



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 063

Thursday, April 20, 2023

Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke



Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Thursday, April 20, 2023

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 63 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, February 16, 2023, the committee is meeting to discuss the main estimates 2023-24 and the subject matter of supplementary estimates (C), 2022-23.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

Colleagues, appearing before us today for the first hour is the Honourable Minister of Transport Omar Alghabra. He will be joined by Arun Thangaraj, deputy minister, and Ryan Pilgrim, chief financial officer and assistant deputy minister.

For the second hour, we will also have Mr. Thangaraj and Mr. Pilgrim. They will be joined by Stephanie Hébert, assistant deputy minister, programs; Vincent Robitaille, assistant deputy minister, high-frequency rail; Nicholas Robinson, associate assistant deputy minister, safety and security; and Craig Hutton, associate ADM for policy.

Minister, on behalf of all members, I would like to welcome you to committee. It is always a pleasure to welcome you here. We will begin with your five-minute opening remarks.

The floor is yours.

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be back with you at this committee today to discuss Transport Canada's main estimates and supplementary estimates (C).

[*Translation*]

I thank the committee for inviting me to take part in its work.

[*English*]

I'm joined today by representatives from Transport Canada. Here for the first time as deputy minister is Arun Thangaraj. Ryan Pil-

grim is chief financial officer and assistant deputy minister of corporate services.

I'm happy to be here today because it gives me an opportunity to discuss the important work Transport Canada has been undertaking on behalf of Canadians.

As much as I would like to never mention the word "COVID-19" again, we continue to live through some of its lingering impacts. The extraordinary disruptions to travel and supply chains we witnessed over the last two years are, fortunately, improving. We remain focused on addressing these challenges and are determined to learn from many of the lessons learned during that period.

Budget 2023 outlines several initiatives that will fundamentally transform and improve our supply chain. While I'm happy to discuss budget 2023 with you today, you invited me here to talk about the main and supplementary estimates.

Let me go over some of the ambitious actions the estimates are funding: introducing Bill C-33, the strengthening the port system and railway safety in Canada act; making sure Canada's air transport sector is reliable and safe for travellers; taking strong steps to meet our climate commitments; and continuing to strengthen Canada's rail system.

In the supplementary estimates (C) for fiscal year 2022-23, the main estimates for fiscal year 2023-24 and budget 2023, you will find many examples of how committed our government is to ensuring Canadians have a safe, secure and sustainable transportation system.

In my opening remarks, I will highlight a few of those examples.

In the main estimates for Transport Canada, you will see grant funding for the very successful program for incentives for zero-emission vehicles. Our plan to accelerate the deployment of medium- and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicles was detailed in budget 2022.

[*Translation*]

By making zero-emission vehicles more affordable, we are helping to reduce pollution, create more well-paid jobs, and build a cleaner world for generations to come.

[English]

The main estimates also include a \$270-million increase in funding, when compared to the previous main estimates, for work toward high-frequency rail, a project that I know this committee is very much interested in.

On February 17, I was in Montreal to announce the launch of the request for qualifications phase for the HFR project, in order to identify and qualify up to three top candidates to build a new, dedicated intercity passenger rail network connecting Toronto, Peterborough, Ottawa, Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City. The new dedicated rail line will complement and build on Via Rail's current services, driving transformation in the populated corridor. This is the biggest investment in passenger rail in Canada in a generation, and the largest transportation infrastructure project Canada has seen.

You will also notice that Via HFR, a new subsidiary of Via Rail, is included in this year's estimates. Via HFR was created in November 2022 to advance the HFR project. As a wholly owned subsidiary of Via Rail, it will operate in close collaboration with Via Rail but at arm's length. This will allow Via Rail to focus on its core responsibilities while Via HFR will develop the world-class expertise necessary for designing and advancing the HFR project.

In the main estimates for Via Rail, there is funding to support Via Rail capital projects. Also, budget 2023 announced funding for maintenance on trains on Via Rail routes outside of the Quebec City-Windsor corridor.

Our government will also continue to work with all Crown corporations to ensure they have the resources needed to continue to properly deliver their essential services. For example, in the main estimates, there is funding for the Federal Bridge Corporation Limited to help offset the impact of pandemic-related reductions in revenue. Just last month, I announced \$75.9 million for the Canadian Transportation Agency to ensure they have the resources they need to address passenger complaints.

Our government was the first in our history to implement the air passenger bill of rights. We have strengthened it since 2019, and we will continue to do so. That's why in budget 2023 we announced proposed changes to the Canada Transportation Act to strengthen airline obligations to compensate passengers for delays and cancellations.

Finally, in the supplementary estimates, you will see funds for eastern Canada ferry services. These funds would help to address increased fuel and labour costs amidst lower revenues due to lingering effects of the global pandemic.

I'm confident that the investments in the supplementary estimates (C) and the main estimates will keep people and goods moving efficiently and effectively and advance a safe, competitive and clean transportation system.

Mr. Chair, that concludes my remarks. I'm happy to answer any questions you and our colleagues may have.

Thank you very much.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We will begin our line of questioning today with Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Strahl, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here again.

You mentioned the Canadian Transportation Agency in your remarks. I want to focus my comments there to start with.

In the last budget, the government added \$11 million to the CTA. Following that, we saw the CTA's passenger complaint backlog more than triple to 42,000 complaints from passengers who have been impacted by our broken air transportation system. We saw that your government has more than doubled the number of senior managers at the CTA over the last five years and has given them performance bonuses every single year while passenger complaint backlogs have grown to over 40,000.

Why would you give bonuses to senior managers at the CTA when they have so clearly failed to deliver for Canadian passengers who are looking for action from that agency?

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Chair, thank you to my colleague for the question.

Let me start off by saying that with the recovery of the air sector last summer, we witnessed a significant increase in volume, causing significant challenges not only here in Canada but around the world. Those delays and cancellations were extremely frustrating for passengers and for me personally. We worked closely with the sector—with airlines, with airports—on addressing these challenges, and I'm relieved to see that things are improving.

The CTA is an agency that is empowered by the federal government to be a quasi-judicial body to adjudicate complaints. We saw, I admit, an avalanche of complaints based on the challenges we saw last summer. The CTA works at arm's length from government to fulfill its mandate. We've provided resources so that they are able to deal with that unprecedented avalanche of complaints. We will continue to work with the CTA on fulfilling its mandate to deal with customer complaints.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I note that you didn't answer the question about giving bonuses when there has been a tripling of wait times, with now 18 months to get an answer from the CTA.

You gave them \$11 million in the last budget. The complaints backlog tripled. It's now 18 months to get a response. If giving \$11 million in additional funds in the last budget resulted in that level of performance, why then would you now have added another \$76 million in this budget? If more money would have solved the problem, would not the \$11 million have made a dent instead of things getting so much worse, as they did over the last number of months?

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Chair, I answered the first question by saying that the CTA works at arm's length, and when it comes to human resources decisions, these decisions are made by the CTA.

Second, my colleague understands—and I know he knows—that the challenges that we saw last summer happened because of the air sector's quick recovery from COVID. In fact, we saw those around the world. If his point is that the way to address these challenges is by reducing investment in the CTA, I disagree with him. What we saw was unprecedented challenges and an unprecedented number of complaints. We will be there to help passengers. We will be there to work with the CTA to address this unprecedented avalanche of complaints, and that's why we're providing resources.

It's not only financial resources, Mr. Chair. We're also working with them on streamlining the complaint process so that the CTA is able to deal with these complaints much more quickly and efficiently.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Minister, our goal or our suggestion has been to have you, actually, insist on service standards that are transparent and publicly available and to insist that there are penalties when those are not met, instead of bonuses, which is what your government has done instead.

I want to talk a bit more about the budget. You increased the air travellers security charge by 33%. We've seen, certainly in my region, a leakage of passengers. When the fee structure becomes so uncompetitive, instead of flying out of the Vancouver or Abbotsford international airports, people are choosing to travel across the border and fly out of Bellingham or Seattle. I know the same happens in Buffalo, for instance, with regard to passengers from Ontario.

How do you justify increasing the cost of Canadian travellers' fees and increasing the cost of an airline ticket for Canadian travellers? Are you not at all worried that this will continue to drive passengers out of our country to use airports and buy tickets in the United States?

