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# Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke





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Monday, May 30, 2022

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)):** This meeting is called to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 20 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, May 5, 2022, the committee is meeting to study the Main Estimates 2022-23.

Today's meeting is taking place in hybrid format, pursuant to the House Order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room or remotely using the Zoom application.

Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy of March 10, 2022, all those attending the meeting in person must wear a mask, except for members who are at their place during proceedings.

[*English*]

Appearing before committee today for the first portion of the meeting we are privileged to have the Minister of Transport, the Honourable Omar Alghabra, as well as a number of departmental officials. They include Michael Keenan, deputy minister; Craig Hutton, associate assistant deputy minister for policy; Kevin Brosseau, assistant deputy minister, safety and security; Stephanie Hébert, assistant deputy minister for programs; and Ryan Pilgrim, chief financial officer and assistant deputy minister, corporate services.

Minister, on behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome you before committee today to address the main estimates for 2022-23.

Without further ado, it's a pleasure for me to turn the floor over to you for your opening remarks.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport):** Good morning, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Hello, everyone.

[*English*]

It's great to be back here. It's my first appearance in person at this committee, although it feels like I've been here quite regularly. I'm always grateful for the opportunity to join you.

Let me repeat that I'm happy to be back in person to present Transport Canada's main estimates for this fiscal year. I want to thank the committee for the valuable work they continue to undertake this session. I welcome this opportunity to highlight some of the important work Transport Canada has been doing on behalf of Canadians.

I'm pleased to be joined today by representatives from Transport Canada: Michael Keenan, deputy minister of transport; Ryan Pilgrim, assistant deputy minister, corporate services and chief financial officer; Stephanie Hébert, assistant deputy minister of programs; Kevin Brosseau, assistant deputy minister of safety and security; and Craig Hutton, associate assistant deputy minister of policy.

Transport Canada's mandate is to ensure that our transportation system is safe and secure, efficient, green and innovative.

[*Translation*]

Transport Canada's mandate is to ensure that our transportation system is safe and efficient.

• (1105)

[*English*]

The department's planned expenditures in the main estimates for fiscal year 2022-23 fall under four categories essential to maintaining a safe and secure transportation system while keeping people and goods moving. The categories are \$1.8 billion under efficient transportation; \$419 million under safe and secure transportation; \$358 million under green and innovative transportation system; and \$196 million for internal services.

Mr. Chair, the events of the past two years have reinforced the critical role played by well-functioning supply chains in supporting good jobs and keeping goods moving.

[*Translation*]

Robust supply chains are essential to our economy.

[*English*]

It's clear that the quality of our transportation infrastructure and the efficiency of our trade corridors are crucial to our economic and social well-being.

Here it's important to pause for a moment to recognize the exceptional work done by our supply chains and those who work in them during one of the most uncertain times in 100 years. At the height of the pandemic, workers in the sector rose to the occasion and ensured that the goods that Canadians depend on were still being delivered. To the workers in the rail, air, marine and trucking sectors, thank you.

That's not to say there were no challenges. Our government is working to ensure that those challenges are responded to and our supply chains are enhanced, which is why Transport Canada is requesting \$1.1 billion for the national trade corridors fund. The fund supports more efficient and resilient supply chains through targeted projects that ease bottlenecks and congestion in Canada's transportation system.

Just last week, I was in New Brunswick to announce funding for two important projects with the Saint John port authority and the New Brunswick Southern Railway. These projects will increase capacity to import and export goods in and out of New Brunswick and will help improve supply chain efficiency for Canadian shippers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a profound impact on Canada's world-leading network of airports.

[*Translation*]

We know how much the pandemic has affected the airline sector.

[*English*]

That's why these estimates include \$270 million for the airport critical infrastructure program. This program helps Canada's larger airports recover economically by making critical investments in safety, security, and connectivity to mass transit.

As we work to ensure a cleaner transportation system, we're seeking \$93 million dollars for the incentives for the zero-emission vehicles program. The program aims to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by increasing the adoption of ZEV vehicles through purchase incentives.

I'd also like to highlight some amounts for the federal agencies and Crown corporations within Transport Canada.

The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, known also as CATSA, is seeking \$567 million to deliver security screening of air travellers and their baggage. We understand how frustrating it's been for Canadians to experience long lines and delays at airports and this requested funding, in addition to the approximately 400 new screening officers hired, will help reduce wait times.

Marine Atlantic Inc. is seeking just under \$41 million to support its year-round constitutionally mandated ferry and seasonal ferry service.

Finally, these estimates include \$981 million for Via Rail to continue operations of Canada's national passenger rail transportation.

Mr. Chair, as I know the committee is studying reducing travel costs and making Canada's airports more efficient, I'd like to note that several of the funding requests I've mentioned advance these objectives.

The airport critical infrastructure program was created to address the loss of revenue Canada's larger airports faced due to the pandemic, and help ensure that our airports remain viable and continue to provide Canadians with safe, reliable, and efficient travel options, while creating and maintaining good-paying jobs in the airport sector. This program allows these airports to make needed improvements without raising fees for travellers.

Likewise, the airports capital assistance program, which provides financial assistance to Canada's local and regional airports for safety-related infrastructure projects and equipment purchases, was expanded last year to help smaller airports across Canada invest in safety.

In addition, the requested funding for CATSA will aid increasing volumes of baggage and passengers.

Our government provided billions of dollars in support to airports and airlines to help them get through the pandemic and to ensure they could retain staff. We will continue to support airports through their recovery.

As we focus on the future, the transportation sector will be vital to Canada's economic recovery. I'm confident that the investments outlined in these main estimates will help advance a transportation system that is safer, cleaner, and more competitive.

Mr. Chair, I look forward to answering my colleagues questions.

Thank you very much.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

To begin the line of questioning for today, we will go with Ms. Lantsman.

Ms. Lantsman, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the minister and his officials for being here.

I'll jump right into my questions.

Industry experts and media organizations have been saying for months, as you alluded to in your remarks, that there would be a surge in air travel post-COVID. Did the government have a plan to ensure that a transition back to post-COVID travel was...or did you have a plan at all?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** As I alluded to in my remarks, there are significant dollars being asked for through the main estimates to help CATSA and airports. These estimates were not written yesterday, last week, or even a month ago; they were written months ago, obviously to illustrate that we have been preparing and planning for the increased travel volume as we expected with the pandemic turning a corner.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Thanks.

Mr. Chair, is the minister waiting for an okay on the estimates to implement any plan on post-COVID travel in airports?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, not at all.

Our work has been ongoing for weeks, in fact for months, and certainly in the last few weeks there has been a heightened sense of urgency given the surge in volumes that we're witnessing not only at Canadian airports, but also at airports around the world. But it does not mean that we shouldn't increase our activities in responding to those surges. So, we are, and we have been supporting CATSA, supporting airports, supporting CBSA, to respond to this new volume level, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I'll go back to CATSA and, in some cases, CBSA. Is the minister aware of any other jurisdiction in the world that doesn't allow unvaccinated domestic travel?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, countries around the world today still have vaccine mandates. I just travelled to Germany and the U.S. Both require travellers to be vaccinated prior to entering their country.

In fact, the U.S. requires a predeparture test even if you are vaccinated.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Is the minister aware, though, of any country that restricts domestic travel of its own citizens on airplanes or trains with a travel mandate?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, different countries make different decisions on the policies to protect their citizens. All along, our government has committed to Canadians to do our best to protect the health and safety of travellers and of those who work in the industry. We consult our experts and scientists and make decisions based on what we think is the best for Canadians and the Canadian economy. We are always assessing our measures. We have lifted many of those measures as we have felt confident that it's safe to do so. We are constantly assessing and reassessing.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Chair, I think the answer is "no".

Is there any specific health advice that the minister has seen to continue 4,000 tests a day in airports as well as stopping almost five million Canadians from domestic air travel because of mandates? We asked other members in the House and nobody can point to any specific advice that has led the government to this decision.

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, over the last two years we have had to implement a range of measures. Those measures have helped save lives. Canada has one of the lowest death rates in the world because Canadians continue to follow public health advice to get vaccinated.

I understand that there are always questions about the right types of measures and the right range of protections. We are being thoughtful and careful and we are erring on the side of safety because we want to make sure that we are protecting lives, Mr. Chair.

