



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 005

Thursday, November 19, 2020

Chair: Mr. Vance Badawey



Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Thursday, November 19, 2020

• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Good afternoon, folks, and welcome to meeting number 5 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of September 23. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. Just so that you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking, rather than the entire committee.

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 the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either the 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.

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. Those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. As a reminder, all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain the order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the committee is commencing its study today on the main estimates 2020-21, as well as the supplementary estimates (B) 2020-21.

Now it's my pleasure to welcome our witnesses.

First off is the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, as well as Kelly Gillis, the deputy minister of infrastructure and communities.

Minister McKenna, once again, welcome, and the floor is yours.

The Honourable Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities): Good afternoon.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my team, including my deputy minister Kelly Gillis, and everyone who has been able to put this together virtually.

I am pleased to appear before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to answer any questions on the 2020-21 main and supplementary estimates (B).

[Translation]

Without doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a profound impact on our country, on our health and welfare, on our economy and on the work of the government. Many things have changed since the pandemic began. Although we have tailored our programs at Infrastructure Canada to better respond to it, our priorities and responsibilities remain the same and we are working very hard to achieve results for Canadians.

• (1540)

[English]

The supplementary estimates (B) for the 2020-21 fiscal year include items that required adjustments for a variety of reasons, and we are seeking a net increase of \$52.9 million.

For example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we launched the new Canada healthy communities initiative to support community-driven solutions that improve quality of life. To accomplish this, we are seeking \$4.9 million of unused 2019-20 funds from the smart cities challenge program for this new initiative. Canadians are adapting to the realities of COVID-19, and this program will help us keep people safe and healthy, support economic recovery and build pandemic-resilient communities.

[Translation]

For the Samuel De Champlain Bridge Corridor project, we're seeking \$48.3 million of unused funds from 2019-2020 to be used for 2020-2021. We are also seeking to transfer \$310,000 to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to support mobility and public transportation.

All of this work supports our long-term infrastructure plan for stronger, more inclusive communities and lasting economic, environmental and social benefits for years to come. These are the same objectives as those of our historic Investing in Canada plan.

[English]

This plan will be key to getting out of this economic crisis, ensuring our long-term prosperity, and to building a cleaner and more resilient future for all Canadians, who are the foundation of our departmental plan.

Since March 1, under the largest program led by my department, the investing in Canada infrastructure program, we've approved over 700 projects representing a federal investment of over \$1.2 billion. This contributes to good jobs across the country from planning to design to construction to businesses all along the supply chain.

We also launched a new COVID-19 stream within that program. These projects will benefit from an increased 80% federal cost-share in the provinces, and a 100% cost-share for indigenous projects and projects in the territories. These are projects like upgrading schools or long-term care homes with things like HVAC and physical distancing measures, or building new parks, and cycling and walking paths to help Canadians get outside and stay active.

We're also pleased to see the Canada Infrastructure Bank hitting its stride under new board chair, Michael Sabia, and new CEO, Ehren Cory, with projects like the \$815 million irrigation plan for southern Alberta as part of the bank's three-year \$10 billion growth plan.

However, it's not enough for governments to simply shovel out infrastructure dollars. It's about the outcomes Canadians get in return. Every taxpayer dollar that is spent will do triple duty creating jobs and economic growth, making communities cleaner and more resilient—meeting our goal of net zero by 2050—and making communities inclusive, so that everyone has a fair shot to succeed.

[Translation]

Every taxpayer dollar that is spent will do triple duty—creating jobs and economic growth, making communities cleaner and more resilient in order to achieve our objective of net-zero emissions by 2050, and making communities inclusive so that everyone has a fair shot to succeed.

[English]

In the Speech from the Throne on September 23, we set out our government's ambition to create a million jobs as we recover from the economic shock of the pandemic. Investments in infrastructure are key to that ambition.

[Translation]

We are contributing to our country's recovery by helping communities get back on their feet, supporting them to get more infrastructure built, creating jobs and building a stronger, cleaner, healthier and more connected country.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to answering your questions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Minister.

We will now go to the speaking order. We will start with the Conservative party.

Mr. Scheer.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister. I don't know what the weather is like in Ottawa, but I hope you're doing well.

I'm glad you referenced the Canada Infrastructure Bank because I had a few questions on that. You used the term "hitting its stride". Many people would call the Canada Infrastructure Bank "stumbling out of the gates". It has been around for almost four years now. It has been allocated \$35 billion.

Can you tell us what the operating costs are for the Canada Infrastructure Bank on a yearly basis?