• (1115)

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Chair, I remain focused on ensuring that we have a competitive, accessible and safe air transportation system in Canada. We saw challenges that occurred last summer that exposed some vulnerabilities in our system. Our system is based on a user-pay model. We know, based on the challenges that we saw, that CATSA needs investment. We have not seen new investments in CATSA, in fact—an increase in these fees—since 2010. We know that CATSA needs to be modernized and needs to be improved in order to expedite and improve the passenger experience. This is a necessary investment to modernize CATSA to ensure that it's more efficient and that it's faster. We will continue to work with CATSA and the airline sector to have a competitive and safe air transportation sector.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Next we have Mr. Rogers.

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

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, welcome back to the committee. You've been here a number of times over the years, and it's always a pleasure to get an opportunity to ask you some questions.

First of all, I see some dollars assigned for the east coast ferry system. When we look at the supplementary estimates (C), we see the funds there.

The question I have for you is this: Why is this the case? Is it difficult to predict how much funding will be needed for ferries from year to year?

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague, Mr. Rogers, for that question and for his advocacy. I know he's been a champion of the services that the ferry services provide to his constituents and the region.

Atlantic ferry services are incredibly important, not only for the residents of Newfoundland and the Atlantic provinces but also for our nation-building initiatives to make sure that our communities are connected.

It was very hard to predict anything during COVID, with the significant disruptions to travel and supply chains, with the significant increase in costs and with labour shortages. We certainly saw unprecedented changes to travel patterns and costs, but we are committed to working with ferry services to ensure that they maintain these essential services that Canadians expect. That's why we provided additional support so that we're able to maintain those services for Canadians.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Mr. Minister, I've ridden the ferries many times between Port aux Basques and North Sydney, and I realize the difficulties and the challenges they had during the COVID-19 period. I witnessed what was happening, but they continued to operate.

I know we have a new ferry being built for that service for Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. I'm just wondering if there's an update that you can provide about where that ship currently is and when it might be operational on the new service.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Rogers, again, our commitment to that ferry service for the people of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and New Brunswick is deeply rooted because we understand the importance of that service. We are committed to modernizing and providing the assets necessary for that service. Indeed, we are committed to building the new ferries that are needed.

I can provide you with an update on where we are right now, but I am optimistic that we'll have good news soon for the people of Newfoundland about the status of that ferry.

• (1120)

Mr. Churence Rogers: That's great. I know it's going to be an ultramodern boat, and it's going to provide some great services for Atlantic Canada—for Newfoundland and Labrador, of course, and for the rest of the provinces, especially Nova Scotia.

Minister, supplementary estimates (C) include \$10.9 million “for the maintenance of Crown owned airports and the Port of Cap-aux-Meules”. Why is this funding needed, and how does it fit into the larger plan to improve the transportation infrastructure in Îles de la Madeleine?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Indeed, Mr. Rogers, the estimates have made a significant commitment to invest in our supply chains and in our transportation infrastructure, whether it is the national trade corridors fund, the airport capital incentive infrastructure program, or the projects at Cap-aux-Meules, for the wharf there, or the airport on the Magdalen Islands. The islands depend significantly on the wharf and the airport for tourism and commercial activities. Our government is committed to investing in these two infrastructure facilities to continue to support tourism and economic activities in the region, which depends on them significantly for jobs that are important to our communities there.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you very much.

Turning, Minister, to new funding for ZEVs to include medium- and heavy-duty vehicles, what is the significance of this policy? How much do medium- and heavy-duty vehicles account for over all transportation-related emissions?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: I think the debate about having to do something to reduce emissions is over. All Canadians understand that we have to cut down our pollution from transportation. The transportation sector makes up almost 25% of all of our emissions. Half of those emissions come from light-duty vehicles, and about 25% to 30% of those emissions come from medium- and heavy-duty vehicles.

If we are serious about reducing pollution, we need to tackle the emissions that are coming from medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. This program is meant to provide incentives for businesses, so that they can find alternative technologies to cut emissions from their operations.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garon, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being with us today.

Last week, we met with people in the Megantic area who expressed some concerns about the new rail line. I'm thinking in particular of the farmers whose land is cut in half by the new track. Essentially, they are asking for a perpetual right of way to be able to access their land, particularly for farming.

Is the government willing to grant them this perpetual right of way?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Thank you for the question, Mr. Garon.

[*English*]

The Lac-Mégantic bypass project is incredibly important for our government. I know it is in the public interest. I know the Province of Quebec supports it. I know Quebeckers overall support it. It was 10 years ago that we lost 47 Quebeckers in a tragic accident, and our government made a commitment in 2018 to build that bypass.

Now I understand when you build a bypass, when you build a rail project, there needs to be incredible sensitivities in how—

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, I'm going to take the liberty of asking the question again, because time is valuable.

Minister, we are going to use time effectively. Is the government willing to grant the farmers a perpetual right of way on their land?

You can answer yes, no or maybe.

[*English*]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: We're open to discussing with landlords, and we've been engaging with landlords for the last couple of years on finding the best way to build this bypass in a thoughtful way, so we're always willing to have these discussions with landlords.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Have you spoken specifically to Canadian Pacific about this issue?

[*English*]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: We're in regular contact with CP—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Did you talk to them specifically about this issue?

[*English*]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Yes, we are talking to CP on all those issues, but again ultimately it is the Government of Canada that is negotiating land rights with landowners. CP will be responsible for building that project, which will be funded by the federal government and the Province of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you.

So there is no answer to my question. We can understand why.

I would like to talk to you about the famous high frequency train in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. I often drive this route. It takes two and a half hours by car. We did our research on your new train, which is basically a turtle that goes by twice as often. It is as slow as the old train, or nearly so, and the trip will take three hours. The advantage the train has over the car is not so much frequency as speed.

Have you done any calculations in the department, have you done an estimate as to how many people would eventually transition from the car to the train, which will not be fast enough? Are you willing to share that estimate with the committee?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Chair, I know my colleagues are extremely enthusiastic about the high-frequency rail, because it's going to build a project that's never been built in Canada. It will transform the corridor for generations. It will be fast, Mr. Chair. The current proposal has trains going as fast as 200 kilometres an hour. Having said that, we're actually inviting other members of the private sector to propose even faster trains.

I have good news for my colleague. This train will be fast, will be reliable and will be electric. I know that many Canadians and Quebecers can't wait to ride this new train, which by the way has been talked about for generations. It's only—

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you.

As witnessed by the camera, we just understood that the minister did not have any calculations done or is not willing to share them with the committee. He took a long time to tell us that he does not have any.

The current train was created in the 19th century, and what you are doing is bringing back a train from the 20th century. Countries like Morocco, France, Spain, Japan, and Korea decided they were going to go with a high-speed train, and what we have today is a project where we have 20% of the benefits and 80% of the costs. I guess everybody is wrong except the minister, so we'll take that under advisement.

Minister, I would like to talk to you about Mirabel. I know you have a special fondness for my riding. We have worked together in the past. At the time of the expropriations that led to the construction of the airport, 97,000 acres were expropriated. Today, there are 13 families who do not have access to their land and would like it back before they die. An advisory committee has been set up to move this file forward and for several months now, community members, including the Union des producteurs agricoles de Sainte-Scholastique, have not heard from these people. Would you be willing to make sure that the committee meets again so that justice can be done for these farmers?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Chair, my colleague just made a statement that I cannot just let go without responding to. I don't know why he's not taking yes for an answer.

We're building the HFR project for the modern history of Canada, for the era of—

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, I asked the minister a question on a very specific issue.

The Chair: We'll just let the minister answer your question, Mr. Garon.

Before we do that, Mr. Iacono has a point of order.

You have the floor, Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would prefer not to say this, but it's already been not once or twice, but more than three times that the minister has been asked a question by our colleague.

I think, as a matter of courtesy, that the minister should be given time to answer the question. Constantly interrupting him while he is giving his answer makes interpretation difficult. It is a matter of courtesy, even if someone does not agree with the answer or the beginning of the answer. The minister should be given a chance to respond.

We are not debating an issue. We are asking questions of the minister. Someone may not agree with the answer and just need to ask the question again, but we should not interrupt.

If our colleague took a minute to formulate the question, at least give the minister a minute to respond.

Thank you.