• (1115)

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Chair, while I appreciate what Canadians have done during this pandemic, my question was this: Has the minister seen any specific public health advice to lead him to continue to have mandates in place for domestic travel in this country, yes or no?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

We have all the science and advice that guide our decisions. Whether it's random testing at airports or vaccine mandates, those are all guided by data.

As I said, the data proves that Canada has one of the lowest death rates in the world. We need to acknowledge that and we need to remain vigilant as the virus remains with us and as the pandemic is not over. We have lifted many of our public health measures and we are constantly assessing those measures to do the right thing to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Of course, Mr. Chair, we are guided by data, experts and scientists.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Mr. Chair, the minister just said that he has seen specific health advice to keep the mandates in place in Canada. I'd like to know if he will table that specific health advice with this committee.

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, I'm happy to table any data that the member is not aware of that prove that vaccines save lives, that Canada has one of the lowest death rates in the world and that vaccines have provided a great service to humanity.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** With due respect, that wasn't the question.

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** We are continuously guided by vaccine advice and requirements because we want to protect the health and safety of Canadians, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Lantsman, and thank you very much, Minister.

Next we go to Mr. Chahal.

You have six minutes. The floor is yours.

**Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister and departmental officials, for joining us here today at committee.

I'll get right into the questions, Minister.

Can you elaborate on how our government has been helping airports and CATSA plan for recovery of prepandemic levels of passengers? How is this reflected in the main estimates?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** During the pandemic, we've seen something that we had never seen in our lifetime. Air travel shrunk by 90%. It was down to 10% of what it normally was. We've seen the devastating impact that has had on airports, airlines and those who work in the aviation sector.

Our government stepped up, because we understand the importance of airports and the aviation sector. We've been providing significant investments in that sector to a total of \$11 billion. Airports, airlines, businesses and workers have received support at the height of the pandemic and throughout that period. That includes CATSA.

As I mentioned in my remarks, there are significant funds being asked for through the main estimates, and that is to build on the support we've asked for over the last year and a half to support the sector.

**Mr. George Chahal:** Minister, is it true, as we have heard Conservatives allege, that Canada is the only country that still has public health mandates in place for air travellers?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** No, it's not true. I alluded to some of those countries in my remarks. I just travelled to Germany and the U.S. Both Germany and the U.S. have public health measures for travellers. France has public health measures and requires travellers to either be vaccinated or tested prior to entry. Australia, Japan.... In fact, Italy still has a vaccine mandate for domestic travellers.

There are many measures, and I'm happy to table with the committee many countries that have public health measures for travellers, either domestically or at the border.

• (1120)

**Mr. George Chahal:** Minister, why do we still require travellers to wear masks, and would dropping the mask mandate do anything to speed up lines at our airports?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** That's really important. If we want to address this challenge we're witnessing, we need to fully understand what causes it. As you're seeing now, it's good news that many people are wanting to travel again, but we're seeing delays in every segment of that sector. We're seeing delays at airlines. We're seeing delays at airports. We're seeing delays at taxi stands. We're seeing delays across international airports, such as Amsterdam, Paris, London, Geneva, and Sydney, Australia. There are many delays, and what that tells us is that these are not unique phenomena to Canada.

Having said that, we need to get to the bottom of it so we can address it. I've talked about several causes of the delays. One of them is a labour shortage, and that's why we were supporting CATSA to hire more people. Some of it concerns bottlenecks in the procedures. Some of it relates to people needing to be informed while waiting in line of what they need to do and what they shouldn't do in the security line.

We're addressing all of those aspects to help alleviate that pressure, and we're seeing results as we are speaking today. We're seeing cuts to that wait times that people experienced a few weeks ago.

**Mr. George Chahal:** Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to turn it over to MP Rogers for a question.

**Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.):** Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

You mentioned in your commentary the funding for Marine Atlantic and the constitutionally mandated ferry crossing from Port aux Basques to northern Sydney.

Could you provide the committee with an update on the new environmentally friendly ferry that's being constructed for that service, as well as the new administrative building that is being constructed in Port aux Basques?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** I have good news for you and for our friends in Newfoundland. The contract for the new ferry was awarded last year as you know, and steel cutting began this May. Construction is on track for delivery, as planned, in early 2024. This new vessel will replace the MV *Atlantic Vision*, and will ensure reliable and continuous ferry service to Newfoundland.

As for Port aux Basques, it's also on track. It's on scope and on budget. We're hoping that construction will start this summer for occupancy scheduled in 2023-24.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** Thank you, Minister. I greatly appreciate that good news for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think the time is done, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** It is. Thank you very much, Mr. Rogers, and thank you, Minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Barsalou-Daval, you now have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Alhabra, thank you for appearing before the committee. It is very much appreciated. I would also like to thank the staff members who are with you.

We are very happy to see people attending our meeting in person. It is good for morale, I think. I assume the other committee members feel the same way.

To begin, I would like to ask you something about the Lac-Mégantic file. It means a lot to me, as I expect it does to you and to your office.

Initially, this project was intended to bring people together. A bypass was going to be built. The project was meant to offer some comfort to the local people so the train would no longer travel through the middle of the city. Now, though, the project is dragging on and becoming controversial.

There is an outcry among community members. They are asking questions. In other words, the project is becoming problematic and there seems to be significant resistance.

Do you think that is because your government lacked transparency and took too long to move forward with this project?

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleague for his question and for his advocacy on Lac-Mégantic.

The new Lac-Mégantic bypass is a priority for our government. It is part of my mandate letter based on the commitment the Prime Minister made. Our government remains solidly committed to it. As my honourable colleague mentioned, undoubtedly now that we are getting to the final phases of the design and to the acquisition of the land and, hopefully, will start construction soon, things can get complicated because as we're negotiating with landowners to purchase their land, some questions and objections are rising because of this new project.

We are dealing with this—

• (1125)

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you.

There have been a number of consultations about the bypass. Suggestions and recommendations have been made to the government, in particular to ensure that the project focuses on reconciliation. You have to understand that there is more involved than relocating a rail line and building a bypass. It is more of a community project to help people move on.

We have also made recommendations to make sure that this new line does not become a highway for oil shipments, and that we do not have longer trains and trains that travel even faster than before.

Do you think these recommendations could become part of the approach, which would make residents more amenable to the project?

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, I welcome all of the recommendations and advice that I'm getting from our colleagues, including this committee. We are now at a critical phase. As my colleague mentioned, it's getting delicate, because many landowners want to negotiate a fair deal for themselves and ensure that the path of the bypass is acceptable to them.

We are working very diligently and delicately with our colleagues. This issue crosses partisan lines, Mr. Chair. I want to thank all of my colleagues in the House of Commons and here in committee who understand the importance of the bypass and have ex-

pressed a willingness to work together to address all of those questions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Alhabra, I wish you would have had the opportunity to respond to the recommendation that I made. If you have the chance, I would appreciate any details you could provide to the committee.

There is an outcry now. I think though that if things had been done properly from the outset, that would not be the case now. If the project had not dragged on and if there had been good communication with the community, we might not be in the current predicament. Furthermore, there seems to be a sense of urgency right now: people want action on this project, but it has taken a long time for anything to happen.

Do you not think that your government is cutting corners now in order to adopt timelines quickly, since very little work has been done up to now?

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, respectfully, I disagree with my honourable colleague. In fact, we have delayed the deadline that we had committed to because of the feedback that we got from community members, including the mayor and the neighbourhood in that area. We want to make sure that we address all of the questions.

We have representations on the ground there all the time. I have visited Lac-Mégantic, and so has my team. We are doing everything we can to maintain open channels of communication to respond to the questions that landowners and community members have. We are dealing with this issue with extreme delicacy, but, yes, we remain committed to building this project as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Alhabra, do you sense that you may have lost control of the project?

The project was supposed to cost about a hundred million dollars, but it is close to \$400 million now. The community is showing resistance on the ground and it seems you have not taken into account the recommendations made to you thus far.

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** It's the opposite, Mr. Chair. We remain committed to this project. It's true that costs have gone up, like the do with every other major project, but we think it's really important that we do it right. If that means delaying the project a few months so that we can be continuously updating community members, responding to their questions and working with landowners, we will do that because we understand how important it is to maintain social licence for that project. That said, I also know that members, community members and residents of Lac-Mégantic want to see this bypass built. The delay is something they are reluctantly agreeing to, but we all agree that we need to build this as quickly as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Alhabra.

Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, you have six minutes. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today with your officials.

I would like to start with some questions about airport delays. It's obviously something on many people's minds.

