



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

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# Standing Committee on International Trade

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 004**

Tuesday, November 3, 2020

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Chair: The Honourable Judy A. Sgro





## Standing Committee on International Trade

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• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)):** I call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on International Trade, 43rd Parliament, second session, meeting number four. Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), we are meeting on the main estimates 2020-21: vote 1 under Invest in Canada Hub, referred to the committee on Wednesday, September 30.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of September 23, 2020. The proceedings are available via the House of Commons website. To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have a choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French.

For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the directives from the Board of Internal Economy regarding masking and health protocols for everyone.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute your mike. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. I will remind you that all comments by members and witnesses need to be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

Pursuant to that standing order, I would like to welcome Minister Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, and her officials. Minister Ng will be here for one hour and her officials will remain for the second hour.

Minister Ng, welcome to our committee. Thank you for being here. I turn the floor over to you.

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade):** Thank you so much.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Good afternoon, everyone, vice-chairs and all the members of the committee.

It's an absolute pleasure to be with you and to assist the committee in its important work. It's an honour to speak to Canadians.

[Translation]

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone.

[English]

Coronavirus, pandemic, shutdown, mask up, test and trace, once-in-a-generation crisis: A year ago, if these words resonated at all with Canadians, it would have been as far-fetched plots from sci-fi films or from books. Today, however, they are words that we would use if we were asked to write the opening chapter of Canada's COVID-19 story. I know that my version of this chapter would acknowledge how extraordinarily difficult these last eight months have been for Canadians. During this time, I have been across the country, mostly virtually, and have spoken to thousands of Canadians, so many of whom are business owners and entrepreneurs, whose lives and livelihoods have been turned upside down by this crisis.

Canadians have shown all of us time and again that they are incredibly resilient, hard-working and innovative, but many worry about what comes next, and that is understandable.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, I'll repeat what our government has been telling Canadians since the start of the pandemic.

[English]

We will be with you every step of the way. The best way for us to get through the challenges we face is by facing them together as team Canada. That is what we have done together since day one, and this is what we will continue to do.

[Translation]

From the beginning, we've focused on providing economic support to Canadians, while taking the necessary action to protect their health.

[English]

The result is that Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan has helped protect millions of jobs across Canada, provided emergency support to families and kept the lights on for businesses with lending support and the wage subsidy.

Just yesterday, we tabled legislation that will expand and extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy and launch the new Canada emergency rent subsidy. Both programs will support businesses across the country and continue to help Canadians throughout this crisis.

The pandemic also reminded us in stark terms how our world is truly interconnected. It has underscored the absolute importance of international collaboration and co-operation. However, as COVID-19 swept the world, many countries responded by restricting trade, the linchpin of prosperity for so many national economies. As of June, some 97 countries had responded to the pandemic by implementing more than 200 restrictions on cross-border trade. As of last month, 142 of those restrictions remain in place.

[Translation]

This isn't the right path, especially for a nation such as Canada that relies on trade.

[English]

Trade accounts for nearly two-thirds of Canada's economy and supports 3.3 million jobs, or one out of every six. COVID-19 should not and cannot be used as an excuse to stop trading or to turn inward with protectionist policies. Instead, we need to focus on the fundamentals: open trade and investment, diversify our trade and develop solutions to supply chain challenges. That is what we have done.

We have worked with Canadian exporters to find innovative solutions.

We worked with our international partners to remove unnecessary trade barriers and to keep the supply chain open and strong for essentials such as food and drugs.

Throughout the pandemic, for example, I've been working closely with my international partners from the G20, the WTO, APEC and others to ensure that our supply chains remain open, our businesses continue their work and crucial goods and services flow. Through Canada's leadership of the Ottawa Group on WTO reform, we're helping shape the future of multilateral rules-based trade, which is really key to global prosperity. It's this type of global co-operation that is going to see us rise to and overcome COVID-19.

Given the importance of international trade to Canada's economy, it's clear that exporting, importing and attracting investment from around the world will be critical to our ongoing recovery. However, it's not quite business as usual. The pandemic has forced us to adapt in innovative ways that are redefining how international trade can be done. Consider the virtual trade mission to South Korea that I am thrilled to be leading this week, in fact, starting tonight. More than 140 Canadian small businesses are signed up to participate in this groundbreaking endeavour. Many more would have joined us in a physical trade mission.

Our government is adapting our services to better serve Canadian businesses. This morning, the Prime Minister and I announced the revamping of the CanExport SME program. It's delivered by the trade commissioner service. This program gives our resilient and innovative small businesses grants of up to \$75,000 to grow their

businesses in the international market. Now, this funding will help them navigate a COVID-19 landscape, with funding to expand their digital and e-commerce presence and participate in virtual trade missions and virtual trade shows. This new world of digital international trade will continue to allow Canadian businesses to take advantage of Canada's preferential trade agreements. We have 14 of them. It gives us priority access to two-thirds of the global economy and to 1.5 billion customers.

To better leverage agreements such as the CPTPP and CETA, Global Affairs Canada is currently rolling out a concerted promotion strategy, with a sector-focused approach to increase awareness of these ambitious trade agreements.

• (1540)

[Translation]

We're ensuring that our businesses and workers in all parts of the country truly benefit from the opportunities being created in rapidly growing markets around the world.

[English]

To do that, we're taking a team Canada approach, an approach under the umbrella of Canada trade. This is what I call our trade tool box, which falls under my mandate. The tools in this tool box include the Canadian trade commissioner service. It includes Export Development Canada, or EDC, Business Development Canada, or BDC, the Canadian Commercial Corporation and Invest in Canada. We're all working together to help our businesses succeed here at home and abroad.

During my recent meeting with my provincial and territorial counterparts, we understood that if Canada is going to get through this difficult period, it will be key for all of us to mobilize small businesses and businesses of all sizes so that we can support their efforts to access the international market. It's equally key that in this mobilization, we include people of all backgrounds and diverse identities, including women, indigenous people, visible minorities, young people and LGBTQ2 entrepreneurs.

Diversifying trade is about more than where we trade and what we trade. It's about who trades. It's about supporting and encouraging new exporters, whether they're just starting out or they've never exported before. It's about being inclusive, because we know that trade works best when it benefits all Canadians, whether it's in traditional sectors such as natural resources and agri-foods or emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence or health technology.

As we move through this pandemic and build a path to a strong economic recovery for Canadians, I know that words such as “inclusive”, “innovative”, “resilient”, “collaborative” and “adaptable” will be among those used to describe how we have performed. These words are at the heart of what team Canada is really about: coming together to build on economic prosperity for our businesses of all sizes and to improve the quality of life for families and all Canadians.

I'd be happy to answer any questions that the committee has for me.

[Translation]

Thank you.

[English]

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

I'd like to acknowledge the officials who are also with you today. From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have John Hannaford, deputy minister, international trade; Steve Verheul, assistant deputy minister, trade policy and negotiations and chief trade negotiator of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement; Anick Ouellette, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer, corporate planning, finance and information technology; and Sara Wilshaw, chief trade commissioner, assistant deputy minister, international business development, investment and innovation. Welcome to all of you.

We will move right away into questions.

Ms. Gray, you have six minutes, please.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. This is the first time you've been in front of this committee in over a year, during this Parliament. It's good to see you. I know that we only have you for an hour today. We are starting the Canada-U.K. study shortly, so I'm hoping that you will commit with us today to come back when we're having that study.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Of course, Ms. Gray, I would always be happy to come back and talk to my parliamentary colleagues.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Great. Thank you, Minister.

I heard through Export Development Canada that they were instructed not to pay the government the yearly dividend this year as is obligated for Crown corporations. Would you say that was accurate for this year?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Ms. Gray, thank you so much for that.

Perhaps, on this one, I'm going to ask my deputy if he would respond, please.

• (1545)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister, if it's okay, because I know that we have the officials here a little bit later and because your time is limited today, I'll just move on. We can address that later. This is your department, and surely it would have been you or, if not you, someone else who would have given this direction. If you're not sure

about that, it's a little concerning, but I'll move on to another question here.

I want to ask you about customs brokers. I know that the government implemented a customs broker deferral program as part of the pandemic plan. As part of this, customs brokers have to take out bonds for businesses. This is both for importing and exporting. I'm wondering if you're aware of this issue and have done any analysis on the customs broker deferral program.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Ms. Gray, that's a terrific question.

Of course, that is a key function that is performed by Export Development Canada. Throughout this pandemic, what we have endeavoured to do is make sure that we are looking at the range of programs and services, including lending services for businesses so that they can indeed be supported throughout this pandemic. It's work that is ongoing, and we'll keep doing what we need to do to support Canada's exporters.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Minister.

As part of this, there might be unintended financial consequences for these brokers because they're being asked to take on the bonds without remittance due to the deferrals. Are you working on any plans to rectify this? Do you have a plan that you're working on?

