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Chair: Mr. Robert Kitchen



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• (1315)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 18 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

Today we will be continuing our study on the national shipbuilding strategy. We will also discuss committee business during that last 60 minutes of today's meeting. Fortunately, although we have been delayed a little getting started, we do have some leeway in our second hour.

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

Regarding the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they're participating virtually or in person. I'd like to take this opportunity to remind all participants who are here at this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, the following are recommended for all those attending in person.

Anyone with symptoms should participate by Zoom and not attend the meeting in person. Everyone must maintain a two-metre physical distancing whether seated or standing. Everyone must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is recommended in the strongest possible terms that members wear their masks at all times, including when seated. Non-medical masks, which provide better clarity over cloth masks, are available in the room.

Everyone present must maintain proper hand hygiene using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance. Committee rooms are cleaned before and after each meeting, but it is helpful and we encourage you to clean surfaces, such as the desks, the chair and the microphone, with the provided disinfectant wipes when vacating or taking a seat. As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting. I thank members in advance for their cooperation.

With that, I would like to welcome our witnesses. I appreciate both of you being here today. We will hear from Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Bureaux.

Just a reminder, the presentations that you have provided for us will be provided to every committee member so that they have access to it.

Mr. Bureaux, would you like to make your opening statement, please?

Mr. Don Bureaux (President, Nova Scotia Community College): Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon.

[*English*]

As was mentioned, my name is Don Bureaux, and I have the honour of being the president for the Nova Scotia Community College. Greetings from the beautiful Annapolis Valley here in Nova Scotia.

It was a very special day in October 2011 when all Nova Scotians collectively celebrated the awarding of the multi-million dollar shipbuilding contract to Irving Shipbuilding to of course construct combat ships for the federal government. The interest in being part of this project was certainly intense, and the excitement around a rebirth of our place in the nation as a shipbuilding province drew an unprecedented sense of pride.

I became president of the Nova Scotia Community College that same year. We are a pan-provincial college. We're the only publicly funded college in Nova Scotia, and we have 17 locations, with a mandate to help build a workforce for our province.

Since then, we've worked very hard and very proudly with the Irving Shipbuilding company as they came out of the starting gate strong to lay the foundation to launch this massive project. Part of their submission, of course, was a value proposition that included the work we've partnered on over the past number of years to enrich and build the skills and the dynamic of its workforce by ensuring, quite frankly, that all hands were on deck.

To kick-start this positive partnership, we signed an MOU with Irving to set up a centre of excellence. One of the major initiatives emerging from this centre was our pathways programming. The focus of this was to open doors to those historically under-represented in the shipbuilding industry. This included women, African Nova Scotians, indigenous, disabled and new Canadian learners.

A critical piece of our graduate success has been the support from our communities. Partners like the East Preston Empowerment Academy, the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society, and Women Unlimited have given invaluable onboarding and continuing support for the learners throughout the entire journey.

We've had a number of people graduate from this program, with the majority heading to the shipyard for work placements and mentoring into eventual employment.

One of the keys to the program's success has been the unique cultural guidance and enrichment provided by our community partners for the students, for us as a college and for Irving, with a 14-week prep program interwoven with significant cultural threads to create a supportive community of learners built upon shared cultural experiences. NSCC and Irving continue to work with our partners, which include the provincial and federal governments, unions, industry associations and our local apprenticeship agency, to grow more developmental opportunities, including student awards.

The college has also helped train and upskill hundreds of individuals through our customized training team, and our team continues to develop training supports to help hone the skills of those building Canada's ships. At the same time that the work of the centre was under way, the college, with Irving, added to its infrastructure to support the growing needs. This included a new community learning centre in Amherst, with new programming; two new metal trades labs in our metro Halifax and Cape Breton campuses; a new pipe trades lab at our Halifax campus; and a new lab and programming at our Kentville campus.

I have submitted a briefing document with greater detail, but the facts and figures just don't provide the full extent of the project's dividends. The words and the personal transformations of our graduates tell so much more.

For example, Antonia Wareham, one of our first grads, who is now a mentor to those who have followed in the program, said, "I'm incredibly proud.... The Pathways program makes the industry more diverse and gives it a better chance [for] flawless success." Sattina Dabb said, "I am now a woman in trades. I can be a role model [for] my children, especially my daughter." Finally, Brad Paul said, "I wanted a career that was not only fulfilling for me, but [it] more importantly, ensured my daughter has the opportunities I didn't have."

Our mission at the college is simple. It's to build the economy and quality of life of Nova Scotia through education and innovation one learner at a time. Our partnership with Irving to support this strategic work fits perfectly with that mission. The transformational changes this partnership has fostered with individuals like Antonia, Sattina and Brad speak to the priceless ripple effects stemming from this contract's value proposition.

What began a decade ago as a major economic advantage to our region, and what one observer called an "optimism dividend", has taken on even greater significance with rising global activity. It has crystalized for all the importance of investing in a skilled workforce able to fulfill this national contract.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for the honour of speaking on behalf of the college today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bureaux.

Mr. Mitchell, if you have a quick opening statement, you now have the floor.

Mr. Paul Mitchell (Professor, Canadian Forces College, As an Individual): In reviewing the testimony presented before this committee, I note that many have remarked on the difficult nature of defence procurement, and no other area has this difficulty, which nearly caused the elimination of a CAF capability through the failure to make a decision. Submarines are a classic case in this and remain so.

Unless the government makes an explicit announcement that submarines will be replaced in the next update of our defence policy, it is very likely that our present class of these vessels will be our last. The loss of submarines will leave our navy far less capable in a world where the number of navies operating them is growing rather than shrinking.

The present national shipbuilding strategy has no plans for the replacement of the Victoria-class submarines operated by the RCN.

"Strong, Secure, Engaged" only commits to their modernization. This process is already under way, which will keep the four boats working until roughly 2035. At that point, the oldest submarine in the fleet, HMCS *Chicoutimi*, will be 52 years old. Further operations will be done under considerable risk.

The year 2035 is only 13 years from now. Complex defence procurement projects like the next generation fighter and the Canadian surface combatant have both been extant for two decades and have yet to deliver replacements for the aging systems now being used. While extending the lifetime of a surface vessel is a challenge, with a submarine, it very much places the crew at direct risk.

In the 1990s, the submarine service went through a near-death experience due to the political indifference to the professional advice of the navy. This indifference was extended right up to the last minute, with a level of bargaining for a steeper price discount than what had already been negotiated, end results that may have enhanced some of the problems the RCN has experienced in operationalizing the boats. It is not entirely clear that the political system remains indifferent to the future of Canadian submarine service, but this time around, there will be no fire sale option to rescue it, should that be the case.