● (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

I just want to add one thing. Indeed, it is difficult for our interpreters to do their job when two people are speaking at the same time. So I would ask all members of the committee to give our witnesses a chance to answer their questions.

You have 30 seconds left on your time, Mr. Garon. You have the floor.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, it seems to me that there is a rule in committee that the minister has at least the same amount of time as is used to ask a question. Everything is carefully timed here. That is exactly the case.

If Mr. Iacono is offended by my questioning, which is well within the rules, he could use his own time to make his comments to the committee.

I asked a question about the current situation at Sainte-Scholastique. The minister would not answer it. I am giving him one last opportunity to do so.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Chair...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

Mr. Iacono wants to speak again.

Is this another point of order, Mr. Iacono?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes, Mr. Chair.

My remark was made in good faith in the hope that the democratic process would be followed. I did not make it to insult or embarrass my esteemed colleague.

I am not casting doubt on the questions asked by my colleague. I am simply saying that the minister should have the opportunity to answer them. As you said, the interpreters also need to be able to do their job so that my English-speaking colleagues and all of my colleagues are able to understand well.

And so I hope that...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

I think we have all understood you.

Mr. Bachrach, you now have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

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

Thank you, Minister, for being back at committee and answering our questions.

I would like to pick up on the high-frequency rail conversation. Your government is forging ahead with this project, based on a concept that seems to be receiving less and less support from prominent circles in Canada. People want high-speed rail. High-speed rail has a specific definition. Other countries have trains that go over 300 kilometres an hour, and they've had them for decades. We're way behind the rest of the world when it comes to passenger rail, yet we have a proposal in front of us for Canada's busiest rail corridor that incrementally improves the speed of the service.

I note that there was a resolution from the City of Toronto and the City of Montreal. The mayor of Quebec City has come out, pleading for high-speed rail. Now I see in *Le Devoir* that there's an article about a dozen prominent members of the Quebec City business community asking for a high-speed train. They want the best-in-the-world service, so that the economy and the quality of life for this region of Canada....

Granted, I come from British Columbia. Rail there is even farther behind what we see in eastern Canada.

We have an opportunity here for the most densely populated region of Canada to catch up to the rest of the G7, to deliver the kind of high-speed service that will get people out of their cars and will stop people from flying these short-haul flights that pollute so much.

I wonder, in the face of all these calls from prominent corners of the business community and municipalities, whether proper high-speed rail is on the table in these conversations that you're having with proponents.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Bachrach, thank you for the question.

It gives me the opportunity to say that our government and I personally want the best project for Canadians. As you said, this is an

opportunity for us to build something that will modernize rail service in Canada.

We want to achieve several public policy objectives. One of them is connecting communities. The second objective is to reduce emissions from transportation. The third is offering a convenient, affordable and fast service for those who want to use this rail service.

I'm glad to see that you support our objective of seeking expertise from the private sector to achieve that—

• (1135)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Don't get me wrong, Minister. I think you're putting words in my mouth.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: —speed we want to have.

That's exactly what we want, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Minister.

The other challenge with this project is that your government refuses to build it publicly to expand the mandate of our public passenger rail provider to build and operate a new, modern, high-speed rail service. There are a lot of questions. I see a press release here from Unifor and their members who currently work on the trains, and they're opposed to privatization.

This is Canada's busiest rail corridor. It accounts for upwards of 90% of Via Rail's revenue. You said earlier that this project is going to allow Via to focus on its core responsibilities. I would find that offensive if I were Via Rail. Their core responsibility is running passenger trains. It's like saying to a baker, "We don't need you to come into the bakery from Monday to Thursday. We want you to focus on your core responsibilities." The core responsibility is to deliver passenger rail services.

The expression of interest that you put out there to the private sector takes away potentially 90% of Via Rail's revenue. What's left? It's the guts and feathers of passenger rail in Canada, and it will lead to, I believe, the death of Via Rail as our public passenger rail provider. That's something that nobody in our country wants to see—well, maybe a few people on the Conservative side of the aisle.

Certainly there are a lot of people in the country who want to see a strong and vibrant passenger rail provider that's public. Why not include that in the scope of the project?

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Chair, I think there's a misunderstanding. I assume that it's a misunderstanding in good faith, because this high-frequency rail project will remain a Via project. When I said that we've created a subsidiary of Via to focus on advancing the HFR, it's precisely that. While Via maintains its operations, we need a separate body within Via to focus on building this largest project that Canada has ever built.

I salute my colleague for his enthusiasm for this project, and I'm here to tell him that this is not a privatization of Via. This is delivering on what Canadians expect within Via's mandate, and we are committed to protecting workers' rights. I met with Unifor, and I explained to them that we will make sure that Unifor's benefits, compensation and rights are protected within Via HFR.

This will continue to be owned by the citizens of Canada. This will continue to be a Via project.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Next we have Mr. Muys.

The floor is yours for six minutes.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This past Sunday, it was a beautiful, clear day in the GTA with blue skies and somewhere around 20 degrees. Spring fever was everywhere. People were walking about.

However, this was the situation at Pearson Airport in the departures area of terminal 1. This is the board: Orlando, delayed; Ottawa, delayed; Halifax, delayed; Newark, delayed; Nashville, delayed; Newark, again delayed; Charlottetown, delayed; Montreal, delayed; Quebec City, delayed; Charlotte, delayed; Ottawa, one on time; Sault Ste. Marie, delayed; Winnipeg, delayed; Calgary, delayed.

That was at two o'clock in the afternoon. Those were three of the first 14 flights of the day, so what about the next 14 with already three delays and one cancellation? This is from a constituent who spent five hours on a sunny, bright Sunday afternoon at Pearson Airport waiting on delays.

Toronto's Pearson Airport used to be among the best airports in the world. Now it is the most delayed airport on earth. This has happened under your watch. We've had two emergency meetings of this committee to discuss this, yet this is still happening. When is it going to get fixed?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Chair, my colleagues know that the air sector across the world faced many challenges as we were recovering from COVID. We saw disruptions, delays and cancellations at airports around the world, including here in Canada.

Transport Canada and I have been working diligently with the sector—with airlines, with airports—to improve and to learn from these challenges. I am relieved to say that things are much better than they used to be. In fact, performance is almost back to where it used to be before the pandemic. However, we're not stopping there, Mr. Chair.

We are working on investing in our airports. We are working on strengthening the passenger bill of rights, which protects passengers. We want to make sure that the system is efficient and competitive, and that passengers are protected.

I welcome my colleague's support for our work on strengthening the passenger bill of rights so that passengers, like his constituents, if they are delayed, find the compensation they deserve.

• (1140)

Mr. Dan Muys: You said that performance is almost back to where it used to be. Is 13 out of 14 flights delayed on a sunny Sunday afternoon normal and to be expected? Are you happy with that?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Chair, I don't know how to respond to that question when somebody takes a snapshot of one moment without talking about other kinds of implications. We have occasional delays in the sector not only in Canada but also around the world. We have occasional weather disruptions that not only happen in Canada but also happen around the world.

I am focused on the system overall and on making sure the system is robust and efficient so that people are compensated in case they face challenges that are caused by the airlines. We will make sure the system and the airports have the support they need.

I note that his colleague has just expressed opposition to providing investment in CATSA, which I find bizarre, given the challenges they are complaining about.

Mr. Dan Muys: Thirteen out of 14 is normal or acceptable.

Airports are a federal responsibility. Never mind CATSA, what about Nav Canada? Hold the airports accountable. Where is the accountability here? We've had two emergency meetings of this committee to talk about absolute chaos and disaster at our airports, and we haven't moved the dial.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: I disagree, Mr. Chair. The dial has been moved significantly. If my colleague needs data, we could provide it to him about the performance of the sector regarding where it was last summer or where it is today, I'm happy to do so. However, I'm still not satisfied.

In fact, the budget of 2023 talks about the necessity for more tools so that we can have a more efficient system. That's why the budget talks about data sharing and more authorities to the Minister of Transport to ensure that the system is more efficient. We are working on an accountability system for airports and for Nav Canada.

Mr. Chair, I welcome my colleague's involvement in the work we're doing to ensure that we have a more competitive and more efficient air transportation sector.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Muys.

Next we have Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Minister, it is always a pleasure to have you here.

