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Chair

Mr. Dan Ruimy

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.)): Good morning, everybody. Welcome to meeting 165 of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), we're resuming our study of the main estimates 2019-20.

With us today we have the honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and Sport.

Welcome, Minister. Thank you for coming today.

From the Department of Industry we have David McGovern, Associate Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

You have up to 10 minutes to tell us your story.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science and Sport): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Esteemed committee members, thank you for the opportunity to be here on the occasion of the tabling of the main estimates for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Science research and evidence-based decision-making matter. They matter more than ever as the voices that seek to undermine science, evidence and fact continue to grow.

Canadians understand that science and research lead to a better environment—cleaner air, cleaner water—new medical treatments or cures, stronger communities, and new and effective technologies.

Our talented researchers and students are developing robotic devices to help people recover from strokes and injuries, making it easier for seniors and persons with disabilities to lead fully independent lives.

[*Translation*]

Researchers are also developing vaccines and technologies to combat infectious diseases.

[*English*]

Canadians understand that science and research are essential to innovation and to the foundations of a 21st century economy. At the same time, the world's top economies systematically invest in research for its own sake.

[*Translation*]

The growth of modern economies has been driven largely by science, technology and engineering.

[*English*]

Investments in fundamental research come back to Canadians in the form of new jobs and higher wages. It's for these many reasons that our government has prioritized science and research since day one. We reinstated the long-form census, encouraged our scientists to speak freely and reinstated the position of the chief science adviser.

I requested that Canada's chief science adviser work with science-based departments to create departmental chief scientist positions in order to strengthen science advice to government and to develop a scientific integrity policy.

We have taken a very different approach in working with the science and research community. We have listened carefully to the community and have undertaken six major consultations.

[*Translation*]

One of those consultations was the first review of federal funding for basic science in 40 years.

[*English*]

We are committed to returning science and research to their rightful place. Four successive federal budgets have invested a total of more than $10 billion in science and research and in our researchers and students. We are putting them at the centre of everything we do. That means ensuring they have the necessary funding, state-of-the-art labs and tools, and digital tools to make discoveries and innovations.

● (0850)

[*Translation*]

We invested $4 billion in science and research in 2018.

[*English*]

This included the largest investment in fundamental research in Canadian history. In fact, we increased funding to the granting councils by 25% after 10 years of stagnant funding. The impact of this decision was profound and positive. We are hearing directly from researchers who say that because of increases to NSERC and SSHRC, they are able to hire students who gain the skills they need for the jobs of the future.

We provided $2 billion for 300 research and innovation infrastructure projects at post-secondary institutions from coast to coast to coast. We also invested $763 million over five years in the Canada Foundation for Innovation and have committed predictable, sustainable, long-term funding for the organization.

We also devoted $2.8 billion to renewing our federal science laboratories because we understand the critical role that government researchers play in Canada's science and research community.

In parallel to these historic investments, our government is making important changes to the research system itself. We will shortly announce the establishment of the council on science and innovation to help strengthen Canada's efforts to stimulate innovation across our country's economy. Minister Petitpas Taylor and I have already announced the establishment of the Canada research coordinating committee to better coordinate and harmonize programs of the three federal granting councils—CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC—as well as the CFI.

The Canada research coordinating committee's action over the last year has led to the creation of the new frontiers in research fund, which supports international, interdisciplinary, fast-breaking and high-reward research.

The committee also launched the first-ever dialogue with first nations, Métis and Inuit regarding research. We provided 116 research connection grants to support community workshops and the development of position papers to inform this effort. More than half of these grants were awarded to indigenous researchers and indigenous not-for-profit organizations to help chart a shared path to reconciliation.

As we put into place the foundations for this significant culture change, we vowed that each and every Canadian would benefit.

[*Translation*]

To achieve our vision, the scientific and research communities must reflect Canada's diversity.

[*English*]

We want as many people as possible experiencing our world-class institutions, but it is not enough to attract people. We also have to retain them. That's why I put in place new equity and diversity requirements for our internationally recognized Canada excellence research chairs and Canada research chairs.

Because of our changes, more than half of the Canada excellence research chairs resulting from the last competition are women. I'm thrilled to say that in the most recent competition, for the first time in Canadian history, we had 50% women nominated for the Canada research chairs, and we had the highest percentage of indigenous and racialized researchers and scholars, as well as researchers with a disability.

Earlier this month, we took the historic step of launching a program that we are calling “Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada”.

[*Translation*]

This is a pilot program inspired by the internationally recognized Athena SWAN program.

[*English*]

We are encouraging universities, colleges, polytechnics and CEGEPs to endorse the dimensions charter to signal their commitment to ensuring that everyone has access to equal opportunities, treatment and recognition in our post-secondary institutions. I am pleased to share that 32 institutions have already signed the charter.

We have repeatedly heard that inadequate parental leave creates many challenges, especially for early-career researchers who are women.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

No one should ever have to choose between having a research career and raising a family.

[*English*]

We know that a delay in career progress early on can often mean that women achieve lower levels of academic seniority and earn a lower salary and pension. That's why, in budget 2019, we are doubling parental leave from six to 12 months for students and post-doctoral fellows who are funded by the granting councils.

Budget 2019 also plans to provide for 500 more master's level scholarships annually and 500 doctoral scholarships, so that more Canadian students can pursue research.

Remaking Canada's science and research culture is a huge and complex undertaking, but we are hearing from G7 countries that Canada is now viewed as a beacon for research because of the investments we are making. We saw it first-hand with the international interest in the Canada 150 research chairs.

[*Translation*]

Obviously, there's still much more to do and it will take time.

