worth of product being moved out at the same time to get the costs that we would get to ship that stuff across the country. Now all of a sudden we want to take one container and ship it by truck somewhere. It does not happen like that. The member is oversimplifying the situation when describing it like—

• (2240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, some people can complicate things endlessly when they do not wish to find a solution, or when they want to impose special legislation on workers who know perfectly well how to do their job and handle containers so our hospitals can get what they need.

I never said that this had just happened. It is true that the union had said that if schedules were restored, there would not be a full general strike. It is also true that the union was always ready to return to the negotiating table.

A few weeks ago, dockworkers went on strike. When the parliamentary secretary said that this had been going on for two years, that is mostly because the Port of Montreal had asked that 100% of longshore operations be considered an essential service, a process that took many months. That is what took a long time, not the negotiations.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is the third time today that I have been referred to as a parliamentary secretary. I want the record to be set that I am not a parliamentary secretary.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I think the hon. member was referring to the parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, in the speech he just gave, my colleague referred to a 2015 ruling on workers' right to strike for the purpose of negotiating their agreements, among other things.

We could add to that the recent attempts by the Maritime Employers Association to stop Port of Montreal workers from striking by turning to the Canada Industrial Relations Board and then the Federal Court of Appeal. Both dismissed the association's case.

We see that the workers' right to strike and to negotiate freely is recognized in law. The Canadian government is violating this right. In the past, this very government hid behind judges in attacks against Bill 101 and, more recently, Bill 21.

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What does my colleague think of the government's double standard towards workers?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: It is a hallmark of governments, whether they are Liberal or Conservative.

When I arrived in the House almost 10 years ago, we debated special legislation to force Canada Post workers to go back to work. At the time, the Liberals were in opposition and they were outraged. Since coming to power, they have taken similar action many times, as we are seeing this evening with the Port of Montreal dockworkers and as we saw with Canada Post. That is unfortunate.

At some point, we will have to establish rules to ensure that these are not just theoretical rights.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, for such a powerful and straightforward speech.

Does he think there is still time for negotiation? What alternatives are there if the strike continues?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

The amendment that the NDP proposed this evening removes the worst parts of the back-to-work bill. The arbitrator will not be able to stop the collective bargaining by demanding a final offer.

We tried to find a way to gain some time and extend negotiations a little. That is what we were able to do, under the circumstances. I am pleased that the NDP managed to at least do that.

• (2245)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I listen to this debate, I continue to become more upset. Not only is the government stripping these workers of their charter right to strike, it issued notice of its intent, through this expedited legislation, to force workers at the Port of Montreal back to their jobs before they even began their strike. What is worse is that the government continues to fearmonger about COVID-19-related supplies with claims that continue to go unsubstantiated. I would like to address this with a quote from an article by FreightWaves published on August 20, 2020. It states:

The union representing longshore workers at the Port of Montreal agreed on Thursday to move some containers holding goods needed in the fight against COVID-19.

"The Maritime Employers Association and the longshoremen's union have agreed to move containers that contain controlled substances and COVID-19-related merchandise and to unload a ship containing sugar," the MEA announced early Thursday afternoon.

I hope this puts an end to the reprehensible nonsense. If there is any issue with important pandemic-related supplies not getting to where they need to go, that is certainly not on the union or the workers. Look to the government or the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

The legislation itself would do the following. It would force the employer and the union to extend their expired collective agreement, prevent the employer from locking out workers and prevent the union from striking.

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I would like to provide some context to this bill before I give further remarks. In 2019-20, the Canada Industrial Relations Board heard the employer's application for a determination on essential services. The employer's counsel used every trick in the book to stall things at the CIRB, including a motion for the board chair to recuse herself, and forwarded judicial review applications. After the decision was issued, CUPE Local 375 went on strike for 12 days in August 2020. Workers went back to work after a truce agreement was signed, giving the parties seven months to conclude a deal. The union worked with the federal mediation service all this time. On April 16, the union reviewed its strike mandate with a 99.3% vote.

The union finally offered to end the overtime and weekend strike if the employees reverted to the working conditions applicable before April 9. On April 23, members of the union declared their mandate of an unlimited general strike as the employer did not show it wanted to negotiate in good faith. As we know, the minister then signalled before the general strike started that the government would be tabling legislation to force workers back to work, despite their charter right.

The minister should know, if she is speaking to both sides, that this strike can quickly come to an end without the need for legislation. The union has made it very clear that it would cease all forms of work disruption with one fair request to the employer to stop the pressure tactics and collective agreement violations.

I will read what a CUPE spokesperson had to say:

If the Maritime Employers Association (MEA) doesn't want a strike, all it has to do is let up on its pressure tactics and the union will do likewise. No overtime strike. No weekend strike. It's straightforward. We want to return to the bargaining table.... We don't want to hurt the Montreal economy. However, we do want to exercise our fundamental right to bargain collectively.

The minister, in her speech on Government Business Motion No. 5, said the following:

Our government firmly believes that the best deals are reached at the bargaining table. However, intervention is sometimes necessary when the parties are at a significant and long-standing impasse, particularly when a work stoppage is causing significant harm to Canadians. We cannot allow the situation we saw in August 2020 to repeat itself, particularly in the midst of this pandemic. If the current stoppage continues, serious accumulated and negative impacts will continue to be felt all over Canada.

Again, the minister has not provided any concrete examples or data of the direct, significant benefit to Canadians. She continues to fearmonger without concrete facts. Instead of facts and data, all I am hearing is a bunch of quotes from lobbyists about what they speculate may happen. The only relevant fact that I have heard from the government about the actual effect of the work interruption was related to the August 2020 strike. This is relevant. What happened to those ships and the supplies they were carrying? They simply got diverted to other ports.

I have no doubt, and acknowledge, that this has made for significant changes and complications to supply chains and land transportation of goods, but this is part of what happens in a strike. Given the fact that she is the labour minister, I would expect the minister to be aware of this and instead monitor the situation. Her job is not to say that the sky is going to fall and then give notice that she will revoke the charter rights of workers to strike before their strike even begins.

Back-to-work legislation is known to have lasting, negative effects. When we take away the charter rights of hundreds of people by an act of Parliament and force them back to work like this, it really affects the morale of workers. I know. I have seen it. What it also tends to do is sour the relationship between the employer and the employees.

By way of example, let us look at the track record of back-to-work legislation and providing a swift resolution to drawn-out collective agreement talks. Bill C-89, an act to provide the resumption and continuation of postal services, was passed by this same Liberal government in the House of Commons on November 24, 2018. It received royal assent two days later and came into force at noon on the following day. Here is what representatives of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers had to say about being forced back to work to help resolve the situation a whole year after being back.

Though the legislators who passed the bill may have thought it would resolve the situation, nothing is fixed, no contract is in place, and we're still working without a new collective agreement, without the right to strike, under the dangerous and unfair conditions that we were trying to deal with in negotiations.

They go on to speak very directly about the overarching problems being suffered due to the nature of back-to-work legislation.

Workers pay the price for back-to-work legislation. CUPW members worked two and a half years without new contracts, with the same old problems we were trying to solve through bargaining back in 2018.

After finally getting a contract, though imposed by an arbitrator some 400 days after the back-to-work legislation, significant issues are still not satisfactory. I suspect these will be part of the next round of bargaining next year. This type of legislation is a way of kicking the can down the road via a still drawn-out process all while taking away the employees' right to collective bargaining.

I think it is important for Canadians listening to know that it is not just Liberal governments that impose the harmful and unfair labour practice of back-to-work legislation. In fact, one could say that the Liberal government learned this tactic from the Harper Conservatives and is carrying on the torch of stripping workers of their charter right to strike. Let us have a look at back-to-work legislation by the Conservatives.

The Conservatives legislated the following groups back to work: the Air Canada Pilots Association and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the United Transportation Union.

Government Orders

• (2250)

Before I end, I do want to raise that the government has still not addressed my concern about a recent development. It is my understanding that there was a proposal put forward last evening to avoid the need for Bill C-29. While I am not privy to all the details of this proposal, I do know the employer, the union and the government were all made aware of the said proposal. This proposal would have involved a return to work, as well as the resumption of the flow of goods.

I am being told it was only the employer that objected to this proposal as a way forward. I think it would be a further injustice and shameful for the government to continue its pursuit of this motion and legislation, given the employer's unwillingness to play ball.

I call on the government to allow the workers to pursue their right to strike.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on a number of occasions throughout this debate, I have asked my NDP colleagues whether they have a threshold at which they would accept and support legislation like this.

The response received was that it was hypothetical question and they do not want to be asked hypothetical questions. This could not be further from the truth. A hypothetical would be if I presented a scenario to somebody, and then asked them what they would do if this happened or if that happened. I am not asking that.

I am asking, very simply, if they support back-to-work legislation in principle? Would they ever support it?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is the first “no” I have heard. The NDP members who are heckling me know they would never support it. I thank them, because I finally got an answer. Would the member agree with that answer?

• (2255)

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, the member asked this the last time. Once again, I support the Constitution, and I would uphold it.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is important to note the facetiousness of the question from the member for Kingston and the Islands.

If we were talking about business here and about negotiations between businesses, and in fact, we hear this all the time, we would hear that the Canadian public cannot have access. We cannot have access to the contracts that dictate the vaccines for COVID-19 because that could affect commercial negotiations. God forbid we do anything that could harm the profits of large corporations. However, when it comes to workers, we can just jump in right away to trample all over their rights and affect their ability to negotiate fair conditions of work.

The Liberals are asking us at what point we would bring in the hammer. As soon there is an answer to that question, it gets built into the corporate plan. We have seen that. We are seeing that right now with the government, which has signalled a willingness to in-

voke back-to-work legislation, directly affecting the bargaining strategy of the companies.

It is the wrong question. I object to the question in principle because it does not recognize that there is a real negotiation here. I think it is so typical of the Liberals. They recognize negotiating principles when it is about protecting corporate profit, but when it is actually about protecting workers and their—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We need time for an answer from the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague.

That Liberal member has asked, during his questions and in his speech, what the role of a parliamentarian is. I look at the role of parliamentarians as being to uphold the Constitution. I truly believe that for the minister to take away workers' rights before a strike even happens is an abuse of her role as Minister of Labour and a direct attack on our Constitution.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to ask a non-hypothetical question.

I have constituents in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove who are being negatively impacted by the labour disruption in the Port of Montreal. I have constituents who have perishable goods tied up in the port strike.

What would the member say to them? What answer would he have for them? My constituents have a right to make a living too.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, they sure do. I totally agree with the question. However, the workers have a right also. They have the right to have fair working conditions.

Would the member say it is not okay for his constituents to be out of pocket or interfered with, but that it is okay for 1,120 workers to take abuse where they work and for them to not be able to improve their working conditions?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, does the hon. member, who put forward the background of offloading essential supplies, believe we are hearing fear tactics today about the threats of the ongoing strike?

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, yes, I have been assured that even in 2020 there was an agreement to make sure those medical supplies would be unloaded, and that is even on record. I have also heard from the union that this would happen again. It would make sure that nothing would stop these medical supplies from being offloaded to make sure Canadians would be safe.

• (2300)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to see all my hon. colleagues this evening during the very important debate. I would like to inform the House I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague and friend, the member of Parliament for Alfred-Pellan.