As we look at these customs brokers, we see that they do play a significant role in ensuring that our supply chains are moving and remain open. There's a concern that as these brokers are taking on more risk, they're getting to a point where potentially they might not be able to continue. Do you have a plan to address this? Are you working on a plan to address this?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I am very happy to always look at measures that will help Canadian businesses. Certainly, businesses that are working through the disruptions in the supply chains in the global economy are something that is absolutely top of mind for all of my officials. It's what I call our team Canada approach.

Throughout this pandemic, we have worked steadfastly to make sure that all of the tools that we have here are lined up in a way to help our businesses through this. I can't underscore enough the supply chain challenges that have taken place. Our chief trade commissioner is here. Throughout this time period they have done enormous work, for which I thank them enormously, to help unclog some of those very issues and supply chain challenges that our exporters have been facing. This is work that we're just going to continue to do.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Are you working on a plan right now for this issue specifically?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're working on a plan overall to help our businesses and exporters make sure they are continuing to trade across the world. Whether the businesses are here or whether they are across the board, we continue to work on a plan to always help our businesses through this.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Okay.

I want to ask about the Invest in Canada Hub. Do you have a dollar value of foreign direct investments from businesses that would directly attribute to the Invest in Canada Hub, looking at the main estimates and the budget that was allocated for that? Do you have an amount for what was invested based on what we invested in this?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** That's a terrific question.

Invest in Canada is such an important entity to help our Canadian businesses. It's the very first time there is a single-window mechanism to help investors who are looking to invest in Canadian businesses and here in Canada. The work they have done is terrific. Since Invest in Canada has been in place, we have absolutely seen an increase in FDI to the country. This is a direct result of their work and their work in collaboration with the trade Canada team. That tool box, Invest in Canada, is a very important feature of that.

• (1550)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Minister, for that high-level description, but I'm looking for the dollar value.

How many jobs were created from this? What is the dollar value in investment? Do you know what those numbers are?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** In fact, \$67 billion were invested last year in Canada through the work of the Invest in Canada Hub.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Could we get that tabled?

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Gray.

Yes. Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Arya, for six minutes.

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister and officials, welcome to the committee.

As we all know, Minister, this COVID pandemic has hit the reset button in almost every single country in the world. For Canada, trade is very important. Sixty per cent of our GDP comes from trade. It is not only international trade being affected now. We are expecting that it is going to continue to be detrimental to the old way that trade was being done. One reason may be the increasing importance of self-reliance, not only for Canada, but for many other countries. That may bring in some protectionist measures in different countries. The full parameter is changing. We are entering a new normal in terms of international trade. I think we have to take steps to see how we can help Canadian businesses continue to export outside of the North American market. That is the key thing.

You mentioned EDC, BDC and Canadian Commercial Corporation. It is good the funding is available, but I think we'll have to go down. For example, for Export Development Corporation, the cost of capital has come down, so we have to see whether that has been translated into the interest costs paid by Canadian exporters.

I will not even talk about BDC because I always have issues with BDC. Regarding CCC, we have to see if they have changed their objective or their strategy, so they can help more small Canadian companies enter the export market.

The energy exports have already started going down, not just due to this pandemic, but also due to consumption being affected by, for

example, electric vehicles. National gas consumption is affected by the bigger plants being replaced by Megapack batteries. In fact, in Canada the first Megapack batteries are being implemented in Alberta.

Things have changed very dramatically in the last nine or 10 months and we are entering into a new normal. I would like to know what specific measures you are taking to help Canadian small businesses export in this new normal.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thanks so much to my honourable colleague for that excellent question.

As you pointed out, Canada has committed to open trade since well before COVID-19. We're committed to trade agreements because they work. We're committed to multilateral, rules-based trade because that works. Rules-based trade establishes stability and predictability in trading relationships. It ensures balance. It ensures fairness. It creates new opportunities for business and it certainly supports well-paying jobs for Canadians. We have preferential access to a billion and a half customers through many economies.

You're absolutely right. Having the trade agreements without the other side, which is to help our Canadian businesses take advantage of those opportunities in the global marketplace, would be a missed opportunity. That is why I proudly serve as Canada's minister for both small business and export promotion—because we have to tell people about it—and also Canada's Minister for International Trade.

Throughout the pandemic—I won't go into the range of emergency supports that we have been providing, but what we have done here in the Canada trade tool box, in the BDC, the EDC, the Canadian Commercial Corporation, Invest In Canada, as well as the trade commissioner service is created an internal working group which is called the business export and trade recovery team.

This incredible, dynamic team is working together during this time of COVID-19 to be sure we are doing everything we possibly can to ensure our businesses have the supports that are needed to help them grow and to grow their businesses into that international marketplace. Complemented by the emergency measures we have in place, this will put them on that right kind of footing, so that they are best primed for the economic recovery when it is time to do so.

We will continue to work very hard to support our small businesses, indeed all of our businesses that are exporting into those international markets, throughout this time.

• (1555)

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Thank you, Minister.

I'm—

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Arya. I'm sorry, but the time is up.

We will move to Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister Ng, for your presentation. I first want to ask a quick question about an aspect of the current negotiations that hasn't been addressed. I'm talking about the negotiations with the Mercosur countries.

Trade is beneficial. Exports will play a significant role in our economic recovery, which we hope will happen as soon as possible. In the case of Mercosur, about a month ago, environmental groups called for a moratorium, given that this is a record-breaking year for forest fires in that part of the world. This could pose a certain threat to our farmers, who, quite frankly, have faced major challenges in recent years. I'm thinking in particular of the poultry sector, which is subject to supply management.

Last Friday, Kendal Hembroff, the director general of trade negotiations at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, confirmed that discussions are still ongoing with that part of the world.

Can you confirm this and tell us whether your department has the political will to move forward in this area?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you so much for that important question.

Let me begin by saying that our trade decisions will always be based on what is in the interest of Canadians. We do recognize the health of forests in the region and how crucial that is to the well-being of both people and our planet.

Our government is firmly committed to the principle that both free and progressive trade and protecting the environment, as well as indigenous rights, should be mutually supportive.

We, as a government, are committed to pursuing core environmental provisions focused on maintaining high levels of environmental protection and governance. I can assure my colleague that we will continue to look for all trade opportunities, but we will always do so in the best interest of Canadians. I can assure my colleague that we're committed to those values when assessing the possibility of any future trade agreement.

On your question with respect to farmers, there is no question that our farmers, in particular the farmers in Quebec, are so incredibly important to the Canadian economy. I want to assure you that the Prime Minister has been clear that we will be making no supply management concessions in any future trade agreements.

[Translation]

Thank you.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Minister Ng, these commitments to the environment and to farmers have been reiterated time and time again. However, the last few times, we've seen that

this hasn't produced conclusive results and that the commitments haven't been fulfilled. Based on your response, I gather that there's currently no moratorium and that negotiations are taking place.

I want to know whether the discussions on the free trade agreement with the Mercosur countries are still ongoing.

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** To the honourable member, we've had no rounds of discussions since 2019. Certainly, in this most recent period, our focus has largely been on helping our businesses through COVID-19. For those businesses that are operating abroad, making sure that they get the support that is needed—

• (1600)

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I wasn't talking about formal rounds of negotiations. I was talking about discussions. We received confirmation of this last Friday in this committee.

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I want to assure the member that the values that underscore our approach to trade, and I think we have a strong record of this, values like protecting the environment and protecting indigenous rights, are first and foremost. We will absolutely continue to talk to our partners, but anything we do will always be in the interests of Canadian businesses and Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Minister Ng, in a recent press release referring to the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, you emphasized the need to ensure that all businesses and workers benefit from the agreement.

However, the trade deficit between Canada and the European Union, far from decreasing, has actually increased since CETA came into effect. Why has this happened?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** To the honourable member, CETA absolutely marked a new chapter in the relationship between the EU and Canada, and it is delivering unparalleled opportunities for Canadians and our businesses.

I've had the opportunity to work with former EU trade commissioner Hogan and just the other day I was speaking to Trade Commissioner Dombrovskis. All of us are absolutely focused on ensuring that we are able to create greater opportunities for our businesses to capitalize on that important agreement and on those opportunities in the European countries.

It's been terrific to talk to several colleagues from the European Union countries, and as CETA takes place, we will need to keep doing the work to help our businesses become even more export-ready, to understand the opportunities and the market access they have, and to help them get the benefits of that access. That's particularly important now as we head towards economic recovery so that we can create that kind of prosperity for Canadian businesses, anchored in the creation of Canadian jobs.

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

We go now to Mr. Blaikie for six minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Thank you very much.

Hello, Madam Minister.

You will recall that in February the government committed to making changes to policy in tabling treaties in Parliament. I'm wondering if you could advise the committee as to when the government intends to implement those changes to the policy.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you so much for asking that question.