• (1545)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I would like to welcome the member from Regina—Qu'Appelle. It's great to see him as the new critic for infrastructures and communities. I certainly think it reflects the importance your party puts on infrastructure that you're in this position.

The weather here is not amazing, but it's not terrible. We announced our net zero legislation today, so that was good. I was outside.

With regard to the Canada Infrastructure Bank, I think it plays an extremely important role. I would hope that the Conservative party would agree with that because we need more infrastructure built, and we need to bring in the private sector to do that.

I am happy to get back to him with the answer. The Canada Infrastructure Bank is an independent organization, and we're happy to follow up with the answer to his question.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Thank you very much, Minister. This is our first time participating in a parliamentary format like this, so I appreciate your acknowledging that.

You talked about the need for more infrastructure. I'm puzzled why you're using the Canada Infrastructure Bank as an example of getting more infrastructure.

Perhaps you could tell this committee something that the Prime Minister did not want to say, which is to answer a very simple question. How many projects has the Infrastructure Bank completed in its almost four years of existence and \$35 billion allocation of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I would like to thank the member for the question.

As I say, the Canada Infrastructure Bank is now hitting its stride. It is moving forward in a whole range of projects.

Probably the best one is the REM project in Montreal. That's an extremely popular project. I'd be happy to accompany the member opposite, when circumstances allow, to view the REM. It's creating thousands of jobs. It's also going to help grow the economy there.

I also would point to an announcement that was just made with the Government of Alberta. It's a new MOU with the Conservative government that recognizes the importance of bringing in the bank and the private sector. This is something that I'm sure the member opposite would appreciate, because it's also very important to his province. It's modernizing irrigation district infrastructure and increasing water storage capacity. This is going to result in an \$850 million investment, creating 6,800 direct and indirect permanent jobs.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: You've referenced two projects, one that which you've signed a memorandum of understanding for.

The question was, however, that you've had almost four years with this institution. This bank announced with great fanfare. It was going to be your government's signature vehicle to do infrastructure differently. It was supposed to lead to dozens and dozens of private sector funds investing in these types of projects.

Here we are, almost four years out, with \$35 billion and millions of dollars' worth of operating costs. You must have completed something. Can you just tell this committee how many projects have been finished? Not memorandums of understanding or work under way, but how many projects have been completed?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: As the member opposite would know, it actually takes some time. I know that everyone at the REM project is working extremely hard. They would love to see it completed, but it doesn't work like that.

Some of the other engagements are the Contrecoeur Port de Montreal, District Energy in Richmond, B.C., and hydroelectricity in the Northwest Territories.

Maybe I'll just go to the Conservative Party's platform because I'm trying to understand.... We do want to get more infrastructure built. That's why we're investing, for example, 13 times the amount of the Conservative Party said it would in infrastructure. You were part of the party that wanted to kill \$18 billion in the infrastructure budget. I'm just wondering if that is still your party's position.

What projects, in your riding, would you want to kill? We have the Town of Ituna water distribution and supply, new water and waste water, lagoon expansion and new lift station, and drinking water treatments systems. I would say that those are very important infrastructure investments.

It's not just the bank. It's what our government is doing, working with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: With all due respect, Minister, you referenced the Infrastructure Bank. I'm just trying to get an understanding, after it has been being allocated \$35 billion. I'm assuming the answer is zero. I don't know why, if the answer is zero, you can't just say "zero".

As you know, our P3 model and infrastructure programs during our previous Conservative government got the job done. We built massive projects all across the country, and it was our commitment in the campaign to actually get things done.

We've heard from stakeholders across the country who are saying dollars aren't flowing. We've heard from ministers in provincial governments who are saying there are projects submitted that are waiting for federal approval. We could be getting more projects built, but there's a massive problem within the department of actually getting those projects out the door.

I want to go back to the announcement with the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Mr. Sabia said, during that press conference, that "hope isn't a plan" and that the plan that you, Mr. Sabia, and the Prime Minister announced was the result of "a serious analysis of current and potential projects. In short, this plan is real." Minister, have you seen the plan?

● (1550)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Yes, actually, the plan is public. I'm happy to share the growth plan. It's a \$10 billion, three-year plan that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has announced. I think it's really important. I totally agree with the member opposite about how important it is to get projects approved. We're in an economic crisis as well as a health crisis.

In fact, I have to give my department kudos, because since the pandemic started, we've approved more than 700 projects worth over \$1.3 billion.