[*English*]

Canadians can be proud, however, that in a short period, the landscape of science and research has forever been altered. We want Canada to be an international research leader, continuing to make discoveries that positively impact the lives of Canadians, the environment, our communities and our economy.

[*Translation*]

I'm sure that all committee members share this goal.

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, I'd like to finish by saying thank you to all the members of this committee for the work they have done over these last three and a half years.

I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, for your opening remarks.

We'll go right into questions. We're going to start off with Mr. Longfield.

You have seven minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, Minister Duncan, for being here.

Thanks also for visiting the University of Guelph as many times as you have over the last four years.

I was meeting with one of our younger scientists, in fact, one who is being repatriated to Canada thanks to what we're doing by investing in science. In fact, five people on this team have come back to Canada as part of the brain gain. Jibran Khokhar is a neuropsychopharmacologist. He's working on addictions and mental health, studying the effects in mice.

His concern has to do with early stage investment and what we're doing for young scientists doing higher risk science versus the traditional larger investments in science.

Could you comment on the work of the Canada research coordinating committee or any other way that we're doing investment in younger stage scientists?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Lloyd, for being such a strong champion of research.

When I came into this role, I pulled the data. What I found is that, in one of our granting councils, our researchers weren't getting their first grant until age 43. You simply cannot build a research career when you're getting that first grant at 43. I've made a real focus on early-career researchers because if we don't, where will our country be in 10 to 15 years?

You talked about the Canada research coordinating committee. We've developed a new research fund. It's called the new frontiers in research fund. It is focused on international, interdisciplinary, fast-paced, high-risk, high-reward research. It's $275 million and will double over the next five years, and then we'll be adding $65 million a year to it. It will be the largest pod of funds available to researchers. The first stream, the exploration stream, we made available only to early-career researchers. We've announced the award winners; $38 million went to 157 researchers.

As I went across the country 25 years ago when I was teaching, people asked if I had a research career or a child. I didn't expect to hear that as I went across the country. That's why, as another action for early-career researchers, we are investing in extending parental leave from six months to 12 months. You shouldn't have to choose between having a research career and a baby. You should be able to have both, and we need to make it easier to do that.

● (0900)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I'll pass that on to Jibran. All the young researchers are connected—it's not a surprise—and they're all looking for these new avenues.

I also met with Dr. Beth Parker, who is the Canada research chair for groundwater. She's doing some work on groundwater, on geothermal, and what that could do in terms of climate change mitigation; working on urban buildings that could get heating and cooling from geothermal. She's a water research scientist.

You mentioned in your presentation the connections with Environment and Climate Change Canada. Could you expand a little bit on how Dr. Parker could connect with the programs around environment and climate change for retrofitting buildings, as an example?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Lloyd, please pass along, first of all, my best wishes to Jibran. I know his work.

If you have specific questions, they should absolutely go to Environment Canada.

One of the things I've brought in, though, is that we want.... Traditionally, academic science as the outside research community and government science have not worked together. There is some crossover and there are some research institutes on academic campuses, but we need to do a better job of doing this.

I've been very focused on government science. On day two of our government, we unmuzzled our scientists. It's one thing to say and it's another thing to create a communications policy to remind colleagues and other ministers that we want our scientists speaking freely and we want them out collaborating. We're also investing $2.8 billion in government science infrastructure to cut new labs. Many of our labs are 25 years of age. With these new labs we're not going to build them the same old way where you have one discipline, a weather lab, for example. We're going to bring environment and fisheries labs together. We're also going to have increased collaboration with researchers, universities, colleges and industry.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Along that line, I was in the Arctic last summer at the PEARL research station. Environment Canada has a weather station there, and there are about seven universities doing atmospheric research looking at climate change. In our budget we had $21.8 million for PEARL. I believe most of that came through Environment and Climate Change Canada, but we still have to do the science there.

Can you comment on the connection between our investments? I know Environment and Climate Change Canada isn't your file, but how do we keep that research centre going, doing important work that it's doing?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thanks, Lloyd.

I know you did visit PEARL, the Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory. It's our most northerly lab in Canada. It studies atmosphere and the links between atmosphere and ocean biosphere. We believe it's an important lab. It was going to be shuttered under the previous government. That is why our government has committed to keeping PEARL open. Environment Canada will be keeping PEARL open.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: But they'll have to keep reapplying to NSERC in order to do the science. Is that what I'm understanding?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: It's important that the researchers apply for research funding just as any of our researchers across the country do. They can apply to NSERC. They can look at other funds. We're of course always happy to put our officials in touch to see what funding might be available.

● (0905)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I'll pass that on to Pierre Fogal, who comes from Guelph and runs that research lab.

Thank you very much, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to Mr. Chong.

You have seven minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing and providing us testimony on the estimates.

I first want to correct the record that there's been some huge sea change in levels of higher education funding in Canada. While I acknowledge that the current government has somewhat increased funding for the four granting councils, if you look at the OECD's measures on higher education expenditures on research and development, they actually haven't changed much in the last 20 years. In 2005 it was 0.67% of GDP. In 2012 it was 0.7%. In 2013 it was 0.67%. In 2014, it was 0.65%. In 2015, it was 0.67%. In 2016, it was 0.68%. In 2017, the most recent year for which OECD has figures available, it was 0.65%. It's not as if there's been a massive sea change in levels of funding for higher education expenditures in this country. I think that's important to note on the record.