Looking at the main estimates for CATSA, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, for 2022-23, there is \$567 million for CATSA. That's down significantly from last year. Last year there was \$859 million of estimated expenditures for CATSA.

Can you explain why the money that is being spent on CATSA is decreasing precisely at a time when we're experiencing all of these severe staffing issues and delays for travellers at our major airports?

• (1130)

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** In fact, there's an additional some \$300 million on top of that in the supplementary estimates. We are restoring funding to last year's level; it has just been broken into different chunks.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Related to this, we're hearing many frustrations from workers and the unions that represent them when it comes to screening officers at airports and some of the working conditions. We're hearing about challenges with things like bathroom breaks. We're seeing extreme overtime and forced extensions of overtime, missed breaks, washroom access, all of these things as well as uncompetitive pay.

I'm wondering if the working conditions faced by screening officers and other airport workers is something you're concerned about. What role are these playing in the challenges you're experiencing hiring more screening officers for our airports?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** I'm always concerned when I hear of workplace complaints. It's important for Transport Canada, for me personally, and for our government that every worker has a safe and well-paid job environment.

I'm going to avoid talking about this particular case, because, as you know, CATSA is responsible for managing its relationship with its workplace. However, our expectation is that everybody who works for CATSA will have a safe, respectful, decent workplace that is free of harassment.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Are you concerned about current work conditions?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** I'm concerned about all work environment, and I think every employer, particularly the Government of Canada and Crown corporations, must be concerned with their own work environment, and must always pay attention to the feedback they get from their workers and unions and must work collaboratively with their unions to address all of these issues.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Minister, I'm going to move on to a different topic.

On March 9 you released a request for expressions of interest related to your government's high-frequency rail project between Toronto and Quebec City.

This is Canada's highest-volume rail corridor for passenger rail. This expression of interest that your government released envisions a private operator coming in, building this new high-frequency rail line, operating it, setting the fares, setting the schedules and also operating the other rail service besides high-frequency rail on that corridor.

To a lot of Canadians, this sounds like privatization—if not privatization of Via Rail, at least privatization of Canada's busiest passenger rail corridor.

Why is that your government's vision?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, I understand Mr. Bachrach's question and he's making some assumptions. Let me be very clear. First of all, this is great news for Via Rail and for Via Rail passengers. This is going to be the largest infrastructure project in Canada's history, and it's going to revolutionize that corridor. We want to build that corridor right. We are seeking input from different players in the sector.

By the way, in many of my meetings with other ministers around the world, I've been asking them for ideas and suggestions about how they operate their rail network.

What we are doing right now is that we're inviting stakeholders to submit proposals based on the scope of work we outlined. Of course, we're asking for for the to maintain a minimum standard, but we're also asking, can you do better?

This is a massive infrastructure project. It's going to continue to be a Via Rail project. This is not a privatization of Via Rail, but we want to build it the right way for Canadians to ensure that they get value for money.



**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Minister, you said earlier that this is a very exciting project for Via Rail. If this is such an exciting project for Via Rail, why did the CEO quit?

• (1135)

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, I don't think you want this committee to do a performance review of individual employees or talk about someone's decision to quit. That is a human resources matter. It's a privacy matter. I want to wish Ms. Garneau the best. She has led Via Rail with integrity. I want to thank her for her service.

Via Rail still has a lot of projects on the horizon, not the least of which is this exciting corridor. I'm excited to play a small role in this project.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bachrach, Minister.

Next we have Mr. Ellis.

Mr. Ellis the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister for being here.

As a point of clarification for the committee, air travel in Italy is really allowed for those who are fully immunized, who have a certificate of recovery from COVID and who could also have a negative COVID test. To be completely transparent, Mr. Minister, there are several ways that people, besides being fully immunized, could actually travel in Italy.

You talked, Mr. Minister, about seeing the data that would inform decision-making. You went down a bit of a different route than what my colleague, Ms. Lantsman, was actually asking. What we're curious about, sir, is understanding the data that allows you to make decisions on those folks who aren't immunized and when they can actually travel. You alluded to the fact that there is data. That's the data that we would like presented and tabled at that committee.

Would you present and table that data here at this committee, sir?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** First, Mr. Chair, my colleague talks about Italy and other countries. What the Conservatives' motion wants to do is to drop all mandates, Mr. Chair. They're not talking about making different—

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Mr. Chair, I think that's not a question, but—

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** —adjustments or changing.... They are asking to drop all mandates.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** —the question was related to tabling of data, Mr. Chair. It wasn't related to Italy. Italy was a statement, not a question.

The question really is related to the data that is informing the decision this government is making with respect to travel in Canada. That's the question, Mr. Chair, I would like to have the answer to.

Will the minister be transparent and table that data with this committee, yes or no? It's simple.

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, you can't make a statement and not expect me to respond to it. Having said that, I am more than

happy to provide data that proves that vaccines continue to save lives, that vaccines are—

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** We all know what the question is here. The question is really related to the restrictions that continue to burden Canadians, and we would like to see the data that really informs those decisions. That's what we're looking for, Mr. Minister.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ellis, I can appreciate that. We've just had discussions, though, with our interpreters in various meetings with regard to members talking over other members. It's very difficult for them to do hear.

If you ask a question, please provide significant time for the person you're asking the question of to respond.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm more than happy to hear the answer to that particular question. That would be lovely.

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, if the Conservatives are looking for data that shows how effective vaccines are at helping save lives, there's an abundance of data and I'm happy to provide it.

It is the government's policy to make decisions based on the data that proves that vaccines save lives, and to implement them. We act based on the science. The science is clear: Vaccines save lives, masks reduce transmission. The data is clear. Then it's governments who act based on that data, and I'm very happy to provide that data to the committee members and members of the House of Commons.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** I'll ask one more time, Mr. Chair, if I could. What is the data that is showing that these mandates need to continue in their current form?

This is not about deaths. We totally understand that. There's no issue.

What is the data that continues to inform the decision-making with respect to continuing these punitive mandates for the approximately 5.7 million Canadians selected for special treatment?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** I'm not sure how to respond to that question, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ellis said it's not about death. It is about death. It is about injury. It's about the health and safety of Canadians. As I've illustrated, there are countries around the world and provinces within Canada that still have vaccine mandates in different sectors and different segments of their economy. We are doing the best we can to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

I understand not everyone has to agree with our decision, but what we are doing is our best to protect the health and safety of Canadians. We're doing our best to protect the resilience of our supply chains.

We are constantly reassessing. We've lifted many of those measures. The existing ones are still under review every once in a while to make sure that they are appropriate.

We are guided by the desire to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

• (1140)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

Understanding that some of the mandates have been lifted, supposedly that would be based on science. Answer yes or no.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Of course.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis:** Therefore, the science exists, which no one has ever actually seen. That is the science with which you are making the decision. That's the science that I would love to see tabled at this committee, Mr. Chair. If we could see that science, which is informing the decision, it would be very helpful for Canadians, because then they would know what to expect in the future.

Could the minister please table that particular science, which he has alluded to?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Mr. Chair, the science is clear that vaccines save lives and that masks reduce transmission. What a government has to do is also assess the risk.

I think my colleague is also talking about risk. We are mitigating risks to the best of our ability so that we can protect the health and safety of Canadians. Risk levels change. Data and the evolution of the virus change. We saw it when omicron hit. We had to reintroduce some public health measures that we had previously lifted.

We are constantly responding to the changing and evolving virus, Mr. Chair, but we are always guided by our desire to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

Next we have Ms. Koutrakis. You have five minutes. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before this committee. I know first-hand how charged your schedule has been in the last little while. I wanted to personally thank you for all your great work, and thank the department and all of the officials who are here with us today.

Minister, in your view, what is the cause for the airport delays we are seeing? We've seen a lot of comments in the media. What, in your view, is the cause for airport delays?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleague and parliamentary secretary for her excellent work.

First, let me be clear. As I said earlier, we're seeing this phenomenon across the world. We're seeing this in different airports. Just this morning, Dublin's airport had a report of a thousand passengers missing their flights. That does not mean that we shouldn't act. I'm not saying this to instill complacency. It's the opposite, but

what I want to say is that this phenomenon is happening everywhere, because we're witnessing a surge of travel demand after the pandemic.

