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• (1700)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): I call this meeting to order. I welcome you to the 20th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

This committee is meeting today from 4:58 p.m., eastern standard time. We're to hear from the President of the Treasury Board and officials on the supplementary estimates 2020-21.

Unfortunately, as we just heard, the minister is unable to attend for reasons that are beyond his control. We will proceed along those lines.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants to this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted. To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much like a regular committee meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen to use the floor, English or French audio. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name.

When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone. When you are not speaking, your microphone should be on mute. To raise a point of order during the meeting, committee members should ensure their microphone is unmuted and say "point of order" to clearly get the chair's attention.

In order to ensure social distancing in the committee room, if you need to speak privately with the clerk or analysts during the meeting, please email them through the committee email address. For those people who are participating in the committee room, please note that masks are required unless seated and when physical distancing is possible.

With the little bit of a change that we've had, we have all received the speaking notes in advance, so I would like to put forward a motion to accept those speaking notes, and then we would transition to discussions with the other witnesses.

The motion I'm proposing is that the speaking notes presented by the President of the Treasury Board be taken as read and appended to the evidence of today's meeting. Do I have consent to do that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[See appendix—Remarks by the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos]

The Chair: Thank you.

With that done, we will proceed. We have with us a number of analysts today.

I think we have all five at this point, do we not, Mr. Clerk?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Yes, we do, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We have Mr. Ermuth, Ms. Cahill, Mr. Purves, Ms. Yalkin and Mr. Greenough.

I'm assuming you weren't expecting to have to do a presentation, so I think we'll go straight into questioning, if that's okay.

Do I see a hand up that you'd like to make an opening announcement?

Mr. Purves, I see your hand up.

Mr. Glenn Purves (Assistant Secretary, Expenditure Management Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat): Mr. Chair, that's perfectly fine. We can go right into questioning.

Just to give everyone a sense of who we all are, we cover many different parts of Treasury Board Secretariat. I cover expenditure management. Ms. Cahill is the CFO. Roger Ermuth covers the comptroller general's office. Mr. Yalkin is from the office of the chief human resources officer, and Ms. Read is from the chief information officer's branch.

With that, we're ready to go.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we will go to the first round of questions from Mr. Paul-Hus.

[Translation]

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

Good afternoon, Minister Duclos.

I hope that your health is better. I'm glad to have you with us.

First, I want to go back to the questions that we asked you on November 20. We wanted to know whether an impact analysis on official languages had been conducted for the WE Charity. At the time, your answer was rather evasive. I don't think that you knew much about the matter.

By now, we should be able to know whether the analysis was done.

[English]

Mr. Roger Ermuth (Assistant Comptroller General, Financial Management Sector, Office of the Comptroller General, Treasury Board Secretariat): In terms of the question regarding WE Charity, there was no French annex that would normally be done for that program. The reason was that it did not come through as a full-blown Treasury Board submission. The initial program that would have come through would have had an official languages assessment. What actually came through and what was decided was that the minister had the authority to make the changes to the program that allowed for the contribution agreement that was eventually signed with WE Charity.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Okay.

I just realized that the minister isn't here. Thank you, Mr. Ermuth, for answering for him.

Normally, Public Services and Procurement Canada must obtain the Treasury Board's assessment for all defence procurement, when the value exceeds the minister's approval authority.

Has this assessment been conducted for combat ships?

[English]

Mr. Roger Ermuth: Did they seek the appropriate authorization? To my knowledge, and this is where I think the department of public services—

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I'll ask my question more clearly.

Normally, defence procurement that exceeds the minister's limits must go through the Treasury Board.

Have you assessed the ship contract?

[English]

Mr. Roger Ermuth: Anything that would have gone beyond the minister's authority would have come in through Treasury Board. In terms of the combat ships, there have been multiple times where those have come through, and in terms of the office of the comptroller general, we would have looked at them to ensure there was policy compliance with the responsible policies.

• (1705)

[Translation]

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

Mr. Chair, I would ask that the Treasury Board's assessment report on the combat ship contract be submitted.

In the votes that we're being asked to approve, we learned that the Public Health Agency is requesting \$2.5 billion for the purchase of vaccines, including advance purchase agreements.

Is this amount entirely devoted to the purchase of the required vaccines or is it devoted to all the agreements negotiated for the hundreds of millions of vaccines?

Can any of you give me the details of that amount?

[English]

Mr. Glenn Purves: Thank you for the question.

To be clear, that \$2.5 billion, which was originally in our statutory forecast, has migrated over to be on a voted basis, and the total amount that we're looking at is about \$9.2 billion.

Of that \$9.2 billion, about \$8 billion is for bilateral purchase agreements pertaining to the vaccines for COVID-19, \$1 billion is for strategic international partnerships, and then about \$200 million is for treatments and therapeutics, such as the drug remdesivir and so forth.

That \$2.5 billion effectively completes the \$9.2 billion envelope that exists in the system.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: The amount adds up. So the \$8 billion for bilateral agreements goes to the seven companies that entered into agreements. One thing isn't clear. Are we paying for the vaccines that were licensed and distributed, or are we paying for the vaccines that were reserved?

[English]

Mr. Glenn Purves: It's advance purchase agreements. As the vaccines come in and the payments go out, it's to ensure that the payments are fulfilled.

In terms of details about specifically the seven you're talking about and the breakdown of that \$8 billion, that's a question that the Public Health Agency of Canada would be better placed to answer.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Can you tell me whether the \$8 billion approved by the Treasury Board includes what was reserved or what we'll receive, regardless of whether it's a Pfizer, Moderna or other vaccine?

Does this amount cover what we need to vaccinate Canadians, or will an additional batch be distributed abroad afterwards?

[English]

Mr. Glenn Purves: My understanding is that funds to deal with supplementary vaccinations have been transferred to Global Affairs Canada for their programming.

I believe that the \$8 billion is to cover all of the vaccines. Having said that, I think the Public Health Agency of Canada would be able to provide a better line of sight on that answer, and we'd be very pleased to get back to the committee with a precise response to Mr. Paul-Hus's question.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Purves. If you would do that for us, we would appreciate it.

Mr. Paul-Hus, thank you for your questions.

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

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much for filling in.

In the 2019-20 departmental results for TBS, it is outlined, “By the end of 2019–20, the government’s overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions was 34.6% below 2005 levels”.

Can you give us examples of how the government is reducing greenhouse gas emissions in its operations?

Mr. Glenn Purves: Ms. Cahill will be pleased to answer that question.