As far as being a world leader on higher education expenditures on research and development goes, while we place in the top 10, we're certainly not a world leader. We are behind countries like Austria, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, which spend considerably more than we do on higher education research and development. In fact, in the United States, the National Institutes of Health alone spend the equivalent of $49 billion Canadian a year on research, each and every year. Even on a pro rata basis, that dwarfs the budgets of the four granting councils in this country.

My question for you is quite simple. The Naylor report recommended increases to funding. The current government has spent considerably more than it had projected when it took office some four years ago. Why hasn't the government increased funding levels for the four granting councils to the levels recommended in the Naylor report?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I'd like to thank my honourable colleague. He and I have worked together a very long time.

I, too, would like to correct the record. The data that you presented, the latest data, as you pointed out, was 2017, but 2018 was the historic investment in research, $6.8 billion in research, the largest investment in Canadian history, a 25% increase to our granting councils.

My goal was to put our researchers at the centre of everything we do to make sure they had the funding to do their research, that they have the labs and tools necessary to do their research and that they have the digital tools. That meant a 25% increase to our granting councils. It meant a $762-million investment in CFI and then the promise of predictable, sustainable, long-term funding of $462 million annually. Finally, after 20 years, there would be stable funding for CFI and, because so much of research today is big data, the digital research tools, there's an investment of $573 million.

When I go to a G7 meeting, what I hear from my G7 colleagues is that Canada is, and I quote, “a beacon for science and research”, and they are looking forward to collaborating, and because of that new frontiers in research funds, that $275-million fund that will double over the next few years, our researchers are going to have access to international money to be able to collaborate with Europe and the United States, and that really has not existed.

Hon. Michael Chong: To be fair, the funding levels have increased, but the 2018 figures will not be much off from the 2017 figures.

What I hear from researchers is that they feel that they are at a competitive disadvantage when competing against the funds available to American researchers through the National Institutes of Health, for example.

I think that, while funding levels have increased, they still have not increased to the levels that the Naylor report recommended, and that's clear.

The other question I had—

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I will respond to that. I was very pleased to commission the fundamental science review of which Dr. David Naylor was the chair. It was a blue ribbon panel. We had former UBC president Dr. Martha Piper. We had Nobel Prize winner Dr. Art McDonald. We had the chief scientist of Quebec, Dr. Rémi Quirion. It was the second consultation we had done. They listened to 1,500 researchers. It is a really important report. The first—

● (0910)

Hon. Michael Chong: I agree, but the funding levels—

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I do want to respond.

Hon. Michael Chong: I don't have a lot of time. I'd like to move on to my next question.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I do want to respond to you.

It was the first review of federal funding in 40 years. We took that report very seriously, and it led to the $6.8-billion budget, the largest in Canadian history. My last sentence—

Hon. Michael Chong: On a nominal basis.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Under the previous government, your government also asked Dr. David Naylor to do a report. There was to be a press conference on a Friday and that report was buried.

Hon. Michael Chong: Moving on to my next question, I have a question about the chief science adviser, Minister. The position of chief science adviser was created with a lot of fanfare but, frankly, a lot of people have been wondering why she wasn't given a sufficient mandate to do her job. A lot of people have been watching her try to fulfill her role to the best of her abilities but without any support from the government.

One of the questions that has been asked is: Why hasn't she been appointed to head up the coordinating council rather than the presidency, the chairing of that council, to rotate the presidents of the various granting councils?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: First of all, let me say that we decided to bring back the position of the chief science adviser, a position that was abolished by your government. We appointed Dr. Mona Nemer, an internationally renowned cardiologist with many awards. Your party's former INDU critic said it was an excellent choice, and we agree.

Hon. Michael Chong: The problem is that she hasn't been given a sufficient mandate—

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: She has been given—

Hon. Michael Chong: —to do her job. She has been struggling to find that role in the government, so it's much like—

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: If I could finish—

Hon. Michael Chong: —a lot of the rhetoric coming out of the government—

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: If I could finish—

Hon. Michael Chong: There has been a big disconnect between the rhetoric and what has actually been delivered, whether it's the Naylor report, which recommended certain funding levels that have not been fulfilled; whether it's appointing a new chief science adviser who wasn't given a sufficient mandate to carry out her role—

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: If I could actually respond—

Hon. Michael Chong: —or whether it's the creation of a coordinating council—

The Chair: Mr. Chong, sorry, but you are over time.

Hon. Michael Chong: Fair enough, but just let me finish my sentence.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Well, I wasn't given that opportunity.

The Chair: I would like to make sure the minister has a chance to respond to your question.

Hon. Michael Chong: Fair enough.

The Chair: You are over time. We're at eight minutes. I've allowed—

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I agree. I just want to finish my sentence, please, if I might.

The Chair: I would like the minister to be able to have a moment to respond to you, please.

Hon. Michael Chong: May I finish my sentence?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Hon. Michael Chong: There has been a huge disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality of what the government has delivered, and I believe that also includes the science portfolio.

The Chair: I will allow the minister time to respond.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: With a $10-billion investment, we've changed the trajectory for science and research in this country.

Dr. Nemer is doing important work.

I will remind the honourable member, I'm glad to hear his respect for Dr. Naylor today, but I wish it was shown when his government was in power.

You buried the report. You ignored his report, and what he asked for was $1 billion for health innovation.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before we move on to Mr. Masse, I want to remind everybody to try to not talk over each other. We want to have respectful dialogue and questions and answers here. It will make it easier for everybody to be able to get the questions and answers that they'd like.

Mr. Masse, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To start, I'm going to move to something a little easier to deal with. It's actually related to your position as Minister of Sport.

Given the fact that the Toronto Raptors are in a historic position today....

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brian Masse: Exactly. Actually, my Chris Bosh jersey from the old times is out, as well.