There are several causes to it. There are labour shortages, and we're acting on those. There are significant peaks and valleys with travel volume. We're seeing at certain times of the day that we have exceptionally large volumes, while at other times of the day we have certain valleys. That's why, depending on the time you're at the airport, you could get through security with no wait time at all, or a longer wait time than usual.

We're seeing scheduled flights.... With airlines, when it comes to scheduling their flights, there's massive fluidity and quick changes to flight scheduling.

Passengers need to be prepared as they are crossing the security line, and ensure that they take their fluids and their laptops out, and we're reacting to that. That's why part of our action plan is to inform travellers as they're waiting in line to make sure that they take their laptops and their fluids out.

We want to make sure that we address all aspects of the travel issues, to make sure that everyone is prepared. We're working with airlines. We've set up a working group with airports, airlines, CATSA and CBSA to address all of these bottlenecks and to make sure that we respond to this, so that passengers are able to pass through as quickly as possible.

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, through you, I'd like to ask the minister his opinion, as a segue to his response. We've heard comments in previous testimony from various business groups. How much credence should Canadians give to advice provided by business groups lobbying for the ending of mandates when these groups have no public health expertise? In fact, I was the one who asked that question, and they did admit that they were not health experts. How much credence should Canadians give to this type of advice?

• (1145)

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Look, I invite all stakeholders and all Canadians to offer their input. We take all input and feedback seriously, and then we assess the feedback and then the experts' advice and we aim to make the right decision that protects the health and safety of Canadians, but also maintains fluidity for passengers and goods. I think we just need to assess the feedback that we get based on its merit, but we welcome all input from all stakeholders.

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis:** I have one final question. I noticed that the main estimates also propose significant new funding designed to help support our airports. Can you elaborate on the goals of these programs? How are we measuring whether these goals are achieved?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** To an earlier question, I responded about the support that we've been providing to the aviation sector, including airports. At airports, I talked about two critical programs in my opening remarks, the airport critical infrastructure program and the airports capital assistance program. Both programs are meant to help support airports, particularly to cover some of the shortages in revenues during the pandemic, to build and expand their facilities, to enhance safety and to ensure that there's connectivity to mass transit in their communities. We've been providing significant investment, and we of course sign agreements with airports to ensure that those projects are delivered on time and on budget to achieve the public policy objectives they seek.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Koutrakis.

Thank you very much, Minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you now have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Alghabra, in 2020, you asked the Canadian Transportation Agency to prepare an amendment to the air passenger protection regulations so passengers could be reimbursed for cancelled flights. During the pandemic, people had all kinds of problems getting refunds for cancelled flights.

When will we know the status of this amendment? When will we know if your next regulations will be effective or not?

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Mr. Chair, that's an important question.

When the passenger bill of rights was tabled in the House of Commons and passed, certainly none of us envisioned a pandemic, and the pandemic exposed that some of the provisions of those regulations did not take into account such an emergency. That's why during the pandemic we offered assistance to airlines so they could provide refunds. Now we are enhancing and improving the regulations to ensure that is taken into account moving forward.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Can you assure us that the next version of the regulations will prevent airlines from once again using loopholes to avoid refunding passengers?

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Mr. Chair, our objective is to ensure that those regulations achieve the public policy objectives, and we do our best to ensure that there are no loopholes. I would invite committee members to offer suggestions and ideas as to how to make sure we can achieve that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Alghabra, it appears that companies under your portfolio, such as Canadian National, or CN, and Air Canada, are having a great deal of difficulty complying with the Official Languages Act and applying it as regards respect for French in their operations.

The study of Bill C-13 is proceeding, and it could be adopted soon. Your objective with this bill is to make other organizations—not including CN and Air Canada, which are already subject to the Official Languages Act—subject to the same rules as those two companies.

Given the deplorable situation at CN and Air Canada, in what way will the application of Bill C-13 to the remaining federal organizations improve matters? Would it not be preferable to apply the provisions of Quebec's bill 96 and bill 101?

Is there not a risk that the same situation would arise that we see now at CN and Air Canada?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we do not have enough time for the minister to answer.

Mr. Alghabra, I would ask you to kindly submit your answer to the committee in writing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

● (1150)

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach for two and a half minutes.

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, it's been one year and three months since the tugboat *Ingenika* sank near Kitimat, taking the lives of Troy Pearson and Charley Cragg.

Can your department point to a single, tangible safety improvement that has been put in place to avoid similar deaths?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I will perhaps pass it on to Mr. Brosseau to respond to that question. I know we have put some measures in place.

**Mr. Kevin Brosseau (Assistant Deputy Minister, Safety and Security, Department of Transport):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, we have an oversight program with respect to those vessels of a particular size. The tugs on the west coast tend to be under a certain size and we have an oversight regime that has been amplified with respect to that.

Another element, of course, is being able to deploy on the west coast and have an increased presence, which is very important, as is communication with tugboat operators. Our officials are actively engaged in that work on the west coast, in particular, Mr. Chair.

Those would be tangible examples of the work we are doing with respect to ensuring the safety of tugboats.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Mr. Brosseau.

I had a conversation with a tugboat operator just recently in Prince Rupert. He pointed to something called a tug-to-tow ratio, which is an area of very specific concern for small tugs under 15 tonnes.

Are there currently any rules or legislation that are enforceable and specific concerning tug-to-tow ratios for tugboats under 15 tonnes?

**Mr. Kevin Brosseau:** Mr. Chair, I will have to get back in terms of particular rules.

I think what's really important to remember, Mr. Chair, are the safety management system regulations for all vessels, which will be coming into force in the coming months. With respect to that specific question, Mr. Chair, with your indulgence, I'll be able to respond to that by consulting the marine safety experts within Transport Canada.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** The Auditor General has raised a lot of concerns regarding safety management systems in other sectors such as rail safety. How do you intend to avoid those same problems when applying safety management systems in the marine industry?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Brosseau. Once again we're out of time. I do invite you to provide a written response following the committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach.

Next we have Mr. Dowdall for five minutes.

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here today.

I just want to make a quick comment first. I was kind of disgusted to hear a committee member trying to really downplay witnesses there. I don't think that's good. I did enjoy the minister's answer, so I want to thank you for that.

I have just a couple of quick things.

Mr. Minister, did you get an opportunity to see or hear the May 16 committee when we began the study on reducing red tape?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Yes, I know the committee has issued a report. I can't remember if Transport Canada is issuing a response to it or not, but I got a chance to go over the report.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Good. You would know from that meeting that quite a few people were a little upset, perhaps. I know you said here that governments gave significant dollars. I hear that boasted about quite often in the House as well, but sometimes it's better to boast about results. From what I heard, a lot of the individuals here thought there were things that could be done at no cost that would probably help the aviation business.

One of the ladies was Monette Pasher of the Canadian Airports Council. She actually wrote this in the paper today: "To reduce or

eliminate delays at customs, the most useful action we could take would be to remove public health measures and mandatory random testing at the airport. Around the world, 62 countries—including New Zealand, Sweden, Israel and now Austria—have already removed testing and COVID protocols. Canada must do the same" or else perhaps move it off-site.

What are your thoughts on moving it off-site? Have you heard that?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** It's really important to always be challenged and always look for opportunities to improve efficiency. We also need to be reminded and remind ourselves that some of these measures, as cumbersome as they may seem, are important to protect the health and safety of Canadians. We want to always assess and reassess the application of those rules.

To answer your question directly, at Transport Canada we are looking at ways to work with airports to move testing off-site. We're looking at that, but let me remind everyone, we are going through a pandemic and we are seeing a lot of—

• (1155)

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Yes, we know, Mr. Minister.

I have just one more question, but I don't have much time here.

Your predecessor stated that airlines need to treat passengers like people, not numbers. Under your watch, government agencies have authored the worst passenger rights violations in Canadian history: it takes passengers hours to get through security, infants are trapped in airplanes for hours after these land and stay in customs halls. Travellers are being detained and delayed, and it is unacceptable.

Have you written to the CTA to have them investigate these gross violations? Have you asked your department to draft a standard of care and obligations for PHAC, CBSA and CATSA?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, let me repeat my understanding and empathy for those who have been waiting in lines at airports. This is something that needs to be responded to. I've made it clear in every conversation I have had with CATSA, with airports and with airlines that this is something that needs to be addressed, and we are offering resources—

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Will there be a standard of care?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** —guidance and support every way we can.