Ms. Karen Cahill (Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial Officer, Treasury Board Secretariat): Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

The government is doing many projects with a number of government departments to reduce its GHG emissions. Two good examples in these estimates are projects that we’re doing with Health Canada and Fisheries and Oceans.

First of all, with Health Canada, the project is to have a site for virtual inspections that will replace the in-person inspections. If this is successful, this project amongst others will help us reduce our GHGs.

There are a number of different projects happening, and the funding from the central fund for greening government serves to that effect.

• (1710)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you for that response.

Is the Department of Fisheries project similar to the Department of Health project? Is it about introducing more virtual opportunities?

Ms. Karen Cahill: No, this one is more of an infrastructure project. It is to make changes to the Bedford Institute of Oceanography sea-water heating. What they are doing is installing a sea-water-source geothermal heat pump system at the Bedford Institute. This will reduce natural gas use and GHG emissions.

This is the majority of the funding in these estimates.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: That’s terrific.

The target is, I believe, 40% below 2005 emissions for 2030. Is there a sense that we are on target to meet our 2030 commitments at the current pace and in the current program?

Ms. Karen Cahill: I can’t tell you for sure that there is a sense, but definitely we can come back to you with a firmer answer. Through the projects we’re doing, however, we’re on a good path to reduce our GHG emissions by a large number of kilotons.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: That’s terrific.

I’m going to switch gears a little bit.

The PBO noted in his report on the supplementary estimates that notable improvements have been made to address issues that this committee mentioned in past meetings concerning financial transparency and openness.

What measures have been introduced to increase financial transparency in the estimates process?

Mr. Glenn Purves: It’s a great question.

One measure that was taken in light of the budget estimates alignment initiative, which was taken before, was very much about aligning what’s in the estimates with what was announced in the fall economic statement. In part I, we include a table that breaks that down, because there are some elements we don’t include in main estimates, such as tax expenditures and the EI account, that you need to build back in, and given the fact that the Department of Finance reports on an accrual basis as opposed to our working on a cash basis.

With respect to COVID in particular, we have been busy trying to improve the transparency for parliamentarians and Canadians as it pertains to the planned spending. Specifically, we’ve been looking at effectively tagging COVID measures that are included in the supplementary estimates. We provided a description of all the COVID-19 legislation. When you go to GC InfoBase you can see all the measures lined up against the same measures in the fall economic statement and see which supplementary estimates were approved for the authorities by voted in and statutory.

Finally, we do an alignment between chapters 1 and 2 in the fall economic statement with the spending authorities that have been identified to date specifically for COVID in the estimates, which amount to about \$160 billion.

Dealing with a pandemic is new for us. We want to try to advance on the transparency side, and we’re always open to comments and suggestions from Parliament as to how we can improve on that.

• (1715)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thumbs-up on the GC InfoBase by the way. It’s great work. It’s helping us visualize a large amount of data.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

We’ll go to Ms. Vignola for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limouilou, BQ): Thank you, everyone, for being here today.

I have a few questions for you.

The supplementary estimates seek approval for \$13.4 billion in spending, in particular for emergency responses to the pandemic, including medical research and vaccine development.

How do you explain the fact that supplementary estimates (A) and (B), or even the main estimates, didn’t include enough money for vaccine research and development?

It isn't surprising that we need to invest in this area. We've seen other countries, especially Great Britain and the United States, invest heavily.

Why haven't we planned for this? Why do we need the supplementary estimates (C) to plan for this?

[English]

Mr. Glenn Purves: Certainly, when you step back and think about the payment authorities that we're seeking from Parliament to address the vaccines—and in the response to Mr. Paul-Hus and his question—it adds up to about \$9.2 billion. I gave a breakdown of what that is.

The payment authorities have come in different forms. Because the crisis started in March and supplementary estimates (A) weren't until June, Parliament approved Bill C-13, which included the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act.

Many of the supports that we're looking at are partially supported through what we call the “statutory” forecast side of the main and supplementary estimates, but then there's the voted component. What happened was that, at the end of December, the statutory authority under the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act expired, so many of the initiatives that were being supported under the payment authority have migrated over to the voted side. That's why you are seeing it effectively listed on the voted.

If you look on the statutory forecast side, you're often seeing an offsetting of reduction amount. On a voted basis, it seems like a very large amount that's coming late, but on a net basis, there are only a couple of measures that are really new.

There's the \$485 million for the procurement of test supplies and testing production, which is going to the provinces and territories through the provision of test kits and supplies to supplement the existing testing capacity that they have.

There's \$50 million effectively to support the surge in demand for distress centres during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, and \$208 million, which is being used to stabilize key resources and operations in the agency.

It can be a challenge to see through that, but that's why, in a way, we put this on the InfoBase, because it's easier to track in that pane.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: That's enlightening. Thank you.

The Treasury Board is requesting \$1.7 billion under vote 15 for compensation adjustments, including compensation for members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, or PSAC. Of that \$1.7 billion, how much is compensation for PSAC employees?

[English]

Mr. Glenn Purves: That's a great question, and one I'd have to actually calculate. I have no objections to providing it to the committee.

Mr. Yalkin, I don't know if you perhaps have that on hand, but if not, we'd be happy to get back to the committee with that answer.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I would appreciate that.

Regardless of the amount, one question comes to mind. I'm curious. Is the amount allocated for employee compensation gross or net?

The compensation was taxed. In a sense, the government recuperated money from the compensation for damages caused by Phoenix. Will you be giving the committee the amount before taxes, or will the amount reflect the actual cost once the taxes were collected by the government?

[English]

Mr. Glenn Purves: I'll pass that question to Mr. Yalkin. I understand there are discussions going on with the CRA, but Mr. Yalkin might have a better line of sight on that.

Ms. Karen Cahill: I can take this question if you don't mind, Glenn.

[Translation]

Ms. Vignola, discussions are ongoing with the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA. In terms of the taxation of damage payments, we must consult with the CRA.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay. I have received calls from people reporting that the amount received on March 3 was taxed.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Vignola.

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

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much.

I apologize because I know this has been touched on. I might be repeating things here, but I'm trying to get clear on PHAC's \$2.5 billion under vote 1c, operating expenditures, and votes 5c and 10c to support research, development and purchases of vaccines.

That seems like a lot of money. In terms of the breakdowns, how much of it is going to development versus purchasing?

I'm still unclear if this question has already been asked, so my apologies if it has.