Government Orders

The government is aware of the serious harm and potentially long-lasting effects to the Canadian economy being caused by the ongoing work stoppage at the Port of Montreal. It is also aware that the work stoppage is jeopardizing the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns. We know that Canadians need the parties to find a resolution as quickly as possible. Nothing about the collective bargaining between CUPE Local 375 and the MEA, the Maritime Employers Association, has been quick.

The parties have been negotiating the renewal of their collective agreement for approximately 30 months now. During this time, they have engaged in protracted litigation to determine which activities needed to be maintained in the event of a work stoppage, held over 100 bargaining sessions supported by federal mediators and had multiple work stoppages.

Despite this long history and the ongoing work stoppage at the Port of Montreal, the parties have been unable to resolve their differences and conclude very importantly a new collective agreement. That is why the government is left with no other choice but to introduce legislation that will end the ongoing work stoppage and prevent further disruptions, resolve all matters that are in dispute between the parties, and establish a new collective agreement.

The government does not take this decision lightly, but we must act in the best interest of Canadians and Canadian businesses. The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. Every year, it handles over 1.6 million 20-foot equivalent units and 35 million tonnes of cargo, representing approximately \$40 billion in goods. It is part of the critical economic infrastructure upon which Canadians and Canadian businesses rely.

What does all this mean for Canadians and Canadian businesses? I will explain. Even before the strike action began, there was a decrease in container volumes at the port worth \$30 million per week for the month of March 2021, as compared to the prior year. The partial work stoppage reduced port capacity by approximately 30%, representing lost cargo volumes worth an estimated \$90 million per week. The situation has deteriorated into a full work stoppage, which is now impeding the flow of approximately \$270 million per week in cargo through the port.

In addition, there are significant risks that this work stoppage will deepen the reputational harm caused by the strikes in the summer of 2020 and create ongoing uncertainty. Even before this latest work stoppage began on April 13, we saw several companies diverting their cargo from the Port of Montreal. According to Sophie Roux, vice-president at the Montreal Port Authority, several Quebec and Ontario companies, such as Olymel, Resolute Forest Products, Société des Alcools du Québec and Dollarama, started using new routes to import or export their goods and containers back in February as the end of the truce neared. Temporary diversions could easily become permanent ones, which would result in long-lasting negative effects on the port and the integrated transportation system around it.

In March, the Shipping Federation of Canada voiced its concerns that once logistics chains are reorganized around other hubs, including those in the United States, it will be difficult to reestablish

arrangements through the port. The federation believes that a port strike would have dire, long-lasting consequences.

In the wake of the parties each giving 72 hours notice for job action, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters expressed serious apprehension with the looming work stoppage. In its press release issued on April 12, the organization stated, “The uncertainty caused by this labour dispute has had financial impacts on Canadian manufacturers and exporters, and the partial strike risks hurting the sector even more.” It also noted that this work stoppage, “will further impact an already fragile manufacturing supply chain, particularly in Quebec and Ontario.” It continued that, “As governments are investing billions of dollars to restart the economy, it doesn't make any sense to allow a slowdown of operations at the Port of Montreal.”

As the stoppage continues, many sectors of the economy that depend on cargo transitioning through the port will find it difficult to function. I ask members to consider, for example, the Forest Products Association of Canada. Exporters face serious delays and increased costs to move products through other busy ports. They also indicate that it took that portion of the supply chain three months to recover from that strike.

It is reasonable to expect similar impacts this time. Prior to the beginning of this work stoppage, stakeholders in the forestry industry indicated that another work stoppage in the port would present the same significant challenges and costs for the forest industry.

● (2305)

In addition, several agri-food stakeholders have indicated that the work stoppage is damaging their ability to ship containerized agricultural products and is causing harm to Canada's reputation as a reliable exporter of agricultural products. Reputation is everything. Food producers also indicated that they had rerouted their exports to other Canadian and U.S. ports prior to the beginning of the work stoppage, something we do not want to see.

As members can see, the effects are wide ranging and the overall impact would be devastating were this work stoppage to continue, particularly as we continue to navigate the impacts of the ongoing pandemic and the associated lockdowns that have dealt such a blow to the economies around the world, including Canada's.

Back-to-work legislation is a last resort and not something this government takes lightly, but we also have a responsibility, again, to Canadians and Canadian businesses across the country. We must act in the best interests of Canadians and Canadian businesses. As the parties remain unable to come to a new collective agreement, we believe this is the best course of action. Members can rest assured we will continue to support the parties through every means possible.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about Canada's reputation.

Does he think that Canada's reputation will grow if we tell workers that the right to strike means nothing, if we ask them to keep working, if we tell them that we do not care about the employer's arbitrary decisions and that they cannot do anything about them? That would give Canada a great reputation.

What message is the government sending to workers about Canada's reputation and their right to protest arbitrary decisions made during negotiations?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, collective bargaining and collective bargaining negotiations are obviously a pillar of the country, a pillar of democracy for that matter, and this legislation is only used in exceptional circumstances. However, I would also like to add that the worst thing I would hate to see is for shipping companies to choose the Port of Long Beach or Port Newark to bring their products into North America, and then have them rerouted via rail into Canada if that is the case. I would hate to see jobs lost and our reputation for certainty for businesses. We saw it when the Suez Canal was blocked.

Ships go throughout the world and bring products everywhere, including to Canada. We must provide certainty to those shipping companies, we must provide certainty to the workers and we must provide certainty to our businesses.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have heard a couple of Liberals say this evening that they would like the parties to reach an agreement before the bill is passed. Workers have only one tool they can use when they have to stand up for fair pay or a safe workplace, and that tool is to withdraw their labour. When government takes away that right, it removes any pressure on the employer to bargain in good faith, the government takes the side of the employer.

How can the government justify this draconian action when the strike has barely begun?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would disagree with much of what the hon. member has said.

This process allows for a neutral mediation arbitrator to be appointed. Actually, if the parties could agree, the individual would be appointed by them on their joint agreement or by the minister if that is not possible. There is an arbitration process involved and many opportunities with respect to labour proceedings have occurred. Strike is not the only process to exercise an individual or worker's right.

There is an aspect of the importance of ports in Canada, which is really an essential service. They are vital for our economy and supply chains. We understand how important supply chains are across this world. The pandemic has re-emphasized that situation, and we must ensure that Canadians and Canadian businesses can continue to operate and not be disrupted in this manner.

● (2310)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend referenced the Suez Canal blockage and, yes, it was an extraordinary thing to see. Who knew there were 400-metre-long ships that could block the Suez Canal? That lasted six days.

Government Orders

I am distressed that the government has moved so quickly. The strike was provoked by the employer. It began just a couple of days ago. Certainly, the damages that are being described to our economy would be significant were the port to be closed for several weeks, but why move so fast and deny the workers their right to strike?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the two parties have been in negotiations for, I believe, over two years, or 30 months to be exact. They have been unable to reach an agreement, with very little movement shown in progress. It is imperative that the government take action when it is needed. This is something that measures that bar with respect to the Canadian economy.

We cannot allow a supply chain to be break down. We have already seen shipping companies reroute their containers to other ports. That has a negative impact for the workforce in Montreal, for workers in Canada, and it is also a negative impact for businesses with respect to our supply chain. We need to maintain that certainty. We want to work and encourage the parties to reach a new collective agreement. This will be a step in that process for them to reach a new collective agreement using a mediator/arbitrator to enter the negotiations at that level.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

I rise today to explain why our government introduced Bill C-29 to end the conflict between the Syndicat des débardeurs, or CUPE Local 375, and the Maritime Employers Association, or MEA.

I think that we would all be extremely relieved if this labour dispute were resolved rapidly and without government intervention. Canadians count on their federal government to protect the most vulnerable and help the men and women who need it most. The work stoppage is devastating for our economy, and the government has a responsibility to act on behalf of all Canadians and to make decisions based on the common good and the safety of all.

Throughout the collective bargaining between CUPE Local 375 and the MEA, we have constantly supported and encouraged the parties to reach an agreement that works for both sides. However, despite our efforts, the parties have not been able to resolve their differences.

The Port of Montreal is central to the economic well-being of Canadians from coast to coast, especially in Quebec and Ontario. The port is an essential link in the supply chain of raw materials and various products that are shipped in containers between Canada and the United States.

Government Orders

The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. Every year it handles over 1.6 million 20-foot units and 35 million tonnes of cargo, representing approximately \$40 billion in goods. It is a major entry point for essential containerized imported goods for the Quebec and Ontario markets. We are talking about construction materials, pharmaceuticals, food products and other critical goods for the pharmaceutical and food industries.

The port's competitive advantages include its proximity to central Canadian markets, efficient rail links and timely trucking operations. About 40 million consumers live within a day's drive by truck, and 70 million more can be reached in two days by train. It is estimated that the port's activities create more than 19,000 direct and indirect jobs and generate about \$2.6 billion annually in economic benefits.

During last year's strike at the Port of Montreal in August, desperate business owners in my riding called me. Alex is in construction, Marco is in the food industry, Jacques works in maintenance, Luc is in agriculture and Kathy is in metallurgy. Not only did they have to deal with the pandemic's devastating impacts on their operations, but they are now losing clients and contracts because their containers are stuck at the port as a result of the strike and they cannot fulfill their obligations to their clients.

As one business owner in my riding put it so well:

● (2315)

[*English*]

“Businesses are losing money hourly. We are on track to gaining back what we lost through the pandemic, but now we are losing clients at an uncontrollable rate. The business community is held hostage by the union and it will be devastating to the economy. The strike will wipe out all the work done to overcome COVID-19. Businesses can't absorb anymore. This is a do or die for many small businesses. I respect the union's right to strike, but what about the right of small business owners, who depend on Maritime Cargo to meet the obligations of their business and thus continue to feed their families, pay the employees and sustain our community. Businesses expect action from the government.”

It should be noted in the summer of 2020 four strikes led to costly cargo hijacking and far from the table confrontations that led to arrests. The uncertainty regarding operations at the Port of Montreal could cause long-term damage to the Canadian economy, particularly in Quebec and Ontario.

With another work stoppage, it is again containerized products, including essential goods like pharmaceuticals and other commodities such as food, forestry and metal products, that are affected. Along with this work stoppage comes the diversion of cargos by other ports, including Halifax and Saint John and the ports on the east coast of the United States. Some diversions could become permanent. This could lead to a drop in demand for related rail and truck transport services. It could also lead to continued economic damage when the conflict ends.

This is why the government is taking legislative measures that would force the parties to resume and continue their activities in the Port of Montreal, while continuing the talks at the negotiation table.

[*Translation*]

This bill, once it receives royal assent, will immediately put an end to the work stoppage and ensure the continuation of all operations at the Port of Montreal.

It will also extend the most recent collective agreement until a new one is negotiated. It also provides for the appointment of an impartial mediator-arbitrator to help both parties resolve outstanding issues. Because the impartiality of the person selected must be ensured, if both parties cannot agree on one individual, the Minister of Labour will appoint a person of her choice.

The mediator-arbitrator will have the double duty of helping the parties resolve outstanding issues through mediation or, if mediation fails and the parties are unable to agree on a new collective agreement, through an arbitration method of his or her choice. Mediation will last for 14 days, after which all outstanding matters will be decided upon by the arbitrator.