With respect to supplementary estimates (C), can you elaborate on the \$25.6 million for the activities related to unmanned aircraft systems and automated vehicles? What will this money be used for? Why is this money needed?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleague for that important question.

We are in the midst of an industrial transformation, including in the air sector. We are, as a government, supporting new technologies that reduce emissions and that improve performance and safety. In return, we need to make sure that Transport Canada is modernized and is able to deal with this new technology so that we are able to certify and to verify this new technology. Those types of investments are meant to ensure that Transport Canada has the resources and the tools necessary to certify and to verify the new technologies that the private sector is producing to make sure our transportation sector is more efficient and more safe.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Wouldn't you say that it is impossible to separate the economy and the environment from programs such as the Zero Emission Vehicle Incentive Program and the Ocean Protection Plan, and that they are important for both the economy and the environment?

Can you tell us more about that?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: This is an important question. I think it's clear to Canadians that climate change is real and that it is having a massive impact on our way of life and our economy. It is an existential threat to our planet. If we are to continue to have growth and economic activities, we need to tackle climate change.

In fact, this comes with an added bonus. This transformation in how we produce and consume things means new technologies that will create new jobs for Canadians. The world notices that Canada is a world leader when it comes to these technologies and when it comes to critical minerals. That's why we saw President Biden here a few weeks ago talking about the importance that Canada plays in this new world. We saw the head of the European Commission come here a few weeks ago to tell us how important Canada is. The world is noticing that Canada is a global leader in new technologies and tackling climate change. Our government is committed to playing a role in ensuring that we have a prosperous future for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Minister.

We are well aware that you have spending priorities that demonstrate the important role that transportation plays in the Canadian economy. You have five, in principle. My question is about two of those priorities, the National Trade Corridors Fund and high-frequency rail.

Can you elaborate on that?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Indeed, as my colleague said, Transport Canada and I, as the minister of Transport Canada, have priorities to ensure that we have a safe, reliable and efficient transportation sector. Our focus is on building efficient supply chains. That's what the national trade corridors fund is meant to help. We're focusing on tackling some of the bottlenecks. That's why budget 2023 talked about the creation of a supply chain office to maintain and monitor the health of our supply chains. That's why we're focused on cutting emissions from the transportation sector and the decarbonization of it. That's why we're focused on building high-frequency rail. That's why we're focusing on ensuring that we have safe oceans, which the oceans protection plan is meant to do.

We have significant priorities that Canadians expect of us, and we're committed to delivering on those.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister and Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Garon, you now have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Minister, please know that when I interrupt you, it's because I am really interested in what you have to say and I like to have your input on even more issues. So it's a compliment when that happens.

My next question is about the Saint-Hubert Airport. You know that the arrival of Porter Airlines at the Saint-Hubert Airport is creating stress and apprehension among the public, and rightfully so. There is also the noise of the helicopters, which is very disturbing for the residents of the neighbourhood. The people of the Montérégie would like to be reassured. They are asking you to raise the flight ceiling for helicopters in the Saint-Hubert Airport area.

What can you tell us about this matter?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Thank you to my colleague for his question.

I actually visited the region just recently. I met with the mayor. We discussed several of these points. I also recently met with Porter Airlines. We talked about their plans to expand into Saint-Hubert airport. This is great news for the region, I think, but I also understand that we need to be sensitive to local communities' concerns. I've actually encouraged Porter to work with the airports on addressing these issues. I also heard from the mayor about the helicopter operations there.

I've committed to working with Transport Canada on identifying ways in which we can address these issues. We're working on that. If there is any development, I'll be happy to share it with you.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you very much.

I'd like to go back to the previous round of questions. Would you be so kind as to apply a little bit of pressure on the issue of the remaining land to be returned to Sainte-Scholastique, so that the advisory committee that's dealing with it can meet quickly in order to move it forward? Obviously, I know there are other priorities, including environmental ones.

This is a request from the Mirabel community.

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: I think you're talking about Mirabel airport. Let me just say that the short answer to your question is yes. I'd be happy to work with officials to ensure that we do everything we can to expedite this process.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

Thank you, Minister.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours. You have two and a half minutes.

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

Minister, as you're well aware, a little over two years ago two tugboat workers lost their lives in northwest B.C. due to a negligent company and a negligent government. They were on board a vessel that hadn't been inspected in its 50-year life, with safety equipment that had not been maintained by the owner, and the tugboat was not powerful enough for the task that its owner had given it.

The Transportation Safety Board has just issued a report. It's extremely angering to read about the negligence that took place, which cost these two men their lives. I know you share this concern.

The TSB has issued four very reasonable recommendations. One involves a requirement for regular inspections of tugboats under 15 gross tonnes. There's a suitability assessment requirement for specific towing operations, a requirement that the pilotage authority verify that requirements are met prior to issuing waivers, and a requirement that the pilotage authority also verify ongoing compliance.

My question is whether you will commit today to implementing all four of these reasonable recommendations in a timely way.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Bachrach, let me just say that I share your frustration with the tragedy that occurred. I want to once again extend my condolences to the families. I soon will be meeting with the families. Thank you for helping to coordinate that meeting.

I can assure you that Transport Canada and I are committed to responding to the recommendations by the Transportation Safety Board. I am committed to implementing and improving our safety measures in response to what we learned from that tragedy.

We are currently reviewing the recommendations issued by TSB. We're taking them extremely seriously. We'll update you and members of this committee with the actions moving forward.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: By which date will you be able to commit to implementing the recommendations?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Bachrach, I commit to you that we're going to do it as quickly as we can.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach.

Thank you, Minister.

Next we have Mr. Strahl.

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

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to turn to the ports now.

There have been several high-profile vacancies, specifically in the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. There are recommendations from port users for directors who are experts in logistics and transportation. You've refused to appoint those from the prairie provinces who have been recommended to be directors, those who have been nominated from there. However, we've just recently learned that you have appointed former Liberal MPP Sandra Pupatello—a failed Liberal candidate in the last election. You also appointed Nancy DiGregorio—a Liberal donor and organizer—to the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority.

Why are there roadblocks for directors who have been recommended by port users, those with expertise in logistics and transportation, but a fast track for failed Liberal candidates, donors and organizers?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Chair, Transport Canada is committed to working with port authorities on appointing qualified candidates to these boards of directors. Nominations are typically made by different stakeholders, including user groups. Transport Canada typically adopts the recommendations and nominations made by user groups. Sometimes considerations are taken into account if the government feels it's necessary to have a different selection, but the individuals the member has mentioned were all recommended by stakeholders. The Government of Canada proceeded with nominations or selections made by these user groups.

• (1155)

Mr. Mark Strahl: It's just a coincidence that they are big-time Liberal donors, organizers and failed candidates. Okay.

The federal government collects about \$300 million in lease payments from airport authorities. The airport authorities asked for those monies to be returned to them so they could make significant infrastructure upgrades to prevent things that impact passengers. For instance, we had a baggage belt go down in Toronto Pearson, which affected thousands of passengers.

However, you chose to keep that money in Ottawa and not return those payments to the airports, which will result in higher airport improvement fees to make those infrastructure upgrades. That will result, again, as with the surcharge that the budget has for security, in higher fees for Canadian consumers who are trying to book flights.

Why did you choose to keep that money in Ottawa instead of returning it to the airports so that they could make investments that will benefit the travelling public?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Chair, first let me disagree with my colleague. His question is incorrect.

The Government of Canada invests in airports significantly. In fact, over the last couple of years, we've made close to two billion dollars' worth of investments in infrastructure at airports, either through the airport critical infrastructure program or the airports capital assistance program, or the many other initiatives where the federal government provides support to airports.

However, I'll just say that we are committed to identifying additional ways to provide more resources to airports. We recognize that there's still more that needs to be done to improve the capacity and efficiency of airports. We will work with airport authorities to identify other ways to help them.

I want to be clear. Our government has made significant investments. They are way larger than just the rent payments that were made by our airports.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I have one more question, Mr. Minister.

With the increase in the carbon tax, the increase in the surcharge for security and the increase in airport improvement fees, has your government done any analysis on the impact that these increased fees—vis-à-vis United States' airports—have had on leakage to the United States? What impact will these increasing fees imposed by your government have on driving passengers to the United States to take flights because of the cost structure in Canada?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Chair, we're constantly assessing the competitiveness and the health of our aviation sector. It is important to me and to our government, and to Transport Canada, that we maintain competitive, healthy and safe transportation, including in the aviation sector.