Mr. Glenn Purves: Mr. Green, it's a great question.

From my standpoint, I could give you a line of sight in terms of the payment authority that is being sought. The fact that—

Mr. Matthew Green: Could I ask you a very particular question? Has a payment authority been sought to start a Crown corporation to do our own domestic development of vaccines or is this money going all out to the private sector?

You'll recall the money we invested in the NRC, which gave the technology for the base science of the vaccines. That's been privatized by corporations. We haven't really seen the kind of co-operation that we thought we were going to get.

If we look at a dollar-value analysis of this, for \$2.5 billion, has the government sought authority to start a Crown corporation for our own domestic production?

Mr. Glenn Purves: Specifically on that, we do have funding that is going to a whole host of different initiatives. In terms of identifying specifically the amount that is going for domestic capacity and how much of that is listed here, we—

Mr. Matthew Green: When we talk about specificity, I want to get specific. Has the government sought a payment authority to start a Crown corporation for domestic production?

Mr. Glenn Purves: I would have to get back to you specifically on that. The creation of a Crown corporation—

Mr. Matthew Green: That would be a specific type of financial authority. Is that correct? It's different from, say, doling this money out to the private sector or to....

I'm looking at the scale of \$2.5 billion. At this stage of the pandemic, how we haven't nationalized domestic production while we're buying vaccines at \$35 a pop is beyond me.

While we're negotiating this \$2.5 billion, the question remains: How much priority has this government at this juncture thought about or explored our own domestic...? When I say "domestic", I don't just mean Canadian companies but Crown corporation or a nationalized program.

Mr. Glenn Purves: I understand the question. I'm just not able to give you an answer right now.

Mr. Matthew Green: Just for future questions, Mr. Purves, if they were to start that direction to do a Crown corporation and, in theory, the Treasury Board were to come to this committee and I were to ask you that, would that be flagged as a separate type of financial authority from the financial authority to distribute money generally to the private sector? Would that require a different kind of thing that I'd be able to pick up in a report?

● (1725)

Mr. Glenn Purves: It all depends on how organizations are structured and whether they're appropriation dependent. If they're effectively provided statutory authority—so they're separate and distinct and are not appropriation dependent—that would be outside our realm.

We're in the business, really, of identifying all the departments that are appropriation dependent and the funding they're seeking, and being able to provide answers to the best of our ability on what that funding is going towards.

In terms of the actual—

Mr. Matthew Green: I will save that question, then, for a future date.

I will bring you back to this one to get clarity. When we talk about the difference between a grant and a contribution, do the contributions have with them some kind of equity or some kind of IP share? Do we get anything when we do a contribution that is separate and different from the parameters around a grant?

When I hear "grant", what I hear is money that we just give away with no strings attached. When I hear "contribution", I hear that there's a relationship or a partnership. Is a contribution a partnership or is it just another word for grant?

Mr. Roger Ermuth: Under the policy of transfer payments, there are two main mechanisms for grants and contributions. The main difference is that with a grant, most of the work goes into eligibility up front, in terms of a recipient receiving funds. Thereafter, there is minimal to no reporting. Basically, if you meet the criteria, the money goes.

On a contribution, there is more reporting. There may be some check-ins for release of expenditures over time.

Mr. Matthew Green: As a supplementary to that—I apologize, as I'm dwindling down here—I recall the words "contribution agreements" being used with the WE scenario. Are contribution agreements used for sole source?

Are they a separate type of procurement that allows for the government to distribute money in a different way than it would under procurement strategies and typical policies?

Mr. Roger Ermuth: It is different from a procurement process covered by a different set of policies. In terms of sole source, that's really more of a contracting term. You have to look at the program, the requirements for the program, what it is that the department says they're going to do in terms of the assessment of proposals they receive, etc.

Mr. Matthew Green: This has been very helpful. Thanks to both of you. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

We will now go into our second round

We will start with Ms. Harder for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): I guess the minister isn't here. I would love to address this to him. I will let you decide who's the best to answer it.

The federal government in recent years has awarded internal contracts to Cisco Systems. There have been a number of articles written about that and, of course, those contracts have been to the tune of about \$260 million. It was stated that there's "a pattern of dependency by Ottawa on a single network provider that has all but shut out competing bids."

Are you worried at all that there is a lack of diversity in the offer of networking, given the cost of these systems?

Mr. Glenn Purves: Thank you, Ms. Harder.

I think Ms. Read or Ms. Cahill are better placed to answer this question.

Ms. Karen Cahill: I believe it would be Ms. Read, Glenn.

Ms. Sonya Read (Acting Assistant Secretary, Digital and Services Policy, Treasury Board Secretariat): Thank you very much for the question.

To be honest, I think Shared Services Canada would probably be best placed in terms of the distribution of contracts and respective networking capacity within the Government of Canada, but certainly that is a consideration in terms of ensuring the ability of the networks to be robust and to have backup capacity.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Ms. Read, I'm sorry, but in Minister Duclos' department, is he not ultimately responsible for this file?

Ms. Sonya Read: For Shared Services Canada...?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Yes.

Ms. Sonya Read: No. That would be under the Minister of Digital Government.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Yes, and the Minister of Digital Government is Minister Murray, and she falls under Minister Duclos.

Ms. Sonya Read: Yes.

From a departmental perspective, Shared Services Canada would have that information, but we would be happy to follow up and provide that information back to the committee.

• (1730)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Are you not able to answer any questions with regard to Cisco?

Ms. Sonya Read: I'm not able to answer any questions with regard to Cisco at this time, no.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's convenient.

Within the supplementary estimates, it is stated that \$3.8 million under vote 1c is being put aside "for the Canadian Digital Service to provide critical digital products and services" related to COVID-19. Which products and services will be provided through the Canadian Digital Service? What is that \$3.8 million being used for?

Ms. Karen Cahill: I'll take this one. Thank you for the question.

Actually, most of the \$3.8 million will be used to support and, as you know, in conjunction with Health Canada, develop the COVID alert application. Also, the money is being used to add new features to the application itself.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Within the supplementary (C)s, there is \$395,221 that is being allocated for funding for the Black entrepreneurship program. Am I correct in stating this figure?

Mr. Glenn Purves: I believe so. Can you tell me exactly which department you're referring to on that front? I think it's for ACOA—correct me if I'm wrong—and for CEDQ as well. It's a horizontal item that's covered under two different portfolios. I could speak to the broader initiative if you'd like.