The recent AUKUS deal between the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia highlights the role of nuclear submarines. The RCN has consistently argued that nuclear boats are preferable to conventional boats. Some may feel that this is due to the icy nature of our Arctic waters, which poses difficulties for conventional submarines due to their need to periodically surface. The travel times involved in getting a Canadian submarine on station, either in our Arctic regions or internationally, however, have more to do with recommending a nuclear option, as such boats can travel at high speeds under water indefinitely.

While either conventional or nuclear, if Canada is to replace its submarines, it will need to make decisions to do so very shortly. The navy has consistently advanced sound strategic reasons for Canada to operate these systems.

Given the complexity of their design and construction, as well as the specificity of our own requirements, we will need to work closely with a company with an established track record in building these submarines. Most off-the-shelf systems will not immediately meet the needs of the RCN, and not every nation building submarines may want to co-operate with us.

Further, despite the investments made by the national shipbuilding strategy, Canadian shipyards have not built submarines since World War I, and re-creating the industrial capital to do so would itself be a highly expensive proposition, as the Australians discovered with their own Collins-class submarine program.

Thankfully, the Victoria-class in-service support contract has allowed for the development of a local industrial ecosystem that will permit any acquired vessel to be supported and maintained. While the Victoria-class has been unfairly maligned in the court of public opinion and within the media, many of the problems associated with the class can be ascribed to the manner in which they were purchased and the dire state into which the submarine service had fallen by the late 1990s. We have a brief window of opportunity to ensure that these events are not repeated.

The government has announced that SSE will be reviewed shortly. In this review, Canada should make the call as to whether it wishes to maintain the capability. The longer the decision is post-

poned, the more likely it becomes that the Victoria-class will be the last such boats operated by the RCN.

That concludes my statement, and I'm prepared to receive any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mitchell.

With that, we will start questions with Mr. Paul-Hus for six minutes.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, gentlemen, and thank you for being with us today.

Mr. Mitchell, I think that more and more people are beginning to understand that, strategically speaking, there is a threat coming from the north, from the Arctic sector. And Canada is a country surrounded by three oceans.

You do training, you train officers. So you are in direct contact with the military.

Based on the discussions you have had, are you able to understand why no one, at the political level, is showing any interest in moving quickly to acquire the submarine?

Why is there a disconnect between Canada's operational needs and the political decisions?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Mitchell: I'm sorry. I did not receive any of the interpretation on that. Again, I really apologize.

The Chair: I've stopped the clock temporarily.

Mr. Paul-Hus, could you re-ask your question, please?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Okay.

Gentlemen, thank you for being with us today.

Canada is surrounded by three oceans, and we know very well that, strategically speaking, there is a threat from the Arctic, from the north, and that the Russians and the Chinese are present in the area.

Mr. Mitchell, you are in contact with the military because you are involved in their training. You talk a lot with the military. From a strategic and military point of view, it is obvious that we need the submarine.

Could you explain to me why, on the political level, there does not seem to be a will in that regard? What would be the reason from a political point of view?

[English]

Mr. Paul Mitchell: I think that any capability that is primarily organized around offensive operations is controversial for most Canadians. Because we are surrounded by three oceans and our southern border is guarded by a superpower, most Canadians believe, in effect, that we live in a gated community. Security is an afterthought for the majority of Canadians. I believe that the political system responds to this.

It is often difficult to articulate what exactly the threat to the Arctic is. There are threats that come through the Arctic in the form of missiles and possibly in the form of submarines, but by and large, our Arctic is fairly secure given the difficulty of operating up there.

In terms of the submarine threat, I think it is largely a hypothetical one. Certainly there is the possibility that the Russians, the Chinese or another nation—even one of our allies—might be able to put a submarine through there, but to what end is the principle concern. The ranges for things like submarine-launched ballistic missiles and the hypersonic cruise missiles some of them are capable of launching are such that really they aren't required to put a submarine to do such launches into our Arctic waters anymore, whereas during the 1960s that was not the case.

I think the submarine threat is largely a hypothetical one. It is possible that in the future, moving through Canadian waters might shorten the transit time for some submarine voyages and there might be a desire to do so. It would be a tricky manoeuvre, given the lack of information on hydrography and oceanography and the understanding of the bottom profile. The risk of grounding your sub or hitting the side of an underwater promontory or an island itself would be fairly significant.

That said, there is more to recommend submarines than simply the Arctic option. Clearly, they bring enormous capabilities in terms of strategic deterrents, in terms of their intelligence capability and especially in terms of the support to fleet operations for a whole variety of different functions that a Canadian task group might undertake while under way or train against prior to deployment.

All of those things recommend submarines, but explaining that to the Canadian public is a very challenging task. The technicalities of it and the levels of classification make it inherently difficult.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Paul Mitchell: I think that explains why there is a lot of resistance to the notion of submarines, particularly because of the difficulty we've had in operationalizing them since 1998. I think that contributes to it as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Okay.

We don't necessarily have to wait for the public to understand these problems. I think there are some tactical and strategic decisions that simply have to be made by the government.

In our committee, we talk a lot about procurement. The purpose of the committee is also to identify ways to be efficient and to improve defence procurement. You say that if Canada decided to buy submarines, it would take a minimum of 15 to 20 years to get the first ones.

What would be the best way for the Government of Canada to acquire submarines more quickly?

Should we buy submarines from abroad and then maintain them here in Canada to reap the economic benefits?

Do you have any thoughts on how that could be done?

[English]

Mr. Paul Mitchell: Unfortunately, there's no simple solution to submarine procurement, because of the complexity of the weapons system.

There are many different types of submarines available, both conventional and nuclear, but the options that are available from German, French or Spanish shipyards, and programs that are in development with Korea and Japan have been designed specifically for local requirements. Canadian submarines need to be ocean-going and globally deployable, rather than just simply operating in the littoral regions. That's why many European designs are not effective.

They need to have long endurance without access to support facilities. All of these things make designing a submarine specifically for Canadian requirements inherently difficult, and that is why—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mitchell. I apologize for interrupting, but we are facing time constraints. If you have more you feel you can add to that answer, by all means, please submit it to the clerk in writing and he will disseminate it to all the committee members.

We'll now go to Mr. Housefather for six minutes.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses for being here today. I'm glad the technical issues got sorted out for Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Bureaux, I'm going to start with you.

I think this educational program, the pathways program, and the overall program to train people to work in our shipyards is phenomenal. I want to understand... What percentage of your graduates are placed with Irving? Is there an agreement with Irving that they will take all of those who want to go and work there, at least for an internship program, if not employment?

Could you explain what the relationship is?

Mr. Don Bureaux: There is an agreement that students who successfully complete the program will be able to complete that part of the program, which is a hands-on, in the place of work component. Given the need for labour and the workforce, Irving has basically been hiring all the folks we were able to graduate.

In fact, we had a class in 2020. Twenty individuals started from our African Nova Scotian community. Twenty graduates completed the program. Twenty graduates then went on to complete the work term, and 20 were hired. We've had great success with that for that flow-through, especially at a time, again, when the workforce is so critical.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, 100%.