My colleague is conflating different things at the same time. He knows that airport authorities have the authority to set their own fees. In fact, I can quote a former minister. Chuck Strahl, as a former minister of transport, had many quotes about the independence of airports and their authority to set fees.

If he needs any briefings, I'd be happy to either provide him with those briefings or direct him to someone he knows very well who can provide him with those briefings.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Finally, for her first round today, we have Ms. Koutrakis.

Ms. Koutrakis, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before our committee again this year. It's always an honour to have you before us to answer these important questions.

I'd like to go back to one of the questions that my colleague Mr. Strahl asked earlier, and it's with regard to the large number of complaints at the CTA. During the pandemic, the airlines were predicting that it would take five years to get back to pre-COVID levels. The traffic volumes bounced back much more quickly.

Unsurprisingly, this produced a lot of problems with air travel systems and generated, as my colleague said, a large number of complaints to the CTA. I would argue that's actually a sign of a successful rebound, and I'm wondering if you would agree with that statement.

• (1200)

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Thank you, Ms. Koutrakis, for the question, for the work you do as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and for your participation in this committee.

Let me just say that, indeed, a lot of the briefings I was given during the pandemic predicted the air sector would not recover for five to six years. The good news, I guess, is that we're seeing recovery happen at a much faster rate. However, it is true that this fast recovery has created many challenges, combined with labour shortages and people's desire to travel. We saw, in fact, a 300% increase in the last year alone. In 2023, we're close to reaching 2019 levels. Indeed, that is promising for the sector and for Canadians.

Having said that, yes, it has generated many frustrating challenges and problems. Our government has been working with airlines, airports and other stakeholders to address these bottlenecks, including strengthening the bill of rights that will ensure passengers' rights are protected. We're working on improving information sharing and accountability in the sector. We are learning from the lessons we saw, including finding ways to improve resources and efficiency within the Canadian Transportation Agency in dealing with complaints.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Minister.

I also want to address some comments in the question from my honourable colleague Mr. Muys.

He was commenting earlier about delays. Delays are more complicated than just looking at local weather in Toronto that day. For instance, tornados and extreme weather in the U.S. Midwest can and do affect operation schedules in Toronto. Would you agree with that?

We recently went through an ice storm. I was affected. I didn't have electricity for one week. I can't imagine that did not affect the schedules of flights.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Ms. Koutrakis, absolutely. I know that sometimes passengers are standing in an airport with what appears to be a clear sky, yet so many flights are being delayed. People are frustrated and wondering why these delays are being caused. Now, I don't want to defend all of these delays. Some of them may be because of labour shortages, but others are caused by bad weather situations in other regions, which have a cascading effect on the airport where they're at.

Delays have always been a part of the aviation sector because of weather or uncontrolled circumstances. What we at Transport Canada are trying to do is to make sure we reduce the number and causes of delays outside of weather—those that are within the control of the sector. One of the best ways to do this is to ensure that airlines are held accountable for the delays for which they are responsible and that we protect passengers' rights.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: That's actually a great segue into my next question.

I was wondering whether you were in a position.... I know you've spoken about this at committee and during media scrums. Are you able to provide us with an update on where those considerations are at, and how we're going to be amending the passenger rights?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Ms. Koutrakis, I made a commitment to Canadians, after the lessons learned from last summer's challenges, that we will improve and strengthen the passengers' bill of rights. I was happy to see budget 2023 refer to it. Stay tuned. Soon we will be announcing what these measures will look like. However, I am committed, as I said to this committee and to Canadians, that, before the end of this session, we will see the passengers' bill of rights strengthened before we rise for the summer.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you.

• (1205)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Koutrakis.

[English]

Thank you, Minister.

That concludes the line of questioning for the first hour of today's meeting.

On behalf of all members, I would like to thank you once again for appearing before committee today and answering all of our questions.

I will suspend for two minutes as we invite department officials to join us.

We'll see you back here in two minutes.

[Translation]

Thank you, everyone.

[English]

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1212)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

We will resume with our witness testimony from department officials.

I'd like to welcome you here once again.

We'll begin our line of questioning today, in the second round, with Mr. Muys.

Mr. Muys, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Mr. Dan Muys: Thank you very much.

I want to raise an issue I have heard about from people in cottage country in Ontario, which is a few hours from my constituency, maybe a few hours southwest of here. There has been a Transport Canada regulatory change that is causing some significant concern. This is the issue as I understand it. There are floating cottages, which are a concern to municipalities and residents in this part of central Ontario, as well as other parts of Canada. There are companies now popping up to build these things.

Previously Transport Canada had regulations and standards for float homes, but now something has changed and Transport Canada is determining that these are small vessels, which means they do not have to comply with local bylaws or houseboat regulations. There are, obviously, environmental concerns with grey water and maybe even potentially black water that's being deposited into the lakes without the appropriate care.

In fact they don't even float. They are jacked up on poles from the lake bed, so they certainly don't fit into what I would determine to be the definition of a vessel that can actually move. I'm not sure if you're aware of this issue or if you have seen these structures at all in person. I have a photo that someone has sent me and it doesn't look a lot like a vessel. It's certainly not about to move anywhere.

Again, are you aware of this? What can be done to change this because it seems to me they have been misclassified and this is causing quite a concern?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj (Deputy Minister, Department of Transport): Yes. We are aware of the issue and we are working with municipalities.

I will turn to my colleague, Nicholas Robinson, to provide some details.

Mr. Nicholas Robinson (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Safety and Security, Department of Transport): Thank you, Deputy.

As the deputy mentioned, this has been brought to our attention, not only in the municipalities of Ontario but in other regions across the country.

With regard to the rules and regulations on specific lakes or waterways within provinces and territories, we're working with those municipalities to determine the extent of the problem and to find ways and solutions to prevent any sort of untoward or unknown discharge that would affect the waterways or interruptions in the way those waterways can be navigated.

We are continuing to work with those municipalities to address that issue.

Mr. Dan Muys: Okay, but this is an issue of misclassification. They are not small vessels.

Would you be willing to review that decision and maybe hold a briefing for MPs in areas that are affected by this? I know one of my colleagues sent a letter to the minister and has had no response. That was five months ago.

• (1215)

Mr. Nicholas Robinson: On the specific action we would take as part of our working with municipalities and other governments on this issue, we are looking at the classification of vessels, but I can't say that we would change course on the classification of vessels at this time while we look to find a specific solution for the issue.

Mr. Dan Muys: Okay, so there's no action.

Moving on, we had Via Rail here at this committee back in January, when we had emergency meetings with regard to the chaos that we saw in travel in Canada at Christmastime. In particular, we had questions around the unfortunate incident where there was a Via train stuck between Toronto and Ottawa for 18 hours. That was quite problematic.

I like taking the train. I like taking that route. I'm skeptical about the notion of high-frequency rail because I have taken high speed in other countries and it's a much better option. That aside, even in this same corridor recently we have had a number of incidents again.

Last weekend I think there were a couple of incidents. One was unfortunately I think a situation of a trespasser fatality, a mechanical issue. Again, there were a lot of delays with Via Rail in this Toronto to Ottawa corridor. Have you had any discussions with Via about this situation? It seems to be an ongoing problem. What's being done to improve it?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: After the incidents that occurred over last Christmas, we spent a lot of time working with Via Rail and their officials on a number of things. One is the response that's required. That includes informing us, working with the host railway company and informing passengers, as well as ensuring that, for example, there's adequate food and water on board.

As you noted, I think it was last week or early in April with the ice storm that we did see a train that was impacted by a fallen branch. What we noted there was that a lot of those measures that were identified, including communication with us and communication with the passengers and CN, were put into place and worked effectively.

After that we're doing an after-action review with Via Rail to say what worked well and what didn't. What I can tell you is that what we have seen is that they are communicating better, they are monitoring social media better and they are providing timely information.

Mr. Dan Muys: In the few seconds I have left, I note that in an article in the Toronto Star last weekend, the headline was this: "Hundreds of so-called 'trespassers' have been run over on Canada's railways. The Transportation Safety Board has only investigated two". That, I think, was the cause of delay this past weekend.