I want to assure the member that our government is absolutely committed to those amendments to the policy. Of course, the formal implementation was delayed by the pandemic, but we're working to formalize these changes. I want to assure you that we will absolutely adhere to the commitments we made to fulfill the obligations.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Do you have a timeline for that? Is that something that will be done, say, by the end of the year?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're working as quickly as we can on this, and we are hoping we will be able to get it done by the end of this year, yes.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Okay. I'm going to take that as a commitment unless you say otherwise.

I understand that Canada has been talking with the United Kingdom about a potential trade deal. Of course, the important deadline there is December 31 as the U.K. leaves the European Union. Under the terms of that policy change, it's foreseen that Parliament would get notice of those talks.

I understand it's the government's position that what they're negotiating currently is not a comprehensive trade agreement but a transitional trade agreement. I'm wondering if you could provide us with a definition of a transitional trade agreement and the definition of a comprehensive trade agreement. I don't expect you to do that right now, off the cuff, but if you could table those with the committee in advance of our beginning the Canada-U.K. study, which will be beginning shortly, that would be very helpful, if that's something your department can do.

• (1605)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you so very much for that. I'm happy to have the department provide you with that information. Also, the officials who are here may be able to answer more of that a little later in their portion, but we can provide that information.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** I appreciate that. It will be useful to our study and the situation in Canada of a potential agreement between Canada and the U.K.

On the question of negotiating with Mercosur, I just want to echo some of my colleagues' comments expressing concern about negotiating a trade agreement in light of what Brazil is doing to the rainforest. I take your answer. I know we heard something similar from one of your officials on Friday, about how the government believes that an environmental agenda can go hand in hand with a trade agenda.

However, I'm wondering if there is anything Bolsonaro could do to the rainforest that would cause the Canadian government to feel it's inappropriate to be negotiating a trade deal with Brazil at this time.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I think our record speaks for itself. We have negotiated the CPTPP. We have negotiated a high-standards agreement in CETA. We have also done that in the recent negotiations with the new NAFTA, in CUSMA.

I think there's a record there to follow, where standards around labour, environmental protection and respect for indigenous rights.... These are all values that underpin the manner in which we undertake trade discussions, and this will be no different.

As I said to our colleague earlier, I can assure you that we are going to continue to consult and be sure that whatever we do will always be in the interests of Canadians.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** I think what I'm hearing there, though, is that there's no threshold for this government in terms of environmental or human rights abuse, for instance, that would cause the government to say that it doesn't want to support governments engaged in this kind of behaviour.

Trade negotiation is always a possibility, regardless of a country's environmental or human rights track record. There's no point at which Canada would say, at least under the current leadership, that it's not going to lend any kind of credibility to the actions of this government by saying that Canada considers them a perfectly legitimate potential trading partner.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I would disagree with you. I think the values I just talked about and how we are respectful of those values that we are accountable to Canadians for—

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** So Bolsonaro's treatment of the rainforest—

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Don't I have the same length of time to answer?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Blaikie. Your time is up.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** I'm just seeking a clarification.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ng, maybe you could give a short answer, please.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I think our clarity around the values we hold, particularly around the environment and around human rights, is something that is in the interest of Canadians. We have demonstrated that we are able to ensure those high standards. We're going to keep doing this, and everything we do will be in the interest of Canadians.

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

We're going to Mr. Aboultaif for five minutes.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Good afternoon, Minister, and thank you for appearing today in front of the committee.

My first question for you is on the Invest in Canada program. What is your budget for 2020-21?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** For some reason I don't have that right in front of me.



**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Okay.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** It is \$35 million. There we go.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** It's \$35 million. You mentioned that the direct investment that came to Canada—I believe it was last year—was \$67 billion. Is that number confirmed?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Yes, the \$67 billion is. It is in foreign direct investment.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Good. Is that an increase or a decrease from the year before?

• (1610)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Let me get back to you very specifically on that. I want to make sure I always give colleagues and certainly the committee accurate information.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** With respect to the \$67 billion, which sectors show a growth and into which sectors is most of the investment going? Can you be specific on that?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well, Invest in Canada, as I said earlier, is that one-window support which I think has been absolutely terrific. It's been terrific because it works with our provincial and territorial colleagues as well. We're really working as team Canada to attract that investment.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I'm interested in the sectors, if you don't mind, where the investment is going. If you have those figures, you can probably plan to work on growing sectors that do not get enough attention or are not getting enough attraction from international investors.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Our focus, steadfastly, has been to make sure we are working with international investors so that they are looking at Canada as an international investment destination.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I'm not questioning your intentions, Minister. I'm asking if you can be specific on which sectors are seeing growth, in which sectors we see a decline, and what the plan is to work on the sectors that are not getting enough attention or attraction from investors across the world.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well, let me give you some supporting facts and figures.

As I said earlier, \$67 billion was invested in 2019. The FDI network facilitated 131 wins that generated \$2.7 billion and created 4,400 jobs. There were 232 visits to Canada from potential investors, 850 FDI projects and 4,010 outcalls.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Those are not dollar figures, Minister. I'm really interested in those figures, because I don't see them anywhere. I can't find them anywhere.

My background is in international trade, and I know that if there's a sector that needs attention, to plan for the future, to increase your budget toward the sector that we need to pay more attention to, that's how we can generate best results. If you don't have those figures, I would really appreciate if we could get them.

The next question is, where do you see our weaknesses on international trade?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Let me answer the question this way. Of course, it's important to support traditional sectors, like agriculture and agri-food across the Prairies and in rural Canada, fisheries on all

three coasts, natural resources and energy in Alberta, and Saguenay, Quebec, steel and auto in Ontario, aerospace and manufacturing in Quebec, and forestry products in several regions. Why? These sectors are globally competitive. Canada is going to retain and increase our share of these tangible trades. At the same time, we want to help shift and help those businesses in the knowledge economy grow, and grow into the international marketplace.

That is the kind of work we are doing to help our traditional trading sectors grow and get that market share and continue to work, and work beyond those sectors, so that we can get our Canadian companies growing, and growing in the international marketplace and creating great jobs that are anchored here in Canada.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Minister, that's who we are: what Quebec does or what Alberta does or the Prairies do. We know that every province in the country has certain competitive edges over certain industries and products.

What is your plan? Where do you think the growth is going to be? That's what we need to hear: where the growth is and exactly what your plan is for the future.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** Minister, could you make that a short answer or else tie it to someone else's answer, please?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Sure.

Businesses are doing an enormous amount of growth. Whether it is in clean tech, agrotech or health tech, a range of businesses and services in the economy are taking advantage of these terrific trade agreements.

Our commitment has been steadfast. We're going to watch. We're going to always watch the backs of our Canadian businesses during this time, to make sure they get on the economic recovery so that they can accrue those jobs here in Canada, anchored in that recovery period.

Thank you.

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

We will go to Mr. Dhaliwal for five minutes.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, CETA came into effect over three years ago. Early reports from Global Affairs Canada show there were massive jumps in Canadian exports to countries like the Netherlands, where we saw a 75% increase. With Ireland, we saw a 65% increase, and with Germany, we saw a 37% increase.

Could you tell us how COVID has impacted these early successes and how the agreement will be impacted as we continue to deal with the second wave in Europe and in Canada?

• (1615)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** As I said earlier, CETA really was a high mark for trade between Canada and the European Union. We have been working very hard to help our Canadian businesses, particularly those small businesses, understand those market opportunities in the European Union and to help them grow.

You're right. The figures you quoted have simply indicated one thing, and that is that this trade agreement really is working for the benefit of our businesses, but there certainly is work to do. The member, of course, comes from British Columbia, and I'm thrilled that as part of our export diversification strategy, we invested in the trade accelerator program. It actually collaborates with the export navigator program in B.C. in helping our Canadian businesses understand those market opportunities in the European Union.

Five hundred million customers: that's what's available to our Canadian businesses. We're looking forward to continuing to help businesses get access to those opportunities and create the prosperity that our Canadian businesses will need to do here in Canada, anchored in good Canadian jobs.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Minister, in Surrey—Newton, almost 85% of the businesses are small businesses. In your large portfolio, which includes business and international trade, how do you see the integration between the two fields of your work?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** That is a terrific question.

It is really and truly an honour to be able to serve as the minister responsible both for small businesses as well as international trade. I think all the members here understand that 99% of our businesses are small and medium-sized businesses, so we have the Canada trade umbrella, which is what I call our trade tool box. We have in there the trade commissioner service, which is Canada's best business development team and sales force around the world, helping our small businesses get access to capital through Business Development Canada, making sure of that insurance and the products that are needed for businesses to export and grow into the international marketplace. For those businesses that are working in places around the globe, where they need a country-to-country contract, there's Canadian Commercial Corporation.

We do take a team Canada approach with small businesses on one hand and international trade on the other. We are creating a "no wrong doors" approach so that we can help our businesses in their start-up, scale-up and accessing new markets.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Minister, new measures aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 have significantly affected how consumers make retail purchases. The option to purchase online has become an important alternative to walking into a retail store. Retail e-commerce sales have gone up, with some businesses relying more on this method. Could you please touch on some of the different e-commerce trends we've observed?