I do have a serious question, though, with regard to the National Basketball League of Canada. I'm not sure if you're familiar with the league, but it has been important in terms of bringing sport and science to inner cities such as mine, in Windsor, where we have the Windsor Express.

The connection today, ironically, is the Oshawa franchise moved to Mississauga, which later folded for the Raptors 905 NBA D-League, affiliated with the current Raptors.

There are franchises in Cape Breton, Halifax, Charlottetown, Moncton, Saint John, Kitchener, London, Sudbury and Windsor.

What is your government doing to partner with leagues such as the NBL? I haven't seen anything yet to deal with concussion in sport and other supports. They have grassroots teams that are professional but also have a tremendous amount of community outreach.

For example, I know our Windsor Express were out for the Mayor's Walk recently, and also running a clinic on the street.

Before, when I had a different job, I ran an inner city youth basketball and sand volleyball program where we got kids off the street and did a lot of stuff for nutrition and so forth.

Specifically, has the government done anything with the National Basketball League of Canada? What opportunities are there for organizations such as that to deal with education on everything from nutrition to sport and culture, and most importantly, concussions?

● (0915)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Brian, thank you for all the coaching you've done. I know you've been a long-time hockey coach. I didn't know about the basketball, so thank you.

Far too many children and athletes suffer from concussion. That's why we've worked with the health minister to develop new concussion guidelines that are being adopted by our national sport organizations. That's being done with the help of Parachute.

In this budget, we have invested $30 million for safe sport. I'm happy to talk about that if you would like. Part of that funding will be for protecting our children.

I'd also add that the House of Commons has undertaken a study on sport-related concussions. It's an all-party committee. I thank them for their work. The report will be tabled, and I'm really looking forward to their recommendations.

Mr. Brian Masse: I'm going to move to another one, but I want to thank you. I'll leave it at that. It will be for another Parliament.

There have been some improvements with regard to science, and getting a profile here on the Hill. I have seen that evolve. I've been involved in this committee for a long time. I still think as a country we're underutilizing science and sport.

I'm not saying that nothing is being done, but it's one of the things that isn't often raised here. That's my personal criticism. Science and sport don't seem to get the attention they probably deserve for a country like Canada.

With some of my time, I want to move to what wouldn't be an unexpected topic for this table. My Bill C-440 on Crown copyright in Canada is very important for the science community. It's not only with regard to the universities, but is also related to a number of different academic associations, research think tanks and so forth.

Our law on Crown copyright is based on a 1911 U.K. law, which was put in place here in Canada in 1929. This is the restriction of government publications, scientific research and other materials that the public has paid for. Over 200 research academics testified here at our committee calling for the elimination of Crown copyright. It doesn't exist in the United States or in most Commonwealth nations. It's very rare to find it in Canada.

What is your position on Crown copyright as it currently is in Canada?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Brian.

You've touched on a number of areas. I'm going to touch on a number of them, and then I'll hand it over to my deputy minister.

You mentioned science and sport. The two absolutely go together. It's really important. If we want to improve performance and the health and safety of our athletes, it's through science. We do have the sport research institutes. I'd be happy to talk about that further.

You also talked about making research available. We absolutely agree. We want our scientists and researchers in government speaking freely. I take every opportunity to say that. We have to change that culture. We believe in open data and open—

● (0920)

Mr. Brian Masse: As the government, do you believe in Crown copyright? That's my specific question.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: We believe in open data and open science.

To pick up on Michael's question, he asked what the chief science adviser has been doing. I hope he has taken a look at her first annual report and the areas that she thinks we should be looking at.

I will turn it over to my deputy minister.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Minister, I'm asking about a specific Crown copyright, the protection and prohibited use of government documents and research materials. I'm asking for your position on that. I don't need the deputy minister's position on that. We've studied it extensively in this House. It's a well-known fact that Canada has a unique system of protection, and I want to know whether you support the status quo of Crown copyright.

I think it's a fair question.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Brian.

This issue is raised with us all the time. We're aware of the issue and we're reviewing it.

Mr. Brian Masse: Okay.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: None.

Mr. Brian Masse: Oh, there we go.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to Mr. Graham.

You have seven minutes, sir.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): I sure hope that industry presents a report on copyright soon. I think it would be quite helpful.

Minister, could you explain to us what the Canada research chairs do and what they've accomplished so far?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: David, thank you for the question.

The Canada research chairs are some of our prestigious chairs. They were brought in in the year 2000. We have two kinds of chairs. Tier one Canada research chairs receive $200,000 over seven years, and tier two chairs receive $100,000 over five years.

We have made changes to the program. The tier one chairs used to be able to have seven years, then seven years and then seven years and that could go on forever. We have capped that at one renewal. Why? It gives more researchers access to these prestigious chairs.

We have actually made the first increase to the tier two funding in 19 years. That's because it is for early-career researchers.

We have made changes in terms of equity and diversity. Of course, I pulled the data; that's what I do as I want to see how we're doing. If we look at the history of the Canada research chairs program, we weren't close to our chairs reflecting the Canada we see today when you look at percentages of the population. I told our institutions that they had two years to make the voluntary targets that they had agreed to in 2006. I really want to thank our institutions. They really changed the way they do nominations and, for the first time, 50% women were nominated for these chairs. The highest percentage of indigenous, racialized and persons with disabilities were being nominated to these chairs.

I want to stress that, for the first time, we have five persons with disabilities holding a research chair. That's not 5%. It's five. That shows the work that needs to be done and that's why we're bringing in the dimensions charter.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: How many research chairs are there?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: It's close to 2,000. Through budget 2018, the historic budget I talked about with the $6.8 billion, we're investing $210 million for another 285 Canada research chairs.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: It's more than I realized. I sense great pride in the program.

