

The Trans-Pacific Partnership needs to be ratified now

BY DAVID TILSON

In early May, I wrote about the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which had been signed by all 11 member countries (including Canada) in March and the concern that if the current Liberal government took too long to ratify it, Canadian firms and agricultural producers would lose their first-movers advantage in the market.

It is now three months later and Canada still hasn't ratified the agreement, despite calls from the Official Opposition to do so, especially given the current status of NAFTA negotiations.

It raises serious concerns about why the current Liberal government has been stalling and not taking decisive action to protect important Canadian sectors and jobs.

Canada, along with 10 other countries (including Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam), are signatories to the CPTPP.

The agreement reduces tariffs in countries representing 13 percent of the global economy or a total of \$10 trillion. It comes into force 60 days after at least six signatory countries ratify it. Currently, Mexico and Japan are the only countries who've ratified the agreement, which has a deadline of February 2019.

What's interesting is that despite promising to "expeditiously" ratify the CPTPP, the current Liberal government didn't introduce legislation to ratify it until late in the spring session.

Bill C-79 only passed First Reading and remains on the Order Paper, which raises questions about why the Prime Minister and his government waited so long.

In response to the inaction by the current Liberal government to act in the best interests of vital Canadian industries and jobs, Conservative Leader of the Official Opposition, Andrew Scheer, sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on July 19, 2018, requesting that he immediately convene an emergency session of the House of Commons to approve the CPTPP.

Once again, the words of the current Liberal government don't match their actions.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his government have failed to adequately protect export markets and the hundreds of thousands of Canadian jobs that rely on international trade by failing to take the necessary steps to ratify the CPTPP in the House of Commons.

Given that NAFTA negotiations have stalled and with a new deal in jeopardy, Parliament must act now to diversify Canada's export markets.

On July 18, 2018, Prime Minister Trudeau made significant changes to his cabinet to diversify international trade.

This is an opportunity for him to prove to Canadians he's serious about doing so by agreeing to Mr. Scheer's request for an emergency session of the House of Commons, as American tariff action against Canadian exports further underscores the need to expand foreign markets for Canadian manufacturers.

The CPTPP has the potential to boost Canadian income by \$20 billion over the next decade.

If we wait, Canadian firms risk losing first-mover advantages, jeopardizing jobs and supply lines.

We cannot wait until fall to act. We must come together as Parliamentarians immediately and approve this critical trade agreement.

It's time for action to protect Canadian interests and jobs.