Also, despite the pandemic, businesses continue to do business abroad. How do you support them, considering that every country is dealing with this health crisis differently?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Digital trade and e-commerce have been incredibly important. That is why, earlier today, I was so pleased to be with the Prime Minister to make an announcement about CanEx-

port. We have pivoted the CanExport program, CanExport for SMEs in particular, so that businesses get up to \$75,000 to be able to do things like attend a virtual trade mission or do those virtual business-to-business meetings. It's helping them to get the support they need to become more digital, not only to be more competitive here at home and to pivot their businesses during COVID-19, but also to access those opportunities globally.

Tonight, I start a virtual trade mission, a first of its kind, to South Korea. There are many businesses, including women entrepreneurs, who are part of this mission, looking to explore and grow into a market. We're going to do this virtually and digitally. We're going to adapt, and the CanExport program is going to adapt in the same way to help our businesses take advantage, I hope, of the opportunities that I hope will continue to exist, but they will just do it a little differently.

• (1620)

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

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Monsieur Savard-Tremblay for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister Ng recently announced a \$12-million investment in the Canada United Small Business Relief Fund. Can we have the details regarding the amounts already allocated? How many businesses per province have already received funding? Are there a limited number of applications per province?

The Canada United Small Business Relief Fund is managed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the national network of chambers of commerce. The goal of the fund is to help small Canadian businesses with their recovery efforts in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why was the Ontario Chamber of Commerce assigned to manage the \$12 million? Why wasn't the management of all of this money divided up across the country?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** That is a very important question. I want to assure the member that the \$12-million investment we have made, working through the chamber of commerce network in all provinces and territories, including Quebec, is there to provide additional support for businesses to apply for a grant, up to \$5,000 per business, to help them support local businesses.

It will help businesses to deal with some of the expenses that they may have had to incur to buy PPE or to do some modifications in response to health measures or even to go digital. There is always more work to be done, and I'm very pleased that we will continue to do that by listening very intently to businesses. That's what this is. This is a program where we're partnering with all the chambers across the country so they can help businesses.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. Blaikie, go ahead for two minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you very much.

I was curious. I know the minister mentioned in her opening remarks some of the supply chain challenges that Canada has faced. Of course, there have been actions to try to ensure that some of the things we need most during the pandemic are being manufactured here in Canada. There's concern by a number of Canadians about the investor-state dispute settlement clauses in the various trade agreements to which we are party and about Canada's financial and legal exposure under those provisions.

I'm wondering if that is a concern for the government. Is it something that's been part of the discussions around setting up domestic supply chains for PPE and other medically necessary supplies?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** During this period we have made sure to create more resilient supply chains. Certainly we saw early in the pandemic the need for items like PPE, ventilators and so forth.

I guess the work is in two parts. On the one hand, it is to make sure there is resilience in the supply chain so that Canadian companies can depend on that. That's where the trade commissioner service has been absolutely extraordinary. They have been steadfastly working on problem-solving and ensuring the inputs into the Canadian supply chain. Here, made in Canada is what we have stood up by helping Canadian companies and asking Canadian companies to be a part of the COVID-19 solution so that—

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Are you concerned at all that those efforts might expose us, under ISDS provisions, to international trade tribunal proceedings?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We have always been very careful and we continue to be. I said earlier—

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Could you highlight some of the measures that the government has taken in order to shield us from exposure under such provisions?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well—

**The Chair:** Minister, Mr. Blaikie's time is up. I don't know but maybe you could give him some of that information offline. We have you for five more minutes here and Mr. Hoback is the next questioner at the table.

• (1625)

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Minister, it's great to see you.

The Conservatives wanted you for the full two hours. I think you're going to have to give the chair some chocolates or something, because she wanted you here for only an hour. If you give her some chocolates, I'm sure she'll let you stay the whole time.

Minister, I want to talk to you about EDC and our trade commissioner service and just looking forward.

We have a structural change that has now hit the world, and that's COVID-19. How are we going to do business in this new world? One of the concerns I have with EDC, BDC and CCC is whether they have reassessed this new world. For example, in EDC, have you gone through your lines of credit country by country and re-evaluated the risk? Has the risk cost gone up in such a way that businesses in Canada now have to pay more for that risk? Can you give us some insight into that?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you so much. It's wonderful to be here with you. I'm sorry that we aren't spending more time here together.

Suffice it to say that during COVID-19 it has been extremely important to make sure that our Crown corporations and our assets that are there to help businesses are helping businesses. This is why I created what I call the BETR team. BETR stands for business export recovery table and brings BDC, EDC, the trade commissioner service and CCC together to really work together to look at how we can best—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** When will we start to see some reports from this group? When are we going to start to see some goals, some ambitions or some ideas, so that small businesses can start to say, "This is where they're going and this is what I need to align to."

Do you have some timetables as to when we're going to see some action there?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well, it's a working table.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Fair enough.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** It's actually part of the operations. What we try to do, just as the Prime Minister has done in putting small business and export and international trade together, is to create that better synergy so that we are working as team Canada. I think that's what Canadian businesses are asking of us. I'm thrilled with the leadership that my deputy has been providing, together with the Crown corporations—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm sorry. I don't mean to be rude. I don't mean to be disrespectful either, but I do only have five minutes.

When we look at EDC and the loans they had outstanding when COVID hit, are we going to see a large writedown from EDC in loans that for one reason or another weren't fulfilled, or in business that wasn't fulfilled? Do we have a huge liability sitting over there right now? Do you have any indication of what that looks like?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** What I would say about EDC during this period is that they have done incredible work. They've done incredible work because they—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** That's not the question.

I agree with you. They do great work, the same as the trade commissioners. In fact, my concern is that we don't have enough trade commissioners in the right countries. What I'm really concerned about is the liability that EDC takes on when they start underwriting businesses in other countries. When you get hit with something like a pandemic, there's got to be a writedown. There's got to be a hit.

I'm kind of curious as to how big that hit is and what it's going to look like. What are we going to do to mitigate that going forward? How do we make sure our businesses don't end up paying for it going forward?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well, I think we all will agree that what is absolutely important is that they are firing on all cylinders right now to help our businesses through this period. EDC, as you know, is an arm's-length Crown corporation. It makes those judicious decisions together with its board. We are working very closely to be sure that those considerations are such that it really supports Canadian exporters at this critical time, because I think that what's needed is to be able to support our exporters during this time.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I agree. They are arm's-length Crown corporations, but in the same breath, they're in a pandemic. They're designated with a certain task: to deal with Canadian businesses in a fashion that they normally don't do, so they do take a lot of direction from the government. They have in the past.

I don't say that's a wrong thing. I think that might be a good thing, considering what we were facing and what our businesses were facing, but I need them to pivot now to take care of these businesses in the foreign markets. When I look at the new markets that are evolving, are they equipped? Are they ready to do that? Do they have a sense of where the priorities should be and what sector should be the priority? Also, do we have the lines of credit established or re-established in those current markets to take advantage of, and do Canadian businesses understand that they are available?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** The effort of helping Canadian businesses understand that this is a critical tool is absolutely a challenge. I suppose that's probably why I have "export promotion" as part of my title, because that is absolutely an area that we need to keep doing. Now, during the pandemic, I think it's more needed than ever, so they actually are getting team Canada and trade team Canada to wrap their arms around it so they can problem-solve as they need to during this time and be supported during this time so that we can get them, bridge them, to better times beyond COVID-19.

• (1630)

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** On your announcement today, when will we see the fine print, the actual details on the application process? Who qualifies for the \$75,000? What's the benchmark? What do they have to achieve or accomplish in order to get that or have it forgiven?

We've had announcements over this last year from the government. The announcement gets made and then it looks like the bureaucracy is scrambling to deliver it. Can you give us a time frame or a sense of a time frame for when businesses can actually look at it, apply for it and move forward with it?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well, the CanExport SME program has been in place. In fact, our government made an investment of \$190 million to this program. What—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Is this just a reannouncement of what you've done before, then?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** No. It is to make sure that this program absolutely is responsive to businesses who need to do business in a different way during COVID-19. I think you'll agree that getting on a plane and travelling is not something that would be the best use of that money, whereas helping them to develop their virtual capabilities and helping them to get to virtual trade shows or virtual business-to-business meetings is what they need. That's what the capacity—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Fair enough, but then your structure within Global Affairs will have to adjust accordingly. You don't need logistics people planning trade trips. You need those people to pivot to be representatives in different countries for these businesses. What has been done in your area to accomplish that?