Having said that, I want to remind everyone that we are still in a pandemic. We're seeing delays across not just airports around the world, but across all sectors of the economy. This is the aftermath of the challenges that the pandemic has posed for our economy—

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Will there be a standard of care, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** —and having said that, we need to react. We need to be supportive. We need to do everything we can to address these challenges, and we are doing so, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Okay.

One other problem we had and where there are a lot of issues is the carbon tax and the extra cost that it has on fuel.

Is the government looking at anything to help in that way?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, we are working with the sector on sustainable fuel and new technologies to identify and work with new fuels that will reduce emissions yet be able to operate a plane safely and efficiently. Absolutely, we are working with the airline sector. That—

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Do you know that Canada is 107th right now in the world in cost competitiveness in the air field?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, it's a priority for me to ensure that we have a competitive airspace sector and airline sector. It is true that Canada, given its unique landscape and geography, has some challenges, but our priority is the safety of Canadians and the efficiency and productivity of the aviation sector.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Let's try to get that number down a little bit from 107th.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Dowdall.

Thank you very much, Minister.

The last three minutes we have will go to Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Iacono, the floor is yours. You have three minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Hello.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being with us this morning, Mr. Alhabra. I also want to thank the staff members with you.

Mr. Alhabra, the 2022-23 Main Estimates show a 39% increase over last year, which is very substantial. That can primarily be attributed to the increase in planned expenditures for the national trade corridors fund, or NTCF.

Can you explain the government's proposed increase for this initiative?

[*English*]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** It's important to talk about this, because one of the reasons there is an increase in the estimates is the national trade corridors fund. This trade corridors fund is intended to enhance resilience in our supply chains.

Our government had the foresight from last year to include an additional \$1.9 billion of investment in the trade corridors fund to ensure that our supply chains would be enhanced and strengthened by a total now of \$4.2 billion over the last four or five years. This year's budget also offered another almost \$500 million.

The reason there is this significant increase is to reflect the increase and the recapitalization that we've seen in the national trade corridors fund.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Thank you, Mr. Alhabra.

Can you give us some examples of projects funded by the NTCF?

[*English*]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, in my opening remarks, I talked about my visit to New Brunswick last week to support the Port of Saint John, but here are some examples. There is \$50 million for the Montreal airport to renovate the cargo deck. There is another \$50 million to the City of Montreal to improve road access between the Trans-Canada Highway and the port of Montreal. There is \$33 million to the Port de Trois-Rivières to increase cargo capacity there by almost 50%. There is \$5.5 million to the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority for the pier 10 export expansion project; and \$5 million to the Alberta Midland Railway Terminal phase 2 expansion, and the list goes on.

I'd be happy to provide additional examples to you, Mr. Iacono.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Thank you, Mr. Alhabra.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

Minister, on behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you once again for appearing here today, and for providing us with your testimony.

Colleagues, I'm going to suspend the meeting for two minutes, so I can let the minister and his departmental officials leave.

We can then set up to welcome the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Honourable colleagues, this meeting has now resumed. To the second half of our meeting, we are overjoyed to welcome the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc. He is joined by the following departmental officials: Kelly Gillis, deputy minister, infrastructure and communities; Alison O'Leary, senior assistant deputy minister, communities and infrastructure programs; and Glenn Campbell, assistant deputy minister, investment, partnerships and innovation.

Minister, it is a pleasure to welcome you and your team before the committee for the first time in person in quite some time. Before I turn it over to you for your opening remarks, I believe Mr. Badawey has a quick motion to get out of the way.

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Most members, if not all members, have received the travel budget coming into the third quarter of this coming year, September. I wish to put a motion forward to accept that travel budget.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

I believe, Mr. Clerk, the reason we're doing this now is that we're on a tight deadline. Are there any objections to getting that out of the way at the beginning of the meeting?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** It is adopted.

Honourable Minister, the floor is yours. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities):** Mr. Chair, thank you. I want to assure you and colleagues that I share your overjoyed feeling to be here with you. I assure you that the pleasure is, in fact, mine.

I am looking forward to this opportunity to discuss with you how our team at the infrastructure department is delivering for Canadians.

Mr. Chair, I won't repeat it, but you properly welcomed the three senior officials who are joining me today. If there are specific technical questions, they'll be happy to answer questions from colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Our government remains committed to building a better future, a more prosperous Canada that is more resilient and more sustainable. That is why we continue to take vigorous climate action to make life more affordable, to grow our economy, and to create good jobs for Canadians.

While we do this, we are increasing our investments in infrastructure to support Canadians. Our objective is to strengthen our economy and communities in order to offer new opportunities to families, young people and seniors.

[*English*]

We will continue to work with all orders of government, as well as indigenous communities and other partners. Those partners are helping us bring to Canadians major bridge projects, for example, zero-emission transit options and affordable housing. We are helping to improve ventilation in public buildings and investing in green and inclusive community buildings. We are investing in sustainable water and wastewater, as well as natural infrastructure.

Today, Mr. Chair, I am here to discuss Infrastructure Canada's 2022-23 main estimates so that we can continue this important work.

Infrastructure Canada is seeking \$9.3 billion in the 2022-23 main estimates. The majority of this amount, \$6.8 billion, will go toward grants and contributions. The remainder includes \$242 million toward operating expenditures, \$13.8 million toward capital expendi-

tures, as well as \$2.3 billion in total statutory estimates, mainly for the Canada community-building fund, formerly known as the gas tax.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

The amount requested in the main estimates this year represents a net increase of \$2.5 billion over the 2021-22 main estimates, the bulk of which is for grants and contributions. About 25% of the increase for grants and contributions is for the new programs announced in the Fall Economic Statement 2020 and the 2021 budget, which will be implemented over the coming years.

These programs include a number of key programs, specifically the green and inclusive community buildings program, which I mentioned earlier, the public transit infrastructure fund, the natural infrastructure fund, funding for ventilation under the COVID-19 resilience stream of the investing in Canada infrastructure program, and an increase to the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund.

[*English*]

The remaining 75% of the grants and contributions increase is for existing programs, such as the public transit infrastructure fund, the investing in Canada infrastructure program and the additional responsibility of Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy. The increase in operating expenditures of \$86.3 million includes resources secured to deliver the new programs, as well as the mandated transfer to the department of responsibilities for the homelessness policy directorate. As colleagues would know, this was previously with the Department of Employment and Social Development. These, of course, are under my colleague, the Minister of Housing.

Statutory funding has seen an increase of \$8.4 million, related largely to employee benefit plan requirements tied to increases in operating resources.

Finally, capital expenditures represent a decrease in capital funding of \$52.4 million compared with the estimates of last year. This is due primarily to the sunset of funding in the 2021-22 budget for land purchases related to the Gordie Howe International Bridge and the Samuel De Champlain Bridge corridor project, with the latter, the Champlain Bridge in your great province of Quebec, Mr. Chair, to be completed in late 2022.

The year ahead promises to be a busy one. We think it will be a productive one for the team at Infrastructure Canada. We're excited about the new programming, as I said, that was made available largely in the 2021 budget and the fall economic update of 2020.

I look forward during the questions, Mr. Chair, to speaking with you and our colleagues about our department's work and our commitment to serving Canadians in the best way possible.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Leblanc.

[*English*]

Mr. Muys, the floor is yours, for six minutes.

**Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister and the departmental officials for being here today. There is obviously a lot of joy in the occasion, and we share in that, although we do have questions.

Minister, I want to talk a bit further about the Canada Infrastructure Bank. As you know, this committee has recommended its disbandment based on its failures and the expert testimony before this committee.

Related to that, my understanding is that this committee passed a unanimous motion in March 2021. That certainly preceded my time on this committee and your time as minister. The committee asked for details regarding the CEO and director bonuses. I know there was a response provided a few months later that was less than satisfactory. It certainly lacked some accountability.

I want to fast forward a year, now that you're in the chair, and ask whether or not, as the last fiscal year ended, there were any bonuses for CEOs or senior managers at the CIB.

Could you provide any details on that?

• (1215)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** We've obviously taken note of this committee's work with respect to the Infrastructure Bank. We acknowledged that any large new undertaking, such as the Infrastructure Bank, which was created probably five years ago, had some initial growing pains. We believe that the Infrastructure Bank is on a much better footing, perhaps than it was four years ago. I had a chance to meet with the board chair in Vancouver last week.