Ms. Rachael Harder: No. I just find it interesting that it's a little more than \$300,000, that \$395,000 is being allocated to this program. The government has definitely used this program as a massive opportunity to virtue signal, but under \$400,000 is actually what's being invested, so—

Mr. Matthew Green: Virtue signal...? What does "virtue signal" mean?

Ms. Rachael Harder: —it just—

Mr. Matthew Green: Virtue signal—holy Christ.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Chair...?

The Chair: Mr. Green, please.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I trust that will not be taken from my time. That was extremely rude of Mr. Green.

The Chair: No, it will not be taken from your time.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Mr. Glenn Purves: Ms. Harder, typically when departments come in through supplementary estimates, in the case of ACOA or CEDQ, it's for the incremental funding they need up and beyond what they've received. There has been an announcement of \$93.1 million over 2021 and to 2023-24, with up to \$221 million in partnership with Canadian financial institutions to support this initiative. This includes an ecosystem fund of \$53 million and a knowledge hub of \$6.5 million. There's surveying, and analysis of surveys, of \$2 million—

Ms. Rachael Harder: What is the additional \$395,000 needed for?

Mr. Glenn Purves: This is to support the ecosystem fund component that these organizations are involved with. Of course, that fund supports Black-led businesses.

Ms. Rachael Harder: What does that mean? "Ecosystem" is a nice word, but what does that mean? Ultimately, what difference is this making in the lives of Canadians?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Harder.

If you could answer that quickly, Mr. Purves, it would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Glenn Purves: It's to support Black-led business organizations across Canada by funding their business development services. If you like, we can come back with a more detailed response on that to the committee. I'd be happy to do that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Purves. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Ms. Harder.

We'll now go to Mr. Jowhari for five minutes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Purves, it's good to have you and your team back. Please extend our regards to the minister. We're looking forward to having him in full health and back at the committee again.

You started talking about horizontal items. I understand that in the supplementary estimates (C) we have about eight horizontal items. I'm interested in about two or three of them. Can you give us an idea of what's included there? Specifically, I'd very much like to get some feedback around the \$55 million, I believe, in funding for the integrity of the Canada border and asylum system. That's broken into two pieces.

If you could start by commenting on that one, I'd really appreciate it.

• (1735)

Mr. Glenn Purves: To give people a sense of what horizontal initiatives are, whenever we table supplementary estimates, if there's funding for an initiative that covers multiple areas and multiple departments, we always list it as a horizontal initiative. We try to flag that as part of our transparency.

In terms of that specific initiative, it's used to provide emergency housing and support services to improve the interoperability of various information technology systems related to asylum systems in order to increase administrative efficiency and the speed of processing claims.

Of that \$55.6 million that you're referring to, Mr. Jowhari, \$6 million is going to the Canada Border Services Agency, about \$22.3 million to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and about \$1.9 million to the Immigration and Refugee Board. Then, of course, under the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and Shared Services Canada, there are additional amounts of about \$3 million in particular pertaining to some of these.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Can you comment on the \$6 million that's going to the Canada Border Services Agency? What is this for?

Mr. Glenn Purves: I'm wondering if my colleague Rod Greenwood has that open—he might be a little quicker than me—to be able to explain it.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes, perhaps it could be quick, because I want to go to the regional air transport initiative of about \$44 million. I'm trying to get some feedback around what that money is for. Perhaps you could quickly talk about the \$6 million.

Mr. Glenn Purves: Of that amount, it's effectively part of a broad range of initiatives to increase the capacity and efficiency of the system. Specifically, that amount is going to project definition in the early implementation of the new automated IT security screening system. In terms of milestones, they expect project definition completion by March. Then they're expecting effectively the broader project implementation to be completed in June of 2022.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you.

We also have another \$44 million of funding for regional air transportation initiatives. About \$10 million of it is for Atlantic Canada. What specifically are these funds earmarked for?

Mr. Glenn Purves: This funding is intended to promote reliable and affordable access to critical regional and local airport and air carrier operations and services. Each organization provides grants and contributions to municipalities, provinces and territories, not-for-profit organizations, businesses and indigenous organizations to help maintain essential air transportation services that support local economies.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Are any of these COVID-related or are these just normal initiatives?

Mr. Glenn Purves: We have them tagged as COVID-related because they came as a reaction to the COVID initiative and the disruptions that have impacted that industry.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: We have about \$31 million for violence against indigenous women and girls. The major portion of that is about \$29 million. With about 15 seconds left, can you shed some light on that? Thank you.

Mr. Glenn Purves: These are operating expenditures and contributions intended to support community-led solutions for reducing violence and addressing harms associated with attendance at federal Indian day schools, addressing service gaps and wage disparities in 46 emergency shelters, and supporting off-reserve shelters used by indigenous women and children.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Purves and Mr. Jowhari.

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

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

Up to \$8 million is included under vote 5 to process outstanding applications for the Canada emergency student benefit, or CESB.

First, how many outstanding applications are there?

Second, why are they outstanding?

Lastly, could there be other costs associated with the fraudulent CERB and CESB applications?

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Glenn Purves: I hate to interrupt. I didn't catch the beginning of your question. I'm very sorry.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: No problem, Mr. Purves.

Up to \$8 million is included under vote 5 to process outstanding applications for the CESB.

How many outstanding applications are there? Why are they outstanding? Is there any money to cover the cost of recovering amounts that some people fraudulently obtained at the expense of students and workers?

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Purves: Ms. Vignola, I think what you're referring to is our central vote 5, if I understand correctly. You're referring to the \$8 million that was in there. Just to back up, our vote 5 is intended to provide a bridge to the next supply bill, so if a department has an urgent cash need, it is able to extend.

In this regard, what happened was that some recipients were in need of funding and that vote 5 allocation went to provide for those recipients. I'm wondering whether my colleague, Rod Greenough, actually has the number of recipients that received that funding, which I think is another part of your question.

Mr. Rod Greenough (Executive Director, Expenditure Strategies and Estimates, Treasury Board Secretariat): I don't have the number of recipients, but there were about 4,000 claims made previous to December 31 that were still outstanding. That's what the \$8 million is to cover, as these claims are processed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greenough and thank you, Ms. Vignola.

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

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is requesting \$1.7 billion under vote 1c for operating expenditures to support the rapid bulk procurement of essential personal protective equipment and the necessary medical equipment and supplies on behalf of the federal government, provinces and territories.

How much personal protective equipment purchased with this funding would go to the national emergency strategic stockpile?