The new collective agreement that this process will result in will include the unamended provisions of the former collective agreement, every decision rendered by the arbitrator and every agreement entered into by the parties at any point in the current round of collective bargaining. Nothing in the bill precludes the parties from coming to an agreement on any topic or entering into a new collective agreement before the mediator-arbitrator renders a final decision. The mediator-arbitrator will have 90 days to conclude the arbitration process and establish a new collective agreement.

I sincerely hope that the parties will come to an agreement before we have to vote on this bill, but we cannot afford to wait. We must act now. We are really sorry that we had to table the bill, because we firmly believe that a negotiated settlement is always the best solution. However, we have a responsibility to Canadians and to businesses which drive our economy. When the consequences of a work stoppage are gravely detrimental to our country, we must act in the best interest of all.

After having exhausted all other options, we believe that this back-to-work legislation is the only one left.

Therefore, I urge all members to support this bill, because Canadians and businesses count on us to end this labour dispute.

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• (2320)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech and even to the previous speech. What I gather is that it is all about business. I did not hear the word “workers” very often in those speeches. There is not much consideration for workers. It is unfortunate since they are the ones unloading the cargo. They are the ones working in the port of Montreal.

Let us go back in time a bit and take a look at how things evolved. First, there was a unilateral change in work schedules by the employer in the midst of negotiations. That is such a good start.

Second, workers replied that if the employer was to do that, then they would go on strike because they want to maintain the quality of their work.

Third, the government threatened to pass legislation if there was to be a strike.

Fourth, the government said it would table special legislation and that such a move would help with negotiations. There has not even been a single day of strike yet.

Last night, the employer just walked away after seeing the special legislation being tabled.

Is this not a bit like bad high school theatre, and in the end—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Alfred-Pellan has the floor.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member across the way for his question.

For more than two and a half years, our government has been providing the Syndicat des débardeurs, also known as CUPE Local 375, and the Maritime Employers Association with significant support to help them come to an agreement, including 100 mediated negotiation sessions.

The Port of Montreal is essential to the economic vitality of Quebec. I know that, because many companies from Alfred-Pellan do business with the port. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that the work stoppage at the port is causing considerable and potentially lasting damage to the economy of Montreal, Quebec and Canada. It is also putting additional pressure on supply chains that are already strained due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Businesses in Laval are worried and increasingly stressed about the situation. They are already having a hard time trying to recover from the consequences of the pandemic, and now they have to deal with the issues at the Port of Montreal.

I want to be clear that we take no pleasure in bringing this bill forward.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague just forgot that the employer, which is represented by five multi-billion-dollar corporations that control a huge share of the global freight industry, violated the collective agreement four times.

This is no mere labour dispute. This is about an employer that, in bad faith, systematically violated and ripped up the collective

agreement. The government did absolutely nothing. Now that the workers, the Port of Montreal longshore workers, are trying to protect their rights, the government is taking the employer's side, deciding this has to stop and asking workers to give up their rights.

My question is very simple. When did the government inform the employer, these huge corporations, that it wanted to intervene in their favour?

• (2325)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his question.

I would like to inform him that the government strongly believes that free collective bargaining is a cornerstone of a productive working relationship between the two parties. The federal mediation and conciliation service has been working with the parties, but their inability to reach an agreement resulted in a partial work stoppage at the Port of Montreal from April 13 to 26 and an unlimited general strike since then.

I want to assure the member that the government has been there every step of the way and will continue to be there. However, we believe the government must act when all other avenues are exhausted and a labour dispute is causing significant economic harm to Canadians.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the excellent member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Like many Canadians, I am deeply troubled by the labour dispute that started at the Port of Montreal. I am especially disappointed in the Liberal government's nonchalance, considering that it had months to help the parties negotiate a solution.

This is not a first for this government, which also took its time alerting Canadians to the imminent arrival of the pandemic, closing the borders when the pandemic hit, supplying rapid tests and negotiating a stable vaccine supply. Even now, it is slow to close the borders. This Prime Minister does not have the leadership skills to manage crises well. He was slow to resolve the rail blockades, and now, a labour dispute at the Port of Montreal is forcing him to react.

I would like to help the Prime Minister understand why longshore workers are essential to our country. The Port of Montreal is vital to the Canadian economy. It has been described as the beating heart not only of Quebec but of all of eastern Canada, Ontario and Quebec.

The Port of Montreal is the second-busiest port in Canada. It handles cargo from 140 countries, serves as a logistical ecosystem for more than 63,000 businesses, and provides essential goods to more than 6,300 Quebec businesses.

These 6,300 Quebec businesses depend directly on the Port of Montreal to continue operating. We are not talking about big multinationals but about small and medium-sized businesses across Quebec that depend on operations continuing at the Port of Montreal.

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The port supports the regional and national economies. It generated \$2.6 billion in added value for the economy in 2019. Nineteen thousand people are directly or indirectly employed in handling 1.7 million containers annually.

Since 2020, almost 17 million metric tonnes of cargo have entered and left the port, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, the numbers were even more impressive. More than double that metric tonnage of cargo was handled by the Port of Montreal alone.

Let us go back a bit further. Since 2016, 12,000 ships have stopped at the port, for a total gross tonnage of \$245 million. To put that in perspective, that means that the port receives more than 2,000 ships every year, 2,500 transport trucks every day and 60 to 80 freight trains every week. It handles \$275 million in goods every day.

It does not take an expert in logistics or shipping to know that these numbers make the Port of Montreal an extremely important player in the transportation of goods and materials around the world, while contributing to the Canadian economy.

The importance of the port does not stop at the circulation of goods and materials. The port also plays a key role in welcoming cruise ships. Some 439,000 cruise ship passengers and crew members have gone through the Port of Montreal since 2016. Seventeen cruise ship companies are currently operating out of the port, and 76 international vessels visited the Port of Montreal as a port of call in 2019 alone.

The Port of Montreal's international reputation is extremely important in terms of both freight and passengers and visitors. It is clear to everyone that the Port of Montreal is an irreplaceable asset for Canada's regional and national economies.

It is not as though the Prime Minister did not foresee what might happen or was unable to prevent it. In August 2020, 1,100 port workers went on strike to protest the fact that they were working without a contract. At that time, the strike prevented the shipment of 90,000 containers and 325,000 tonnes of dry bulk. Industries like mining and forestry were particularly hard-hit by the strike. Many small businesses in my riding of Mégantic—L'Érable were negatively affected.

• (2330)

According to a recent press release from the Montreal Port Authority, the August work stoppage caused approximately \$600 million in losses over a two-month period. Fortunately, that strike ended after 19 days, when the Maritime Employers Association and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which is affiliated with the FTQ, agreed to a seven-month truce to negotiate a resolution.

That was the exact moment when the government had the opportunity to intervene. The federal government could have thrown all of its weight and influence into ensuring that the parties reached a negotiated agreement. That was when ministers should have taken an interest in what was happening at the Port of Montreal. The government should not just have sent mediators. Ministers should have gone to the Port of Montreal and met with the parties to show that they cared about the Port of Montreal's contribution to the econo-

my. However, that did not happen. The government let things go and let the parties drift apart. As a result, we are here tonight to vote on special back-to-work legislation.

Canadians cannot and should not have to suffer the disastrous consequences of the government's inability to take advantage of the seven-month truce signed last summer. This is even more true when we consider the fact that our country has been hit very hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Montreal market research firm said that the Canadian economy could lose \$10 million to \$25 million for every day that work is disrupted at the Port of Montreal. As a result of the strike last summer, \$600 million in sales was lost, 80,000 containers were not able to be processed and 20 ships were diverted to competing ports. This undermines the Port of Montreal's international reputation.

I will give an example. Canada's fertilizer industry is one of the industries at risk of once again being significantly affected by the work stoppage at the Port of Montreal. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fertilizer pass through the port during the spring planting season, which is right now. Farms across Quebec and Atlantic Canada need this fertilizer to grow the foods that make their way to grocery stores everywhere, including Thetford Mines.

After a prolonged strike, food insecurity could become a real problem in eastern Canada and across the country. This is not what we want. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chains around the world have been greatly affected. The last thing Canadians need is even more uncertainty due to a labour dispute at the Port of Montreal. Many small and medium-sized businesses have already warned that they will have to slow down production and lay off workers if the strike at the Port of Montreal continues.

The executive director of the Association du camionnage du Québec is also worried about the inevitable bottlenecks that will occur once the workers' strike is over. The docks could be filled with ships still waiting to be loaded, preventing new container ships from docking. The resulting costs would inevitably be passed on to consumers, who are already paying dearly for the inflation we are all currently experiencing, particularly when it comes to building materials and food.

We have already seen this kind of bottleneck situation in Canada, during the rail blockades that took place last year. It seems like such a long time ago, but it was just last year. Because products could not be moved from the ports of Vancouver and Halifax, ships were eventually diverted to American ports. As a result, the Canadian economy was deprived of the benefits of shipping activity in its own ports.

As I mentioned, Canadians are unfortunately already familiar with the negative impacts of disruptions caused by interruptions in supply chains.

Government Orders

Last year, the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated that the rail service disruptions cost the economy \$275 million and that businesses' profits would be \$130 million lower than usual. I am not just referring to multinationals, but also to small businesses in all regions of Canada and Quebec.

Billions of dollars in goods were delayed because of the blockades. Millions of tonnes of grain were trapped in the Prairies, and Canada's forestry sector suffered very heavy losses. It was hell. This evening, we must talk about the 2020 rail blockades to illustrate the impact that disruptions in the supply chain can have on Canada's economy and Canadians' lives.

● (2335)

It is shameful to have another labour dispute affecting our supply chain.

The strike at the Port of Montreal could and should have been prevented. As was the case with the rail blockade, this government does not understand how Canada's economy operates. It is unable to act at the right time, and it reacts when it is too late. It is obvious that a solution—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's time is up. As many members have questions and comments for the speakers, I would ask hon. members to keep their remarks short and concise.

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville has the floor.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech. I broadly agree with him on the lack of leadership, predictability and action on the part of the government, which could have solved the problem instead of lying low.

Tonight, the opposition parties have an opportunity to show some leadership and to vote for or against the legislation. Does my colleague agree that the members should vote against the legislation and dedicate themselves to resolving the dispute?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the longshoremen of the Port of Montreal, as well as the Maritime Employers Association or MEA. They are essential to our economy, and their role is more important than ever, as we are going through the difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I hope that the measures that the government puts in place tonight, which that we will support, will allow the two parties, the longshoremen and MEA, to come to an agreement. I am counting on the two parties to build the prosperity of the Port of Montreal and the whole economy associated with it in all regions of Quebec. It is important to protect the economy in all regions of Canada, Quebec and Ontario.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Does he not recognize that, since the right to strike has been recognized as a fundamental right by the Supreme Court of Canada, it is not possible to simply decide that it does not exist anymore, just because it is bothersome and has consequences for society?

If it is indeed a fundamental right and if that right allows workers to use job action to achieve a negotiated solution, we must allow free negotiation to take place and not intervene as the Liberals are doing.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, it is the Liberal government's inability to be proactive that is forcing us to pass legislation that is going to take away the workers' right to strike.

Could the government have acted sooner and differently when major problems started to arise between the parties? That much is obvious. However, the minister never showed up in Montreal to negotiate and put the pressure on. Nothing like that happened. It is because of this incompetence and extreme foot-dragging that we are here in the middle of the night about to bring in special legislation.