With respect to executive compensation, that is a very reasonable question. Obviously, the effort in the case of recruiting, for example, the current CEO, with whom I met in Ottawa a couple of months ago.... He was a partner at McKinsey & Company and had worked at Infrastructure Ontario. He had very considerable experience in this area. My understanding is that all of the.... The board, of course, sets the pay and compensation for senior executives. It's entirely consistent with similar organizations in terms of the practice of recruiting talent.

If you have specific questions regarding the bonuses, Mr. Campbell might have that precise information, or I'm happy to forward you what information is publicly available.

**Mr. Dan Muys:** Sure, and I think that's we're asking for. It's for publicly available information, as was provided to the committee when the question was last asked. If that can be tabled with the committee, it would be appreciated.

Related to that, what are the metrics associated with those performance bonuses? In my 25 years in the private sector prior to politics, when you have a situation like the Canada Infrastructure Bank that has completed zero projects, I wouldn't have received a performance bonus for zero results.

I don't know if you can comment further on that.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** I don't want to at all diminish our colleague's experience in the private sector, but to say it has completed zero projects is an oversimplification.

In the last 18 months, there has been a very significant increase in the capital funding made available. It's in the tune of \$7.2 billion for 28 to 30 projects. It represents a total capital investment of over \$20 billion. Again, we're happy to provide the committee—as I know the Infrastructure Bank has made public in the last few weeks—a detailed list of all the projects with which it's involved and the funding it has allocated.

I'm very confident that over the coming months, we'll see the Infrastructure Bank investing in every part of the country in projects that will be very important to Canadians. I'm confident that the last 18 months were different than, perhaps, the previous two years, but I'm very confident that the next 18 months will also show a significant increase in the CIB's activity.

**Mr. Dan Muys:** To that, when you were here last at the end of February—three months ago—you admitted that the CIB needed to raise its game in terms of the pace of attracting private sector investment into these projects—which is certainly a *raison-d'être* of the CIB—and you indicated that you were going to be communicating your expectations to the bank. Three months later, what has been done? Are you satisfied with the progress to date? What can you point to that would be of interest to this committee?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Chair, I think those are very reasonable questions.

I certainly share the impatience of members of this committee and of Canadians to see the value that the bank can bring to these kinds of projects. I've had a number of conversations with both the CEO and the board chair. As I say, we met with the board chair. My deputy and I were in British Columbia last week and spent a couple of hours with Ms. Vrooman. I explained to her what I think is an understandable desire on the part of all Canadians to see the bank relevant in big and small projects across the country. They have invested, as I said, \$7.2 billion of bank capital, which has attracted, as of last month, \$7.6 billion in private and institutional investment.

I certainly take your point that in the initial description of the bank's mandate, there was an expectation or a hope that that private capital portion would be higher. I think we're going to see that grow over time.

• (1220)

**Mr. Dan Muys:** Again, last time you were here, there were 33 projects that had been started—and none completed. Where are we at today, three months later? Have we accelerated that or achieved a higher number?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** We are of course accelerating that, but perhaps Mr. Campbell, you have examples of specific projects to use as an example that might help Mr. Muys.

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Campbell, but we're unfortunately out of time for that segment. I invite you to submit that information by email following the committee today.

Next we have Mr. Badawey.

The floor is yours. You have six minutes.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister, for being here with us today.

I'm going to start off, Minister, by expressing my appreciation for your file. You have infrastructure, you have intergovernmental affairs and you have communities, which are paramount with respect to the direction that we're taking as a government to ensure that ongoing communication gets strengthened. I say this because we do recognize that lots of the files and the issues that we're dealing with are cross-ministerial. I congratulate you for doing that very successfully.

With that said, you've been dealing with different departments, different orders of government and indigenous communities to ensure that strength in communications, as I said earlier. In particular, to get to my question, between Transport, for example, Finance, the provincial government, the municipal government and the private sector... We were down in Washington this past week, and one thing we all agreed upon, binationally, was the need to strengthen our supply chains, our trade corridors, to be more strategic in those investments that we make not just locally or domestically, but between both countries. By integrating the binational strategic trade corridors, including integrating binational capital investments, we ensure, once again, binational fluidity within our supply chains.

We look at the Great Lakes, for example. Can you elaborate on the proposed new funding of \$79.1 million to protect our coastlines and waterways? What will this money pay for and why is it so important?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Badawey, thank you for your comments.

I'll offer a couple of opening comments, and perhaps the deputy can offer some specific information with respect to the waterways you mentioned.

You're right that our department works very closely with Transport Canada on precisely that supply chain resilience. You're absolutely right to say that Canadians are concerned, and properly so, with the security of supply chains and their resilience. The binational aspect of infrastructure is critical. We saw what happened to the Canadian economy when the Ambassador Bridge was blocked some months ago, and what that meant for the thousands and thousands of workers who were on layoff in your province. I think that

reminded Canadians of those very real choke points. That's why obviously the Gordie Howe bridge is a key part of our department's effort to build some resilience in a critical supply chain piece.

I have conversations with the Minister of Transport often about where the infrastructure department can complement some of the trade corridors funding. We don't want to displace their ability to properly identify, as they did last week in Saint John, New Brunswick, infrastructure upgrades to the Port of Saint John to make it easier for container rail service, for example. They're properly focused on that, but there are things that our department can do that will be complementary, that will support those investments and make sure we're getting the very best benefit for the money that that department, or our department, is trying to put in.

With respect to the waterways, I don't know, Kelly, if you want to add to that.

**Ms. Kelly Gillis (Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Communities, Office of Infrastructure of Canada):** I don't have the details of that particular investment. Perhaps we can follow up afterwards to find out which program and which department that particular investment is made through for waterways.

Certainly one really important investment that we are making between our two countries is the investment we are doing through the building of the Gordie Howe International Bridge, which will be a really important trade corridor between our two countries. It is advancing. You can see, now that you're there, the progress in the construction that's being made.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Ms. Gillis. Thank you, Minister.

To dig a bit deeper, we look at what Transport's doing with the ports modernization review, the St. Lawrence Seaway review, and many other reviews that we're doing with respect to the Great Lakes and the blue economy strategy.

Minister, how do you see infrastructure, as you mentioned earlier, aligning, for example, with the NTCF to ensure that we have that fluidity? How do we ensure, again binationally, not only with respect to policy legislation but equally, if not more importantly, with respect to integrating those capital investments in roads, rail, air, water, that our distribution systems are being integrated with when it comes to distributional logistics, and ultimately to meet the demands of fluidity?



• (1225)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** I entirely share your view that we need to look across the Government of Canada to see how different federal departments making investments.... I think of the high-frequency rail investments, for example, that Transport Canada is working on. Our department has a modest role in support of that effort. If you look, as the deputy said, at the Gordie Howe Bridge—and I'm thinking here too of the Champlain Bridge in Quebec—these are critical supply routes for the safe movement of goods and people. The ones that obviously have the highest focus across the government will be these binational infrastructure investments, as you properly noted, Mr. Badawey.

To go back to the previous question about the Infrastructure Bank, I think that one of the things we can do is to ensure that the Infrastructure Bank, which can bring to the conversation different expertise, different financing instruments.... We think that that's part of working, for example, with other partners in the government, but also private sector partners or other orders of government as we try to find the best way.... At a time when fiscal resources are necessarily limited, we want to make sure that we're not tripping over one another or that if the Government of Canada is doing something that's complementary to something that the Government of Ontario or Quebec or New Brunswick is doing, it in fact makes those dollars go further and achieves the objectives that we have in a more efficient way.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you, both.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. LeBlanc. It is so long since the committee has met in person. Obviously, we are pleased to see you.

My questions for you pertain to the 2022 budget. After reading a passage on page 79, I have some questions you may be able to answer. It says: "Budget 2022 signals the government's intention to accelerate the deadline for provinces to fully commit their remaining funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, to priority projects to March 31, 2023. As a measure of fiscal prudence, any uncommitted funds after this date will be reallocated to other priorities."

If I understand correctly, provinces will now have until 2023, and not 2025, to spend the funding provided under the investing in Canada infrastructure program.

What about the amounts that are not spent?

Does that mean that those amounts will no longer go to that program? Will they be reallocated to various other projects?

The provinces will not necessarily keep the unused money because it is not theirs.

Is that correct?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Thank you for your question, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

It should be noted that the Minister of Finance has already decided that the provinces that received funding through programs created under federal-provincial agreements, such as a Canada-Quebec or Canada-New Brunswick agreement, must commit the funds to projects by March 31. The funds do not necessarily have to be spent, but the federal government, and in your case, the Quebec government must agree on a list of projects to receive federal funding.