I want to understand. I want to delve into this a bit. This is a two-year program, overall. Is that correct?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Yes.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: How many students are there in the different groups that you are bringing in each year? What's the overall number of students that you're able to admit to the class each year?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Again, there are different types of programs. There are programs that we would call "customized" programs, which are a bit shorter and a bit tighter. They would go up to a two-year program.

We operate a very flexible model, so if there's a particular need for us to expand the number of seats, we can do that very quickly. We're able to handle a cohort of 20 or 200, or even higher if the demand is there.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: There's clearly a demand on the shipyard's part, in needing qualified employees to build these ships. One of the issues that we hear about all the time with delays is the lack of qualified personnel.

Is the issue then the number of people who want to enter the program or the quality of the people who apply to the program, to not have a class of 200 every year, for example?

• (1340)

Mr. Don Bureaux: That's such a great question and there's such a long answer to that. What is so great about this program is that we're creating a different narrative for the shipbuilding industry. For far too long if you were a young person looking at a career, you did not think of shipbuilding as a viable career, nor did your parents, quite frankly. Now, because we have this length of time, we have a 30-year horizon in which people could start and retire in the same career, that's changed the whole story here in Atlantic Canada.

We had to go back into the public school system and reorientate or tell a different story as to what a career in shipbuilding could look like. Because of that, because we're avoiding these peaks and troughs, it will be much more stable. Now we have our young people thinking, there's a career that I'd like to explore. Even beyond that, it's a career that not only includes the trades but also robotics, automation, and health and safety. Even students who study gaming are able to get into a viable career in the shipbuilding industry right now.

It has been a relearning and a recalibration of what the sector could include.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: It's amazing. In terms of other groups especially that are not usually seen in the shipbuilding, you've made an extra effort to reach out and include them, which is fantastic.

Have you had any discussions with comparable institutions in British Columbia, Quebec or Ontario related to doing things at other shipyards similar to what you're doing in Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Absolutely. In terms of the network in Canada, which is represented by our national body, Colleges and Institutes Canada, there's a very strong collaborative partnership ethos amongst the institutions. Not only would we share curriculum and expertise for shipbuilding, we share it right across the entire board. We've also had people, of course, looking internationally.

This is a best practice initiative, and we want to bring the best, whether we have to create it ourselves or bring it from afar in order to do an even better job.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Do you know of any colleges similar to yours that are going to start in other provinces to do this type of comparable program?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Again, I can get you that, Mr. Housefather. I can get that information to you. In terms of the specific pathway program for people who have faced traditional barriers, I can certainly get that to you. Again, for us, that's the critical kind of unanchoring, if you will, pardon the pun, of barriers that people have faced, and to pursue this, it just changes the entire narrative of a community when you see a diverse workforce.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, 100%.

Mr. Mitchell, I read your articles with great interest. I'm going to ask for a succinct answer to this. You mentioned in one of your articles that "In strategy, geography matters. Canada is isolated, which has been a blessing, but it might become a curse should the U.S. turn hostile to our interests and values."

I assume that's related to isolationism, the attitude the Trump administration took towards NATO and international partnerships, that we should be wary about it and not just rely on the U.S. to defend us. Is that where you were going with that?

The Chair: If you could answer fairly quickly, we'd appreciate that.

Mr. Paul Mitchell: I agree with what you say, yes. Even under the Biden administration, we've seen punitive trade policies that were started under the Trump administration continue. Certainly the political circumstances in the United States are very unsettled at the moment.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Ms. Vignola for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being with us today.

Mr. Bureaux, as a former teacher, I know that partnerships can not only provide the economy with specialized workers in areas where there is a shortage of labour, but also have a positive effect on the retention of young people in school.

Do you have any data on the effect of the pathways to shipbuilding program on the retention of youth under 18 and dropouts?

Are many returning to school as a result of the partnership you have established?

Do you have any figures on workers who didn't like their jobs or couldn't find work in their field and decided to retrain through Pathways to Shipbuilding?

Do you have any data on those three things?

• (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Don Bureaux: Yes, we would have data, as I mentioned earlier, on completion rates, on people who apply for programs, complete the programs and go on to work. Beyond that, in terms of our impact on young potential students who are exploring this as a career, I would say that we have less hard data on it but very anecdotal data.

In terms of the number of students in Nova Scotia who now are looking at an ocean-related career, I think the important thing to remember is that, whether it's shipbuilding or beyond, the entire ocean sector has been made better as a result of this workforce strategy to tell a different kind of future in terms of a career in this area. In terms of our work with young potential students and going back into the high schools, one of the things we'd do is put on summer camps, for example. We'd go into the high schools and have students explore the opportunities that this may present.

I'll just finish by saying that our research does tell us that one of the most important influencers on a young person's decision to pursue a particular career remains with the parents. It's the conversations at the supper table that help shape a future career path or learning path for young students. We very much encourage parents to come in and see what's being done. They can tour the facilities and participate in open houses to help inform that conversation at the dinner table.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you very much.

Earlier you said that all of the people in your 2020 cohort were hired by Irving Shipbuilding.

How many cohorts have you had so far?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Bureaux: So far, we have had three cohorts. We're looking at starting a fourth cohort. That's the number we've had so far.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay.

Were the people in those three cohorts all hired in the shipbuilding industry?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Bureaux: Yes. I don't have in front of me the exact number, but I can say with confidence that a very large percentage of the individuals did go on and secure employment with the shipbuilding industry.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: To your knowledge, is the retention rate good for people who have been hired in the shipbuilding industry? Are they still there after one year, two years, three years?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Bureaux: Again, that's a great question. The retention rate is very high. We appreciate with Irving the commitment that they've made to make the workplace a safer workplace, a workplace that recognizes the importance of diversity and a workplace that recognizes the differences in different cultures. We've learned from day one that not only do we have to prepare our students for success. We also have to prepare the workplace for success, through committees and different cultural experiences that create that soft landing for those students. Because of that, the retention rate is high.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you very much.

In the 10 years since the 2011 announcement, which certainly brought a wave of positivity to Nova Scotia, how many people in total have been trained in your three cohorts?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Bureaux: We have a number of different program streams. In the stream of the pathways cohort, we've had 65 to date. In other streams, we've had close to 300 trained.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: You mentioned 300 people.

Did I hear you correctly?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Bureaux: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay.

In terms of the economy and the gross domestic product of Nova Scotia, are you seeing any benefits from the pathways to shipbuilding program, which is for youth in the shipbuilding industry?

If so, what are those benefits?

• (1350)

[English]

Mr. Don Bureaux: I don't have at my fingertips right now a measure for an economic impact measured as per GDP. I do want to stress that there's actually a third stream too, which is individuals who have pursued our core programming in the trades and other areas and have gone on to work with Irving.