I would come back to the fact that.... Just take infrastructure and investments in public transit, where we've invested 13 times what the previous government did, and that's actually creating jobs—

Hon. Andrew Scheer: That is not true.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: —across the country. I'm happy to share the information with the member opposite.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: That's not true

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Scheer.

I will now go on to Mr. Sidhu. The floor is yours.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to Minister McKenna, Deputy Minister Gillis and the whole team for being with us today.

I will be splitting my time with my colleague Mr. Rogers.

Minister, this week we welcomed you virtually to Brampton to make an announcement on Brampton's Riverwalk project, which will help unlock economic value in our city.

Minister, climate change is real and the impacts can be seen across the country, including here in Brampton. Can you speak more on this project and other actions you are taking to enhance community resilience?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thank you very much. That was a really great project, and it's a partnership of the federal government directly with the municipality. I think it was great that we were able to make such a big investment, but let's talk about that project. I like talking about real things.

It's not just investments of money. It's investments in people and the economy. I have had the chance to go to Brampton, and this is going to make a huge difference in dealing with flooding that we've seen there, which impacted thousands of residents. But it also means that you can actually build more businesses and more housing there.

So this is an extremely important investment that is going to make a real difference. That was \$38 million and it was going to create, I think Mayor Brown said, over 50,000 jobs, good jobs that we need right now. Our disaster mitigation and adaptation fund has supported 59 projects across the country providing \$1.7 billion towards these projects. The reality is, as you've said, that climate change is real and is having a real impact that's imposing serious costs on Canadians. We need to be making our communities more resilient to deal with the impacts of extreme weather and with the realities of climate change, and we're going to continue to do that.

I could list a whole range of projects that have made a big difference that I've been able to witness in communities, where people are so happy that we're taking their concerns seriously.

Flooding has a real impact on people. It has an impact on their health. It has an impact on their communities. And we can be more resilient and, of course, build a cleaner future.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister.

We are very excited about this project. It's going to help the residents of Brampton so much. I'd like to pass it over to Mr. Rogers here.

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

Welcome, Minister. It's good to see you, and welcome as well to your officials.

Minister, I know we've been introducing all kinds of programs to try to combat climate change and we know that Canadians are keenly interested in greener transit fleets. Can you give us an idea and some updates about the kinds of initiatives that the government is taking to support the electrification of transit systems?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: That's a really great question, so thank you very much to the member for the question.

Look, we know that climate change is real, that emissions from the transportation sector are a significant portion of our emissions, and we have an opportunity to do a lot better by making investments in electric vehicles and, more broadly, in public transit. It's really amazing because there's another benefit to that, which is that it's a Canadian supply chain. If you look at where electric buses are made, there's New Flyer in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Nova Bus and Lion Electric in Quebec. There are really great opportunities to be creating jobs while we do this, and I've made a number of investments across the country in electric buses. We made a commitment of 5,000 electric buses. We were just talking about the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Part of their growth plan is investing in electric buses with us so that we can get more buses electrified, and that's a huge priority. I've really seen that across the country, including in your own province.

• (1555)

Mr. Churence Rogers: I have a quick question about universal broadband fund. Here in Atlantic Canada we were excited by the announcement of the universal broadband fund, especially in our small rural communities, which depend on the Internet to stay in touch with loved ones, to access government programs and just to stay informed.

I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on the physical infrastructure that will be built in Atlantic Canada and the kinds of jobs that that might create.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: The investments in broadband are really critically important. I've heard from so many people across the country about how the pandemic has really demonstrated how challenging it is, that not having access to broadband is not just a productivity issue, but an equity issue. It means that you can't home-school your kids. You can't run your business online. It means increasingly that you can't access your medical services. So it's a huge impediment.

We announced recently the universal broadband fund with \$1.5 billion. Once again the Canada Infrastructure Bank is also looking at how it can be a partner and expand that, because we have an opportunity to get broadband built, and in your community, it's our goal.... The Prime Minister has accelerated the goal. Our goal is that 98% of Canadians be connected by 2026, but my focus is on how the Canada Infrastructure Bank can move ahead as quickly as possible to connect as many people as possible.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers, do you have a quick question?

Mr. Churence Rogers: No, Mr. Chair, that's the final question from me. Thank you very much.

Minister, thanks for these answers.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers and Minister McKenna.

We'll now move on to Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the committee, Ms. McKenna.

Earlier, I heard you talk about all kinds of infrastructure projects but there is one topic that I did not hear you raise. However, I have had the opportunity to discuss it with you on a number of occasions and perhaps your thinking may have evolved since.