The projects can be spread out over a number of years, and the funds can be disbursed over a period of ten years after the deadline. If the federal government cannot agree with the Quebec government or New Brunswick government on the list of projects, however, the funds will be recovered by the receiver general of Canada.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you.

From what I understand, the money could still be spent at a later date, as long as a decision has been made or the project has been submitted by March 31, 2023.

Let me explain why I asked this question.

Under the Canada-Quebec integrated bilateral agreement for the investing in Canada infrastructure program, which your government signed in 2018, Quebec has until March 31, 2025 to submit projects.

Am I to understand that this agreement is no longer valid?

• (1230)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** No, that is not the case. By the way, that agreement is working very well.

Last week, Ms. Sonia LeBel and I had a very constructive and positive discussion about the infrastructure projects we would like to conduct in partnership with the Quebec government. I am optimistic about what is happening with the Quebec government and decisions about committing these funds.

Our problem relates to the provinces using up the funding. In British Columbia, for instance—where I was last week—there is essentially no money left. That is also the case in Manitoba and Ontario. These provinces have submitted requests to us. Prince Edward Island has maybe 15% or 30% of the funding that has not yet been committed. Manitoba has essentially no residual funding that has not been committed. That is the case in a number of provinces.

In a way, Quebec is not the worst off. The worst off is Newfoundland and Labrador, followed by my province, New Brunswick.

The Minister of Finance is anxious to see these funds allocated to projects. Some premiers, however, including the Ontario premier, are asking me for a 2.0 version of these programs.

My job is to work with all the provinces to determine what a second version of these programs might be. I told Ms. LeBel that last week. Moreover, we agreed to meet to determine more specifically how this second version can offer a solution that is in the interests of both Quebec and the federal government.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** So if I follow you, Mr. Leblanc, money that is not allocated to projects by March 31, 2023 will be returned to the general fund and you will find other ways of using it. In other words, the deadline of March 31, 2025, set out in the Canada-Quebec bilateral agreement of 2018 is no longer valid. So you unilaterally amended the agreement concluded with Quebec, without negotiation or discussion.

Do you not think that is unusual?

Generally speaking, when an agreement is concluded and papers have been signed, both parties have to honour it.

Is that not the case?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Exactly, but we have the same agreement with 10 provincial governments and three territorial governments. A number of them have chosen projects and allocated funding more quickly than Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and New Brunswick.

The Minister of Finance decided—and I agree with her—that it would be in the interest of Canada's economy and environment to allocate those funds to projects as quickly as possible. As I said, that does not mean that the projects will be completed, but a choice has to be made. The list of potential projects is so long that there will never be enough money to complete them all.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. Leblanc, when I sign a contract with someone, I expect it to be honoured.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, your time is up, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Thank you, Minister.

Next we have Ms. Ashton, who is joining us by video conference.

Ms. Ashton, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello, Mr. Minister.

In the last while, Canadians across the country have lived firsthand the extreme weather events that are increasingly common as a result of climate change. Last summer, Lytton, B.C., was burned to the ground following horrifying wildfires that ravaged the west coast. Last fall, a month's worth of rain fell onto the south coast of B.C. over two days, forcing over 15,000 people to leave their homes. Lives were lost, and communities were destroyed.

Ottawa, where this committee is taking place, is still dealing with the fallout of a storm so extreme that 350,000 people lost power. The Northwest Territories and northern Ontario have been dealing with unprecedented flooding in recent weeks. In my riding, Peguis

First Nation had to evacuate over 1,800 people, and more than 700 homes were impacted. This is a community that has dealt with flooding five times in the last 16 years.

Every year we see more and more of these extreme weather events. It's only getting worse, yet it seems the federal government is always reacting to these events and not making the type of long-term, sustainable investments to help communities keep themselves safe in the face of climate change.

Peguis, for example, has asked for flood mitigation investments to stay safe for over a decade, but the government has largely refused to deliver them. I have put forward Bill C-245 to reform the Canada Infrastructure Bank to support communities in the fight against climate change. The word is that the government will vote against this bill.

On what grounds is your government willing to say no to supporting communities to survive in the face of climate change and to finally put the Canada Infrastructure Bank to good use?

• (1235)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Chair, through you to Ms. Ashton, thank you for the questions. I say questions—plural—because our colleague touched on probably half a dozen different elements in her question.

It won't surprise you, Mr. Chair, that I don't share her view that the government hasn't done anything to get ahead of these extreme weather events and the challenges they represent for infrastructure across the country. She properly identified some of the devastating circumstances in British Columbia, like the atmospheric river event and the fires in Lytton. I was in her province of Manitoba a few weeks ago. I saw the flooding and the circumstances of the flooding in some parts of southern Manitoba.

All across the country we have examples, like the highways that are cut off in Mr. Rogers' province of Newfoundland and Labrador because of washouts on the Trans-Canada Highway. Right across the country, very expensive and very dangerous events are taking place that cause considerable damage to infrastructure and obviously represent a considerable risk to human safety as well.

I don't think that the Infrastructure Bank should be the first and only place that we would go to do this important work with provinces and territories. As our colleague will know, in 2018 the government committed \$3.4 billion to a disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. This isn't an Infrastructure Bank program, which is a loan. This is actual federal money made available to help communities remain resilient in the face of natural disasters. To date, \$2.1 billion of funding has been put out to 70 projects across the country to mitigate the threats of natural disasters, floods, wildfires and droughts.

I think the Canada Infrastructure Bank should and can play a supporting role in some of these projects. For example, in some of the irrigation projects on the Prairies, perhaps some water management projects—

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** I'm just mindful of the time here. I appreciate the feedback in terms of what government is doing.

I do want to bring it back to the Infrastructure Bank to find out exactly what they are doing.

Let's be frank. I imagine that five years ago, what your government envisioned when it comes to the Infrastructure Bank was quite different than what we have today. In conversations with a number of your MPs, it's clear that the CIB is not seen to be doing the work that it should be doing.

I want to focus in particular on one subset of communities that faces the greatest infrastructure challenges. Those are indigenous communities. We know for first nations, the infrastructure gap is \$25 billion to \$30 billion. When you look at the Infrastructure Bank, we know that they have rejected historic numbers of projects relating to indigenous communities because those projects were seen as being too small.

Do you think that the Infrastructure Bank should prioritize projects for indigenous communities and be better represented by including indigenous representation on its board?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Chair, to our colleague, Ms. Ashton, thank you for the question.

I certainly believe, as I know all members do, that the Infrastructure Bank, like every other agency or department of our government, should focus on closing the infrastructure gap that exists for indigenous communities.

The short answer to her question of whether I think the Infrastructure Bank should play a role in supporting indigenous-led infrastructure across the country is of course they should. I've had those discussions with the board chair. I've had those discussions with the CEO. We're looking at renewing the board of the Infrastructure Bank. We're always looking for qualified indigenous persons who could serve on important boards like this. There's one indigenous person who currently serves on the board of the Infrastructure Bank, but there's a vacancy. Some directors will be replaced over the coming months.

If colleagues have suggestions.... Ms. Ashton represents a part of the great province of Manitoba, which has some of Canada's best indigenous leadership. If there are people who colleagues might suggest for indigenous directors of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, we'd be all ears and look forward to including them, if we can, in a way going forward.

• (1240)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Ashton, and thank you, Minister.

Colleagues, if there are no objections—the bells are ringing—I propose that we continue our discussions and questioning until 12:55 p.m. That would give you 16 minutes to make your way to the House should you choose to do so.

Seeing no objections—

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Are we reconvening afterwards?

**The Chair:** I don't believe we're going to have time to do that. Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Clerk.

With that in mind, we'll turn the floor over now to Ms. Lantsman.

You have five minutes. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Thank you so much.

Thank you, Minister, for returning to this committee and to the officials for taking the time.

I want to continue from where my colleague started. I know that you see this as more complicated, but the number of projects that the CIB has started six years into its existence was 33 and zero were completed.

I get that there is a lot of work, but are we still at 33 in terms of projects started?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Chair and Ms. Lantsman, thank you.

In order to provide the most precise information possible to a very reasonable question, perhaps Mr. Campbell can offer the exact number.