Do you have any comments on that?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we are at the six-minute mark.

We don't have time for a response, unfortunately, Mr. Muys.

We'll go on to Ms. Koutrakis.

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

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to all our colleagues and experts from Transport Canada who are here this afternoon.

Transport Canada launched a call for proposals to support greater indigenous participation in the oceans protection plan. Can you elaborate on this initiative and how the indigenous participation will help protect our oceans and coastlines?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Thank you for the question.

The work we do with indigenous peoples in that local community engagement is critical to a number of our programs but most notably the oceans protection program.

That program has a number of components that are focused on engagement. We provide long-term funding for capacity building to enable effective participation and engagement, and that includes ensuring there's funding for technical expertise for those communities, as well as a community participation fund program, which is a \$2-million-a-year grant program designed to provide short-term funding to indigenous communities and organizations to take part in developing and improving our marine transportation system.

Late last month, the minister invited organizations to apply for funding for indigenous marine coordinator positions, which increase our partners' capacity to participate in the development and implementation of that plan. Core to that as well is the enhanced maritime situational awareness. That is a tool that has been co-developed with indigenous communities. Again, I think it's an example of that ongoing partnership that has led to the success of the program.

• (1220)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: I was lucky in the second week of the constituency break from Parliament, when I and six colleagues were able to travel to Saskatchewan. We saw that partnership between the government and the indigenous communities. They were very grateful for that. I'm very pleased to bring back that feedback.

Also, when I was out in Saskatchewan, we met with quite a few smaller farmers. They were very grateful to see that budget 2023 had some funding for the extended interswitching. The supply chain task force recommended extended interswitching as a way to introduce more competition in the rail sector, which would benefit agricultural producers in particular.

How would it do so and how do we know the traffic would not be scooped up by American rail carriers? That seems to be something that may be important for some of our colleagues to know.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Thank you very much for that question.

As you noted, the supply chain task force did identify inter-switching as a measure that would enhance competitiveness in the rail sector. What inter-switching does is allow a shipper to access, through a regulated rate, an alternative carrier for their goods at a nearby exchange.

What the provisions are designed to do within a specific geography—and that's in the Prairies for a specific time period of 18 months—is enable shippers that are within 160 kilometres of that interchange to leverage an alternative railway to secure better rates or service offerings. What that pilot will enable us to do is gather data on the benefits and the outcomes of it in terms of competitiveness, rates, cycle times and the impact on the supply chain.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: I believe that this is also part of Bill C-33 on port modernization. Are you able to tell us how it would be different from the pilot project, which I believe is for 18 to 24 months? If a shipper is in a situation where they would like to use the inter-switching, do they need to apply, or has the process changed?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I'll turn that over to my colleague, Craig.

Mr. Craig Hutton (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Department of Transport): Thanks very much for the question.

With respect to inter-switching, it will require a legislative change first, so that will need to be considered by Parliament. Following that, this is a tool that shippers could use in their negotiations with the railways.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: My understanding is that it would be automatic. Is my understanding correct?

Mr. Craig Hutton: Once that amendment comes forward, it will be clear in terms of the process by which that method will be enabled.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: I also wanted to ask a question on the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, which recently decided not to move forward with the rolling truck age program that had originally been introduced under the Stephen Harper government.

Can you explain what role Liberal MPs in B.C. played in getting the port authority to put its plan on hold?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Thank you for the question.

What we were looking at as part of that program was to ensure that the operations and the movement of goods in the port and through the supply chain were as smooth as possible. We noted that during the pandemic, with the atmospheric rivers and the fire, the movement of goods, especially in and out of the port, became really critical.

In 2022, there was a delay, given the impact of the pandemic. Earlier this year, we asked the port to look at new technologies and other measures that it can use to assess the overall greenhouse gas reduction strategy that the port has. We will continue to work with

the port to find a common path forward to reduce pollution, protect jobs and keep goods moving.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Koutrakis.

Thank you Deputy Minister Thangaraj.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garon, you now have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The federal government recently acquired lands related to the former Rabaska project for the Port of Quebec.

Could you tell me what Transport Canada's role was in the acquisition of this land and also if there is any specific project related to these new acquisitions?

[*English*]

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Thank you for the question. I'll turn to my colleague, Stephanie, for further details on that.

When the ports acquire lands, it requires ministerial approval. That was provided, as you noted. However, I don't have any specific details with me right now on the project.

I'll ask my colleague if she might.

Ms. Stephanie Hébert (Assistant Deputy Minister, Programs, Department of Transport): Mr. Chair, I think this is a matter where we will have to follow up with the committee, in terms of the specifics of this particular project

[*Translation*]

And can you tell us why the land was acquired?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Has Transport Canada acquired land in the past without having a specific project in mind?

Ms. Stephanie Hébert: Thank you for the question.

Land acquisition is very often done for specific projects and for specific purposes. With respect to the project to which you refer, I do not have the details in hand. It is therefore very difficult for me to answer the question. However, you always have to have an objective in place. Transport Canada rarely acquires land. Normally, it is the ports that have this responsibility. We will follow up on that.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: I would appreciate it if you could provide a written response to the committee.

I would now like to ask a question in relation to the airport infrastructure installed in my riding. Last fall, there was a fire on the Mirabel airport grounds. The airport authorities decided not to send the airport firefighters, which caused delays. One man died in the fire. When a firefighter finally decided to intervene, he was suspended by the airport authorities. I know that this is under the purview of Aéroports de Montréal.

Then, of course, there was interest in the issue of airport security. I met with a lot of people in the business. They told me that there would be imminent dangers to the safety of the public, passengers and employees, particularly with respect to the number of firefighters on duty at Dorval and Mirabel. Indeed, the number seems to be far below U.S. standards, for example.

In fact, in 2019, Aéroports de Montréal asked Mr. Daniel Dufresne, a health and safety consultant, to conduct an analysis on this subject. When Aéroports de Montréal executives received the report and saw the content, they decided not to share it with either the unions or the employees.

Could Transport Canada take steps to ensure that the unions and this committee have access to the report produced by Mr. Dufresne in 2019?

[English]

Mr. Nicholas Robinson: Thank you for the question.

I'm not aware of the report you mentioned, but I will speak specifically to firefighting regulations within airports.

We have firefighting regulations and rules within airports. They're based on the number of passengers an airport may receive over a certain period of time. Subsequently, they need a certain amount of firefighting service to be provided in the case of an emergency with aircraft. If there are reports, whether they be by an operator or another individual, that suggest an airport is outside of those regulations, we would investigate it like any other security or safety risk, but we inspect airports based on the firefighting regulations we have.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you.

I'm told that airports of a similar category in the U.S. would probably have double the number of firefighters. It would be interesting to verify that. There has been a lack of transparency at Aéroports de Montréal, so I'm not surprised that you're not more aware of this report, as many other people are not as well. If you could send a response to the committee on this matter, we would appreciate it.

I will ask you a technical question that I asked the minister earlier. In terms of high-frequency trains, how many people do you estimate would take the train instead of their cars once the project is deployed? We are wondering, and I would like to know if quantitative comparisons have also been made by Transport Canada to see how many people would make the transition if there were a high-speed train project, or HST. We know that the HST is faster and that speed is a major incentive to take the train.

Have estimates been produced as to how many people would switch from cars to trains? If so, can you inform the committee, perhaps even in writing?

• (1230)

Mr. Vincent Robitaille (Assistant Deputy Minister, High Frequency Rail, Department of Transport): Thank you for the question.

With respect to the proposed high-frequency rail, or HFR, project, for which the procurement process has been initiated, it will need to increase ridership in the corridor at the very least from 5 million in 2019, approximately, to 16 million in 2050. This is already mentioned in the call for tenders. We are talking about tripling the number of passengers. This growth will be related to reduced travel time and increased reliability, and to the fact that existing riders will be taking the train more often. There are already a lot of people who take the train, but they don't take it as often as they'd like because there aren't enough trains now. The schedules are not good enough. In addition, a large proportion of the new passengers will be people who used to fly or drive. We're talking about doubling, roughly, the number of passengers.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Robitaille and Mr. Garon.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

The floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair

I'm going to pick up where my colleague left off, talking a bit more about high-frequency rail. It seems like there are two key fundamental questions at play here. One is the decision between high-frequency rail and high-speed rail, and the other is the difference between public procurement and the P3 model that the Liberal government seems fixated on pursuing.