● (2340)

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, whenever we hear people speak tonight who favour this legislation, they make much of the fact that the negotiations between the employer and the union have gone on for years. That is not at all unusual. I remind the members here of how long our workers at the House of Commons worked without a contract: four years, and that was with us, our House of Commons management and very loyal and brave workers including our Parliamentary Protective Service officers who risked their lives to protect us on October 14, 2018.

Is the hon. member so unfamiliar with labour negotiations that he thinks it is significant that they have been negotiating for two years?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the main issue here is that the Liberals' inability to settle the dispute and help the parties come to an agreement is forcing us to bring in special legislation tonight.

The aim of this special legislation is to help not the big corporations that own the Port of Montreal but all the small businesses throughout every region of Quebec and eastern Canada, including Ontario. Food producers could be prevented from getting essential goods during a very difficult time for our economy. We are still in the middle of a pandemic, and something must be done.

I absolutely deplore the fact that the government was unable to act as an honest broker to help the parties come to an agreement before we got to this point.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his heartfelt speech.

This crisis has impacted many other workers, including in the agri-food processing sector in my riding. Over 80% of production is exported through the Port of Montreal.

We talk a lot about the workers at the port, but there are also factory workers who are being laid off because of this situation.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Beauce is quite right.

That is what I have been saying from the beginning. The labour dispute at the Port of Montreal has an impact on the economy, not only of Montreal and the surrounding area, but of all regions of Quebec, including the ridings of Beauce, Mégantic—L'Érable and Richmond—Arthabaska. These repercussions will be felt in all of our regions.

Government Orders

It is so disappointing that it has come to this. The Liberals have been incapable of doing their job. The ministers did not intervene when they should have, to the detriment of the workers at the Port of Montreal, who could have reached a negotiated settlement if only the government had taken a stand.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise in the House tonight, speaking specifically to the back-to-work legislation for the Port of Montreal. I am pleased to provide a perspective as an Ontario MP, for many of my constituents, businesses and farms that rely on the viability of the port in my part of eastern Ontario. Some parts are only an hour or two away from the port, depending on their part of the riding.

Members have heard me speak in the House several times over the course of the last few months. As a new parliamentarian coming here in the class of 2019, I am judging as constructively as I can the government's performance on numerous files. We have seen the government, and I have said this many times, talk a good game. They say the right things and they have good intentions, but unfortunately we see time and time again their ability to talk and their ability to deliver, and not just have good intentions, but good results, are not happening.

I have spoken several times in the last couple of weeks to constituents, on media interviews and in the House here on different topics, for example, on the border closures, international flights and the debacle that we saw last week. I do not need to tell members or Canadians that in that situation the government should not have been caught by surprise that countries around the world, unfortunately, during COVID-19 would become hot spots or have outbreaks. The situation in India and Pakistan has been terrible, but the government was caught totally flat-footed, and here we are having to react, or they reacted very late to that.

I look at the debate we had on medical assistance in dying, trying to respond to the court ruling in Quebec. Constant extensions and delays were happening, because, I believe, and I think many Canadians believe, the government was talking but not actually delivering, following through or checking things off.

We find ourselves in the same situation here now with the Port of Montreal. The government has failed to bring both parties together to get a resolution. This bill tonight is not something to celebrate or be happy about. This is the result of a failure and a lack of leadership on the part of the federal government.

I want to bring context here tonight of why this matters economically. Many people, maybe those who are not familiar with the Port of Montreal, think it benefits the city of Montreal or maybe some neighbouring communities, but it is a lot more than that. It is the second-busiest port in Canada. There are 140 countries that use the Port of Montreal as a gateway into Canada, and we use that to export around the world. There are 40 million tonnes of cargo, and to put that into context that is 88 billion pounds of cargo, that go through the Port of Montreal every year. It affects every facet of our economy and our well-being. It sees 2,500 trucks a day, 60 to 80 trains a week, \$2.6 billion in economic benefit, \$250 million in tax revenue, and, here is an important part, 19,000 direct and indirect

jobs, many of them well-paying union jobs, which is nothing short of a great thing.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time we are dealing with a strike. Back in August 2020, we were in a similar situation for 19 days. We saw what happens. We saw the economic damage it created across the country, the ripple effects and the months it took to get caught up. We also have a problem when it comes to the reputation of reliability at the Port of Montreal, which is important for the employer, the union, thousands of businesses and tens of thousands of workers in this country.

I had the opportunity to speak, and my staff did as well, today to people in Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry to get a local impact, but I also know, and I talked to, many colleagues across Ontario. I was speaking, and my team was, with the economic development officer, Bob Peters, from the City of Cornwall. As members may know, I am very proud of my riding and the many businesses that are there. Cornwall is one of three major supply chain hubs in Canada serving the bulk of central Ontario, Quebec and eastern Canada. We are very proud of that. We have thousands of job in Cornwall and in our riding alone that rely on a viable and reliable Port of Montreal in operation.

● (2345)

I think of the issue with the Suez Canal a few weeks ago and the issues that happened when the supply chains were blocked there. The massive economic impact, the ripple effect that it had, was very devastating to many parts of the world. Just-in-time deliveries and reliability matter, not just for those directly in the port but going through that supply chain. It matters, not just to jobs at the port but to jobs across this country.

I think of Laframboise in my riding as well. As a local manufacturer and supplier, it relies on moving products. Benson Auto Parts, proud from the city of Cornwall, founded and originated and grown from there, relies on the Port of Montreal to import its products and to support its staff and its revenues. I do not need to remind this House, and of course all Canadians, that now is not an opportune time to put another economic strain on those supply chains and on our businesses in this country.

Another good friend we were speaking to today was my friend Jim Wert, not only the mayor of the Township of North Stormont but also a very well-respected farmer in our region and beyond, across the province. Jim was reporting that what we have seen, with the threat of closure and now the closure at the Port of Montreal, has already caused a spike in commodity pricing and it has a big effect on agricultural operations. That is not just the case in Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I see my colleague behind me from Saskatchewan and I know there are impacts there as well. It ripples right across the country and affects agricultural operations.

Government Orders

This time of the year is a key time for our farmers. There are extremely time-sensitive deliveries that need to get to our farms in planting season, including potash, urea and phosphorous. We cannot have that come in two, three or four months later. We cannot have that being unreliable. Not only does that affect commodity prices on a large scale, but it could cripple and wipe out planting season in many parts of this country.

Beyond my riding, we can look at CN Rail and how it uses the port. There are auto companies like Pfaff Auto in Concord, just north of the 400 and 407 in the GTA. Northern Transformer provides a hundred jobs in Maple, Ontario in that same region. If they cannot get products, if they cannot get what they need through regular deliveries from the Port of Montreal, we could be seeing temporary job losses at a time when our economy cannot sustain that.

It is unfortunate that it has come to this. Already, with just the word of the closure of the port and the stoppage at the port, there has been a 10% drop in shipping volumes. They have gone elsewhere: New York, New Jersey and Norfolk, Virginia. We cannot be seen, at the Port of Montreal, as a country and as an economy that is unreliable.

I want to give credit to my colleagues here on the Conservative side, to our leader and our shadow minister for labour. I think they showed great leadership tonight. There was an amendment that came through the NDP that was supported both by members of the union and labour leaders, and by businesses as well. Our leader listened to both sides for supporting an amendment. Unfortunately, we have to deal with this, and we are supporting back-to-work legislation because it is necessary for our economy.

I close here tonight with my message to union workers and all workers in this country, the tens of thousands who rely on the port being reliable and viable in getting their product. We cannot afford a prolonged work stoppage, and we cannot afford to see those great union jobs at the Port of Montreal be lost because shipping routes and operations change to other ports. I am sorry that the government has not acted in a way that would bring a deal. It is unfortunate that this legislation is before us, but tonight they have seen us support a reasonable amendment in an effort to get the best piece of legislation to get those workers back on the job and to make sure that the bright future at the Port of Montreal is realized, both in the short and long term.

I appreciate the opportunity. As always, I look forward to the comments and questions from my colleagues.

• (2350)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about something the member said.

What I understood from his remarks is that the economy is important—I am not denying that—and that it cannot be shut down. Also, in order to keep our economy moving, workers cannot have the right to strike, nor can they resort to job action. Basically, the workers are being asked to put up with their working conditions.

At the same time, he says he believes in free negotiations. Does my colleague not see the inconsistencies in his speech?

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it gives me the opportunity to reiterate that this is not an ideal situation we are in. The message, as I concluded there, for the union workers in this country is that we need to make sure that not just for those at the port but for tens of thousands of union jobs that rely on that port being open and being known as a reliable place to bring products in and out, we need to have that strengthened and we need to have it up and operational in our country.

It is a positive in the long run for the union to be seeing that. It is very unfortunate that we are in this situation. It is a begrudging situation and a begrudging vote that we have to make, but it is in the best interest of the union in the long run for us to have a viable port.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are gaslighting working people. We just heard from the member celebrating good union jobs. We heard this legislation is key to protecting union jobs. My goodness, let us respect what the workers of the Port of Montreal are saying themselves, the processes they have undertaken over a number of years to bargain collectively and fairly.

We heard the Conservative leader go on about the working class. Well, this is the test. Their support of back-to-work legislation is taking the side of the employer against union jobs, against working people. Why are the Conservatives trying to mislead Canadians, when their actions speak for themselves? They are on the side of the bosses, instead of standing up for the port workers in Montreal and instead of standing up for working people in this country.

• (2355)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to speak to the member from Manitoba and the NDP yet in this COVID world, but I think this is the first time I have been accused of gaslighting, for those who know my style. I certainly hope my speech did not reflect that whatsoever. The approach we are taking is not pro-business or pro-union; it is pro-Port of Montreal, and that includes a win for both the union workers, the management and the economy of this country.

I appreciate the member's raising those points, as it gives me the opportunity to talk about the respectful, rational leadership the Leader of the Opposition and my colleagues showed tonight by supporting an amendment that was desired by labour leaders and supported by those on both sides of labour and business. That is a mature, professional approach that is far from gaslighting.

We want a strong economy and strong union jobs in this country. The approach we are taking is one I am proud of.

Government Orders

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague had great comments about the importance of the supply chain and the jobs, and the impacts this would have across the country, the grand scale of the things that are hinging on this situation. He also mentioned a few folks from his riding. I am wondering if he would have any more comments on some of the concerns he has heard from those in his riding who are obviously watching this very closely.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, maybe I should put an asterisk on what I was saying about supporting union jobs. I support union jobs being here in Canada, not union jobs moving to New York, New Jersey or Norfolk, Virginia. If there is no access to the Port of Montreal and it could be seen as being unreliable, jobs and operations would be permanently shifted to the United States or other areas. We do not want to see that.

When we talk about this, it is a balanced and reasonable approach of what we have seen through the amendment here tonight and the vote on the final piece of legislation. We can balance those factors out. Again, I am disappointed we are in this situation. I know there are many anxious business owners and farmers in my riding, across the province of Ontario and frankly across this country who are waiting to see the outcome of this legislation and to get things opened up at a time when our economy cannot take many more hits.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Joliette.

I sit here and wonder what we are doing here tonight. Why exactly are we here, when the Prime Minister has had all day to do what needs to be done?

Despite the late hour, the Bloc Québécois will not give up, nor will I, when faced with the absolute necessity of denouncing the government's intention to pass special legislation forcing workers back to work at the Port of Montreal.

Binding back-to-work legislation is an affront, but binding back-to-work legislation passed under a gag order is a double affront.