Mr. Glenn Purves: I don't have the answer to that question, Mr. Green. I wish I could give you that breakdown, and I'd be happy to follow up—

Mr. Matthew Green: When they submit their supplementary estimates and they ask for this spending authority, are there briefing notes and documentation that would give them a rationale for the need for this funding?

Mr. Glenn Purves: Yes, so—

Mr. Matthew Green: In that rationale, would the purchase of this \$1.7 billion be refilling the millions of dollars that were thrown out in 2019? Is that to supplement the closure of the three warehouses for the national emergency stockpile, or is it above and beyond that?

Mr. Glenn Purves: This effectively was part of an allocation that was identified early on as part of the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act, and as a consequence of that act expiring at the end of December, this [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to continue the purchases related to these initiatives.

Mr. Matthew Green: Would you not agree that in the definition, Mr. Purves—

Mr. Glenn Purves: Now what I [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] of the key commodities purchased—

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Purves, your answer is pixelated.

Mr. Glenn Purves: I'm happy to walk through—

Mr. Matthew Green: It's pixelated, so I can't hear it, and I'm not interested in the walk-through. I'm interested in the answer.

What I'm interested in is finding out the rationale for the approval of this \$1.7 billion. How much of it went to the NESS? Certainly that would be in your briefing documents.

Mr. Glenn Purves: I don't have that specifically. I do have the breakdown of the types of commodities that have been used to support this initiative: disposable gowns—

Mr. Matthew Green: May I ask you two questions in short order, Mr. Purves?

Are you familiar with the national emergency strategic stockpile? Just give a yes or no.

• (1745)

Mr. Glenn Purves: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay. Do you not agree that the description of the purchasing under this category would fit the description of the purpose of the national emergency strategic stockpile?

Mr. Glenn Purves: What you're asking for effectively is just the federal stockpile. I don't have the breakdown between the federal and the list of provinces and the territories, Mr. Green.

I'm happy to go back—

Mr. Matthew Green: The national emergency strategic stockpile was originally stocked to provide everybody in an emergency. The federal government shut down three warehouses in 2019, on the eve of the pandemic. We haven't forgotten about that, and we will be getting back to that in short order.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

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

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Purves and others, it's good to see you again.

I have a question for Mr. Purves.

How is TBS tracking COVID spending department by department? You talked about publicizing the authorities and planned spending, but with the actual spending, the cash that's gone out the door, how are you tracking that?

Mr. Glenn Purves: Different departments, of course, are responsible for their implementation of the initiatives. When you—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: The data is making its way to TBS, is it not?

Mr. Glenn Purves: Through the CFMRS, certainly, as departments report and so forth, and we have our own informal tracking that we—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: How frequently are they reporting that?

Mr. Glenn Purves: We are trying to get departments to provide us with a rough sense of what they're doing on the basis of when information is available. For transfers, for instance, it's much easier for departments to report that, because it's easier to be able to track that. With respect to programs that have implementation issues and so forth, it is more lagged, because it's based on the CFMRS system with the receiver general.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Are the department CFOs reporting the spending to Treasury Board?

Mr. Glenn Purves: With departmental CFOs, on an informal basis, we have started asking them what it is that they are spending. That is an initiative that we're working through with the CFO community. We don't have a system that talks to all the other systems, where you could just press a button and be able to get this instantaneously.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I understand that.

I'm glad you were talking about trying to be more transparent to parliamentarians about various programs, whether with GC InfoBase and that.

In that light, Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce a matter-at-hand motion in this regard. I'll read it into the record right now.

I move that the Treasury Board Secretariat provide the committee with all monthly COVID-19 expenditures reports and COVID spending data as disclosed by the chief financial officers of all respective departments, and that they provide this information to the committee no later than March 17, 2021, and update this committee on a monthly basis by the 15th of the month.

While I respect that there's information on GC InfoBase, it's not actual spending. It's the authorities or planned spending. I think we owe it to this committee, but also to Canadians, to see the actual spending on COVID.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

Is there any discussion on that matter-at-hand motion?

Ms. Vignola, I see your hand up.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Could I receive Mr. McCauley's text by email?

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'll send it to our clerk right now.

The Chair: While Mr. McCauley is doing that, I see Mr. Fergus has his hand up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to support Ms. Vignola's efforts. We need an accurate text in French so that we can see it and review it. It would be good if a translation could be done quickly and distributed to members.

• (1750)

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It was translated for you as I was reading it into the record, as matters at hand are. This is a continuing trick

by people on your side, Mr. Fergus, to try to delay things. We've seen it repeatedly, but it was translated as I read it into the record.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

I will reread the motion.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, did you have your hand up?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Yes, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to request that the motion be reread, if possible.

The Chair: Certainly.

Mr. McCauley, can you reread the motion, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Sure.

It is that the Treasury Board Secretariat provide the committee with all monthly COVID-19 expenditures reports and COVID spending data as disclosed by the chief financial officers of all respective departments, and that they provide this to the committee no later than March 17, 2021, and update us monthly by the 15th of the month, each and every month.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I apologize for interrupting, but I have received the French text of the motion. If you wish, I can read that into the record now.

The Chair: Please, Mr. Clerk, if you would do that, I think that would also be beneficial for those on the committee.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: The French text is as follows:

That, in the context of its study of the Supplementary Estimates (C), 2020-21, the committee send for, from the Treasury Board Secretariat, all monthly COVID-19 Expenditures Reports and COVID-19 spending data as disclosed by the chief financial officers of all respective departments and that these documents be provided to the committee no later than Wednesday, March 17, 2021.

[*English*]

I have the text in English as well. I can try to distribute it to the members by email now, if the committee wishes.

The Chair: Yes, please. Thank you very much.

While that is happening, I see your hand is up, Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): I'm happy to have Mr. McCauley speak to his motion if he so wishes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: No.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Okay.

My only point is that this information either has, is or will appear in various formats in the past, present or future, but it's unlikely that the Treasury Board Secretariat is the source of such information. Of course, the public accounts will be published, to state the obvious. Of course, the Department of Finance regularly reports on these matters.

I don't know about Mr. McCauley, but there's nothing more transparent than government spending. If he's sending our friends here from the Treasury Board Secretariat on a make-work project, it will be resolved in short order in any event in the regular course of financial reporting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

I see that Mr. McCauley's hand is up.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thank you.

I am not too keen on waiting a year or so for it to show up in the public accounts. I'm making the assumption that TBS has this information or that it's being supplied to TBS by the CFOs. I think we owe it to ourselves to have this information.