My question to the department is whether these questions were explored with formal assessments prior to the issuing of the request for an expression of interest for the HFR project.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: I'll answer in part, and then Vincent will jump in.

With respect to high frequency and high speed, part of the design of a process is to allow the market to determine which one would work better. I think we've set out objectives in terms of shortening journey times and achieving higher speeds in the corridor. What the response will come back with is a solution that may integrate high speed or rest solely with high frequency.

I think, at the end of the day, the resulting project will improve rail service, have faster journey times and serve more communities than are served currently. As Vincent said, there will be a marked increase in passengers using rail.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: However, Transport Canada and the government have already prescribed the sandbox in which they want these private sector companies to put forward proposals. They've described a high-frequency rail project. This is my understanding. When I met with Via Rail, they talked about the design of the project in quite a bit of detail. There's been a lot of thinking that's been put into it.

In choosing to go down that path—because high-frequency rail is a fundamentally different product and different service from high-speed rail—was there a formal assessment done prior to making the decision that said, “We’re going to go the HFR route, not the high-speed rail route”?

Mr. Vincent Robitaille: Just to build on the response of the deputy minister, the process includes both the procurement selection of the private partner and the codevelopment period of four years working with them. It’s specifically designed to encourage them to investigate whether and where high-speed segments could make sense to provide the best service possible. It’s designed this way to have this assessment, but also to do it in a way that protects taxpayers’ interests and achieves value for money.

There are many services around the world. I think there was some mention of that in your previous question. If we look at Germany and Morocco, those are mixed services. You have a high-speed train that can run at 250 kilometres per hour. At some point it gets to the city, when it slows down for a period of time. It’s done in that way to, again, look at the significant infrastructure costs that are necessary for high speed and to deploy it at the best place possible.

• (1235)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: All right. What I’m hearing from you is that the scope of the project as currently defined is broad enough to include high-speed rail as it’s traditionally defined. It’s just curious that the government promotes it as a “high-frequency” rail project with speeds of 200 kilometres an hour, and not “high-speed”. They talk about it in a fair amount of detail, which seems to be putting their thumbs on the scale of what they are expecting from these private sector proponents. I’ll just leave that there.

My other question is around procurement and whether a formal evaluation was conducted looking at public procurement versus the P3 model on value for money, risk and the public interest. Was there a formal evaluation prior to the request for expressions of interest?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Under the model, as the minister said, the subsidiary of Via, Via HFR, remains public. The choice of the procurement process and using a private sector partner was precisely chosen to allow for the greatest amount of innovation, looking at, again, service but also how we transfer revenue risk, benefit taxpayers, increase ridership and—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I appreciate and understand the rationale that the government uses for choosing that path. My question was a very specific one: Was there a formal evaluation of procurement models prior to the request for expressions of interest?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Yes. The government analyzed a number of procurement models.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Would Transport Canada be willing to table that evaluation with the committee?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: If you request it, we can table that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay.

I would like to make that request, Mr. Chair. I don’t know if we need to vote on it.

Yes, I think that would be very interesting information, because obviously there’s a vigorous debate out there about the risks of the P3 model. We see projects like the LRT in Ottawa, which has been an abject failure. There are plenty of examples across Canada of where the private sector has really messed up these big capital projects. I think it’s in the public interest here. When we’re talking about the future of passenger rail in Canada, we need to put public interest right at the heart of that.

I understand that this is really a question for the minister, because it’s more political than operational, but I think you know what I’m getting at here. The assumptions that go into those assessments are vitally important.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: In the assessment of those models, we did look at, for example, the findings of the inquiry of the LRT. Those findings and the experience of other major infrastructure projects are integrated into how we’re approaching procurement and how we’re approaching the codevelopment phase and working with that partner.

Again, we were very conscious of all those experiences as we went down that path. That informed the selection of the model that we used.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Deputy Minister, and thank you, Mr. Bachrach. We will be putting forward a formal written request. A vote is not necessary.

Next we will go to Mr. Lewis.

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

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the officials for their testimony this morning. It’s certainly appreciated.

I’m going to go down a little bit of a different path here. I would like to talk about electric vehicles. The minister in the last hour spoke about the importance of EVs and how that looks. My question is around that.

We have targets set for 2030. It’s unfortunate that our targets do not meet America’s targets. It’s incredibly unfortunate. It’s very difficult for our manufacturers, for sure, but let’s talk about the federal gas tax. For every percentage of EVs we put on the road, the government will be losing federal gas tax revenues, of course. Does that come out of Transport Canada’s budget?

Which budget will this come from? What will be slashed because of the lack of revenue for that?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: What does come out of the department’s budget is the incentive program, so the subsidies or the incentives provided to Canadians and businesses for light-duty and heavy-duty vehicles.

The question on the gas tax is something that is better directed to my colleagues from the finance department.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Okay. Thank you.

Obviously your department must be very much aware and focused on the lack of revenue that would be coming from gasoline.

I'll just make it simpler. Do you have discussions with the minister about this?

• (1240)

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: In working with colleagues from other government departments in the strategy of decarbonization, we look at all of the angles, all of it. There was a full cost-benefit analysis that was conducted on the revenue side, but also on the impacts and the financial impact of carbon emissions. Those factors were all weighed as part of the development of the policy.

Mr. Chris Lewis: If it hasn't been thoroughly thought through, I would suggest we start doing that, because there is going to be a huge hole in our revenues.

Specific to the eastern ferry services' budgetary support that the minister spoke about, can you tell me if the Pelee Island and Manitoulin Island ferries are part of this eastern budgetary support?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: No, they are not.

Mr. Chris Lewis: What specifically is the eastern one? Is that just the important ferries, like those types that go to St. John's, Newfoundland?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Yes, it's those specifically as well as the ones between P.E.I. and Nova Scotia.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Was consideration given to Pelee Island and/or Manitoulin Island ferries? I know they're suffering enormously with labour.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Those ferries operate under provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Okay, that's Ontario. Thank you for that.

Specifically to the high-speed rail, I'm going to ask about the Toronto-to-Windsor corridor, as Essex is my riding, right next to Windsor. When the high-speed rail goes in, will there be a new set of railroad tracks this goes on, or are we using the existing set?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: The idea behind the high-frequency rail is that there will be a dedicated right of way for the project.

Mr. Chris Lewis: That's new tracks.

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Yes, that is for portions of it. As part of the assessment of the alignment options, there may be existing tracks that are used in segments where there isn't a conflict between freight and passenger rail currently, but there will be a significant component for a new right of way.

Vincent.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Yes, please go ahead.

Mr. Vincent Robitaille: Just to illustrate, sometimes you have new tracks that are next to existing tracks, for example, so that's when we say right of way. That would be the distinction.

Generally, for the service it needs to be brand new tracks on the ground and signalling systems. There are specific pinch points, such as near city centres, where we need to use existing tracks.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Okay. Thank you.

I have just 30 seconds for one final comment. The reason I asked that, of course, was that I was on the west coast last weekend meeting with our port authorities out there and whatnot. Quite frankly,

the bottleneck is the railroad tracks. It's not the ports. We can have all the greatest infrastructure in the world, but if we have only one set, then we're going to bottleneck ourselves.

Thank you to all of the officials this morning. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lewis.

Next we have Mr. Badawey.

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

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

The minister mentioned earlier strengthening the nation's port system. My question is this: Do you feel this will create fluidity within our supply chains, and if so, how?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: As we saw, what became very clearly apparent is the role that ports play in the smooth movement of goods and services, and the supply chain task force did highlight that very clearly. A key element, as the previous questioner noted, is how rail functions in and out of ports and how trucks work.

We are very focused on how we make the full port system work. Part of Bill C-33 enables all of those things—fluidity, environment and other considerations—to be integrated in the decision-making of ports. Part of what we are looking at is also the digital information to ensure that the infrastructure is used to its maximum effectiveness. There was a recent call, as part of the national trade corridors fund, to that end. There are various initiatives that we have that really do coalesce around making ports function as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

• (1245)

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you for that answer.