As our leader, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, clearly stated earlier today, there is a way out. A fair outcome under the circumstances is not only desirable, it is within reach for the Prime Minister. He still has a few hours left.

Through its many interventions, the Bloc Québécois has laid out all the pieces of the puzzle next to each other. The Prime Minister has to set his misplaced ego aside and simply put the pieces together. He spent time addressing the economic problems stemming from the strained labour relations at the Port of Montreal. He addressed it through special legislation that should only be used as a last resort, but it is not too late to do the right thing. The Prime Minister still has a few hours to act like a head of state and live up to his responsibilities.

The indecency of introducing such a bill speaks to a number of things, starting with the fact that an equitable alternative solution is within reach. It should be noted that the right to strike is recog-

nized, protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, by the Constitution and reiterated by the Supreme Court.

Imposing special legislation is completely unacceptable. Our leader confirmed this morning that the union had clearly stated in writing that the employees would go back to work tomorrow if management retracts its unilateral change to workers' schedules.

Earlier today, in question period, it was no surprise that the Prime Minister refused to confirm that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour had stated in writing that the unilateral change made by the employer on April 9 to the 2013 collective agreement would be prohibited by the provisions of the special legislation. It leads us to wonder whether this amendment would be allowed under the provisions of the labour code.

Would it not be easy to pick up the telephone, call the employer and ask it to back down on the unilateral change? It is even more necessary given that the union has agreed to return to work in a few hours, tomorrow morning, and to continue bargaining if the Montreal port authority agrees to reverse the unilateral measure imposed on April 9. Why not do this? Why is the Prime Minister not upset with the employer's action taken on April 9, but is upset with the workers' action? After all, unilaterally changing working conditions, namely the scheduling, during bargaining is just not done.

Every day that the Prime Minister's pride prevails costs the Quebec economy up to \$25 million. It took some nerve to say earlier today, in question period, that the mediation and arbitration process would be impartial. Really now.

I am saying this because the union asked the employer about what it made of the statement by the member for Mount Royal. The union told the employer that it understood that unilateral changes to scheduling could not be made under special legislation and told it what this means in light of the labour code provisions. The employer answered that it would reply after the special legislation was passed. Who really believes that it will be impartial and neutral? We should not be taken for fools.

The government's actions confirm that it is condoning the employer's strategy, which is to leave the bargaining table. It leads us to believe that strings were already being pulled in advance. The Government of Quebec wants the 1,500 Port of Montreal workers to go back to work. Quebec regions and many of the province's economic stakeholders want the dispute to be resolved. For their part, workers want to work. They do not want to be on strike.

● (2400)

The union understands what is at stake with the economy and the impact labour disputes can have. To claim otherwise is to show contempt for the labour movement and for all unionized workers, regardless of what field they are in.

Government Orders

Every member who is still here at this late hour tonight needs to understand that many hours of precious time have slipped by since Michel Murray explained that work would resume if the employer would go back on its unilateral change to work schedules. A few hours have already been wasted.

The federal government's actions, decisions and approaches do not support the legal framework surrounding labour law. Bill C-29 destroys that framework. The right to negotiate and the right to strike are linked. The right to strike is inherent to the right to negotiate because, without the threat of a strike, there is sometimes no power to negotiate and no way to come to an agreement. These are fundamental rights recognized in the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization, the Canadian Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This special legislation is a back-to-work bill. By choosing to take this approach to the current dispute, the government is turning a blind eye to the very principle of those rights. According to the Canadian Union of Public Employees, this special legislation is basically an affront to all Canadian workers. I would like to add that we are right to be concerned about this legislation being imposed, because a clear solution was identified to get employees back to work as of tomorrow without compromising the negotiation process.

The points of negotiation do not need to be analyzed and dissected here by me, the Prime Minister or the government. What is worrisome is how recklessly the Prime Minister is using this process to force the hand of the parties in question. The demands of the union are not excessive or unreasonable. My colleagues have talked about them.

In the column he wrote in *Le Devoir* in August 2020, Professor Soares aptly contrasts the human needs that employees are seeking to fulfill, such as work-life balance through more predictable schedules, with the employer's desire to maintain the status quo. Workers' rights were won one step at a time by people who had the courage to stand up and demand that their rights be respected, that they be able to live and work safely and in dignity. The labour movement was built one gain at a time, and these gains were hard won from the government and the most powerful players in the world.

The Prime Minister claims to believe in bargaining. He claims to have exhausted all options. However, he has absolutely no problem violating workers' rights and making the choice to support an employer that unilaterally made changes to a collective agreement. The agreement may have been expired, but it is still in force during the negotiation period. He should be relieved that our leader, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, has been willing to co-operate and work diligently on this issue these past 24 hours.

If the Prime Minister is so worried about Quebec's economy, about Quebec's workers, about their rights, about the principles of bargaining and all that, why is he not being fair and responsible? Why is he not acting like the leader of a country?

Let us recap: Was he concerned about Quebec farmers in 2019, when the Premier of Quebec, the Union des producteurs agricoles and others were asking for special legislation during the conflict be-

tween Canadian National and the Teamsters union? With regard to the urgent need to supply propane to the farmers and ranchers of Quebec, what answer did he give?

The Minister of Transportation at the time said the government was convinced that the best and fastest way to resolve the issue was for both sides to continue to negotiate collectively, and that it was prepared to help. That is what needs to be done.

The present case has to do with an employer that just got what it wanted handed to it on a silver platter. When working men and women exercise their right to strike, they do not do so for pleasure. They do not like to strike. The right to strike is not some walk in the park that can be taken away at the whim of elected officials with special legislation.

• (2405)

So much for a progressive party and a progressive Prime Minister. With its approach, the government is sending a clear message to unionized workers in Canada: their right to strike, which is their main pressure tactic when negotiations grind to a halt and which is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, has just been voluntarily eroded by the state.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the member from the Bloc Québécois outline again how the Government of Canada has infringed upon the rights of these Canadian workers? I need a little clarification there.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The government is eroding workers' rights by preventing them from exercising those rights. This is not the first time. I would like to point out that, in 2018, the government did the same thing to the postal workers' union. Workers were not even allowed to strike.

Employees participated in rotating strikes, and the government immediately passed special legislation forcing them back to work. Every time a group wants to exercise its rights, Parliament decides to pass a bill like this to prevent them from striking.

• (2410)

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I rise tonight in the House to oppose back-to-work legislation for workers at the Port of Montreal, I want to give a shout-out to my brothers and sisters in Local 2034 of the IBEW in Manitoba who work at Manitoba Hydro. They have been on strike for weeks, and there is no doubt that the Conservative government here has had its thumb on the scales.

Government Orders

As I watch the Conservatives get up and shed crocodile tears over this legislation, I cannot help but remember the record of the previous Conservative government and current Conservative governments across the country, like the one in Manitoba that is interfering with bargaining at Manitoba Hydro. It has tried to legislate its way out of collective bargaining in the public service and declared war on health bargaining units in Manitoba.

On behalf of working people the country over who are watching tonight, I will say to the Conservatives who have been getting up and doing their song and dance that we are not buying it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. That was not so much a question as a comment.

As he said, the right to strike is guaranteed by the courts and is a fundamental freedom that cannot be taken away except in cases of extreme necessity. In this case and in the cases the member mentioned, it seems the government wanted to systematically shut down workers' right to strike. That is inconceivable, unacceptable and irresponsible. It violates people's right to bargain freely.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I completely agree with everything she said.

I only have one question: What can we do now to help the longshoremen in spite of this terrible special legislation?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her question.

This morning, the member for Beloeil—Chambly proposed a solution that was so simple that I wonder why no one had thought of it before. The union's hands are tied. The government could simply reach out to the management side. With this special legislation, the government is siding with management. That is exactly what it is doing, and it is upsetting the balance that allows for collective bargaining.

A solution was available, and still is. The Prime Minister could make a phone call. We are here at this late hour to fight for the workers at the Port of Montreal. The Prime Minister could pick up the phone and propose this incredibly simple solution.

Where is he tonight?

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

I have a question for my hon. colleague. She took the words right out of my mouth because I too am appalled by everything we have seen and heard over the past few hours.

Does she agree that the leader of the Bloc Québécois was once again the voice of reason and that we, as parliamentarians, should listen to the relevant propositions and act accordingly to salvage the current situation at the Port of Montreal?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

When negotiations get tough, the Prime Minister's Office should step in. We have a Prime Minister who did not act and could not

pick up the phone. As for the member for Beloeil—Chambly, he did phone Mr. Murray and really listened to what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour had to say.

The solution is there, on the table, readily available. All the Prime Minister has to do is reach out. No special legislation is needed.

• (2415)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the longshoremen have been without a collective agreement for 850 days, and during all that time, there was no involvement by the government, who has been dragging its feet from the start only to introduce special legislation. In the end, what is the government saying? It is telling the boss that he does not need to negotiate anymore, that he can let things drag on, because the government is going to pass legislation, as usual.

They do not care about labour law or free bargaining. The Liberal Party caters to the bosses. We know that.

When there is no negotiated settlement, and the government imposes its special legislation, the work environment suffers greatly. Tensions remain and are amplified. Nothing is solved.

Since 1990, Ottawa has passed no fewer than 15 pieces of back-to-work special legislation, including the one before us today. On average, that is one piece of special legislation every two years. The last one targeted the postal workers in 2018. I remember well.

In Ottawa, special legislation that takes away workers' rights has become the norm rather than the exception. Legal experts Renée-Claude Drouin and Gilles Trudeau have indicated that this situation is pernicious because it essentially denies certain categories of workers the right to strike and can also turn what should be an exceptional situation into a permanent solution. That is what we are seeing tonight.

Dockworkers are well aware of the seriousness of the situation caused by the pandemic. They have been putting off their option to strike for months. This has been going on for 850 days. The employer did not negotiate and cannot even agree with itself. That makes it rather difficult to negotiate with another party.

The government did not do anything either. It saw that things were not progressing, but it washed its hands of the situation. What is worse, the government made it clear that, as soon as the workers went on strike, special legislation would be passed under a gag order. In short, the government made it clear to the employer that there was no need to negotiate because big daddy Ottawa would step in with legislation. The Liberal Party supports employers.

The Liberals essentially told the employer to keep stalling if it was not getting what it wanted because they would step in and save the employer's skin once again, as they do every two years.

As we all know, the worst part is that the longshoremen did not even want to go on strike. They did it in response to the employer's attacks on scheduling. Those attacks were intended to compel its buddy Ottawa to pass its special anti-worker legislation with its undemocratic gag order. The Liberal Party caters to employers.

As we know, the government could still have stopped the strike today even faster than using legislation, simply by stepping in and asking management to stop using those measures, since the employer will have to stop anyway. The longshoremen would have called off the strike immediately. Their strike is a response to the attacks from management.

The government had all the cards it needed to stop the job action and send the longshoremen and management back to the bargaining table, but it wanted special legislation instead. It still prefers to send the message that it is there to save the bosses' butts. That is what it means to be a party that caters to employers.

This bill represents a fresh setback for workers' rights. The Canada Labour Code is already an antiquated farce worthy of a Dickens or London novel. To this day, in 2021, it still allows the use of scabs. The Liberal Party claims to be progressive. Progressive, my foot.