For about a year, we have been talking to you about the criteria imposed on municipalities under the Gas Tax Fund and Quebec's Contribution, or TECQ. Municipalities have been writing to me in their hundreds—and we have made a collection of their resolutions—to denounce those criteria and to demand to finally be able to use the funds for city halls, fire stations, municipal garages and warehouses. I feel that you are very familiar with the subject.

I would like to know whether any specific loosening of those criteria is foreseen. You will understand that, at the height of this pandemic, municipalities need money in order to carry out their projects. It will help them financially and it will also help the economy.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thank you for the question.

The federal gas tax fund is certainly important for Quebec. We have contributed more than \$2.5 billion to support communities, whatever their size.

As for the way in which it works, I feel that it is really important to understand that the situation in Quebec is different from the other provinces of Canada. Quebec is responsible for administering the federal gas tax fund through its own program. This allows it to ensure that the investments support the infrastructure projects that directly benefit municipalities.

The federal gas tax fund provides money for infrastructures that are mainly intended for public use or benefit, such as sports centres or cultural and tourist infrastructures, rather than municipal buildings that principally serve the municipal administration. I know that we have talked about that a lot.

Discussions are underway with the Government of Quebec with a view to establishing a new component with a broader scope: the COVID-19 Resilience stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. This will help municipalities a lot, including with their municipal buildings.

• (1600)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Madam Minister.

I think I have an answer to my question, but essentially, you read the program description to me. I am pleased to know that discussions are underway. It will be interesting to find out whether those discussions go in the direction of what is being proposed here. In fact, according to the information I have, it seems that the blockage

is on the federal side, in terms of giving more flexibility to the municipalities.

The problem is that those small municipalities are in difficulty at the moment. They have experienced huge drops in revenue and I feel that it would be good to give them flexibility and space during these times. It would help them a lot. We are talking about municipalities like Berthierville, Amos, La Sarre, La Malbaie, Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu and Louiseville, to name but a few. Hundreds of municipalities are affected by these restrictive policies and I feel that a sympathetic ear on the part of the government would be welcome.

You talked a lot about the Canada Infrastructure Bank with my Conservative colleague and you also brought up the Contrecoeur Terminal project for the Port of Montreal. You were the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in the past. You have probably therefore kept an eye on the file and you must also know that yesterday, the project received approval from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

I would really like to know why the project has not yet received federal funding through, for example, the National Trade Corridors Fund. Although Quebec has a lot of good projects like that, it receives less than 10% of the money from the fund.

I know that your answer will be that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has a \$300 million agreement. But that agreement is just a loan, not a grant. Yet grants exist and the other provinces have had access to that fund. Why do Quebec and the Contrecoeur Terminal project not have access to it?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Yes, I was indeed the Minister of Environment and Climate Change previously, but I feel that we are talking about two different things. The Canada Infrastructure Bank has shown an interest, but there's also an environmental impact process.

I think you are also talking about access to funding. The Minister of Transport operates the funds that have to do with trade, including the National Trade Corridors Fund. So I can ask him the question.

We recognize how important infrastructure is for trade, for international trade. We are always seeking to invest in new projects.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you. However, what is important to me is that Quebec receives its fair share of federal investments. At the moment, that is not the case. When we put good projects on the table, I feel that those projects must be financed and get the appropriate attention.

We currently have another problem: all the cities are in difficulty, of course, but airports are too. The aviation sector is severely affected.

Earlier, you also talked about the Canada Infrastructure Bank and said that funding for the Réseau express métropolitain, or REM, was on your list. However, because of the pandemic, the Montreal airport no longer has a penny to its name, which puts the link with the REM at the airport in jeopardy.

The Government of Quebec has so far invested \$1.2 billion in the REM project. It seems like the federal government does not want to provide its share of the investment required to bring the project to a conclusion and we would like to know why. Will you eventually be putting any money into it?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Be quick, Minister McKenna.

[Translation]

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Of course, we recognize that the situation is difficult because of the pandemic and that there are also economic consequences.

The REM is a very important project. Like you, I read in the newspaper that the Government of Quebec does not want to invest any more in the REM. On our side, we have invested in the project through the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

So we will study the matter, because public transportation is really important. I always try to have more public transportation than less.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister McKenna.

We'll now move on to Mr. Bachrach.

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

Thank you for being with us today, Minister.