That, in fact, is a harder number to identify. When the shipbuilding contract was first announced 10 years ago, the applications to our college and our general programming like welding and pipefitting just skyrocketed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bureaux. As I indicated to Mr. Mitchell, if you have anything further that you can add to that, by all means, please submit it to the clerk and we will distribute that.

We will now go to Mr. Johns for six minutes.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Thank you, both, for your important testimony.

Mr. Bureaux, I really appreciate the work you're doing, by the way, in your program.

You talked a lot about under-represented groups and working with the Mi'kmaq. I really appreciate that. Could you talk about some of the barriers some of those students might face, or barriers that under-represented Black and indigenous people might have to entering a program like yours?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Mr. Johns, thank you for such a great question.

There are a number. Let's begin with financial. The cost of our programming is watched very closely to make sure that our tuition is kept as low as possible, but those financial barriers are still there, so we want to make sure that we're able to provide assistance when it comes to tuition.

Number two would be things like child care and distance to learning. A person who does not have transportation would find it to be a very difficult task to travel to class. We have to be mindful of that. Access to technology is an area that we have to pay particular attention to.

There's one, though, that's more systemic, Mr. Johns, and that is that almost 40% of our learners are the first people in their family ever to go to post-secondary education, and that creates a new norm in that family. As you can imagine, if you have just one individual in the household who receives a post-secondary education, that dramatically changes the norm or the culture of that household.

On the other side, though, with nobody else in the household having experienced post-secondary education, the rhythm of mid-terms and final exams and assignments is not well understood and, therefore, not supported at times.

Mr. Gord Johns: I'm going to go specifically to indigenous children, because there is a connection, I believe. We know indigenous children today are many times more likely to be taken from their families and placed into the foster care system than are non-indigenous children. These children are vulnerable under legacies of colonialism and the illegal taking of these children from their lands and

their resources through Canada's residential school system, the sixties scoop and continued systematic removal of children from their families into foster care by provincial governments.

We know that people who have been in care are far more likely to experience homelessness and mental health crises. You talked about the economic opportunities and the changing of the course. Ralph Nilson, the president of Vancouver Island University, offered free tuition for children coming out of care, and that has changed the lives of these youth. Now the B.C. NDP is doing that.

Do you think that Canada could play a role in helping to support, specifically, children coming out of care to end this terrible legacy that we have going on right now? I believe what you're talking about is embedded in the truth and reconciliation calls to action numbers one to nine. Maybe you could speak a bit about the importance of senior levels of government helping these students.

Mr. Don Bureaux: I know Dr. Nilson well. In fact, I worked with him at Acadia University back in the day, and he's been a mentor of mine.

Towards that end, we offer exactly the same option at NSCC. If an individual has been in care, they can come to NSCC with no tuition being owed to us.

Yes, again, there's absolutely an economic barrier. I think that, nationally, it would perhaps be something we would want to explore. I think that would be an excellent idea. What we're also realizing is the value of having an elder on campus, for example. When our indigenous students face challenges, the colonial system over the past hundred years or more has created norms that our indigenous students haven't experienced, so for us to have an indigenous elder on campus who the student could go to would be invaluable. Also, Mr. Johns, we recognize that cultural symbols are critically important on our campuses.

The third thing I will say is that it's important to take learning to where the learners are. Towards that end, we have actually opened up a learning centre on a first nation community where the students can be exposed to what it means to be a post-secondary student in a safe, welcoming environment on reserve, and then they're able to progress more comfortably into one of our campuses and then on to a career.

• (1355)

Mr. Gord Johns: I appreciate it.

Right now we have a robust shipbuilding sector happening and developing in Port Alberni. In my riding, we have the only deep-sea port on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Mr. Don Bureaux: Right.

Mr. Gord Johns: I know the local indigenous people—the Nuu-chah-nulth people, Tseshah, Hupacasath and Huu-ay-aht—have huge aspirations.

Can you speak about how other institutions could learn from your institution or how you could pivot and support across the country the work that you're doing?

Mr. Don Bureaux: The desire to pivot and support is where it begins. We are fully committed to that. If there's any institution, sir, in your riding that we could possibly share with and help, we'd be more than happy to do that.

One of the keys to all of this—and I don't think it's going to be a surprise to anybody—is the importance of communication, going into the community and deeply listening to what the barriers are. That's what we found to be so important, to sit down with the elders in the community, understand what those barriers are and then work collectively to solve them.

If I can say anything, it's that this has been one of the critical successes. In fact, we've developed joint steering committees, joint working committees, where we come together with our first nation communities. Sometimes the agenda is simply to talk and get to know each other without a particular set of outcomes.

Mr. Gord Johns: Thank you so much.

How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: There goes the buzzer right now—perfect timing.

Mr. Gord Johns: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. McCauley for five minutes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Thanks, folks. I'm sorry I cannot be there in person.

Mr. Mitchell, I want to just chat about subs a tiny bit with you.

You spoke about the need for RCN subs to have a global reach as opposed to a more local reach, as perhaps the Japanese and Germans and Spanish are building. Could you explain why you think we need a more global reach?

Mr. Paul Mitchell: Absolutely.

It goes back to your colleague's comment about the fact that we're surrounded by three oceans and our southern border is guarded by a superpower.

Clearly, the maritime approaches of this country need to be guarded carefully. That might require a submarine that has a much shorter range than one that the RCN would prefer to operate. Nevertheless our ability to deploy on a global basis is something our navy prides itself on. We've sent task groups as far away as the Persian Gulf, which is practically on the other side of the planet, and we operated submarines off the coast of North Korea in 2017.

Our ability to cover those areas off is an important consideration in terms of a task group operation.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Can I interrupt here?

I appreciate what you're saying, and I'm not arguing or disagreeing with you. It's more that we have a tradition of this, or we'd like to do this as a very joint.... It's not necessary if we picked up subs to have such ability, though. I mean, the *Chicoutimi* was able to do that, but for any new subs we could stick to our own shores almost, if we chose to.

Mr. Paul Mitchell: Absolutely. We could stick to our own shores—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm not pushing for one or the other. It's more to learn.

Mr. Paul Mitchell: Absolutely.

A submarine that's capable of only doing littoral operations by virtue of the fact it has a limited range could still perform a vital training function for task group operations on a global basis.

One of the things, though, that would be very challenging would be to send the submarine up into the Arctic. The distances that are involved even from Halifax, going up the east coast through the Davis Strait and into the Arctic, are significant. Basically, to take a submarine into the Arctic, you're going to need a range and endurance that a globally deployable system brings with it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You mentioned earlier about the subs in the Arctic. I'm going to get this wrong here, but it sounded like you were describing an almost perceived threat from others. I can't remember the exact words you used. I apologize, I'm fighting an asthma head cold.

• (1400)

Mr. Paul Mitchell: It's a hypothetical threat.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: If it is a hypothetical threat, would we be better off, say, pouring all our resources into icebreakers, with a strategic partnership with our American allies, saying that we'll push everything into here. They'd look after the sub parts, and we'd do everything with polar icebreakers to cover that part.