I'll give you a perfect example. We found out under COVID spending that Fisheries and Oceans spent over \$100,000 of taxpayers' money to put up people at a luxury millionaire resort on Vancouver Island, which had absolutely nothing to do with COVID at all, as I have stated.

I'd like to see how much more taxpayers' money is either being misspent under the guise of COVID spending or in the actual spending itself. The whole reason this committee exists in Parliament is to oversee spending. I see no reason why, under transparency and openness by default, we would not welcome this information.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Just to reiterate what my colleague Mr. MacKinnon stated, I do feel very strongly that this is a matter that is best directed to the Department of Finance and not TBS. This is not a TBS matter. That's my first objection.

My second objection is that I'd really like to ask Mr. McCauley to make a case for why we would go beyond the regular schedule of financial reporting that is expected and that is on the calendar in terms of the financial reporting that happens on a regular basis, and why we would need to have a month-by-month account when, again, this is part of the regular calendar and regularly scheduled accounting of expenditures. I'm just wondering what the argument is for going outside of that regular process.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

I see that Mr. McCauley's hand is up.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I could ask what the reason is for hiding this. We are not seeing it on GC InfoBase. We've asked in the past. We've been told by TBS at previous meetings that it's all on GC InfoBase. However, that's the authorities or planned spending and not the actual cash.

There are untold billions being spent, and I think we owe it to Canadians as members of this committee and as members of Parliament to see this spending.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacKinnon, I see that your hand is up.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Let's just disabuse Canadians of the notion that they are not going to see the spending. Mr. McCauley, you know much better than that.

There is a reason why we return to this committee to examine witnesses on estimates and supplementary estimates on multiple occasions. There's a reason why our financial reporting systems are set up as they are. There's also a reason why real-time reporting of finances and spending is not possible in an enterprise as large as the Government of Canada.

I know Mr. McCauley knows that. I know that history has yielded literally dozens of mechanisms to ensure the financial transparency that he hopes to achieve here today.

What I would submit is that forcing officials to create new instruments and new ways of doing financial reporting—which is really only reinventing the wheel—is just a make-work project for public servants who are extremely busy getting us through a pandemic. He's looking for financial reporting by the very people who are working right now to help us manage our way through a pandemic, who are buying vaccines, who are supplying PPE—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Steven, please....

The Chair: Order, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: —who are doing the work of getting Canada and getting Canadians through this pandemic. Those are the very people he is targeting with this motion by having them create new and strange financial reporting tools that the government is ill-prepared and not set up to provide.

Mr. McCauley, I think you know this. In fact, I know you know this, and I know you know that these kinds of dilatory manoeuvres here at committee are not the kinds of things that are going to serve Canadians in the long run.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Fergus is next, and then Ms. Harder.

Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to repeat what my colleague from Gatineau, Mr. MacKinnon, just said.

However, I want to say that I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and that we conduct this exact type of analysis in that committee. We receive financial statements from all departments and we mainly review the analyses provided by the Office of the Auditor General.

Mr. McCauley is an experienced member who has served on both sides of the House. He certainly knows—

• (1800)

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Both sides...?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: —that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will receive the data.

My colleague, Mr. Green, who sits with me on that committee, knows that we spend a great deal of time reviewing the government's financial statements to ensure that these amounts are being spent correctly. When they aren't, all our colleagues on the public accounts committee participate in the fine and unanimous tradition of reviewing the financial statements on a regular basis and making sure that the work is done properly.

If Mr. McCauley insists on moving this dilatory motion, it will only force our hard-working public servants to come up with work that's already being done in another committee.

Mr. Chair, I want to know whether I can ask the clerk of our committee, through you, the following question. Doesn't this fall more under the purview of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts than the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates?

There's a fine parliamentary tradition in the House of Commons of not duplicating committee work. When a committee does a job, we let the committee do its work. We don't have the power to reinvent this.

I'm asking you this question, Mr. Kitchen. I would like you to ask the clerk to clarify this issue for me.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus.

I'm looking at the clerk to see whether he feels comfortable answering that question.

The Clerk: What I can say, Mr. Chair, is only from a procedural point of view. From a substantive point of view, you'd have to speak to the analysts. I know that Raphaëlle has her hand up.

Ultimately what I would say from a procedural point of view is that if the chair has ruled the motion in order, then the chair has ruled that the motion is in order and it's before the committee. The committee can then consider it, as it would any other motion the chair has ruled in order, and then can amend it, vote on it and decide it.

With regard to whether the content is actually within the mandate of the committee, I'm probably the wrong person to ask. I would refer this to Raphaëlle, who will be able to answer that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

If the analyst feels comfortable answering that.... Raphaëlle, do you have any comments?

Ms. Raphaëlle Deraspe (Committee Researcher): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to comment in French.

[*Translation*]

If you look at the mandate of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, you'll see that the committee must review the format and content of all budget documents.

Since the COVID-19 expenditures are part of the budget documents, this matter would be related to the mandate of the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Raphaëlle.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Can I just make one quick comment?

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, I actually have Ms. Harder, then you and then Mr. Kusmierczyk. We'll let Ms. Harder go first.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This matter at hand is actually quite simple, which is to say that the mandate letter of every single minister within this government states the same thing, and that is this. I will quote directly. It says, "I", being the Prime Minister, "expect us to continue to raise the bar on openness, effectiveness and transparency in government. This means a government that is open by default."

I repeat: "open by default". This means that every single Liberal member sitting at this table should be facilitating the procurement of this document and this information that has been asked for today.

Instead they are arguing against it. That's not "open by default". The government should make this information available and it should be accessible to this committee. It's totally appropriate. Be open. Be transparent. That's what it says in the mandate letter.

• (1805)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Harder.

Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I have a question I'll pose to Mr. Ermuth.

Does this data already exist?

We hear Mr. MacKinnon go on that this would grind the government to a halt and stop vaccine procurements and everything if this information were made available. I believe it is already existing. Can you confirm that for us and easily share it?

Mr. Roger Ermuth: Mr. Chair, we've had ongoing discussions with departments around gathering information in terms of this, and these will be the types of questions that have come up.

On some of the work we have done and the approach we have taken, with my colleague, Mr. Purves, in terms of looking at the measures, the focus has been on looking at measures up until this point, but messages have gone out to departments saying in anticipation of transparency and questions from Canadians and parliamentarians that there would be at some point a request to bring this information in. In terms of gathering, collating, it's doable. Some of the information will be readily available. The question is to what extent it will be consistent across departments.