You know, we have some great people who do all sorts of great work, but their old jobs might not be what's required right now. How do we get them into the right areas so that we're utilizing them as effectively as possible?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well, we have in previous budgets certainly increased investment to the trade commissioner service, but I think that today—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** A budget? I'd love a budget. Wouldn't you love a budget?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Tonight, my virtual trade mission to Korea, which is the first of its kind, I think is a perfect example of how team Canada, trade team Canada, is working to support the over 100 businesses that are coming with me virtually into Korea. This—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Can we join that? Can I join in on that call and listen in?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Of course, you're welcome. I think what you're going to see is a whole bunch of wonderful businesses just like those ones we saw when you and I were in Africa. We have terrific female entrepreneurs who.... If you think about it, if it were a physical trade mission, we wouldn't have these numbers. These numbers are off the charts. They're absolutely terrific. We're looking forward to helping them make those business connections and giving them the capacity to, I hope, grow and to book contracts in this market, South Korea.

We're actually celebrating five years of the trade agreement.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Actually, that's a trade agreement that everybody voted for—even the NDP, Daniel.

Anyway, just to sum up, I would definitely like to be made aware of those so we can participate. It's not necessarily that we want to be vocal during the meeting but just so we can at least listen in and listen to what businesses have to say about what works and what's not working.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Randy, I've been promoting this trade mission forever. You need to look at my social media and everywhere else I've been promoting it.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** How did I miss it?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** And of course you're welcome. You're always welcome.

**The Chair:** Minister, if we could keep you longer, we would love to have you stay, but it sounds as though you have a pretty exciting evening ahead of you. Thank you very much for coming today. We would like to have you back several times, especially in the near future. There are several things we want to talk to you about.

Thank you very much, Minister. However you exit, you'll exit, and we will continue on with the officials who will be here.

We go now to Mr. Sarai for five minutes.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was going to ask the minister this question, but since she's not there, I'll let one of the officials take it.

As she already outlined, I think we know the pandemic has been challenging for female business owners. It's even been called a "she-cession". Last week, we heard about a virtual trade mission. I think that's the one that's about to happen, in which over 170 businesses will be able to participate. In particular, female business owners who might not have been able to attend an in-person trade mission will be able to attend given this format that is easier than the normal one.

Are there any thoughts on how we might be able to incorporate virtual aspects into future trade missions, once travel restrictions are eased, as a way to open up international trade opportunities for SMEs, especially as a way to assist female-run SMEs to access international markets?

This is for our trade commissioner.

• (1635)

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw (Chief Trade Commissioner, Assistant Deputy Minister, International Business Development, Investment and Innovation, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I'm happy to answer that question.

The short answer is that we are really excited about the results we are seeing from this virtual trade mission, and as you say, about making a lot of these more accessible events for others.

What we're doing right now amongst the trade commissioners is sort of collecting best practices. This also includes how we're doing other virtual events, like participating in trade shows around the world. A lot of the trade shows have gone virtual, and our folks on

the ground are participating in these and they have all kinds of feedback coming in. We are collecting all of that feedback and we're going to see what we can do to apply these going forward, because as you say, if it makes it more accessible for women entrepreneurs or indigenous entrepreneurs or visible minority entrepreneurs or others who might not have the opportunity to participate in a trade mission that takes them away from their home or their business or their family for a week or 10 days, not to mention the costs of those things, we want to make sure that we are preserving some of the best aspects of what we're learning in this particular time.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Maybe you can also help me with regard to travel restrictions, it being very difficult for importers as well as exporters. In our case, we're more concerned with exporters, when they have issues abroad with their goods, payment, delivery or transportation, or as we saw in PPE matters, people taking them right as they were about to be boarded.

What has the trade commission or EDC done to assist Canadians or to kind of mould their services in this particular time? What are the best practices that are emerging from this COVID experiment or experience?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Let's hope it's not an experiment, Madam Chair.

Certainly, countries around the world are taking measures, including border restrictions, to address the pandemic, and those measures can pose challenges for Canadian companies and their representatives.

We understand, obviously, that foreign governments have legitimate public health and safety priorities, just as we do here. Our trade commissioners are working with companies to help them navigate these, to understand what the restrictions are, to understand how to best.... Our folks are trying their best to advise Canadian companies if they feel that they need to travel. If they don't feel that they can travel, we are working with them to pivot their services or how they are working with their clients and delivering their goods or services to clients in markets abroad.

I think I mentioned last Friday that requests for our problem-solving service, which is one of our four key services, have increased by 47% or 49%, something like that, in the last little while, and for obvious reasons. People are asking lots of questions about what they should do, and we've been able to help them find new ways of doing business. As the minister mentioned, the CanExport program has been put in place and made more flexible to support companies in accessing e-commerce platforms, search engine optimization and working with others for financial payment and transaction, and securitizing those things.

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

We will go on to Mr. Lobb.

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The first question I have is in regard to the CETA trade deal and any progress being made with any of the non-tariff barriers, or whatever you want to call them, in the pork and beef sectors—specifically around the pork sector.

Are there any updates on that?

• (1640)

**Mr. Steve Verheul (Assistant Deputy Minister, Trade Policy and Negotiations and Chief Trade Negotiator of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I think that clearly we have been very much aware of the difficulties that our exporters have been encountering going into the European Union. We've had continuing conversations with the European Union at various levels, including the officials levels, the minister, and have been pushing this issue continually.

I think we are beginning to see some signs of progress. When it comes to pork and beef in particular, we still have a bit of a challenge in finding the right way to get into the EU market. The EU has very significant restrictions, as I'm sure you're aware, when it comes to hormone-treated beef, and other requirements that they impose on imports coming into the EU.

We are making progress on all of these issues. It's much slower than what we'd like to have, but we are getting there.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** In regard to pork and trichinella in the pork, it's my understanding that the EU wants every container ship to the EU to be tested for this. Is that the holdup with pork going to the European Union?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** That's probably the most significant holdup at this point in time.

Until we can demonstrate that we don't have this in Canada, it's going to be a bit of a challenge to assure the EU that this is not going to be an issue with our bilateral trade. That is another issue we're working on. Unfortunately, these issues always take longer than we think they should with the EU, but we are making progress on those issues.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Okay. It's just that I look at it and wonder how much it could cost to test every container of pork going to the EU. How much does it cost to do a test?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I don't know the cost of the test offhand. Ideally, what we would look for is to be able to assure the EU that we don't need those kinds of tests because we will have taken the necessary steps within Canada, before the product is shipped to the EU, to an extent where we can assure them that it's just not an issue.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** I can't disagree with what you're saying, but at the same time, if there's a way to do the test to satisfy them until we demonstrate the other, it would seem that it would be the route to go. I know that when the announcement was made on this trade deal, when it was fully implemented it would be \$600 million a year for beef and \$400 million a year for pork. If I'm correct, and I

might be wrong, it's only \$7 million a year for pork. We actually have a red meat trade deficit with the European Union, which is completely baffling, to my mind.

I guess it would be better for the minister, maybe, to answer some of this, but is there a strategy to turn this around? To me, this would be one of the great failings of the government, to implement a trade deal with 500 million people, and when we're one of the kings of beef and pork production in the world, we have a.... We were worried about a problem with cheese from France and Italy, and here we are getting blown out on beef and pork.

Is there a strategy to correct this? It won't be too many years until this is fully in force on the red meat side. What can we do to get this fixed immediately?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** One of the things we have to do, and I think the most important thing we have to do, is to continue working with our own industry on our side to make sure we're taking the necessary steps to meet the conditions that are required to enter the European Union. It's a bit of work with the EU, but it's also a bit of work with our own production. The EU has very specific requirements for getting into their market. We're not able to change those very easily, so to some extent we have to meet those requirements. That does require some changes in certain production practices on our side.

• (1645)

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Fair enough. But if we use that pork example—

**The Chair:** Mr. Lobb—

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Oh, it couldn't be five minutes yet, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but it is. I stretch it out as much as I can for everybody.

Ms. Bendayan, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My first question for the officials relates to some of the progress made with the Ottawa Group over the last number of weeks and months. I understand there was a meeting this summer. I'm wondering if you could update the committee on how that important work is going in order to reform the WTO.

I'm not sure who would like to take the question.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I will take that question, Madam Chair.

The Ottawa Group has been a particularly valuable vehicle for Canada to have influence in discussions around the WTO. I think what we have seen is that, when we look around the various conversations taking place at the WTO, the only real mechanism for trying to advance issues is the Ottawa Group. It's essentially the only game in town right now in terms of really trying to make progress.

You mentioned the meeting that I think took place back in June. We did establish a work program at that point in time. We've had a total of five meetings at the ministerial level since we formed the Ottawa Group, and five meetings at the deputy ministerial level. We are starting to make some significant advances on some of these issues. For the moment, at least, we're putting a particular priority on access for medicines and medical supplies and trying to ensure that trade will flow as easily as possible for those types of products. At the same time, we're also looking at areas like electronic commerce, trade facilitation and more predictable trade in agricultural products.