Is there any value in that, or do we need to cover every contingency within our own RCN?

Mr. Paul Mitchell: Effectively, you would be ceding a certain level of sovereignty if you were to rely on American assets to patrol Canadian territory. That is the simple answer to that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: We almost do that right now with the F-22s out of Alaska.

Mr. Paul Mitchell: We do retain a certain fig leaf in the form of forward-operating locations for CF-18s and the ability to deploy in surge capability into the Arctic. We are heavily reliant on American assets; that is absolutely certain. Nevertheless, to completely rely on them, you're placing an enormous burden of trust on another nation that they will, in fact, share the information they are gathering during their operations in the north.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What do you think of our country being left out of that new agreement the Americans struck with the Aussies?

Mr. Paul Mitchell: I think there is a diplomatic angle there that is troubling in the sense that Canada is outside of three of the Five Eyes that we normally co-operate with very closely. That is a troubling statement on, perhaps, the part of Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom about our reliability as a partner.

In terms of the technology-sharing aspects, until the government decides or if the government decides that it wants to pursue a nuclear route, it's neither here nor there in regard to those aspects. If we choose to stay with conventional boats, then we don't need to be jumping into that particular arrangement.

I do think there is a strategic message being sent by the fact that we were not part of that group.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

We'll now go to Ms. Thompson for five minutes.

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Bureaux.

Congratulations on your program. I think it is really quite inspiring.

For my opening question, if you wouldn't mind, could you speak about the challenges or supports you have in place for students when they leave the college, which is clearly a very thoughtful, supportive place, and the supports to help transition to a workspace that may or may not have the same level of introductory supports?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Thank you for that question.

We're finding that many of our industry partners are wanting to make the change. They want their places of work to be more inclusive, to be more diverse and to welcome and embrace diversity in a much different way. They want that to happen for two reasons. There is the "just the right thing to do" reason. There is that social kind of component to it. There's also an economic component to it because, quite frankly, we do need every hand on deck.

Through our ongoing relationship, our work with the local chamber of commerce and our work on various committees, we try to continue to maintain our relationship with those hiring organizations to try to fundamentally change the workplace. One of our favourite quotes is that "culture eats strategy for breakfast". I think there is no other place that's truer than in the workforce. It's great to have a great strategy, but if a culture is not consistent with that, then all else breaks down.

The other thing we do very closely, I think, is that the faculty we hire are required to have a certain number of years of industry experience. Because of that commitment and that requirement to have experience in the industry, they bring with them a tremendous level of community and industry contact. Often the employers will work with them to try to make the transition as smooth as possible, so that those workplaces are welcoming and inclusive, and quite frankly, so that their commitment to removing all barriers to accessibility is maximized.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Thank you.

That certainly speaks to the retention on the other side.

Could you speak about the challenges that you encountered in those early years? Your program is well established—it's been 10 years. Again, congratulations to you on that. What were the early challenges? Were there barriers that the college had to move through to really bring the program to the place where we see it today?

• (1405)

Mr. Don Bureaux: The first challenge, I think, was the public narrative of the shipbuilding industry. To say it was a dying industry in Atlantic Canada would be an understatement. It was an industry that people thought that, if they did pursue a career in it, it would be short-lived. It would not be one in which they could spend a long period of time. We had to change that narrative.

The second thing we had to change is that it was seen to be a dirty industry in terms of the work. It was an industry that was at times, perhaps, dangerous. It wasn't a bright and clean work environment. What Irving and other shipbuilding industries have done to model the way is that they've converted the place of work to be a modern, progressive, safe and, quite frankly, inspiring place to work because the nature of the work is so technologically advanced.

The third thing is that we had to make a significant investment in infrastructure. Again, because of the cyclical nature of this industry for many generations in Nova Scotia, it didn't take long for infrastructure to become obsolete. We had to gear up. We had to change the perception of an industry. We had to make sure, as I mentioned earlier, that the workplaces people were going into were welcoming.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Thank you.

I'm curious, coming off that answer, if there's a want. Are you engaged in conversations in other aspects of the sector for similar programs as a recruitment tool for the very real labour shortage?

Mr. Don Bureaux: That's a great question. The answer is yes, and not only in this sector but in other sectors. As you can well imagine, in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada, the forestry sector, for example, is a sector in which we have acute workforce shortages. At the same time, we have too many people sitting on the sidelines. We have people with disabilities, people who have faced barriers but, for an opportunity to access education, they could be successful.

We often refer to education as a set of escalators. You need to move people from this level of skill and knowledge to this level of skill and knowledge. Often the solution, it's thought, is to increase the number of escalators if you want more people up here. The challenge is that many people can't even get on the escalator. There's a front-end gap.

We can provide these kinds of 14-week partner-based programs as a lead-in to the longer programs. It's a proven solution for success.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bureaux.

We'll now go to Ms. Vignola for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you very much.

Mr. Mitchell, there was a reference earlier to submarines. I think I understood that in an ideal world, what I call a unicorn world, we would need submarines within 10 years, because ours are outdated. However, it is unimaginable that Canada will be able to obtain new submarines within 10 years.

Do I have that right?

[English]

Mr. Paul Mitchell: My concern is, if we don't start the process of replacing these submarines in the next two or three years, it will be very challenging to negotiate the complexity of not just the defence procurement process, but also the industrial requirements to come up with a design that will meet Canadian needs. Yes, by 2035, the clock will run out on the ability to replace these vessels.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

In your opinion, how many ships would Canada need, at the very least, to adequately meet its needs, both territorially and in terms of security?

[English]

Mr. Paul Mitchell: In terms of the absolute minimum just to conduct operations off the east and west coasts, six conventional boats would probably be sufficient. That would enable you to establish an operations cycle on either one. That would enable the continuous presence of a submarine able to deploy to just off our coasts.

If we bring in the Arctic or if we are looking at sending submarines abroad, we would need to double that number because of the transit times to get submarines to and from station.

However, if we were to go to a nuclear option, we could also go back to a six-boat number, simply because the speed with which nuclear boats can travel under water, up to 25 knots or more, means that they can get on station very quickly. To give you an example, it took about 80 days for *Chicoutimi* to cross over from Esquimalt to Yokosuka in Japan. A nuclear boat could probably do that in under a week.

• (1410)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Vignola and Mr. Mitchell.

We'll now go to Mr. Johns for two and half minutes.

Mr. Gord Johns: I'm going to go back to you, Mr. Bureaux.

Mr. Bureaux, regarding the pathways to shipbuilding program, can you cite any comparable programs on the west coast?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Unfortunately, Mr. Johns, I don't have a specific example. My team would. If there's one that exists, my deans and our curriculum folks would interact with them on a regular basis. I simply don't have those kinds of relationships, but I can find out for you.