Again, anything is possible. If the committee is asking us, the question is going to be the timing and the extent to which we can live up to the depth of the request at a specific time. As we get closer to year-end reporting, I will present at public accounts, so we do have some of this information, which will come in more detail at that point, but again it becomes what the committee tasks us to do and what we can do.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: In my understanding you have all of this because it was brought up a year ago in your CFO meeting.

Mr. Roger Ermuth: We have all of which...? I'm sorry.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You have all of the information, the spending information, that I'm asking for.

Mr. Roger Ermuth: Again, the question really becomes to what extent and what is specifically....

Mr. Chair, there was a question, I believe it was question 172, where some of this information came out, so absolutely there is some detailed information related to that. Departments are, or should be, tracking the expenditures related to measures and some of those things.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Perfect, so we have the information already.

Mr. Roger Ermuth: The hard part is going to be, again, some of the roll-up stuff. The question is really to what extent and to what level of the specifics is that request and the amount of time to pull that together.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For me, the fundamental question is this: What is Mr. McCauley not getting under the current system. We're seeing reports published on a regular basis and the information is contained therein. In addition to that, it provides the folks gathering the information the opportunity to make sure that the information is sound.

Something that's important to keep in mind is the quality of the information that's contained in those regular reports, which provides us an opportunity to make good policy and good judgments because we know that the information has been checked and double-checked and due diligence has been carried out. Again, the fundamental question I have that Mr. McCauley hasn't answered is what he is not getting from the current—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What I'm not getting is what you're trying to hide and why you're trying to filibuster public spending.

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, please....

Mr. Kusmierczyk, you have the floor.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I'll yield the floor, because again, I'm looking for that answer. I haven't seen it.

Just to reiterate what Mr. MacKinnon had stated, we have hard-working officials here who are focused on the task at hand. We have an enormous challenge here that we're dealing with during the pandemic under incredibly stressful situations.

You haven't made the case that this is something that is absolutely necessary, and that's what I'm looking for.

Again, I'm open to your ideas, as always, but I'm looking for you to make the case that changing the normal course of reporting is required because you're not getting what you're looking for. That's the case that I need made.

• (1810)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kusmierczyk. I believe you were asking that question for Mr. McCauley to possibly answer.

Mr. McCauley, do you have an answer?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It's very clear that my colleagues across the way are just trying to filibuster or block. We've heard from Mr. Ermuth that most of this information already exists. I know it's getting reported monthly already from the CFOs. It is very little work to collate it and publish it to this committee. Our oversight is spending. Our oversight is expenditures on behalf of the taxpayers. Simply getting access to planned spending or authorized spending is not adequate.

I'm ready to put it to a vote. If my colleagues around the table agree, then I think we should move on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

I see one more hand up.

Ms. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: In short, I gather that Mr. McCauley wants to receive monthly reports, Mr. Ermuth says that we have some of the information and Mr. Fergus says that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts also receives the information and that the information already exists.

However, a timing issue may need to be considered. March 17 is next week. I gather that the information exists, but that it must be shared between committees.

Is that right?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, I believe so.

I see no other hands up. Is there consent to adopt this motion? If it's not unanimous, I will call on the clerk to conduct a vote.

First off, is there unanimous consent to approve this?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: No.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the benefit of all members, I just want to make sure that I have the correct text of the motion that Mr. McCauley read. I would like to reread it to ensure that it is correct.

Mr. McCauley, if you can please confirm, the text I have is this:

That, in the context of its study of the Supplementary Estimates (C) 2020-21, the committee send for, from the Treasury Board Secretariat, all monthly COVID-19 expenditures reports and COVID-19 spending data as disclosed by the chief financial officers of all respective departments and that these documents be provided to the committee no later than Wednesday, March 17, 2021, and then update this committee on a monthly basis by the 15th of the month.

Is that correct?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Yes.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, it is a tie vote.

The Chair: We have a tie and I vote yes.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Thank you.

As we move forward, I want to thank the witnesses for bearing with us as we go through this.

I see we still have one more person to ask questions in this round.

Mr. MacKinnon, you have five minutes.

As we look at the time, for clarification—and we thank the witnesses and the interpreters for being here—we will finish after Mr. MacKinnon's five minutes.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I'm not speaking for any public servants, but this motion that just passed, with a deadline of seven days hence for information that requires double, triple and quadruple checking and translation, is not only dilatory but borderline abusive. I want to apologize on behalf of, certainly, the members of my party on this committee to all public servants who are going to have to work 24-7 to provide that in-

formation. This is an appalling order that we've just imposed on public servants when we have financial transparency instruments already in place. I can't imagine anything, frankly, more dilatory or abusive towards public servants.

That having been said, I want to thank our friends from the Treasury Board Secretariat for being here today.

[*Translation*]

I know that you worked together on developing the white paper on official languages. However, I don't know which of you can answer this question.

Can you describe the Treasury Board Secretariat's involvement in the development of the official languages plan and white paper?

[*English*]

Mr. Tolga Yalkin (Assistant Deputy Minister, Workplace Policies and Services, Treasury Board Secretariat): Yes, I would be very happy to respond to that question.

We worked very closely with our colleagues at Canadian Heritage and also the Department of Justice to develop a number of the proposals that, evidently, were made public in the document of intent that was published a few weeks ago. There were a number of proposals in there that our role was critical in developing, including those that relate to the role of Treasury Board providing oversight, as well as a number of the administrative measures, including an increased focus on qualification standards, training for public servants and many others as well.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: What would you say are the main objectives of the Treasury Board Secretariat? What are the files or the areas you would feel most strongly in advancing in the context of the upcoming revision of the Official Languages Act?

Mr. Tolga Yalkin: There are a number of areas. It's always hard to identify those for which we are the most enthusiastic. The ones that I think would hold the most promise for public servants and also, I would say, Canadians, generally, to enhance their access to the public service, relate first to the work that is planned on the qualification standards.

For the members who aren't familiar, the qualification standards are essentially the requirements that are set down for official language capabilities in the public service. The government has stated its intent that they may be revised. They would be revised with a view to improving the access of Canadians to jobs in the public service, the progress of public servants who are within the public service already as they augment their linguistic capabilities, and also the ability to recognize external standards as well, such as the DELF and the DALF, in order to easily facilitate the integration of Canadians who have a linguistic capability into the public service.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: The goal is always to ensure the vitality and use of both official languages in the public service.