It's all about trying to find ways to ensure that trade will move and we won't have the kinds of export restrictions that we've seen from many countries as a result of the pandemic. The Ottawa Group is beginning now to demonstrate that it can deliver some actual results.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you very much. That's very helpful.

Switching gears a little to our exporters, I'm looking at a StatsCan report for August 2019 to August 2020, and it appears that the number of exporters in metropolitan, urban areas fell by about 14.5% compared to a decline of about 10% for exporters outside metropolitan areas. We're talking about a 16% decline for Montreal and about 15% for Toronto, which is fairly significant. I'm curious how you might explain that difference and what policies we might be able to put in place to address that discrepancy.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I think that's probably a question that may be more easily answered by my colleague Sara Wilshaw.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** That is a very interesting result. I'm not sure I've seen that StatsCan report, but thank you for drawing it to my attention.

I know that our chief economist has been looking at exporters, and she put out a very interesting stat last week, noting that the number of Canadian SMEs exporting went from 19,600 in February down to 15,600 in April but is now back up to 18,400. It's still 6% lower than it was in February, but it's a significant improvement.

While I'm not sure I can identify the reasons StatsCan had noted some differences between urban and rural in those export numbers, they are coming back up, which is encouraging. Hopefully it means that our exporters are learning, as we all are, to work with the technology and to access e-commerce platforms and do things virtually. As I think I've said, as well, we have lots of supports for folks in that space, including financial support under the CanExport program.

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

We're moving on to Mr. Savard-Tremblay for two and a half minutes.

• (1650)

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I want to thank all the officials here today.

At this point, I want to ask you a broad question. Over the coming weeks, based on our committee's priority studies, we'll be focusing on the agreement on the horizon with Great Britain.

Where do things stand with regard to a possible transitional agreement?

[English]

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Madam Chair, I think the discussions we've been having with the U.K. have advanced considerably since we resumed discussions back at the end of the summer. We now feel that we're within range of agreement on an outcome to the transitional agreement that we've been talking about.

To remind members, we are looking at negotiating an outcome that will allow us to have a transitional agreement in place as the U.K. exits the EU so that we don't lose the preferences we've negotiated under CETA in relation to the U.K. As part of that negotiation, we would also expect to negotiate a full free trade agreement after the U.K. is entirely out of the EU. The discussions we're having on the transition agreement with the U.K. are going reasonably well. We are making some progress. We think we're fairly close to the finish line, but we're not quite there. As you can imagine, in any kind of trade negotiation, the most difficult parts are the ones you deal with at the very end.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Thank you. It's nice to finally have some answers.

Initially, we suspected that this transitional agreement would be very similar to CETA. What major stumbling blocks have prevented the agreement from being signed as easily as hoped?

I imagine that it will be much more difficult to establish a permanent agreement. However, at the transitional agreement stage, why haven't things been as easy as expected?

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Verheul, can we have a short answer, please?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Okay. It will be very short.

The main challenge was that we were taking the CETA, which was an agreement with all of the EU members, and trying to convert it to a U.K. agreement only. That did require us to negotiate on some market access issues in particular, which meant separating what we had provided to the EU in CETA and converting that into what we would provide to the U.K. and what they would provide to us in a bilateral transitional agreement. A lot of the issues were very easy, but there are a handful of issues where we do have to have actual negotiations to reach a landing zone.

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

We will move on to Mr. Blaikie, please, for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you very much.

On that question, to what extent is the European Union involved in those negotiations at all? To give you an example, in the last Parliament, I travelled to the U.K. and to Ireland and had the opportunity to ask a question in each forum about the market access that was granted in the dairy sector, for instance. Folks in the U.K. were of the view that they could get an equal or a certain share of what was granted under CETA. Folks in Ireland were very much of the view that this market access belonged in CETA.

To what extent are you talking to folks in the European Union throughout these negotiations? Are they actually at the table, or is Canada having to shuttle between a table with U.K. negotiators and a table with CETA partners?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, we're certainly continuing to talk with our EU counterparts, whom of course we know very well from our negotiations, but they are not at the table. We are keeping in touch with them, but they are not actively engaged in any of the discussions between Canada and the U.K. on these issues.

The decision we made fairly early on was that we would leave the various concessions and commitments made in CETA between Canada and the EU as they were. We did not take access out of the CETA to provide to the U.K. Instead, we tried to transfer all of the areas where we had rules-based kinds of approaches to the Canada-U.K. discussions, and the market access issues would be largely transferred but did not involve taking access away from the Canada-EU agreement.

That's the premise that we developed early on. The U.K., understandably, is not concerned about that, given that they're not giving anything up. It's up to us to sort the rest out with the U.K., which we are actively doing and, as I mentioned earlier, we are getting quite close to an outcome.

• (1655)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you.

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

I'm sorry, Mr. Blaikie. The time is up.

We will move on to Mrs. Gray for five minutes.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the officials for being here today.

In 2018, the government created the Invest in Canada hub, as a way to promote and facilitate foreign investment. Can state-owned enterprises or companies affiliated with state-owned enterprises invest through the Invest in Canada hub?

I'll leave it up to whichever official would like to answer that.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I think that's more likely to be in Sara Wilshaw's area than in mine.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Thank you very much for the question.

Investments over a certain threshold that come into Canada, whether they come through the Invest in Canada hub or some other means, or whether they're facilitated by the trade commissioners, are subject to the Invest in Canada Act. The Invest in Canada Act says that it provides for the review of significant investments that are made by non-Canadians. It looks at a couple of tests. One is—

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Ms. Wilshaw, thank you. I'm quite familiar with that.

Here's what my question is. Specifically for the Invest in Canada hub, because there is money that's allocated as a budget to focus on that, are state-owned enterprises or affiliated companies going through this? I understand that there's a separate process to look at that, but can they actually go through this process?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** It should be very clear that the Invest in Canada hub operates as a departmental corporation, so they have their own board of directors, their own president and CEO. I think the question would probably be better directed towards them, but you have correctly identified that they have a certain budget allocated, and the trade commissioners work very closely with them. I think the question about the process by which they determine who goes through them should be better directed towards that organization.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** We are talking about main estimates today, and it is right in the main estimates, so I would think that there would be somebody here who could answer this.

Do you happen to know if any of the investments that have gone through this have undergone a national security review, or do we not have anyone here who can answer that either?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** I would have to come back to you on that.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Okay, that's unfortunate, because we are talking specifically about what's in the main estimates here.

We did hear today that there were some investments that came into Canada, so I'd like to ask to have tabled what the dollar value is, by industry, that has come through the Invest in Canada hub. We did hear some numbers earlier. What is the dollar value by industry? What are the jobs by industry? What is the number of new companies and what is the breakdown? Was the investment in existing companies or in new companies?

Is there anyone who can table that information, or is that something that can be taken away to be tabled at an early date?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Madam Chair, we can refer the questions to the Invest in Canada hub and seek responses.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you.

I look at the different departmental officials here today. You have all been operating for about 19 months without a budget, so I'm wondering if you can go into some details as to what it looks like when you're operating without a budget. How do you plan? How do you strategize? What does that look like, when you don't have a budget that you're operating under?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I'll start. We're not operating without a budget in the trade policy and negotiations branch. We do have our budget. We've had to make significant adjustments to our budget because we're not travelling as much as we used to and that's been a major portion of our budget. Without question, however, we're certainly operating within a budget for the course of this year.



• (1700)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** The budget hasn't been approved by Parliament, so that's—

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** This is a departmental budget that operates as it has in the past.

**The Chair:** Ask a very short question, Mrs. Gray.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you.

I think the only other thing is whether we have anyone who can table some information regarding the consular services. I know we had a meeting earlier about this, but is there any information as to what the plans are, what the stats are moving forward, going into the new year? What is that going to look like?

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

We'll move on to Mr. Sheehan.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much to the presenters, and to the minister before.

One thing that is obviously right before us here is that we're all talking right now on Zoom. We're doing this virtually and quite successfully. We're getting the necessary work done. You heard the minister earlier....

I'll talk to Steve right there. It's good to see you again. You've testified many times, and in particular I'd like to acknowledge your work on the NAFTA deal. You have a door behind you, and it's interesting to see that there are doors of opportunity; there are doors that are shut; there are people knocking at the door. I want to talk to you, Steve, about the opportunities with the virtual announcement today as it relates to some of the trade agreements you've worked on, not just for the big companies, but for the small and medium-sized companies.

For all the other witnesses as well, I wanted to get some comments, because we've seen how much work this trade committee has done related to opening up markets in Europe, Asia and North America. Has any of that been hindered? I think we'll start with that question first, and then talk about opportunities in this COVID-19 world and how our trade deals have been doing.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I think I'll start. Others will certainly have something to add to this.