I do have another question related to the research. How does one motivate particular research to happen? One of the big issues in my rural riding, which has no research institutions, is that there are over 10,000 lakes in my riding. It's a big riding. We have Eurasian milfoil and other invasive species that are causing great problems. There seems to be no research being done on how to address them, mitigate them and prevent them from spreading further.

If somebody who isn't a scientist wants to take a particular topic up for research, how does that happen?

● (0925)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I'm going to start right at the beginning.

I want to strengthen our culture of curiosity in Canada. All children are born curious. All children want to discover and explore. They'll pull apart this pen. They'll pull apart the microphone. They want to understand how things work. They're interested in nature. They want to go out and explore the lake and what's found at the bottom of the lake and what insects are there.

It's up to us to foster that natural-born curiosity through elementary school, high school and hopefully beyond. It's not enough to attract them in their institutions. We have to be able to retain them. I think it's about science literacy. It's about strengthening a culture of curiosity.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Massé wanted to ask a quick question as well, if I could pass some time to him.

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Thank you. It's greatly appreciated.

Minister Duncan, first, I want to thank you for your commitment, passion and determination when it comes to science. It's extraordinary.

I've had the opportunity to meet with you several times with representatives of our research centres, both at the college and university levels. On a number of occasions, you and I have been told that regional research centres have difficulty accessing grants to continue their research. We've been told that these grants are mainly allocated to major research centres. However, some extraordinary research is also being conducted in the regions.

I'd like you to discuss potential measures to help our smaller regional college or university research centres access these funds.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I want to thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

Rémi, thank you. Yes, we met with a number of your researchers, and it was just fascinating to know the research they were doing.

As you know, all the research that's done is peer reviewed. There are panels created, but we want to make sure those panels reflect Canada, and that has been changed.

We haven't talked about colleges yet. Colleges, polytechnics and CEGEPs play an incredible role in the research ecosystem. Just as we've made the largest investment in universities, we've also made the largest investment in our colleges, in applied research, of $140 million. That's the largest investment ever.

When I go across Canada, whether it's at Red River College—that's where Lloyd went—Humber College, Centennial or Seneca, the research that's being done is absolutely extraordinary, and they are able to make a difference in the community.

A company comes in. They need an answer, a quick turnaround, whether it's in robotics, artificial intelligence or virtual reality, and in three or four months the college is able to provide a solution.

At Niagara College, it was a certain type of nut they were able to do. At Niagara College, it's the help they're able to provide to the wine industry.

Thank you for raising this important question.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to Mr. Lloyd.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister and officials for attending today.

It has been reported as recently as May 2 in the Globe and Mail by Stephen Chase and Colin Freeze that in a National Research Council application process for advisory members of a committee related to a Huawei research grant, those with political opinions about Huawei need not apply for this process.

I think it's disturbing to Canadians when they're seeing that our federal agencies are screening people out for their political viewpoints in terms of their membership on committees. We have seen this trend in other departments, with the government putting political and personal values tests on whether or not you get government funding.

I'm just wondering, Minister, if we can trust the government in the future to protect Canadians and protect our processes from people being screened out for their political and personal viewpoints, and excluded from sharing in government programs and processes.

● (0930)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Dane, thank you for your question.

I believe it is incredibly important that our researchers, whether in government or academia, are able to explore, to cross disciplines and to cross boundaries. That's how research works.

When it comes to academia, NSERC has very specific rules in terms of peer review. It needs to be hands-off. It is the specialists who review applications.

You mentioned foreign investment. As you know, there is a review being undertaken by security officials, and we will respect the results of that review.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Minister.

That is a separate matter. It is related. However, this is about an NSERC process for deciding who gets to sit on a site advisory committee related to Huawei's co-investment with the University of Laval. In the application process, people were asked if they had political views about Huawei. If they had political views, they would be excluded from this process.

When asked about this, Huawei stated that they did not request this screening process and do not expect a screening process for this application, so why is NSERC, a federal agency under your control, proactively going in and screening people out for their political views?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I'm going to turn this over to my deputy minister.

Mr. David McGovern (Associate Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Department of Industry): Thanks very much.

Let me preface my comments by telling you that, before I started with ISED, I was the deputy national security adviser to former prime minister Harper and then to Prime Minister Trudeau.

When these issues first emerged on our radar screen, Minister Duncan, as she's told you throughout, asked us to put together the data, to put together the fact base. We reached out to our granting councils, to the U15, which are the 15 most research intensive universities, to Universities Canada. We covered the whole spectrum. We just wanted to get a sense of what the issue of foreign investment in research in our academic institutions looked like. In the specific case that you're talking about, our granting councils want to ensure there's no bias in any of the people who do peer review. The way this story was portrayed in the newspaper suggests that it was focused on a single entity, single company, single country. But the notion of having no bias by the people who do the peer review, it applies to every grant application.

What we've been doing recently for Minister Duncan is trying to look at the broader issue of foreign investment in research at our universities. We're working with the universities. We brought in the national security community. We've reached out to foreign countries. We're putting together sort of the fact base, but we're also raising awareness on the part of all of the participants.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have only 30 seconds left, and I do thank you for that thorough technical response.

I understand that we need to have strong protections from conflict of interest in these cases, and I do support that matter. However, when Canadians see that government granting agencies are asking people for their personal political viewpoints before they can apply for a process, I think that is crossing a line, and I think Canadians have a lot of concerns when that is a factor.