The Liberal Party and its government are siding with the bosses and the big banks, not regular folks. We must not be fooled by their nice-sounding speeches and their cool attitude. It is a party that caters to big business.

No, we do not want a strike. The public, Quebec, union members, everyone wants the work to resume. There was no need to get to this point, but the government let the situation deteriorate. How irresponsible, as usual. Even today, there was an option that would have allowed for free bargaining. The government could have taken action, but it did not. How irresponsible. This government prefers to drag its feet until its soles wear out, rather than take action.

Let us briefly review labour law together. Even though, in this case, the government had all the cards to prevent a strike and keep negotiations going, the right to strike is a fundamental right. It is entrenched in labour law. It has even been recognized by the Supreme Court. In a ruling, the court recognized that the right to collective bargaining is a constitutional right, writing that section 2(d) prevents the state from substantially interfering with the ability of a union to exert meaningful influence over working conditions through a process of collective bargaining.

In another ruling, it even gave the right to strike constitutional benediction as an essential part of a meaningful collective bargaining process.

A judge even wrote that “[t]he right to strike is not merely derivative of collective bargaining, it is an indispensable component of that right. It seems to me to be the time to give this conclusion constitutional benediction.” A Supreme Court justice said that. She also said that it “is an indispensable component of collective bargaining.” That is not nothing.

By imposing closure on the legislation, the government summarily discarded the entire process for bargaining working conditions.

● (2420)

According to Pierre Trudel, a law professor at the Université de Montréal, the right to strike is the “irreducible minimum”. Canada has a court, a charter and a constitution that its government is not even able to obey. What contempt for the fundamental rights of

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workers. What a terrible day, what a terrible night today is for their rights.

The minister is taking the side of management while reminding us that she is the daughter of a union member. What a betrayal.

To come back to Mr. Trudel, he also writes, “The Court added that the international human rights instruments to which Canada is a party also require the protection of the right to strike as part of a meaningful process of collective bargaining.” Economic repercussions are not an argument for infringing on the right to strike. On that topic, the Committee on Freedom of Association, the wing of the International Labour Organization that interprets conventions pertaining to freedoms, has stated that even if the right to strike has an economic impact, that right has to be upheld. It is an international convention.

Today, the government has once more chosen to sacrifice the higher goal of economic and social peace. What great statesmanship on the part of the Liberals. It would seem that the federal government is quick to renege on its own international commitments when it is in its interest to do so. What is the value of federal commitments? This is how we can estimate their true value. It is the party of big business.

The highest court in the land recognizes the importance of workers' right to strike. In addition, Canada is a party to the International Labour Organization conventions that also recognize the fundamental nature of this right. However, the Liberal government is suppressing this right through special legislation to be passed under a gag order while declaring itself to be progressive. For goodness' sake. Clearly, its words and deeds are not lining up at all. Progressive, my foot. Everyone in the business world knows that it is thanks to the balance of power that each party makes concessions in order to negotiate working conditions.

Both parties lose during a lockout or strike, which exerts pressure and forces the parties to sit at the table to find a compromise and negotiate an agreement. However, the threat of special legislation disrupts this balance of power and sends management the message that it no longer needs to negotiate in good faith. This destroys the entire bargaining process between the employer and the union.

Management knew that the government was going to do this, so why would it bother negotiating seriously, with both sides giving up certain conditions in order to reach a compromise? Why would it do that, knowing that the government was going to play the card that would give it a leg up? The strike is unquestionably having a major impact on Quebec's economy. No one is denying that. However, I remind members that the government could have gotten involved during the negotiations so that they could keep moving forward without the need for a strike. The government did the opposite. There have been 850 days of negotiation, during which the government did nothing but drag its feet until its soles wore out.

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The Bloc Québécois supports the dockworkers' demands and their fundamental right to freely negotiate their working conditions. We always stood with workers and we always will. The Bloc Québécois is denouncing the passage, under a gag order, of this special legislation that takes away the dockworkers' right to a negotiated collective agreement, in spite of there being other alternatives. Labour law sets the framework within which parties can exercise their negotiating leverage in a legitimate and legal manner. Failing to respect the workers' rights is making a mockery of a fundamental institution designed to ensure social and economic peace. That is what tonight's debate is about. The government's decision to ram this legislation through under a gag order is once again shaking the cornerstones of our society. We are wholeheartedly denouncing this situation.

What a way to act. What contempt for our people. I am ashamed of being in the House tonight and seeing the government act this way. What a disgrace.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague kept referencing in his speech that it has been 850 days without a contract. A manufacturer in my riding twice now has been extremely affected by this and is talking about its losses being as high as 25%.

Why does the member think that the Liberals always choose to delay and ignore the issue until it gets to the point we are at here today?

• (2425)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I have the answer to that question.

To be able to act, to step up to the plate, to be proactive, to settle a dispute during the first few days instead of waiting until the last second to bring in special legislation, it takes guts and it takes a spine, two things the Prime Minister lacks. The Prime Minister let the situation deteriorate and ended up bringing in back-to-work legislation. What a terrible message to send. This government and this Prime Minister are utterly devoid of courage.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier I heard a Liberal comment that he felt that businesses were being held hostage by the unions. Could this perhaps be better characterized as businesses being held hostage by an intransigent port employer? It seems that is what is really happening here and the government is taking the wrong side.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment.

As he says, it is not the unionized workers who are holding the entire economy hostage. Yes, there are some major implications. The economic consequences of a strike at the Port of Montreal are terrible for all sectors of the economy. However, for 850 days, the employer never showed up for negotiations. In particular, my whole point is that the Prime Minister and his ministers did not contact the

employer to say that it was in a key and crucial sector and it had to negotiate.

This is not about salaries; it is about schedules. I cannot believe that a scheduling issue could not be settled after 850 days. The Prime Minister and his ministers need to get a move on and settle the situation by putting pressure on the employer to negotiate. What are they doing? They are always doing the worst possible thing, dragging their feet and then imposing special legislation. It is appalling.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Joliette expressed the frustration that we are all feeling over this situation. In his speech, he talked about the issue of work schedules. Essentially, what the workers want are better work schedules.

I am told that every day, the dock workers at the Port of Montreal have to call in between 6 p.m. and midnight to find out whether they have to go to work the next day. They have to do that 19 days in a row. Every day, they arrive home unsure whether they are working the next day or not. They are always waiting. They cannot make appointments with their doctor, their accountant or their mechanic. They cannot make any plans. They do not even know if they can attend their children's birthday parties.

How can a person plan their life when they have to be fully available to work 19 days out of 21, 24 hours a day, never knowing what to expect?

How can a person provide their family with quality of life, especially when there is no way of knowing whether the two days of guaranteed leave after 19 days of work will fall on weekdays or the weekend?

Under such circumstances, would my colleague from Joliette also want to go on strike?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères for his question and comment.

Those are indeed very tough conditions. How is anyone supposed to balance work life and family life or have any life at all outside of work under those conditions?

These demands are perfectly legitimate. Obviously the port has its considerations, and that is what bargaining is for. In order for bargaining to happen, both parties need to sit down and talk and exchange their points of view. However, if one party knows from the outset that Ottawa is going to put together special legislation, that it does not need to negotiate or compromise and that it can ignore the law with impunity, why would it bother to participate in negotiations?

• (2430)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

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At the heart of this back-to-work legislation today is the issue around workers' rights. The right of workers to free collective bargaining and the right to strike are rights guaranteed in law.

Since we are talking about workers' right tonight, it would be appropriate for me to note that today is also the National Day of Mourning in remembrance of workers who were injured or killed on the job. It is essential that employers ensure their workers have a safe work environment. It is especially important at this time, in the middle of a pandemic, when so many workers are risking their lives, whether they are health care workers, cashiers at grocery stores, bus drivers or teachers. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to them and, as part of that appreciation, I will recommit myself to continue to fight to ensure that every single worker in the country has the protection of paid sick leave and that the federal government delivers on this important measure for the protection all of them.

As we are talking about workers' rights, tonight I was listening to the minister's justification on this back-to-work legislation. At one point, the minister actually said that she was not taking sides, that she brought forward this legislation with a heavy heart. Somehow the minister appears to be completely oblivious to the fact that the minute she indicated the government would bring in back-to-work legislation, she took a side. She sided with the employer over the rights of the workers and with that action, she tipped the scale toward the employer in the bargaining process. Gone is the process for free collective bargaining. That is what the minister did when she indicated that the government would bring in back-to-work legislation.

The government is saying that it does not want to do this, but the reality is that it is doing it. It is ignoring the rights of the workers. It will justify this with all kinds of excuses, but let us be clear about what is happening. The unions have expressly said that there would be no job action if the employer walked back on the unilateral decision to change their work schedule. My question for the government is this. Why did it not tell the employer to honour the workers and not change their working conditions and job security provisions? That is in their collective agreement.

When the employer announced that it would not honour the workers' job security provisions, that is when things went off. When it took the unilateral decision to make changes to the workers' schedules, that is when things went off. Instead of telling the employer that it was not appropriate and that it must negotiate fairly at the bargaining table about scheduling, job security and other measures within the collective agreement, the government made a decision to tip the scale by indicating it would bring in back-to-work legislation. That is why we are here tonight. By doing this, the Liberals are sending a clear message to all workers that the government does not have their backs, and it does not. That is where we are at this moment in time.

• (2435)

I have heard members say that this job action from the unions would impact the flow of medical supplies and equipment. The union has also indicated that there is extensive essential service order in place by the Canada Industrial Relations Board and that its members have always abided by that order. That is to say that the

workers would not disrupt the delivery of essential service orders involving medical supplies and equipment. That is an important piece for us all to note.

I want Canadians who are watching this debate to also know that this debate is not about money. In fact, the union has indicated that many of its workers are younger workers and many of them are women. I have been advised that a quarter of them are women now. What they are seeking are changes to the work conditions that will ensure a better work/life balance.

If anything, this pandemic has really brought to light for all of us the importance of family, of our loved ones and to ensure that while we work, we have a safe work environment that we can go home to and balance all of these things. Those are the basic things that every single worker wants. Those are the things I know I want for myself as well and for the people I love. That is what these workers are fighting for at the bargaining table.

To negotiate all of that, we need to ensure their rights are respected, to ensure that their right for free collective bargaining is protected. However, the government undermined all of that with this back-to-work legislation. What is even more worrisome is that after all of this the government might think it has solved the problem somehow, but it has not thought ahead of what it will mean down the road with respect to the working relationship between the workers and the employer, and the requirement and need to ensure there are good relations going forward.

By undermining their collective bargaining rights, in many ways we are helping to poison the well, and that is not good for anyone. That is not good for the workers and not good for the employer. It is actually in the best interest of the Canadian government to step away. There is still time. The government can say that this is not the right path forward, that it is going to withdraw the bill. It can still do that.

That is what I find so dismaying. The government wants to pretend that it is friends with workers, that it will honour the rights of workers and then in a heartbeat it brings in back-to-work legislation. That back-to-work legislation will strip workers of their rights, their basic, fundamental rights, which is enshrined in law.

I come from British Columbia and, sadly, we have a sad history of a government that violated the rights of workers over and over again. I remember the situation with health care workers and teachers where the government brought in around-the-clock debates that stripped the teachers and health care workers of their basic rights, the basic right to collective bargaining.