Mr. Gord Johns: What could the federal government do to help invest in, support and create an even more robust program than you're delivering right now, which sounds unbelievable, especially targeting students who are from under-represented groups?

How could the federal government best support this? What would be a recommendation to this committee?

Mr. Don Bureaux: That's a great question. Again, with the federal-provincial kind of jurisdictional responsibility for education, the federal government over the years has been tremendously supportive in two big areas. One is infrastructure.

To provide training in the area of shipbuilding is a very expensive endeavour. The technology changes on a regular basis. We need to keep up to date on that, so infrastructure would be number one.

Mr. Gord Johns: Where is it now? Is it inadequate right now? What level would you say it's at in terms of scoring, if you want to call it that?

Mr. Don Bureaux: At our institution, I would say it's good. We've had a great run for the past number of years to update our infrastructure. We're in good shape. It is getting shorter and shorter in terms of the runway.

The second area in which we've benefited tremendously is in research. The federal government has a role in funding research. I know that the split has traditionally been low at colleges. For every dollar the federal government invests in research, a very small percentage goes into the applied research at a college. Through that research, it enhances the learning environment.

Those are the two big areas I would say to explore for further options.

Mr. Gord Johns: Okay.

In terms of expanding your program, what are some of the ways in which the federal government could support your program specifically?

Mr. Don Bureaux: Again, it would be in applied research and the opportunity for students to engage in research in terms of metals, in terms of 3-D printing, in terms of new techniques and in terms of simulation. Those are so critically important to help our students move forward.

For example, it's amazing the technology available right now in welding simulation. At one time, the only option you had to teach a student welding was a very wasteful process. If a mistake was made, the metal was wasted. Now, with the simple push of a button, a simulated weld can occur over and over again.

That would be one.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bureaux and Mr. Johns.

We'll now go to Mr. Paul-Hus for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mitchell, the project office for the Victoria-class submarines is made up of several government stakeholders, including stakeholders from the Department of National Defence and Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Wouldn't it be more efficient to have a single department managing procurement and defence contracts to deal with the decision-making issues, for example?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Mitchell: Thank you.

I'm not a student of procurement or the organization of that procurement, so I don't believe I have the competence to answer that question properly.

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Okay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Chair, since the beginning of our study on air and naval defence procurement, on several occasions we have received experts who unfortunately did not have the critical information needed to give precise information. That's not necessarily the case with Mr. Mitchell now, but I'm talking about all the witnesses we've had. That's why, a few weeks ago, I tabled the following motion in committee:

That, in the context of its study of air defence procurement projects and its study of the National Shipbuilding Strategy, the committee send for, from Public Services and Procurement Canada, a monthly progress report concerning the progress of the maritime and air defence procurement projects including up-to-date acquisition, operating, training and maintenance costs and the progress of the work; that these reports be submitted to the committee on a monthly basis by the 15th of the month from May 2022 to May 2023, inclusively; and that the reports be rendered public and published on the committee's website.

As I said at the beginning, the members of the committee, especially the opposition members, obviously need information. Since the function of the experts is to analyze what is going on in the Government of Canada in terms of military procurement, and especially since the air and naval defence procurement contracts are the largest contracts in Canadian history, it would be a minimum requirement that we have reports that inform us, at all times, or on a monthly basis, of everything that is going on in that regard.

I would like us to debate my motion and, ideally, to vote on it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus. The motion was tabled in the past. It's now been retabled, so there's opportunity for debate.

I see Mr. McCauley's hand up, followed by Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, Mr. Paul-Hus, for putting it forward. I think we should have had this five years ago, so that we could have stayed on top a bit and not had to wait for annual or biannual reviews.

I'm wondering if Mr. Paul-Hus would be open to maybe a friendly amendment just to make a bit more precise the information that we should be looking for. I want to add, after the first paragraph where he has "concerning the progress of the maritime and air defence procurement projects", the following more precise words: the combat and non-combat vessel shipbuilding projects contained in the NSS, and the projects described in the section entitled "Royal Canadian Air Force" in chapter 2, "Long-term investments to enhance the Canadian Armed Forces capabilities and capacity to support peace and security", found in Canada's defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged".

Otherwise, the rest of it is fine.

I just wanted to add that if Mr. Paul-Hus is fine with that, just to make it a bit more precise the information we're looking for, namely the updates on everything in the NSS from the polar icebreaker to Seaspans, etc., to the more precise information on the air force items being purchased under "Strong, Secure, Engaged".

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

We have an amendment on the floor at this point in time, and I will ask if it's a friendly one.

Mr. Paul-Hus, are you amenable to that amendment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I think the amendment is very reasonable, because we want to focus our work so that we're not asking an insane amount of work from the officials. It's about focusing on what we need to know.

So I think the amendment is very acceptable.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, and thank you, Mr. McCauley.

I apologize that I should have gone straight to Mr. Housefather. With that said, I'll also indicate that the clerk has distributed the amendment to the committee members.

Before I go to Mr. Housefather, I also want to indicate to our witnesses that I suspect, by the look of things, this may go a little bit longer, so I think we will dismiss you at this point in time because we're past the hour. I want to thank you both for being with us here today. We appreciate that. For your testimony, as I indicated earlier, if you do have anything further that you would like to add, please submit it to the clerk and we will distribute that to the members.

I will dismiss the witnesses. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Mitchell, my father was the CO of where you work right now at Canadian Forces College, albeit in 1976, so I do understand where you're working.

My appreciation to both of you. Thank you very much

• (1420)

Mr. Don Bureaux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks, Mr. Mitchell.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I was going to start by noting that, yet another time, a motion has been put forward in the middle of questioning when there was only one Liberal questioner left. This is the second consecutive time this has happened. This easily could have waited until after the Liberal questioner had had the chance to ask the questions. We could have let Mr. Paul-Hus put forward his motion and then agreed to defer the discussion until after the last questioner. Again, without courtesy, that didn't happen. I am not pleased by that.

I'd like to understand, Mr. Chair, if you have you now ruled, based on the fact that Mr. McCauley had his amendment accepted by Mr. Paul-Hus as a friendly amendment, that the amendment is now in your view integrated into the motion, or does there continue to be a debate on Mr. McCauley's amendment? If there is not, I have an amendment to put forward.

I'm not giving up the floor. I would first like to understand, Mr. Chair, whether you have ruled that Mr. McCauley's amendment has been integrated into Mr. Paul-Hus's original motion or not.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Can I interrupt quickly? It may be out of order.

I'm happy to hear what yours is. We could just meld them all together, if you have a better one. I know it's not procedure, but I'd be happy to hear it, if it's just us chatting among ourselves to get a better one, and better information.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I appreciate that, but I'd like to understand whether the amendment is integrated or not, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I call for order. Mr. Housefather has the floor.

I understand that. I have ruled it is in order. We're discussing the amendment at this point in time.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: That's what I wanted to understand, Mr. Chair.