I only have four seconds left, so I just want to thank both of you again for appearing today.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to Mr. Oliver.

You have five minutes.

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Thank you. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Jowhari.

We're spending a lot of time talking about science. I did want to thank you for your leadership on the sports file as well, the great work you've been doing across Canada to promote sports, inclusive sports, in particular.

I want to harken back to the conversation you had with Mr. Chong. I think it was Samuel Clemens who said there are lies, damned lies and statistics, which is basically the use of statistics to bolster weak arguments. I just wanted to reflect on that, because in this case, there were statistics being used that weren't relevant to the time period that was reflective of the work you've done as minister.

Here's the quick reality story. In my previous life, I chaired a peer review committee for CIHR, and over the previous government span we watched our allocation actually just dry up. We had people with Ph.D.s leaving Canada. Worst of all, we couldn't bring new students in to bring them up to Ph.D. level. There was a paucity of funds.

I've stayed in touch with the science officers and the others who are involved in it. They are all reporting incredible interest back into.... This is health research, which I know isn't NSERC or SSHRC, but it's been a phenomenal change and we're seeing now robust academic programs. We're seeing good Ph.D.-calibre people back in our universities, and we're seeing training happening across Canada. I just wanted to reflect that. As he said, there's reality and there's rhetoric. This is the reality. The rest is rhetoric.

● (0935)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: John, thank you for highlighting it. Yes, it was disappointing to provide stats only to 2017, knowing the historic budget was in 2018.

Mr. John Oliver: It's very obfuscating on his part, I think.

I did want to ask you a question, though. Part of what you've been working on is the Canada research chairs program, which I think has been a phenomenal statement about our commitment as a government to research and bringing long-lasting leadership—not just funding, but leadership positions—to make sure we keep research strong across Canada.

I was wondering if you could give us an update on how that's working, the early-career researchers and the work they're doing to retain very accomplished Ph.D.s and promote new researchers coming in.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I'll give you a very specific example. Last week we announced the discovery grants, which are a large NSERC program. We made the largest investment in discovery grants in Canadian history. Some $588 million went to 5,000 researchers across Canada. What is particularly exciting is that 500 of those grants went to early-career researchers. There was an increase. They got an increase in the funding. They got a stipend as well as 1,700 scholarships for postgrads.

What we hear from the researchers is that they are feeling the difference. They understand that under the previous government, funds stagnated. No one was talking to the research community. It really was a broken relationship that needed repairing. When you stagnate funds it means there are small pools. The previous government added to the challenge by concentrating funds in a few hands.

The last thing they did was to tie research funding. For example, if you wanted a SSHRC grant, it had to have a business outcome. That's not how research works. We are saying the lifeblood of the research ecosystem is our researchers.

My goal is to put our researchers and our students at the centre of everything we do and to ensure that they have their funding, their labs and tools and digital tools.

Mr. John Oliver: Sorry, Majid.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): No worries. With 45 seconds, I will say welcome.

Minister, there has been much talk about institutions, our educational institutions and our private sector when it comes to supporting research. However, I understand that the Government of Canada is also supporting a lot of researchers within the government.

With 30 seconds left, can you shed some light on the research that we are doing? What kind of researchers are we hiring?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Majid, thank you for highlighting our government scientists.

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds for that one.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Okay.

We've given $2.8 billion for these new labs. I want to highlight the increase in our scientists and our technical experts since we have come into government. In 2015-16 to this time period there's been an increase of 2,000. That comes on top of the 2,500 that the previous —

Mr. Majid Jowhari: That's 2,000 that we have hired within the government?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: That's 2,000 scientists and technical experts. That's April StatsCan data.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We're going to move to Mr. Chong for five minutes.

We are going to go over by a couple of minutes. I just want to make sure that everybody keeps their time on track. The minister does have to go. We're going to try to finish off everything.

You have five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to respond to what Mr. Oliver said.

I use accurate statistics. We pulled out the latest OECD statistics. The reason I used 2017 is that's the latest year for which data was available from the OECD on the higher education research and development measures. That's why I used the 2017 figures and not those for 2018. I will put to the committee that I expect the 2018 figures will not be that far off from those for 2017 and previous years.

All of that is to say while I acknowledge that the current government has increased funding levels for the four granting councils, there has not been a sea change in funding levels relative to history and relative to the rest of the world. That's borne out by the facts. The facts are this: The four granting councils together in the estimates this year will receive approximately just under $4 billion. The National Institutes of Health in the United States will receive $49 billion Canadian alone for research. On a pro rata basis, that dwarfs what we're doing. So to suggest, as the minister has, that Canada is a world leader in funding levels simply is not true. While we are in the top 10 for HERD measures, we are not number one. That's clear on a variety of different measures.

I want to go to a specific question from the Naylor report. The Naylor report recommended that the government form a national advisory council on research and innovation. One of the concerns I've heard from the research community is that they fear that the board, which the report recommended be made up of 12 to 15 members, will be highly politicized. What they are looking for is to have framework legislation adopted by Parliament that would depoliticize the appointment process to ensure that this board and this advisory council are at arm's length from politics and serve their function.

Does the government have any plans to do that?

● (0940)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I, too, am going to respond to you regarding funding.

We have absolutely changed—

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, with respect, I asked a question about—

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: —the trajectory of funding.

Hon. Michael Chong: —the advisory council.