Mr. Tolga Yalkin: Exactly.

The emphasis is on the idea that qualification standards should be tailored to the duties of public service positions so that public servants can better serve Canadians in the language of their choice.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Excellent. I applaud your involvement, especially in the midst of COVID-19.

I know that all public servants in the National Capital Region and in official language communities across the country are very anxious to see the modernization of these provisions. We must ensure that our official languages can thrive. As you know, this is a key component of the representativeness of public servants and government institutions. This concerns service for Canadians, but also work life. We want to always make sure that public servants can use the language of their choice internally, in meetings and during formal and informal discussions.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

Thank you very much for your question. We appreciate that.

With that said, we've now come to the end of the round. In light of time, if we were to start another round, it would add completely to the meeting, so I'm just looking to make certain that we have consensus that the meeting end. We can go a little bit longer if we have to.

Can I see a thumbs-up for continuing for one more round? I'm seeing just two thumbs-up. I'm not seeing any others so—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Before we close, I would like to tell Mr. MacKinnon, through you, that the motion has gone through the normal process and has been passed by the committee members. If he had wanted to move an amendment, he should have done so.

We aren't acting abusively at all by asking public servants to do this work. We know that the information exists. It's just a matter of sending it to the committee. So we don't need to hear Mr. MacKinnon play people like a fiddle. He's trying to blame the opposition, which is just doing its job.

I want to remind him that his government hasn't tabled a budget since March 19, 2019. I think that's the least that can be done. The pandemic is an excuse for everything. However, at some point, we must do our job. We aren't abusing anyone here.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Paul-Hus.

Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: I would concede to Ms. Vignola if she is looking to speak to that point, but I do have an exception.

In light of the editorial, the diatribe after our vote, I want to bring to the attention of this committee that if the government were interested in not abusing the public sector, then it wouldn't tax the damages on the Phoenix pay scandal. That's abusive, the fact that they're going to tax the damages that have been awarded by the courts on Phoenix pay.

They come to us and talk about files they already have and could simply release to us, and this is somehow abusive. It's just beyond the pale and speaking in massive hyperbole, in my opinion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

Ms. Vignola, you did have your hand up, and as I've allowed others to have a quick say, if you would like to.... I see you're waving. Thank you.

I'm not seeing consensus to continue. Therefore, first of all, I want to thank the witnesses for being with us today: Mr. Purves, Mr. Ermuth, Ms. Read, Ms. Cahill, Mr. Yalkin and Mr. Greenough.

We trust that all is well with the minister and that everything will transpire appropriately and in a timely manner for him.

I thank you all for being here. The meeting is adjourned.

Words: 574/130 wpm (in English only)
Length: 4.3 minutes (in the English version)
Audience: OGGO committee members

**Speech for
the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos,
President of the Treasury Board**

to the

**Standing Committee on Government
Operations and Estimates (OGGO)**

on

**the Supplementary Estimates (C),
2020-21**

**Ottawa
March 10, 2021**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the committee for inviting me to speak about the Supplementary Estimates (C), 2020-2021.

With me today is:

- Glenn Purves, Assistant Secretary,
Expenditure Management Sector;
- Karen Cahill, Assistant Secretary and
Chief Financial Officer for the
Treasury Board of Canada
Secretariat;
- Tolga Yalkin, Assistant Deputy
Minister, Workplace Policies and
Services;

- Roger Ermuth, Assistant Comptroller
General, Financial Management
Sector; and
- Sonya Read, Acting Assistant
Secretary, Digital and Services
Policy

These Supplementary Estimates (C) are
the third of three Supplementary
Estimates tabled in fiscal year 2020-21.

Like the Supplementary Estimates (A) and (B), they outline new and updated spending needs for programs and services that were not sufficiently developed in time for inclusion in the 2020-21 Main Estimates or previous Supplementary Estimates.

Transparency

Like all Estimates, the final Supplementary Estimates for the 2020-21 fiscal year are part of a broad set of reports to Parliament, such as the Departmental Plans, the Fiscal Monitor, the Departmental Results Reports and the Public Accounts, as well as enhanced information available through GC InfoBase, that provide transparency

on government spending for Canadians and parliamentarians.

In addition, several changes have been made to the presentation of

Supplementary Estimates (C) to further enhance transparency. For example,

additional information relating to the

COVID-19 response has been included

in an online annex and on GC InfoBase.

The Estimates also include a

comparison of the Fall Economic Statement and planned expenditures in these Estimates.

SUPPORT FOR CANADIANS

As demonstrated in previous Supplementary Estimates for 2020-21, the Government continues to invest in Canadians and the economy — particularly in response to the public health threats of COVID-19 and in an

effort to minimize its impacts on the health of Canadians, our economy and social well-being.

These Supplementary Estimates (C) support Parliament's consideration of the final planned appropriation bill for 2020-21, which authorizes many of these support and response payments, including those laid out in the Fall

Economic Statement 2020, which was tabled on November 30th.

These Supplementary Estimates also reflect, for information, the efforts introduced through several legislative measures, such as the *Canada Recovery Benefits Act*, which provides economic support through the Canada Recovery Benefit, the Canada Recovery

Sickness Benefit and the Canada
Recovery Caregiving Benefit.

THE AMOUNTS

The Supplementary Estimates (C),
2020-21 present a total of \$8.0 billion in
incremental budgetary spending, which
reflects \$13.4 billion in voted
expenditures, partially offset by

a \$5.4 billion decrease in forecast statutory expenditures.

Roughly \$9.9 billion (or 74%) of the voted requirements are for the Government's response to the impact on Canadians of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Most of this new spending is for:

- emergency responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, including medical research, vaccine development, public health measures in Indigenous communities, assistance to developing countries, testing, contact tracing, data management and purchases of personal protective

gear and medical equipment and supplies;

- economic responses to the pandemic, including support for small- and medium-sized businesses, regional air services and broadcasters; and
- government operations, including increased expenditures due to the pandemic.

Overall, about 89% of the voted spending sought through these Estimates is to support 10 organizations, 4 of which are seeking over \$800 million to meet their priorities.

They are:

- the Public Health Agency of Canada
— with \$6.3 billion;

- the Treasury Board Secretariat — at \$1.7 billion;
- the Department of Indigenous Services — with \$1.6 billion; and
- the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development — with \$895.6 million.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chair, my officials and I thank the Committee for their diligence and ongoing study of the Government's spending to support Canadians, especially during these challenging times.

We look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Thank you.

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