The unions brought the B.C. Liberal government to court and won in both instances, in the legislation against the teachers and against the health care workers. If there is a lesson to be learned here, it is this. We must respect the rights of workers. We must honour them. In this instance, bringing in back-to-work legislation in the manner in which the government has done is so wrong and it is not helpful. The government may want to fool itself by saying it is helpful, but it is not. It cannot say in the same breath that it is somehow friends, allies and supporters of labour while doing this. I actually remember—

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• (2440)

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time for this portion of the speech.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks.

Those in favour of heavy-handed back-to-work legislation often claim that it will improve the social climate. I think the opposite is true.

Ensuring peace requires balance, and workers, along with unions, play a major role in social justice and balance.

How can the government justify saying that this special legislation will ensure a balance of power between the parties?

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct to say that bringing in back-to-work legislation has ramifications beyond this moment in time. As I indicated earlier, it poisons the well going forward; it is not a good path forward.

On Labour Day, the Prime Minister released a message saying, “And thanks to the hard work and advocacy of unions, we’ve taken action to protect collective bargaining rights.”

However, here we are at this moment in time. The Prime Minister and the Liberal government are not respecting collective bargaining rights. They are not respecting the workers. They are not respecting labour. It is such a shame. The government needs to reflect on that, and withdraw this bill tonight.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals talk about protecting the middle class, and these are middle-class workers.

With the number of times the Liberals and Conservatives have forced workers back to work through back-to-work legislation, eroding the right to strike, does the member agree that collective bargaining and the constitutional right to strike is being dangerously eroded, and maybe permanently eroded, through this type of action?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the Liberals and the Conservatives are much more alike than one would think.

At every single turn, we have witnessed the Liberal government bringing in back-to-work legislation. Even in my short time around the House of Commons, we have seen this. The postal workers are an example, when we went well into the night debating that back-to-work legislation. Before that, we saw examples in the Harper administration and the Conservatives.

Every time government takes these actions, it sends a clear signal to the workers that their rights could be done away with in a heartbeat, that they will be stripped of their basic rights enshrined in law. The member is absolutely correct in saying that every time the gov-

ernment takes this action, it is stripping workers' rights that have been enshrined in law.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Vancouver East knows first-hand, as a member of the legislative assembly in British Columbia, what happened when the B.C. Liberals took power in B.C., and how they devastated collective organizing and union and labour rights in that province.

Could the member comment on what the danger is when a government, like the federal Liberal government or the B.C. provincial Liberal government, runs roughshod over basic human rights, like labour rights and the right to collective bargaining?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, there were ramifications when the Liberals were in government in B.C. for 16 years. They stripped workers of their rights, particularly in the Hospital Employees' Union, or HEU, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. It was devastating for the community.

I will use the example of the HEU. When the then B.C. government came in, it relegated many of the workers to dangerous work situations. Many of them worked in long-term care facilities and health care facilities. As a result of that, they had to work multiple jobs, which has proven to be a major problem during the pandemic. Thank goodness for the B.C. NDP government that came in. It overturned legislation, tried to restore some of the workers' rights in the system and protected the workers, long-term care facilities and health care facilities with various measures.

Those are the ramifications that could happen in real life with a government that does not honour the rights of workers. In this instance, the government is doing exactly that. It is not honouring the rights of the workers at the Port of Montreal.

The government should do what is right. It should do what it says it is committed to doing and step away from this legislation.

• (2445)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I am speaking from the traditional territory of the Qayqayt first nation.

Like many of my colleagues, I, too, would like to acknowledge this sad International Workers' Memorial Day, which recognizes workers who have been killed or injured on the job. As members know, Canada lost nearly 1,000 workers over the past year because of a lack of workplace health and safety. Unfortunately, that is the exact date on which the government chose to impose a gag order and violate collective agreements and every union right in Canada.

This government claims to support workers. However, earlier today, it imposed a gag order and introduced the disastrous Bill C-29, which puts an end to a collective agreement and the collective bargaining process that is so important to our democracy. That is extremely sad.

It is important to note how the government acted today. It just rewarded an employer or a negotiator that represents huge shipping companies worth billions and billions of dollars and that has been acting in bad faith for many months and years. Today, the Liberals rewarded this multi-billionaire employer that is seeking to trample on the rights of unionized workers at the Port of Montreal.

Montreal dock workers are part of CUPE Local 375, and they have been negotiating in good faith for years. I want to send them this message: We stand in solidarity with them, and we are proving it tonight. We have done that all day during the debates, particularly by making an amendment to Bill C-29 and by trying to have the gag order imposed by the government lifted. We are there for dock workers and their families.

We understand their concerns about health and safety in the workplace and their desire to have legitimate working conditions and a collective agreement that is respected. For the past several days, the government has been trying to trample on their rights and tear up that collective agreement. The NDP is there in solidarity with them.

What the government just did is appalling. We will not stand for it. Surely in the next election voters will let the Liberal and Conservative members know what they think, given that the two main parties are voting tonight to trample on the rights of unions and workers.

● (2450)

[English]

Today we have spoken often about front-line workers, and we have, throughout the course of the pandemic, paid tribute many times to them because of the courage and duty they have shown so often in working hard to ensure that we continue to move forward as a society. However, we see the contempt the government holds not only for front-line workers, unionized workers and the dock workers in Montreal, but indeed for all Canadians who are part of the labour movement.

The contempt the Liberals have shown today should be remembered for a long time. Remember, the Liberals have always put their hands around workers and said that they stand with them and that they will be there with them. However, that only lasts as long as the billionaire employers have their interests represented. The moment there is an attempt by workers to look for and obtain their rights is the moment when the Liberals back away and abandon and betray those workers. We see this tonight, and we certainly saw this with postal workers just a few years ago. We saw the Liberals pretending to support unionized workers and then betraying them the second they had the opportunity.

We have seen a lot of crocodile tears tonight from Liberals who stood and said they really do not want to do this. However, we know full well what happens when a government intervenes, particularly in a situation like this where workers have seen their rights completely pushed aside by a government. What happens when a government weighs in on the side of the employer and the billionaire corporations that represent maritime employers? It immediately sets the whole playing field against regular workers.

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The Maritime Employers Association violated the collective agreement not once or twice, but four times, pushing workers at the docks in Montreal to the very edge. The workers responded with what is an overwhelming mandate, with over 99% of the workers saying that enough is enough. When we see an employer acting with such impunity and acting so irresponsibly, all we can do is stand up and stand together.

The Liberal government, after pretending to care about the workers, workers' rights, labour rights and union principles, betrayed the workers by saying to the employer that it is going to introduce back-to-work legislation and that no one should not worry. The employer can violate the collective agreement and the government will say nothing, but the moment the workers respond, it casts aside their rights and pushes them aside.

This is the very heart of whether or not a government is progressive, and there are many examples of why the Liberal government is less than progressive.

My colleagues have cited the similarities between the Harper government and the current government, but I would go beyond that. When we see tonight's actions, see how it treated postal workers and see the massive handouts, like the \$750 billion in liquidity supports that were handed out to Canada's big banks within days of the pandemic hitting, we know this goes far beyond what the Harper government did. Yes, the Harper government did similar actions, but the overall size and scope of the bank bailout there was \$116 billion. Now we see the Liberals doing six times worse.

Tonight, with this casting aside of what are basic fundamental labour rights and human rights, we see the contempt the Liberal government holds for the workers of the country. We have seen this as well with sick leave. The Prime Minister has refused to implement a working sick leave program in the midst of the pandemic, when sick leave is absolutely essential.

The Liberals should not be proud of their actions tonight. There is no justification for what they have done, and what they have done is deplorable. However, labour, labour organizers and labour members across the country will remember what they have done tonight.

● (2455)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the member believe that the Christian Labour Association of Canada, or CLAC, is a real union and that CLAC should have the opportunity to bid on infrastructure projects like the designated unions under the provincial government of B.C.?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member, I gather, is trying to talk about the community investment programs that have been put in place by the B.C. NDP government. I absolutely support them. The idea is that we make sure that the people who bid on these programs are from unions that have a solid building trade background and are highly qualified, with Red Seal certification. The community benefits will actually go back to the community. It is absolutely fundamental to the program that the B.C. NDP government has set out.

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I completely support that smart approach. What it has done has led to many benefits going back to the community. It means that we are getting extremely highly trained tradespeople working on projects in British Columbia. It has been a successful program and I support it all the way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate speech. He made some good points, and I applaud his unwavering and immutable defence of workers' rights.

I would like to ask him about something a little more specific. The longshoremen's union had said that if the employer would stop playing games with the employees' schedules and punishing them, there would not be an open-ended general strike on Monday morning, which was last Monday. However, the day before the general strike, the Minister of Labour said that if there was a general strike, she would use special legislation to force people back to work.

What effect might this have in the short term on the employer's willingness to seriously negotiate with the unionized workers at the Port of Montreal?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie spoke so eloquently on this issue today. He is standing up for the interests of workers at the Port of Montreal.

As he knows, I am a former negotiator who worked on the management side during collective bargaining. It is no secret that the best way to avoid labour disputes is to have both parties negotiate in good faith.

The Liberals just trampled on any good faith by allowing the employer, multi-billion-dollar companies, to squash its workers. The government made an irresponsible decision and sided with the employer.

I think everyone will remember this sad day in Canadian history.

• (2500)

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I have heard a lot of economic justifications for this special legislation. I want to take this opportunity to explain to anyone who cares about the economy that less than 1% of work time was lost to all of the strikes held in Canada in the 20th century.

Does my colleague think that the employer and those who support this bill should stop crying wolf?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right.

If there has been any economic disruption at all, it is because the government interfered in the process by appealing to the employer, the multi-billion-dollar companies. The government told the employer that it would protect and support them, that they could do whatever they wanted with the union because it was going to impose a gag order and pass special legislation.

The Liberal government is to blame for any economic disruption, because it was the government's irresponsible actions that caused this dispute. If it had stepped in and told the employer to stop

crushing the union, everyone would be in a much better position today.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that I am here tonight on the traditional territory of the WSÁNEC nation with respect and gratitude.

Hych'ka Siem.

I also would like to split my time with the hon. leader of the Green Party of Canada, Annamie Paul, but I cannot because she is not elected yet, but she will be. I want to share that she comes from a strong union family.

We had our caucus meeting and discussed how we all feel, the three of us who are elected and the ones who will be elected later, about what we think about this back-to-work legislation. We will never support back-to-work legislation, never.

I am honoured to speak and take the time to stand clearly and firmly on the side of the longshoremen of the Port of Montreal.

[*Translation*]

Today is a day of mourning, when we remember those killed, injured or sickened on the job. This year, with this awful pandemic, our thoughts are with front-line workers who have done their jobs to protect our lives. We are so grateful to them.

How ironic that we should be marking this deeply sad and serious day in the House of Commons by debating special legislation to force longshoremen back to work with zero regard for their rights, including their right to strike. The right to strike is a constitutional right, yet here we are on this day of mourning, violating their fundamental right. To me, this is a supremely sad occasion.

I would like to tell a personal story. Thirty-seven years ago, I was working as a lawyer in Halifax, representing unions. Specifically, I worked for the Port of Halifax longshoremen. This might be hard to believe, but back then, the employer was the very same Maritime Employers Association. I am old now, but I will never forget my experiences with that group of longshoremen, who are still dear to me.

