

# **COMPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS**

## **THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS**

### **A PROCESS THAT LACKS TRANSPARENCY**

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, International Trade Critic for the Bloc Québécois and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on International Trade, points to a flagrant problem of transparency during the negotiations leading up to the conclusion of this transitional agreement with the United Kingdom, unfortunately representative of a widespread lack of transparency during the negotiations of several of Canada's recent international trade agreements.

According to the Bloc Québécois, it is necessary that parliamentarians and provincial representatives be more involved in the next rounds of talks, which should lead to a permanent agreement.

### **Inform and consult parliamentarians and the provinces**

The government should be required to keep parliamentarians informed at every stage of the process. Such a requirement would reduce the risk of parliamentarians having to vote on an agreement without all the informations needed to make an informed choice, or in the urgency of the situation, as it is currently the case. The tight timeframe for this study and for the adoption of the Transitional Accord in Parliament is all the more problematic given that the Transitional Accord is likely to become permanent, with no sunset clause. Parliamentarians need time to do their job.

Quebec and the provinces should also be invited to the negotiating table, since they formally have the ability to obstruct the implementation of an agreement in their own jurisdictions. As part of the negotiations with Europe leading up to the ratification of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement in 2017, Quebec was able to send its representative to the discussions, and the process has not been repeated since.

### **Putting in place permanent mechanisms**

The Bloc Québécois therefore recommends that the Parliament adopt procedures to increase the level of democratic control to be exercised over the agreements. The minister responsible for ratifying an agreement should be obliged to table it before the Parliament with an explanatory memorandum, within a sufficient time frame, and the approval of parliamentarians must precede any ratification.

We also regret that a recommendation to consult with the provinces before the final passage in the House of Commons of the agreement bill referred to in this report was rejected by members of the Standing Committee on International Trade. This would have allowed the government to demonstrate its commitment to transparency by implementing these consultations.