The Chair: You prefaced with a comment. It's only fair that the minister respond to that comment in the process of answering your question.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've absolutely changed the trajectory of funding in this country from stagnation to investment. First year, $2 billion.... I'll just give the example. In the first year, $95 million—

Hon. Michael Chong: With respect, Minister, it's not to the levels recommended in the Naylor report.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: I'm trying, if you'll allow me—

Hon. Michael Chong: You keep citing the Naylor report, and you have not—

The Chair: Mr. Chong, please let the minister answer.

Hon. Michael Chong: It's also my time, Mr. Chair, and the Naylor report was clear about its recommendations for increased funding levels. The fact of the matter is the government has not increased funding for the four granting councils to that level. That's a fact.

The Chair: You don't need to make that point with me. Again, you are asking the minister—

Hon. Michael Chong: —about the national advisory council and not about funding levels.

The Chair: You are commenting and now you're.... Please let the minister answer. It's only fair. You prefaced all of that information—

Hon. Michael Chong: I asked about the—

The Chair: You're running out of time, Mr. Chong. We're running out of time, so if you'd like the minister to answer—

Hon. Michael Chong: I'd like her to answer about the national advisory council.

The Chair: She can answer to whatever she feels is appropriate.

Hon. Michael Chong: And I can respond in any way I'd like to respond.

The Chair: Well, your time is running out.

Minister.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In year one, we made a $95-million investment in the granting councils. It was heralded across the country because that $95 million was the largest investment in the granting councils in a decade. In budget 2018, we increased our funding to the granting councils by 25% to $1.7 billion.

Now I'm happy to answer. There will shortly be an announcement about the council on science and innovation. I'd like to thank the Science, Technology and Innovation Council, or STIC, for its work. This will be our council and we will take a different approach. It will be open and transparent. Agendas will be provided so Canadians know what will be discussed, and there will be reporting to Canadians. We are taking a very different approach and there will be the 12 members that you mentioned.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to Mr. Sheehan for five minutes.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Thank you very much, Minister, for bringing science back. In fact, you've brought it back to schools, back to government, back to industry and back to Canada.

Sault Ste. Marie is known as a steel town but we also have one of the highest rates of Ph.D.s per capita. There's a lot of scientific research happening on flora and fauna, forestry, the Great Lakes and the rivers. We also have Algoma University and Sault College. I noted that you had mentioned the dimension charter. Algoma University has signed that. It's a semi-rural university and they're leading the way. They have, since 2015, two research chairs. They're basically our front-line warriors in the battle against climate change. They're doing significant scientific research. They're working with both the private and public sectors there.

As you know, my daughter Kate was just accepted to the University of Ottawa for science. I really appreciate your leadership over the last few years in making things more diverse and giving a leg up.

I have a couple of questions. Can you explain some of the changes you have made to help women enter the scientific field and do their research? Can you explain in particular some of the changes that have been made to maternity leave?

As well, I noted with great significance that one of Doug Ford's first actions was to get rid of the chief science officer for Ontario. However, you were tasked with creating a chief science officer for Canada. Can you explain the importance of a chief science officer as well?

Last, Dr. Bondar says hi.

● (0945)

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thanks, Terry. Congratulations to your daughter. Please give Dr. Bondar my very best. She's a Canadian hero.

Equity, diversity, inclusion: We have world-class institutions in this country, and they rank in the top 100. I think we should all be celebrating our researchers and our institutions.

I want as many people going through these institutions as possible. We have to attract them there, and we have to retain them. That's why we've put in place these equity, diversity, inclusion requirements for our prestigious research chairs. That's why we're increasing parental leave. When I came in, the parental leave for the three granting councils was three months, six months and six months. We got it to six months, and in this budget it's going to 12 months.

That's why we're bringing in the dimensions charter. This is based on the Athena SWAN program in the U.K., which has been replicated in Ireland, the United States and Australia. The Canadian program will be the most ambitious, and it's really exciting. In a matter of a few weeks, we will have 32 institutions signing on.

We want our institutions to be welcoming. I was at Dalhousie University on Friday, and there's really great excitement that people can be part of transformative change. In 1970, there was 0% full women professors in engineering. Roughly 50 years later, it's 11%. We've made progress, but it's incremental. There's excitement that together we can make transformative change. It's very exciting.

You asked about the chief science adviser. We believe in science advice to government so that our scientists can speak freely, so that they are not muzzled. They can be collaborating and going to international conferences. The chief science adviser has done really important work this year. She has worked on having departmental chief scientists to increase science advice to science-based departments.

I asked her to develop a scientific integrity policy—this is a first in Canada—to protect our scientists and researchers so we can never go back to as it was under the previous government. Nature, one of our most prestigious research journals, talked about Canada muzzling its scientists. We can never go back to that.

She has done an important aquaculture report that our government is now acting upon. She has done her first annual report. She is rebuilding the relationships with the research community outside and inside of government, as well as international relationships. Science and diplomacy matter.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The final two minutes are yours, Mr. Masse.

● (0950)

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you, Minister, for being here.

To continue along that line, there has been a lot of talk here about the silencing and muzzling of scientists in the previous government but your government right now does not allow scientists to release papers. Your scientists' papers are often redacted when they finally do get them released.

Your government right now has partial use and restrictions on papers in scientific research that is commissioned. It is not allowed, when you finally get them, to use them and share them.

Often requests from scientists and researchers are delayed or even ignored amongst departments. The situation has become so critical right now that your government also has lost information. As we go to the digital area, some departments treat it with respect, some do not, and information and research are also lost with regard to not moving into digital formats.

All of that has been expressed as part of the concerns on Crown copyright. Right now, you muzzle and restrict scientists, not by necessarily restricting what they say in public, but by denying the free access of their works for other Canadian researchers.

Aren't you then part of the problem?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Brian, thank you for your question.