With regard to binational integration of supply chains, frankly, this is something that, in travelling to Washington on many occasions throughout the past few years we've been advocating for on behalf of our country, and in working with the U.S.

For example, Niagara, which is the area I represent, has worked diligently throughout the past many years and continues to work in a binational fashion with our U.S. partners to move trade as well as people. A perfect example of that is the Great Lakes and the \$22.5-million investment that the federal government made into the City of Port Colborne to do just that. In this case, it's to move people. Also, the residual benefit is the trade, which would be using the same docks that the \$22.5 million will be invested in.

The President came to Ottawa a few weeks ago and made the comment that it's a priority, with respect to the binational integration of supply chains.

What investments are being made? Can you speak about what accounts or programs are available and can be leveraged as funding for other partners to be involved to ensure that those capital investments are made in the best interests of the binational integration of supply chains?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Thank you for the question.

The national trade corridors fund is the vehicle that we've used to leverage investments that facilitate and expand our trade opportunities. To date, I believe we've invested about \$3.7 billion, which has leveraged an additional \$4.7 billion in investment in ports, rail and cargo facilities. That strengthens the bilateral trade relationship we have with the United States.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Because of the national trade corridors fund and other funds as well, like maybe infrastructure or environment—for example, the \$420 million that was just announced for the Great Lakes—do you think there are opportunities to work with other funds by leveraging or stacking funding with the NTCF and/or utilizing private sector interests, which might extend the leveraging for some of those investments?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Thank you for that question.

There have been announcements on green shipping corridors and on greening port infrastructure as well. Stacking has a specific connotation when we provide funding. There are limits, according to policy.

What we want to do through our programming is leverage and crowd in funding from other levels of government and from the private sector. I would argue that we've been very successful in doing that to date.

Mr. Vance Badawey: My last question is about digital and data, which you mentioned earlier.

Do you find there are opportunities, as part of that leveraging, to utilize our binational U.S. partners so that, going back to my first question, it creates more fluidity within the system?

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Very much.

We know that data is an asset that is tremendously underutilized. When we look at port community systems, for example, in Europe and in places like Singapore, where data flows and information is exchanged, they can really maximize supply chains and throughput in ports.

I had a conversation last week with my counterpart at the Department of Transportation and we committed to sharing data. Our statistical agencies work very closely together to share data. They have an ongoing initiative that uses Canadian data currently to smooth the flow and make things move more efficiently.

We agreed that we would continue to do that and keep each other aware of the issues that we have around data.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

Thank you, Deputy Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garon, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to take you to Trois-Rivières—not physically, obviously. The Port of Trois-Rivières is recognized as a good corporate citizen, involved in the community, and so on. There is a recreation and tourism project with the City of Trois-Rivières that has been planned for several years. It seems that the port is not allowed to undertake projects of this nature on its land.

Have there been any discussions between Transport Canada and the Port of Trois-Rivières on this issue? Would there be any way to get such a project unblocked on land that cannot be used, as I understand it, for port purposes?

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Arun Thangaraj: Thank you for that question.

Maybe I'll provide a bit of general information, and then we'll have to come back to you with further information if required.

Any time that a number of regulations apply when projects are there—for example, the Canadian Navigable Waters Act in terms of things that may impact navigation on waterways when things, whether they be recreational or commercial, are proposed—there is a regulatory process that the department is implicated in. I don't have the details specifically on Trois-Rivières, but we'd be more than happy to provide an update to you in writing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Perfect. I would appreciate it if you could send us the information in writing.

I'd like to go back to the estimate of how many passengers would take the high-frequency train if there were no high-speed train.

You tell us that there was an estimate, in which the type of train was defined. It also mentioned increasing the number of passengers.

Mr. Robitaille, you told us about the sources, the increase in frequency, the increase in speed, the transition from automobile to train, and the economic growth of the population by 2050. On the one hand, there is the project, and on the other hand, there is the increase in ridership.

Mr. Chair, I am making a formal request. I would like the estimate on the increase in ridership to be provided to the committee.

Mr. Vincent Robitaille: There is a procurement process. There are a number of things that we can convey publicly, but we also want to encourage competition. Of course, we will respond to the member's request.

I would like to make a small correction. The call for tenders suggests minimum outcomes, for example, in terms of ridership. It doesn't say anything about the technology, the type of train, the alignment and where the tracks should be built. What is being requested is that the route connect certain cities. We're talking about increasing ridership and decreasing travel times. We are challenging ourselves to do better. The call for tenders asks the private sector to surpass the established minimums, without dictating a way of doing things. We want as much innovation as possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robitaille and Mr. Garon.

[English]

Next, and finally, we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours. You have two and a half minutes.

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

On March 21, a railcar full of petcoke caught on fire in the rail yard in Smithers, B.C., my home community. The volunteer fire department in Smithers responded with 17 firefighters. The neighbouring Telkwa volunteer fire department responded with a number of units and personnel. This was a single car filled with a relatively inert substance. I see comments in the newspaper from the deputy fire chief saying that “with the types of hazardous materials moving through Smithers a large-scale rail event would quickly go beyond our fire fighting capacity.”

I think this speaks to the emergency response assistance plans that the railways are required to have. Those plans are approved by Transport Canada. The real concern here is the transport of more volatile dangerous goods, like liquefied propane. Because we've seen such a dramatic increase in the transport of propane through our rail corridor—hundreds of cars per week—is there a point, when hazardous goods increase in volume, at which Transport Canada requires the railroads to reassess their ERAPs, their emergency response assistance plans, and have them reapproved by Transport Canada?

At what time was the current ERAP that is in place last assessed and approved by your department?

Mr. Nicholas Robinson: Specific to the last time for the ERAP in and around Smithers, B.C., I'd have to get back to you.

The ERAP is one pillar of a multipillar approach around the transportation of dangerous goods. It is assessed against risk. When you add on additional risk, when you start to transport things that might have elevated risk, we do have to re-evaluate the ERAP.

The other piece around the transportation of dangerous goods that we need to focus on and that might be different from other instances we've seen over a number of weeks and months is that Canada, when it comes to the transportation of dangerous goods, has very clear safety standards around speed and around inspection as these dangerous goods go through the country.

• (1255)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I appreciate that. I think the key concern here is that when things go very wrong, as we've seen happen in Canada several times, what is the response capacity to keep the

community safe? There's a real concern among these smaller communities with volunteer fire departments that their capacity is simply insufficient to deal with a major disaster.

The implications of having multiple cars full of liquid propane on fire in the heart of a community are absolutely unthinkable, and I'm very concerned that our current plans are not up to the standard they need to be to protect human life and to avoid something like what happened in Lac-Mégantic from happening in a community in northern British Columbia.

I believe I'm out of time, so I'll leave it there. I look forward to following up with the department on this topic.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach.

On behalf of all members, I'd like to thank the witnesses, the departmental officials, for appearing before committee today and for answering our questions.

Before we adjourn, colleagues, I believe we have unanimous consent to move the following motions on the main estimates. I'll read the motions out for everyone's consideration.

CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SECURITY AUTHORITY

Vote 1—Payments to the Authority for operating and capital expenditures.....\$561,429,271

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$27,756,954

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Vote 1—Operation expenditures.....\$1,019,788,928

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$165,973,915

Vote 10—Grants and Contributions.....\$2,178,360,403

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

MARINE ATLANTIC INC.

Vote 1—Payments to the corporation.....\$189,617,507

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

OFFICE OF INFRASTRUCTURE OF CANADA

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$247,556,443

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$93,866,503

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....\$6,916,338,456

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

THE FEDERAL BRIDGE CORPORATION LIMITED

Vote 1—Payments to the Corporation.....\$7,381,000

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

THE JACQUES-CARTIER AND CHAMPLAIN BRIDGES INC.

Vote 1—Payments to the corporation.....\$144,126,071

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

VIA HFR - VIA TGF INC.

Vote 1—Payments to the corporation for operating and capital expenditures.....\$43,670,000

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

VIA RAIL CANADA INC.

Vote 1—Payments to the Corporation.....\$1,233,649,830

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

WINDSOR-DETROIT BRIDGE AUTHORITY

Vote 1—Payments to the Authority.....\$885,179,373

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report the main estimates 2023-24 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much. With that, the meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>