I think it's...particularly since we had a number of trade agreements coming into place. Certainly CETA was before COVID-19, as was CPTPP. The new agreement with the U.S. and Mexico came into effect during the pandemic. Clearly, we've seen some difficult times faced by our exporters, without a doubt, but I think that's more a function of the general challenges of the economy because of what's happening with COVID-19, more than anything to do with our trade agreements. I think our trade agreements have, in fact, helped to somewhat dampen some of the impacts we would have seen otherwise.

While we are starting to see trade recover, particularly in those areas where we do have agreements, obviously there are a lot of companies that are struggling just because of the domestic situa-

tion, as much as trying to get into the international markets. I think we're a bit held hostage at the broader economic challenges we're facing at the moment. We do need to do whatever we can to help those companies get back into the game, in some ways, as we move forward.

My colleague Sara Wilshaw may have something further to add. I think she's been more engaged in trying to help those companies move forward in this circumstance.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Madam Chair, perhaps I can take a moment to add to that.

Certainly we are looking to promote, and we have been out actively promoting with a number of our partners, federal and provincial as well as chambers, the trade agreements that we do have and the access that has been gained, to try to take advantage of those things as best we can. We also look at where specific gains have been made. We make those things clear. We have ways of helping our companies to find out what the tariffs are now and to specifically focus on taking the best advantage of what has been negotiated and agreed.

• (1705)

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Thank you very much for that.

I can tell you that being in Sault Ste. Marie, right on the border here, and seeing the amount of trade that comes through here...and naturally, by extension, we're seeing a lot of these trade agreements that are opened up to Europe and Asia. Using us as a centre point to access all the markets is really important. I think it behooves us to continue to explore ways in which, whether it's virtually...for people to make contact. I've been on trade missions. I see a lot of people here whom I've travelled with. Nothing beats the face-to-face and the eyeballing. I hope this is an interim solution until we get to such time when we can do that.

To the point about saving money, Steve, do you have an idea, just for estimates, how much money was saved doing things virtually? If you don't have that number, I understand that you may be able to get back to the committee. You guys may not be at that level yet. You're so busy helping people, you haven't sat back and looked at that. I think there was a comment earlier about that by Randy.

I'd be interested to see spent-money value versus results, and virtually versus in-person as well.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, I think I would have to say, and from my own personal experience too, that there's certainly no substitute for having face-to-face discussions. Whether you're trying to do negotiations or whether you're trying to do business, I think there's an extra element there that makes it that much easier to do those kinds of deals. But given that we haven't been in a position to have those kinds of face-to-face discussions, from our perspective, a lot of what we have been doing is significantly increasing the emphasis on digital trade and electronic commerce, trying to give companies what they need, both in trade agreements and in Sara Wilshaw's group, and helping companies to be able to more effectively participate in electronic commerce that way.

We're trying to address that in many ways. I think we've made significant improvements. Many companies have enthusiastically adopted the digital trade type of approaches. We've helped them do that, but again, at the end of the day, as you're suggesting, it's still not the same as having face-to-face conversations and doing deals that way.

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

We have a slot here for the Conservative member. Who wants to go forward, Mr. Hoback or Mrs. Gray?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** We'll continue with the speaking order that we had.

**The Chair:** I have an open slot for this round for a Conservative member.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Lafrance):** It would be Mr. Aboultaif.

**The Chair:** It would be Mr. Aboultaif. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you to the department.

I expect some concrete answers, of course. I wasn't able to get that from the minister, unfortunately. I know that with digital trade and trying to adapt to new ways of doing things, all that is fine and dandy. That's just a mechanism—nothing but.

What is the real target, where we know that we can grow our economy through foreign investments coming into Canada and trade with the rest of the world, and where we show at least some proper balance for what we export and what we import? More or less, I'd like to hear from the department about where the target is. Which industries is the department working on to grow those sectors and the many competitive sectors that we have in Canada?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, we're working with other parts of the department, obviously, because the key to achieve what you're talking about is really making sure that our domestic policy intersects properly with our trade policy.

Now, we are in a fortunate position compared to many others, because we do have agreements with the European Union, and we have agreements with the Trans-Pacific Partnership—Southeast Asia, including Japan and others—and we have our agreement with the U.S. and Mexico. With all of the agreements we have, we do have advantages over others, so we are certainly making the most of what we can do on that front. I think that does give us that kind of advantage.

In terms of setting priorities, we really get that kind of input through consultations that we have with industry and consultations that we have within the government, particularly from domestic policy departments that are telling us where they want to see the particular sectors advance.

• (1710)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** The interprovincial efforts are very important, and you just mentioned that, in order to be able to give us the exposure and the edge to be able to do more trade. Do you think we're doing a good job on that? Don't you think that we still have a lot of red tape, problems and difficulties with trade among the provinces? That edge—that advantage—we seem not to have, and I think it's getting worse. What do you think?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I don't think we can say anything other than we do have more work to do at home in particular. Interprovincial barriers are something that we need to address to ensure that as a country like Canada we can have the most coherent posture when we go to other countries and not be held back by barriers between provinces. That's something that is being worked on as well.

I think, given the kinds of pressures that every economy is under right now because of COVID, that we have to do that much better in removing barriers to trade and trying to facilitate more opportunities. That work is going on. It may not be proceeding as quickly as we might like, but we are certainly focused on that in terms of trying to leave Canada in the best position we can have it in as we start to come out of this particular crisis, hopefully before too long, and we will be well poised to take advantage of agreements once we do that.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Yes, to have our house in order and to be prepared, or at least to prepare the ground to explore further opportunities, how do you envision the timelines here? Because missing an opportunity at this time.... We're still in the middle of a pandemic, but we will be talking about post-pandemic at some point sooner or later. How are we preparing ourselves for that from your perspective as a department?

I'm talking to the people who do the job, whether this government or another government is in place, or this minister or another minister. You are doing the job. How do you think we are doing and how do you think we're handling both directions to achieve and to reach the final goal?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I think we are in pretty good shape and we're doing what we need to do.

Certainly with the kind of work that I do, we have the various trade agreements in place. We have those preferences. We have advantages in other markets for other countries. All of that is very well advanced.

I think my colleague Sara Wilshaw, on her front, has been working on a lot of the issues around making sure that Canadian businesses are ready to take advantage of those agreements, that they're coming out of the pressures we've been under in a much stronger position and able to advance in those agreements.

I probably should turn to Sara to see if she has—

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I have one short statement I'd like—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Aboultaif. You're way over—

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** If I may—

**The Chair:** Your questions are so intense, but maybe you can get some of those answers offline.

We will continue on to Mr. Dhaliwal, please.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question will go to Chief Trade Commissioner Wilshaw.

First of all, I would also echo the congratulations to you on your new appointment.

I'm going to pick up on Randeep's question that was asked in the last committee meeting, particularly when it comes to pulses going into India.

Every month I hear from one or two who are interested in doing trade, because there's a lot of demand there. You particularly mentioned that your trade commissioner services in India try to help with the problems that they face on the ground.

Could you elaborate on some of the issues that they face?

• (1715)

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Certainly. Thank you for the question.

In fact, we do have people who are dedicated to agriculture, on supporting agriculture and agri-food industries and our farmers in the mission in New Delhi. Obviously they are looking at the different requirements and regulations for importing, and they make those known to our Canadian exporters and our clients.

They have regular conversations with officials in the Indian government about those regulations. Some of those conversations happen internationally; some of those conversations happen bilaterally.

Of course, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has the lead on those discussions. As I think I mentioned on Friday, we always hope that the conversation can be science based when it comes to any regulations or requirements for importing. That's really more on that side...and the trade policy colleagues who look after those things.

In terms of what we do, the trade commissioner services would help our exporters to perhaps find new markets, perhaps find alternative markets or alternative buyers or wholesalers, or other uses for different agricultural products if they run into challenges. That's the kind of thing that we look to do.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Nowadays we are finding that the businesses are facing unique situations.

Has the strategy on the ground when it comes to trade commissioner services not only in India but across the globe been changed or redefined to support businesses?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** I'm really proud of what the trade commissioner service has been doing in this period during the pandemic to support the businesses. They haven't stopped, not for a second. We have more than 12,000 clients, and no one has dropped the ball or we would hear about it very quickly. We have a regular feedback mechanism to understand our client satisfaction. We do a lot of work, and we have very high responses from our clients in terms of understanding what they like about our service and what they think could be improved. We work regularly with our whole network to keep a very, very high standard of service.

I think I mentioned last Friday that we are running at about 91% client satisfaction. I'm very proud of that, as I say, and I'm very proud of what our trade commissioners have been able to do.

Of course, we also have locally engaged officers, who never left the markets in which they serve. Even though some of the Canadians had been evacuated, most of them have returned. I believe all but seven posts have returned. However, our locally engaged em-

ployees, who are really the market experts and give that information, never left.

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

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We move to Mr. Savard-Tremblay for two minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to go back to my previous comments, since we were a little short on time.

Mr. Verheul, could you elaborate on the planned agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union regarding the sharing of the shares to be divested? I want to know where things stand, since this issue seemed to be stalled for a long time.