You asked if Mr. Paul-Hus considered it friendly. Even though he considered it friendly, you're saying that we're still debating and voting on Mr. McCauley's amendment separately.

The Chair: That's correct.

At this point in time, we are discussing Mr. McCauley's amendment, which can be made at any time. I misspoke when I asked Mr. Paul-Hus for his, because it was put forward along those lines. At this point in time, I've accepted it.

We're debating the issue of Mr. McCauley's amendment at this point in time.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I understand.

Mr. Chair, I would ask to have the floor back after the completion of the discussion of this amendment in order to put in another amendment.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

At this point in time, we are discussing the amendment. Mr. Housefather wants to go back and speak to the original motion once we've dealt with the amendment.

At this point in time, seeing no further discussion....

I'm sorry, Mr. Paul-Hus. Your hand is up now, I see.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Housefather, I'd like to say I'm sorry I cost the Liberals five minutes. That was not my intention. If the procedure allows me to do something other than use my time to table a motion, I would be happy to do it differently in the future. My intention was simply not to lose this opportunity to speak to the motion today.

On the main motion, our party, through Mr. McCauley, has tabled an amendment that restricts the scope of the motion, which was originally much broader. Now it's a matter of restricting the work that's being requested in order to have more specific reports on acquisition projects.

Can we vote on the amendment or should we go back to the main motion? These are formalities, but I would like us to go back to the motion as amended and discuss it, because it is preferable in terms of the work of the committee.

We can go back to the first motion; it is a technical issue for me. However, we have amended it to make it even more reasonable.

• (1425)

[*English*]

The Chair: At this point in time, for clarification, the amendment is on the floor. We need to make a decision on that amendment. Once that amendment is decided on, we will go back to the main motion or main motion as amended, based on the vote.

Mr. Housefather, is your hand up to discuss the amendment?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, Mr. Chair.

I would ask for a brief two- or three-minute recess so we could discuss the amendment and look at it. I haven't yet seen the written document you emailed us.

The Chair: I will suspend for two minutes.

• (1425)

(Pause)

• (1430)

The Chair: I'm calling the meeting back to order.

I gave you a bit longer than two minutes, Mr. Housefather. You have the floor.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted the floor, previously, to ask for the break. I appreciate it. Again, I will have another amendment once we vote on this one, if the discussion is over.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm looking around the room. Ms. Vignola has her hand up.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Frankly, the first version of the motion was excessively broad. It would have been a massive undertaking for departmental officials. I'm very pleased to see Mr. McCauley's amendment, which clarifies what is being sought and how long it will take. I welcome the effort that has been made in that regard and the consideration given to the workload.

• (1430)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Vignola.

Again, I'm looking around the room for hands. I'm not seeing any at this point in time.

I would call for the vote. Do we want a recorded division or are we okay with hands?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Could we have a registered vote, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We'll have a recorded vote.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I was just going to get some clarification, if you could read out what the vote is.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, the vote has been called.

[*English*]

The Chair: Order.

We are going to a recorded vote. I asked for consensus to do raised hands or whether someone wanted a recorded vote. There was a request for a recorded vote. Therefore, we're moving to a recorded vote at this point in time. I've asked the clerk to call that out.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Mr. Chair, we have five yeas and five nays. It is a tie vote.

The Chair: The chair votes yes.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We'll now discuss the motion as amended. That is now on the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I've also sent an amendment to the clerk that I would ask him to circulate, if it's okay, after I put mine forward.

Basically, my issue is the frequency of reporting. This is not something that would be simple and easy for the department to keep putting together, certainly not on a monthly basis. My amendment would read as follows.

In line number three or the end of line number two in the English version, I would change the word "monthly" to "biannual", so that would mean every six months. In the fifth line, I would delete the words "a monthly basis, by the 15th of the month from May 2022 to May 2023 inclusively" and change that to "on a biannual basis from June 30, 2022, to December 31, 2023".

[*Translation*]

To be fair to my French-speaking colleagues, here is the amendment I suggest be made to the French version:

In the third line, I propose that the word "mensuel" be replaced by "biannuel." In the sixth line, I propose to replace "mensuelle au 15^e jour de chaque mois de mai 2022 à mai 2023 inclusivement" with "biannuelle commençant le 30 juin 2022 et finissant le 31 décembre 2023."

• (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to explain it when you judge it receivable and everybody has a copy.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Can we start the debate?

[*English*]

The Clerk: I need to explain something to the committee first, if I may.

The Chair: I'm going to ask the clerk to speak first, and then we will go.

Go ahead, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: This is to explain something to the members of the committee. In the version of the amendment that I have from Mr. Housefather, the text is correct; however, the version that he had sent to me was the original version of Monsieur Paul-Hus's motion.

You may notice that the text that's been modified is, in fact, the original version of Mr. Paul-Hus's motion. However, the amendment that Mr. Housefather read would still apply in the same way to the motion by Monsieur Paul-Hus that has now been amended.

I just wanted that explained to the members of the committee so that it is clear.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

We will now go to Ms. Vignola, who is followed by Mr. Housefather and then by Mr. Paul-Hus.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Reporting on a monthly basis can certainly represent a significant workload for the officials. I understand that my colleague is suggesting that the report be submitted on a biannual basis. If it is, the collection of data will not represent a huge workload for the officials.

Is there not a way of splitting the difference? That way, officials would not have to spend their time collecting data and would not have to collect a massive amount of data. So I ask my colleagues if they are willing to find a balance between “monthly” and “biannual.”

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Vignola.

Now I will go to Mr. Housefather.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I thank my colleague for her comments.

I could have proposed that the report be submitted annually, but I tried to cut that in half by proposing that it be submitted every six months. Quite frankly, data is provided on a regular basis in the four-part tables of the Department of National Defence. The forms related to this data are rather informal.

If you're providing information to a parliamentary committee, you have to do it in a very formal way with a lot of checks and balances. As far as I know, it represents quite a heavy workload for a small team. All the data is already provided. Of course, the committee always has the right to ask the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement or officials to testify before the committee.

Every six months we will get data, and over the next two years we will get data four times: once in June and once in December of each year. I think that is a sufficient amount of data.

I rely on the members of the committee. I hope that we will be able to agree on this. If we can't, we'll see what we do three months after the vote on the biannual reports.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

We have Mr. Paul-Hus, who is followed by Mr. Kusmierczyk and then Mr. McCauley.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Housefather has just said precisely why we need to get this kind of report. Right now, the information is extremely scattered.

Mr. Housefather says that in order to provide a report to the committee, a lot of cross-checking has to be done. This is exactly what we need to ensure the effectiveness of these contracts, which are the largest Government of Canada contracts in history.

That's why, by getting reports on a regular basis, we can really know where we're going with offshore patrol ships, Canadian warships, and offshore ships. If all departments of the Government of Canada consolidate the numbers and data into a report that is then provided to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, it may give everyone a better idea of where the government is going with respect to these major projects.