I will tell you what I am absolutely committed to. On day two, we unmuzzled our scientists.

Let me explain this. It is one thing to say it and it's another thing to act.

We developed a new communications policy from the previous government, because Nature magazine was reporting about Canada muzzling its scientists. I then wrote, along with the former president of the Treasury Board, to all ministers of the science-based departments to make sure they knew there was a new policy. We stressed that we want our scientists to speak. We want them communicating with Canadians. We want them speaking to the public.

Mr. Brian Masse: Then why won't you let them share their papers? Why do you have restrictions?

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: That is the problem that we face here.

The Chair: Mr. Masse, the minister has actually stayed over her time. I wanted to make sure you got your time. Please do a quick wrap-up.

Mr. Brian Masse: Fair enough.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

We want them out speaking. Culture change takes time. I take every opportunity when I speak with government scientists. I'm the first science minister to ever meet with the deputy ministers of science-based departments throughout the year, and annually for eight hours, to discuss the challenges of government scientists. I am also committed to open science and open data—and I've asked our chief science adviser to work on this, because we want Canadians to have access.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

On that note, we've come to the end of our first hour.

Minister, thank you very much for being here today. Thank you for staying the extra minutes so that everybody could get in their time.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Chair, thank you to you.

Once again, I'd really like to thank this committee for the opportunity to appear before you to answer your questions. Mostly, I'd like to thank you for the important work you've done over the last three and a half years.

Merci.

The Chair: Thank you. We will suspend for a few minutes.

● (0950)

(Pause)

● (0955)

The Chair: We're back.

Before we go into committee business, we need to vote on the main estimates.

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$65,905,491

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....$241,163,563

Vote 10—Launching a Federal Strategy on Jobs and Tourism.....$2,091,224

Vote 15—Increased Funding for the Regional Development Agencies..... $24,900,000

(Votes 1, 5, 10 and 15 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$14,527,629

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....$34,270,717

Vote 10—A Food Policy for Canada.....$3,000,000

Vote 15—Launching a Federal Strategy on Jobs and Tourism.....$1,709,192

Vote 20—Strong Arctic and Northern Communities.....$9,999,990

(Votes 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN SPACE AGENCY

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$181,393,741

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....$78,547,200

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....$58,696,000

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

CANADIAN TOURISM COMMISSION

Vote 1—Payments to the Commission.....$95,665,913

Vote 5—Launching a Federal Strategy on Jobs and Tourism.....$5,000,000

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

COPYRIGHT BOARD

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....$3,781,533

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY

Vote 1—Operating expenditures $442,060,174

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....$6,683,000

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....$2,160,756,935

Vote L15—Payments pursuant to subsection 14(2) of the Department of Industry Act.....$300,000

Vote L20—Loans pursuant to paragraph 14(1)(a) of the Department of Industry Act.....$500,000

Vote 25—Access to High-Speed Internet for all Canadians.....$26,905,000

Vote 30—Giving Young Canadians Digital Skills.....$30,000,000

Vote 35—Preparing for a New Generation of Wireless Technology..... $7,357,000

Vote 40—Protecting Canada's Critical Infrastructure from Cyber Threats.....$964,000

Vote 45—Protecting Canada's National Security.....$1,043,354

Vote 50—Supporting Innovation in the Oil and Gas Sector Through Collaboration.....$10,000,000

Vote 55—Supporting Renewed Legal Relationships With Indigenous Peoples.....$3,048,333

Vote 60—Supporting the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs.....$7,300,000

Vote 65—Supporting the work of the Business/Higher Education Roundtable.....$5,666,667

Vote 70—Launching a Federal Strategy on Jobs and Tourism (FedNor).....$1,836,536

(Votes 1, 5, 10, L15, L20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65 and 70 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$37,981,906

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....$209,531,630

Vote 10—Launching a Federal Strategy on Jobs and Tourism.....$3,607,224

Vote 15—Protecting Water and Soil in the Prairies.....$1,000,000

Vote 20—Increased Funding for the Regional Development Agencies.....$15,800,000

Vote 25—Investing in a Diverse and Growing Western Economy.....$33,300,000

(Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 agreed to on division)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF CANADA FOR THE REGIONS OF QUEBEC

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$39,352,146

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....$277,942,967

Vote 10—Launching a Federal Strategy on Jobs and Tourism.....$3,097,848

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

FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY FOR SOUTHERN ONTARIO

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$29,201,373

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....$224,900,252

Vote 10—Launching a Federal Strategy on Jobs and Tourism.....$3,867,976

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

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$436,503,800

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....$58,320,000

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....$448,814,193

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

NATURAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH COUNCIL

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$53,905,016

Vote 5—Grants.....$1,296,774,972

Vote 10—Paid Parental Leave for Student Researchers.....$1,805,000

Vote 15—Supporting Graduate Students Through Research Scholarships.....$4,350,000

(Votes 1, 5, 10 and 15 agreed to on division)

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$35,100,061

Vote 5—Grants.....$884,037,003

Vote 10—Paid Parental Leave for Student Researchers.....$1,447,000

Vote 15—Supporting Graduate Students Through Research Scholarships.....$6,090,000

(Votes 1, 5, 10 and 15 agreed to on division)

STANDARDS COUNCIL OF CANADA

Vote 1—Payments to the Council.....$17,910,000

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

STATISTICS CANADA

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....$423,989,188

Vote 5—Monitoring Purchases of Canadian Real Estate.....$500,000

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the chair report the main estimates for 2019-20, less the amounts voted in the interim estimates, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now go in camera to discuss M-208.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]