Could you update us on the developments in this area?

[English]

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Yes. Certainly the negotiations that we're currently conducting with the U.K., as I mentioned, are on a transitional agreement that we can reach, which would try to preserve as many of the elements of CETA as we can as the U.K. moves out of the EU and into a relationship where it's no longer part of the EU.

We do have discussions with the U.K. right now. We're in the final stages of reaching, hopefully, a transitional trade agreement. Most of the issues we're talking about relate to goods market access, because that's one issue where we can't simply leave what we had in place with the EU under CETA and replicate it entirely in the U.K.-Canada context. You can do that on rules-related issues, but you can't do it when you start to talk about numbers. We've been doing that, and that's been much of the focus.

We also have had some challenges in trying to resolve issues related to temporary entry of business people for business purposes. That was part of the commitment under CETA. It's been particularly difficult with the U.K., as it was in CETA, but that's carried over to these transition discussions as well. We really only have a fairly small handful of issues left to resolve, and then I think we can reach agreement on a transitional arrangement, which will then allow CETA to continue after the U.K. finally does leave the EU at the end of the year. That will give us the opportunity to negotiate a full free trade agreement with the U.K., following that.

In the meantime—

• (1720)

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

We move to Mr. Blaikie for two minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** The main estimates that we're considering were tabled on September 30, but in fact they were really tabled on February 27. The two documents, as I understand it, are identical.

You had mentioned that the pandemic has affected, for example, your travel budget. It's going to be less, obviously. Can you speak to why there wasn't an attempt to update the request for authorization of spending?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, there were changes. As I'm sure you know, there was an allocation given to departments, in terms of departmental budgets, and within that my own branch, as a relatively small proportion of that overall departmental budget, is allocated a certain amount every year. Now, through the course of the year, given that we have not been travelling as much, we have returned a fair amount of those funds. We weren't going to be using them for travel expenses.

That is regular ongoing spending. It doesn't relate to any additional allocations or requests that we may get coming out of a budget, for example. We're not in that kind of scenario at this point in time.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Okay, so despite the fact that, from your own unit, you're returning money to the main department budget, you don't anticipate requiring any additional expenditure in other lines.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, I wouldn't say that entirely. I think that as we move forward we have been required to deal with some of the elements that we have to fulfill with respect to the implementation of new agreements. Particularly when it comes to the new agreement with the U.S. and Mexico, we do have additional duties that we have to perform, which will take additional people to perform them.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Just because our time is limited, could you table with the committee where you think you'll have cost savings and where you think you'll have additional expenditures between the forecast that you had in February versus what you project for the remainder of this fiscal year?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, I can. I wouldn't have any difficulty doing that, but I will caution you that this is generally done at a departmental level rather than at a branch-by-branch level. I'm responsible for a branch rather than the department. What you would probably want to see is how things look at a departmental level rather than at some of the smaller branches. Certainly, that information is—

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** The trade committee is always interested in the work of your branch so I would accept that. Of course, if you can table information concerning the wider departmental budget, that would be welcome as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you all very much. I think the departmental officials had several requests from different members for various reports. If you could do your best to supply that information to all the committee members we would very much appreciate that.

The committee can now proceed with the adoption of the vote referred to the House. Note that it is not mandatory to do a vote, but without a report, the main estimates are being deemed reported.

For your information, one vote was referred to the committee by the House under Invest in Canada. In the main estimates, that vote

was at \$34,291,556. In March and June the House adopted 9/12ths of that amount through interim supply. Therefore, the amount before the committee now is \$8,571,889.

Is it the will of the committee to proceed with the adoption of the main estimates?

• (1725)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Chair, I apologize. I am just getting used to the virtual proceedings. If other members would like to have a recorded vote, that's fine, but I don't know if I could recommend that we just consider it agreed to on division at this time.

**The Chair:** I believe so.

Is there any further discussion on that? Is everyone in agreement with that?

Okay, it will be agreed to on division. I have to finish one spot here, though.

INVEST IN CANADA HUB

Vote 1—Program Expenditures.....\$34,291,556

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the committee will now dispose of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, minus the interim supply the House agreed to on March 13 and on June 17, 2020. Shall vote 1 under Invest in Canada Hub be carried?

I believe Mr. Blaikie said it would be carried on division.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Aboultaif, yes.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Are we still supposed to have the witnesses as we discuss this?

**The Chair:** As soon as we complete this vote, the witnesses will be leaving, sir.

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** Shall I report the vote to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you to our witnesses for spending so much time with us. We were able to get in a lot of questions and answers today so that was very much appreciated. You are welcome to leave the meeting.

Thank you to all the witnesses who were here.

We'll give the witnesses a second to leave.

We have some committee business now, which consists of the discussion of Mr. Dhaliwal's motion.

We had your motion Mr. Dhaliwal. Mr. Sheehan had moved two suggested amendments.

Mr. Sheehan, do you want to move the two amendments?

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** I certainly will move the two amendments once again. It is important for us to finish the discussion and make sure, as you explained so well last time, why it's so important.

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Dhaliwal.

**The Clerk:** I have three amendments.

**The Chair:** The committee has all three amendments. Let's take them individually.

This wonderful system we're on here....

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** I'm sorry, Madam Chair. Did you say something to me? I couldn't hear it.

**The Chair:** It was suggested that Mr. Sheehan was going to move several amendments to your motion. Okay?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Sure. Go ahead, Terry.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** I so move, Madam Chair, and I'll let you pick up from where we left off last time.

• (1730)

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Madam Chair, on a point of order, I just want to verify that the three amendments are actually what you said had to be changed in order to be in order, based on the recommendations from the clerk. Is that correct?

**The Chair:** Absolutely, and if anybody has trouble with them, we can vote on them individually. I believe everybody has ensured that the clerk circulated another listing.

On the first one, this simply makes it easier for me to have committee business, and that's the whole motion on there:

That the Chair may schedule all or portions of a meeting to be in camera for the reasons listed above;

That's in Mr. Dhaliwal's motion.

Is everyone in favour of that amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** This is the second part that was suggested:

That any motion to sit in camera shall be subject to a debate where the mover, and one member from each of the other recognized parties, be given up to three minutes each to speak to the motion; and that the mover shall then be given up to one minute to respond.

This is simply so that we don't spend an hour debating whether or not we're going to go in camera. It just gives some timelines on it.

Is there any discussion? Is everyone in favour of that amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Right on.

**The Chair:** Madam Clerk, I do not have the third one in front of me.

**The Clerk:** The third one was in the first part of the motion, and it was to add:

d) to discuss committee business,

It was to authorize the in camera meeting to discuss committee business.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Right.

**The Chair:** Is everybody in favour of that? Wonderful.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Thanks very much, all of you.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Is the motion passed as amended?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Clerk:** Can we ask the question please, Madam Chair?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Yes.

**The Chair:** All those in favour of the motion as amended?

I don't see anything happening here. Just wave or do something or other. This is strange.

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Right on.

**The Chair:** All right.

Next week is a break week. The whips so far have not scheduled any committee meetings for that week.

Our next study is going to be on U.K.-Canada trade. We've asked the whip that the next two meetings—

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Let's do that.

**The Chair:** —be scheduled by the whip to allow the clerk to be in a position to proceed with the invitation for witnesses for the U.K.-Canada trade, once the whips have decided what the schedule is—that's our next issue, U.K.-Canada trade—and that the clerk have witnesses proposed by the members for the first meeting and officials for the second meeting. Once the clerk has decided what our next two meetings are, there would be the Canada-U.K. study. Is everyone okay with that?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Chair, on a point of order, because we originally had scheduled a committee meeting for Friday the 13th, could you just clarify that you're saying that meeting won't be happening now?

**The Chair:** No, because the whips have not finalized the schedule. We will be meeting the following week.

Again, the very first thing we're dealing with is the U.K.-Canada agreement, which was your motion. All right?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much, all of you, for your co-operation.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Sorry, Madam Chair, but I have a point of order.

On our side, we were certainly preparing to propose witnesses for the U.K.-Canada study. What I understood from our last meeting is that we were looking at stakeholders. Are we still beginning with stakeholders? It's just so I know how to prepare on our end.

**The Chair:** Yes. The suggestion was for witnesses for our first meeting and officials for the second meeting.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Chair, I have another quick point of clarification.

When would you like an initial list of witnesses submitted or when should we be submitting witness lists?

**The Chair:** I think we need to get them submitted immediately. The clerk had given us a date.

Madam Clerk, what was the date?

**The Clerk:** An email was sent requesting the list of witnesses for November 3, but it could be for Friday, because at this point we know that we won't be having a meeting next week.

If it's okay with the members, the list of witnesses for the Canada-U.K. trade study should be in for Friday. Is that fine?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** That works for me.

**The Chair:** Is that okay with everybody?

It sounds like a very interesting study.

Thank you all very much.

I move adjournment.

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