**Mr. Glenn Campbell (Assistant Deputy Minister, Investment, Partnerships and Innovation, Office of Infrastructure of Canada):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I'll just remind you that the CIB's engaged in advising investing as well as providing research and analysis to many communities, provinces, municipalities and indigenous groups about their projects and bringing in structuring at a very early stage.

There are currently 34 projects to which the CIB has made a formal investment commitment. Those are outlined on its website. Many more are active or under consideration either in advising or structuring due diligence consideration.

As many of these projects are of the more complicated variety involving the private sector, often they start earlier and are engaged. Some of them, because of their complexity, will take longer to complete.

The CIB also is not a procurement entity, so it, in itself, is not delivering the projects. It is actually making the commitment to enable them.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** I appreciate that. That's from 33 to 34.

Minister, the last time you were at this committee, you rightfully said that the CIB, like my colleague said, needed to “raise its game”.

This committee has recommended the dismantling of the CIB.

You committed to communicating your expectations to the bank. I want to know, for the sake of the committee, if you are seeing any improvements in the last three months. Was there any communication to the CIB?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** I think the short answer, Mr. Chair, is yes.

There have been extensive and ongoing discussions with the Canada Infrastructure Bank. The board chair and the CEO are people with whom I have regular conversations and updates. They were in Ottawa and updated me about a month ago.

I have made it very clear, as have my colleagues at the table who represent our department, which is the shareholder of the bank. We have explained to them our expectations and I am very confident that we're seeing an increase, as Mr. Campbell said, month over month in terms of the bank's outreach to both potential investors and potential project advocates. We're going to see over the coming months a growing list in every part of the country. I'm obviously focused on that coming from Atlantic Canada, to ensure that we have the right regional balance in terms of where the bank is able to support projects as well.

I remain very confident that we have seen, and will see, an increased role.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** Let's talk about a couple of those investments. We talked about Fortis last time.

I want to know this from a seasoned minister and from somebody who has been in and around government a long time. Do you think the investment in Fortis, a company with \$9 billion or \$10 billion dollars of profit, is appropriate as the main shareholder of the bank?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Chair, our colleague Ms. Lantsman will understand that one reason we set up a structure like a crown corporation is precisely so the board of directors and the senior executives of the bank are the ones that make those individual investment decisions.

I'm not involved in the decision to allocate X million dollars to project Y. We give the bank a set of expectations. We give them direction in terms of the areas we'd like to see them work.

I am confident that the bank makes those decisions on the best interest of Canadian taxpayers.

Mr. Campbell said....

• (1245)

**Mr. Glenn Campbell:** The investment is actually in the project; it's not in the company, so ITC Fortis is a counterpart—

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** As a steward of our tax dollars and as a minister in the government, do you think a project like Fortis is appropriate?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** The board of directors of the Canada Infrastructure Bank thought that the project was important. I hadn't thought of it as concisely as Mr. Campbell did, but we have to be careful not to pick a series of partners in any one project and decide that is the right particular corporate entity that should participate in a particular project. That certainly doesn't feel like the role of a minister—

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** We can take away the—

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** I'm sure the due diligence of the bank took all that into account.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** That's too bad. I was just getting started.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lantsman.

Next we have Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister. It's good to see you today.

Minister, as you know, infrastructure needs are appearing across the country, particularly in rural and northern areas like we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, and your province of New Brunswick. We're already receiving support from the rural and northern communities infrastructure stream to upgrade roads and marine infrastructure among other things in Bonavista-Burin-Trinity, my riding of course, but there's always more to be done. Every day, Canadians know the needs best of what needs to be done.

The national infrastructure assessment is a step in the right direction to determine these needs. Could you please describe the engagement you've received from Canadians on development of this initiative and what the next steps are in its implementation?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Rogers, thank you for the question and for your leadership in advocating for some of these smaller rural communities and their particular infrastructure needs across the country. If it's true in your great riding in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it's true in other small communities across the country.

I can tell you that I had a lengthy conversation with your premier last evening and, as I said to your colleagues on the other side of the table, Newfoundland and Labrador has a considerable balance left in its infrastructure funding. As we said to our friend from the Bloc, I said to the premier of your province that we had a very short timeline to work with the members of Parliament from his province to identify those projects where we could invest.

As you said, Mr. Rogers—and I think he referred to some conversations he had with you last week as well—in your province the Trans-Canada Highway is a critical piece of the economic infrastructure of the island that you represent. I'm very confident that with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in the coming months we will find a great list of investments that Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador would be able to make, and some smaller municipalities that would participate in other kinds of projects.

The national infrastructure assessment was something that our government thought was important and was modelled on work that, for example, is done in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. A number of other jurisdictions have an independent and long-term professional assessment of the infrastructure needs of communities, if it's rapid transit or water and wastewater infrastructure. We're in the process of finalizing what it would be. You'll note that in the budget a year and a few months ago we were allocated \$20-some million to set up this national infrastructure assessment. We're well on our way. The first step, as you properly noted, was to consult with Canadians. I forget the exact number, but we had over 300 submissions from Canadians, many of them experts in the field. I spoke at the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering meeting in British Columbia last week. These are the kinds of people who had very thoughtful ideas. I had a conversation with them about the national infrastructure assessment.

We think there's a real appetite to participate in this work.

Mr. Rogers, I will make sure that it's not only a few big cities that drive that conversation, but that the work is also relevant in small communities like the ones you and I represent.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** I truly appreciate that, Minister.

The other question I have for you is about the fixed link project that we've talked about, between Labrador and the island portion of the province.

• (1250)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Not between New Brunswick and P.E.I.?

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** That's going well. It's 25 years old.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** No, I mean the one between Labrador and the island of Newfoundland. I wonder if you would give us an update. What is the status of the report that's being done examining that particular project?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Those projects are truly transformational. Our colleagues from Prince Edward Island talked to us about what it meant. It's disturbing now that people.... The bridge to P.E.I. leaves from my riding, so people go to P.E.I. on holidays, and take a day trip. They then turn around and go back to the island because of the bridge. That can be transformational to local economies and to supply chains, as per Mr. Badawey's comments.

As you'll know, Mr. Rogers, the Canada Infrastructure Bank, in its advisory and consultative capacity that Mr. Campbell spoke of, did an initial assessment of a potential fixed link between the Island of Newfoundland and Labrador. My understanding is that it has completed a preliminary assessment, or an initial assessment. That work has been given by the bank to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I look forward to having an opportunity with our colleagues from your province, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, to look at next steps. I haven't had any specific conversations with the premier or with ministers in the provincial government, but I know that they now have at least the initial assessment

based on the Infrastructure Bank's work of a year, or a year and a half, ago.

I'd be happy to get you more information on that exact project.

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** I would love to get that information, Minister. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you now have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the Canada-Quebec bilateral agreement for the investing in Canada infrastructure program, your government stipulates, in points 3A and 3B, that funding under the public transit infrastructure fund and the clean water and wastewater fund that are not used in phase 1 could be used for other streams of the investing in Canada infrastructure fund for Quebec.

According to the available information, about \$300 million has not been spent.

Did your government transfer those funds to the remaining envelope of the investing in Canada infrastructure fund in the case of Quebec?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** We can provide specific amounts, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. We have not, however, transferred to Quebec, Ontario or other provinces amounts that have not been spent.

Are you talking about old programs from the time of the previous government?

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** I am talking about the investing in Canada infrastructure program, for which an agreement was concluded in 2018, and specifically points 3A and 3B. This agreement was concluded by your government, a Liberal government.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Okay.

As I said, I will be very clear. Amounts that have not been spent by March 31, 2023 will be recovered by the receiver general of Canada. They will not be transferred to the provinces. No province will have that money unless we agree on a joint list of projects. That will of course take a number of years.

I do not want you to be pessimistic. I have full confidence in your provincial government. We will get there.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Let me go back to points 3A and 3B.

The programs mentioned ended on March 31, 2020.

Will the money that was not used by March 31, 2020 be transferred to the remaining envelope, to be used by March 31, 2023?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** No, it will not.

You are talking about funding allocated for phase 1. Public servants refer to that as funding inherited from other programs. The amounts that have not been spent will not be transferred to the current investing in Canada infrastructure fund, whose funding must be spent by March 31, 2023.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** For a second time, you are not honouring the agreement with Quebec.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Minister, and your departmental officials for appearing before the committee today. It was indeed the enjoyable experience we thought it would be. We look forward to hosting you once again in the near future.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, colleagues.

● (1255)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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