Should the report be done on a monthly or biannual basis? I think that if we provide a monthly report, from the first report onwards, it will be enough to make updates, which should not be very complicated to do. Each department will simply have to provide its report, which will be consolidated.

Am I prepared to see if this could be between one and six months? I can have some leeway, I'm not completely crazy. That said, I think that the need to proceed efficiently and to obtain those reports on a very regular basis will give the Government of Canada and taxpayers a chance to know where we are going.

I thank you, Mr. Housefather, for recognizing the usefulness of all this.

● (1440)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think the amendment that my colleague has put forward is sensible. It allows us to have both—to be able to check in and see how the ministry is progressing on this work and at the same time allow them to also focus on the task at hand, which is procuring these ships and fighter jets for us. That's where the focus should be as well. I think the six months balances that.

I mean, we could ask that a report be sent to us every 24 hours, every day, yet there probably wouldn't be a material difference between a Monday and a Tuesday and a Wednesday. It would be the same thing, I would argue, with a monthly report. Having it every six months balances the need for the ministry to focus on the task at hand and to keep us informed and provide us with actionable information that actually provides us with trend lines.

Again, in a spirit of collaboration, which is what's terrific about this committee, I think that strikes an excellent balance that is sensible and that is pragmatic. I would support my colleague's excellent amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Go ahead, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks, Chair.

Mr. Housefather, thanks for your comments, and thanks to Mr. Kusmierczyk as well.

I would think that maybe we could settle at three. The issue at hand is that this is going to be well over \$100 billion of taxpayers' money. We've seen repeatedly in this committee.... I mean, just last week or the week before we were asking about the F-35s, yet PSPC's saying, DND told us three years will be for delivery...when PSPC is not even aware.

We've seen this repeatedly for six and a half years on this committee. We've seen delay, delay, misinformation and non-information about the ships. If you look at the old blues, you will see that the icebreakers should be in the water by now, and the first CSC would be arriving next year. I don't think we're even cutting steel yet. I think we owe it to taxpayers and to parliamentarians to get a lot more information out on this. As I said, it's going to be well over \$100 billion, when all is said and done.

I understand where the Liberals are coming from, and I understand my request. I'd be very happy with Ms. Vignola's suggestion of perhaps every three months. We can see it for a year and go from there. I think waiting every six months will mean further delays and a further disservice to taxpayers and other parliamentarians.

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, are you proposing that as a subamendment?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: If the committee agrees, yes. I'm putting it out there for discussion, but I can make it a subamendment if it will move things along faster.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any debate on the subamendment of Mr. McCauley?

Mr. Housefather.

• (1445)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would have thought that perhaps we could have done this differently, such that if the six months were defeated, we could have put forward another amendment for three. I'm going to vote against the subamendment in favour of my initial amendment without the subamendment. If there are no other hands up, I would request a recorded vote.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

I'm looking around the room, and I don't see any other hands up. I will call for a recorded vote on the subamendment.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My understanding of the subamendment is that “biannual” would be replaced with “every three months” in the first instance, and in the second instance, instead of “biannual basis”, it would be “on a basis of every three months”. That's my understanding of the subamendment that Mr. McCauley has proposed.

If members are in agreement, I will start the roll call.

(Subamendment negated: nays 6; yeas 4)

The Chair: The Chair: On the amendment as amended by Mr. Housefather, is there any discussion?

I'm not seeing any hands up. Does anyone request a recorded vote?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Sure, Mr. Chair, I request a recorded vote.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: All right, we are at the main motion, as amended, at this stage.

Is there discussion on the main motion as amended?

I see Mr. Paul-Hus's hand is up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clerk, can you confirm the date for the first report?

There has been no change in the date, so the first report will have to be submitted in May, in the next few weeks, not in six months. The next report will be submitted in six months.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, for the information of the committee, in the amendment that was passed, it says that the reports will have to be submitted to the committee on a biannual basis starting June 30, 2022, and ending December 31, 2023.

• (1450)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, are you good with that? Are you nodding your head?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Housefather, you had your hand up. Your hand is down now. Are we good, or do you want to discuss something?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: It was just to clarify what the clerk said, Mr. Chair. I was just going to say that it was June 30.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm not seeing any other hands up, and I'm assuming somebody is going to call for a recorded vote.

I see that, Mr. Jowhari. Thank you.

I'll call on the clerk for a recorded vote on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you, everybody.

We have now voted in favour of the motion as amended and as amended. Maybe there were too many amendments.

With everybody here, normally we would go in camera at this point in time. I think, with what we have to discuss, we can do it in public. That way we don't have to go another 10 minutes or so to suspend and come back in from suspending.

Just so that everyone is aware, you'll be happy to know that the clerk, on behalf of the committee, submitted our travel budget to the liaison committee, and we will obviously wait for more news on whether we are approved for travel or not.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, Eglin Air Force Base is somewhere near the place you were talking about in Florida, but I don't see that as an option.

Also, members will recall that the committee wanted to invite Canada Post to appear once the financial statements were released. Those were released to the House on Wednesday and referred to the committee, so I'm going to ask the clerk to contact Canada Post to see about scheduling a time for representatives to appear to discuss the financial statements as we move forward.

Two supplementary budgets were distributed to members yesterday. One is for the committee's study on the air defence procurement projects, and the other is for the committee's study on the national shipbuilding strategy. The previous budgets adopted for these studies did not contain any money to pay for reimbursements for

witnesses' travel expenses for coming to Ottawa. This was because the budgets were prepared and adopted before witnesses were able to appear in person.

The House of Commons changed this rule after the initial budgets were adopted, so now that we have more witnesses who are appearing in person, we would need approval of funds to pay for their travel. Both changes in the budgets are modest, and we hope that they will be sufficient to cover the expected costs of witnesses' travel expenses.

The clerk is prepared to answer any questions, if you have any at this time on that. I throw that out to the members. I see no hands up on this.

With that, does the committee wish to adopt these two budgets?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: They are carried.

Go ahead, Ms. Vignola.

● (1455)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, could we have the travel budget that was submitted to the liaison committee emailed to us?

The Clerk: Yes, we can distribute that document to all members of the committee. It's just a summary of the information that was submitted to the liaison committee. I'll just ask them not to disclose it, as it's confidential.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

I am again looking around the room. I am not seeing any hands up. There is nothing upon the screen.

With that, I want to thank everybody for the meeting today.

We are still finishing before three o'clock, Mr. McCauley, just so you're aware.

With that said, I would like to thank the interpreters for everything you've been doing with us and I greatly appreciate your time.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'd like to start my filibuster now, Mr. Chair.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you to the technicians as well for helping us in dealing with getting the witnesses on board. It was greatly appreciated.

To our analysts and our clerk, thank you very much, and to the food services who provided food for us here today, I thank you as well.

With that said, I declare the meeting adjourned.

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