• (2505)

[*English*]

This is a complicated story, so I am going to tell it in English. There had been an accident at sea. The ship was tossed about in a big storm and it came to port all right, but its cargo was badly smashed. Everywhere one looked there was just a mess. The Maritime Employers Association, same employer, sent the workers in to clean up the ship. The collective agreement had said that if people are in a dangerous or hazardous work situation, they had to be paid time and a half. It also said the employer had the responsibility to provide protective equipment. Oh, no, not these guys. They did not bother providing any.

By the way, the Port of Halifax has a different employer association now, but this was about 1984 and it was the Maritime Employers Association. It was the longshoremen of Halifax. They sent them on board the ship to clean it up. In the hold there was raspberry jam that was smashed, a lot of Mumm champagne that was smashed, and they had a commercial chemical that is known for being hygroscopic. In other words, it absorbs moisture; that is one of its commercial benefits. I think it was potassium hydroxide, my memory may be faulty on that. Because this stuff in the hold was so hygroscopic, it absorbed all the moisture around it and became very caustic and toxic in an enclosed working space where my friends, I loved these guys, they were sent down there to clean up the hold.

What happened was that the reaction of the chemicals caused it to be really hot on their feet, through their boots. This will of course strike all of us here tonight at this late hour as an extraordinary tragedy, but it was so hot on their feet that they actually just smashed what bottles of Mumm that were not smashed already to pour the champagne on their feet to try to relieve the heat they were feeling. It was just awful. It was awful working conditions. They were not given any masks, so they were having trouble breathing and their feet were getting hot, and everything about the working conditions was appalling.

They worked in these conditions until the Environment Canada person showed up, who was in charge of accidents and toxic chemicals. He showed up appropriately dressed in full-on haz-mat, full-on moon suit, but the employers kept telling the guys to keep working in these conditions.

Fast-forward, we got into arbitration over this because the employers refused to pay what they were obliged to pay under the collective agreement. I will never forget the lawyer from the other side. I will spare mentioning his name because he has passed away and why bring abuse to him at this point; God rest his soul. The lawyer actually laughed at the workers during our arbitration. He said, "What, they need protection from raspberry jam?" Then I called my expert witness, Luke Tripp, the head of the Environment Canada contaminants program at the port at that point, and he laid out clearly, exactly how hazardous that was. We won that arbitration, hands down.

I have not forgotten my seething hatred for the Maritime Employers Association, I am sorry to say. Now it is many years later. They are all different people. They have probably all changed their tune. However, in this conflict I have no doubt where my heart lies. I cannot believe that we are in this situation where workers are being treated like this in 2021, that they would be provoked into this situation with so many arbitrary unilateral actions by the employers. It is really very distressing to imagine that we are passing legislation to force the wronged party back to work, and not standing up with the union.

[*Translation*]

We at the Green Party stand in solidarity with the Syndicat des débardeurs, and I want to say out loud, "So-so-so-solidarity! So-so-so-solidarity!"

Today, the longshoremen at the Port of Montreal are the victims of the employer's malevolent strategy. All the trials and tribulations the union has had with the employer are just awful. We will be vot-

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ing on special legislation under a closure motion to force the longshoremen to go back to work without the protection of their constitutional right to strike.

● (2510)

[*English*]

I am very glad that in a life of lots of different kinds of jobs I had the chance to work in union-side labour law. However, I am overwhelmed by how many times this happens, and the same point was made by the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. For those of elected in 2011, and I am just coming up to my 10th anniversary this Sunday, one of the first things we had was back-to-work legislation for CUPW, Canada Post workers, being forced back to work. Jack Layton led us in three days of filibuster to try to stop that from happening, and we were all the time hoping that there were some negotiations happening. That should be a rare instance; it is becoming all too common.

I do agree with my friend from Nanaimo—Ladysmith that it threatens to become not just a pattern but normal; it threatens to become a way of fundamentally undermining the rights of collective agreements and of ignoring the fact that we can get to negotiated solutions. I know it is tough. I have nothing but regard and affection for my friend, the Minister of Labour, but this is a terrible mistake.

We should not be doing this, because the employer clearly knew that it could provoke and make unilateral decisions that violated the collective agreement that it was still honouring. It has been a number of years without a collective agreement, but both sides were honouring it. Despite the strike last year, they have been working hard to keep the goods moving. That is a key point. The union has been working hard to keep goods being delivered. It has been trying. We know that on March 17, when the employer said the union was not bargaining in good faith, the mediator could not say that. The mediator said it was premature to make that conclusion.

Therefore, who was not acting in good faith? It was the same guys who sent the Halifax longshoremen into the toxic hold of a ship to clean up the mess and laughed at them. Everyone can see that I have not quite gotten over it. This is not a moment to force the longshoremen back to work. This is a moment to have someone pick up the phone and tell the Maritime Employers Association that this is not acceptable, that it provoked this and the government is not going to back it up, and that the government is going to make sure it moves heaven and earth to move those goods to other ports and find workarounds.

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We are not a country that is known for being landlocked; we are known for having ports. It is not going to be easy if we let the strike go. It would not be easy to find a good berth for every ship heading into that port, but we have many more options than they did in the Suez Canal. We have ports in Quebec, ports in Halifax, ports in Saint John. We have ports on our east coast and ports on our west coast. Surely to God, there was a better solution than this.

I lament it deeply. I wish, in my heart of hearts, that we had not come to the place we are tonight. I know in Ottawa it is well after midnight and here in British Columbia it is getting on in time, but this should not have happened on April 28. This deepens the offence, deepens the damage and deepens what it means to workers across this country. I agree entirely with the union's press release that this action of back-to-work legislation strikes at the heart of collective bargaining and hurts every worker across this country.

Make no mistake about it. A country that does not have a strong trade union movement is a country that lacks in social justice, that loses ground on the very things we take for granted: that children do not go to work in factories, that there is such a thing as time off, that there is such a thing as a reasonable work-life balance. These are some of the conditions that the longshoremen were working so hard for.

[*Translation*]

I just want to say that I deeply regret the special legislation being passed on closure this evening. It is a bad decision by our government that goes against workers' rights, against unions' rights and against the Port of Montreal workers.

I want to say to all the longshoremen at the Port of Montreal that I am sorry, and I ask them to forgive us for not being able to stop our government from making this decision.

• (2515)

[*English*]

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I love to hear the member's stories about her life and history in all kinds of aspects, and I thank her for sharing that one.

As a member of a former NDP government in Nova Scotia, I know that on July 5, 2013 the NDP government introduced back-to-work legislation for the paramedics. It cited the fact that in the negotiations there was no compromise and it was about the health and safety of Nova Scotians. In fact, we did introduce that legislation.

Does the member believe in voting with one's conscience and being able to speak up on subjects that one may not agree with one's own government about?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say out loud how much I love the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester, her fine work against environmental racism and all the things she stands for. I thank her for the reminder that the NDP in power is always very different than the NDP in opposition. I speak as a British Columbian who has had too many promises broken by Premier John Horgan.

I would say it is always best to speak one's mind. It is always best to vote the way one wants to vote. I am blessed to be in a party

that, as a matter of our policy, as passed by our members, does not allow whipped votes. I love her.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member just mentioned our beautiful British Columbia. I would like to get her comments on the community benefit agreements, which are a provincial matter, but given we just went in that direction, I do not think it is completely irrelevant.

In British Columbia, the Christian Labour Association has been excluded by the New Democratic Party and Premier John Horgan from bidding on major infrastructure projects because it is not one of the unions, or what the NDP government believes is actually a union, even though the Christian Labour Association members believe they are a union.

What would the Green Party say about the exclusion of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, or CLAC, which represents thousands of workers in B.C., from having their rights protected as workers and their ability to bid on government projects?

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to say something before I go to the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

This subject did come up before. It should be pointed out that I am having a hard time making the link to its relevance to the topic. I see it is loosely connected in terms of the labour movement and so on, but it is, by its definition, very much a British Columbia issue. I will let the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands take a run at it in her response, but I do want to caution hon. members to keep their questions and comments relevant to the subject at hand.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Leader of the Green Party of British Columbia, Sonia Furstenuau, to get back to my friend from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and move on to discussing the Port of Montreal.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I salute my hon. colleague and point out that here in Laurentides—Labelle, in Quebec, it is currently 1:19 a.m.

It is quite a task, given these unacceptable actions. I was touched by what my colleague had to say, but I am also very ashamed. I would like to hear how she thinks Quebecers and Canadians will feel about this government and its irresponsible actions after the vote we will be having in the next few minutes.

• (2520)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague.

I completely agree with her that this is shameful. That is the only word to describe the events of this evening. I hope I am being clear, because this really is shameful.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that I stand with our party in fighting this back-to-work legislation. Many of the points raised by the member resonated with me.

Could she speak to the implications of this attack on workers, not just on the Port of Montreal workers, but all workers across Canada?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, if all workers across Canada had access to being members of trade unions, we would see more strength in our social justice movements. I think we can all say that the role of the unions has been weakened through the era of neoliberalism.

Any blow against the rights of unionized workers is a blow to the heart of what makes this a great country. There is just no question about this. Every single time we bring in back-to-work legislation, it is inevitable, no matter how much people in the government say that it is not taking sides, it clearly is, and it is taking the wrong side.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for doing the research to take the evening for us.

These are essential workers. These are people who we celebrate during the pandemic and who are getting the supplies into the country. They have been clearly mistreated, and the evidence looks like the employers provoked this situation. I am wondering if she has seen any evidence that the employers knew they could take this to the boiling point and would be able to count on the Liberal government for back-to-work legislation.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, honestly, I do not know that we have evidence, but circumstantially, how else can we read the situation?

The employer systematically provoked the situation, and needlessly. I know that many of the Liberal and Conservative speakers have made much of the fact that they have been going so long without coming to a successful negotiation and a successful conclusion, but, and I have pointed it out to this place a few times, it is not uncommon to go a long time without a contract while they are negotiating. They are negotiating, and yet they keep working.

The fact is that in this place, in the House of Commons, we are employers, and our protective service workers went four years without a contract. They were taking job action and wearing badges, wearing ball caps or in other ways breaking the code of how they were to dress. That was the only action they could take. Members can imagine if that was not used against them, that it took four years to negotiate. It was used, and I think the RCMP took way too long to treat our workers fairly within the House of Commons. The fact that they have been talking for two years is no justification whatsoever for deciding that it could not be solved, that it could never be resolved and that it could not find a negotiated solution, and I have just—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for her solidarity with workers at the Port of Montreal.

In terms of federal labour relations, does my colleague agree that back-to-work legislation should be avoided because it violates workers' fundamental rights, and does she agree that we should pass legislation prohibiting the use of scabs, also known as replacement workers?

● (2525)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

For the last time tonight, I want to say that I completely agree with him. We need to protect workers' rights. This balance will not work in the future if workers have no rights against employers. That is exactly what my colleague said.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:25 a.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The motion is as follows.

That Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of operations at the Port of Montreal, be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request either a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, we ask for a recorded vote.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (2555)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 102)

YEAS

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Fonseca	Fortier	Trudeau	Turnbull
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Gallant	Garneau	Vandal	Vandenbeld
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Gerretsen	Gladu	Vidal	Viersen
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Melillo	Mendès	Michaud	Normandin
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Montreal, is deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported with amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage as amended, and deemed read a third time and passed.

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the committee of the whole.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, Bill C-29, an act to provide for the resumption and continuation of operations at the Port of

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made earlier today, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:56 a.m.)

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