I want to start with the topic of the climate crisis. I know this is something that you and I share as an urgent concern. You've spoken quite a bit about climate action being a priority for your department. Yet looking at the departmental plan for 2020-21, it really doesn't speak at all to Infrastructure's role in meeting Canada's emission reduction targets. I believe there is one line in there with a target of having 3.5% of municipalities enhance their "capacity to reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions and adapt to climate change as a result of federal funding", but there is no quantification and there are no metrics.

With none of these specific measures in the departmental plan, how can Canadians be assured that we're on track to meet the targets with regard to the contribution of specifically Infrastructure?

• (1605)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: That's a really great question.

As you know, I am passionate about action on climate change. We just announced our net-zero legislation. Infrastructure, as I say, either increases emissions or reduces them, and makes us either more or less resilient. We have a climate lens on projects right now. The legislation was actually brought in. It was a private member's bill, as you would know, by my great parliamentary secretary Andy Fillmore. It only applies to projects of \$10 million and over.

I certainly agree that we need to be looking from a climate perspective at every single project. That is something that I am committed to and we are looking at instituting. I also agree that we need

to be creating incentives for communities to make the right decision to lower their emissions. We need to be understanding how much they're going to be lowering their emissions. We need to be looking from a longer-term perspective at how we're going to be at net zero by 2050. I've talked about the importance of a national infrastructure assessment so that we have a lens to the longer term, all the way out, so that we are very clear about where we need to be with clear goals along the way.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: The question was, how are we going to know that we're on track? I listened as carefully as I could, and I didn't pick that up.

I'll move on to my next topic, which is rural broadband. You've spoken a little bit about it. This is a really key concern for the region in northwest B.C. that I represent. It's a large rural region, as you know very well. The department's goal is to get high-speed Internet to 98% of Canadians by 2026. How did the department arrive at that number of 98%?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I can certainly sympathize with folks who are having such a challenging time right now, and in your own riding. ISED is the lead on broadband, but we do play a supporting role. I play a supporting role in terms of the investing in Canada plan. We've invested over \$340 million for 11 connectivity projects through the rural and northern stream. We are but one part, and that requires the provinces and territories to actually prioritize broadband over, for example, roads and bridges.

There is also the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which has made \$2 billion in new funding available to connect. They've said three-quarters of a million homes and small businesses, at least. That's something that I will be following extremely closely, because I could not agree more; I think the biggest infrastructure challenge is connecting all Canadians as quickly as possible.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Minister, in your departmental plan, you talk about inclusivity. I'm wondering if this inclusivity includes equity between rural and urban communities. Is that something that is referenced there? If it is, does your department explicitly measure this dimension of equity?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I should say that inclusivity is extremely important to me. We do have community benefits, but it is a different way of looking at inclusivity to include people who live in rural areas, and I absolutely agree that this is part of inclusivity. Once again, I'm looking at how we get outcomes, outcomes in terms of jobs and economic growth. How do we get outcomes in terms of climate action? How do we get outcomes, in terms of inclusivity, in designing programs where we can explicitly measure and track those goals? We are certainly working on that.

I think you raised an extremely important point. A lot of times, people think of inclusivity as the LGBTQ+ community or maybe people from an accessibility standpoint, but I think we need to also look at it from a rural-urban lens as well.

• (1610)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: According to your departmental plan, Minister, important results of public infrastructure are inclusivity and sustainably increased economic growth, yet the only indicator that is listed in the plan is GDP growth. How do you plan to measure inclusivity and sustainability? The challenge, and what I'm getting at, is that these words are in the departmental plan, but there are never metrics or specific objectives to give the public any sense that progress is being made towards these goals. How can people have a sense...? I'll come back to my previous question: How can we have any confidence that progress is being made if there are no metrics and there are no quantifiable objectives in the departmental plan?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I think that's a really great point. Our plan, just to be very clear, the way it's structured is that, for example, we have a stream that's called green infrastructure. It is provinces and territories that determine what projects come to us, or community, culture and recreation. We get projects that have been submitted by municipalities or other partners to the provinces. They decide which ones end up on my desk.

I do think that we need to be looking at that very closely because, I agree: When we make investments in infrastructure, we need to be making sure that everyone is getting an opportunity to access good infrastructure. We know that we have an infrastructure deficit in indigenous communities. We know that, in racialized communities, there is often a deficit and a gap. I think we need to do more. We are looking at.... I've talked to the chief statistician to figure out how we do that better, how we can develop the tools.

As I said, I'm outcomes-based. I think that every dollar we spend, every taxpayer dollar, needs to reach three outcomes. It has to create jobs in the short term and economic growth in the long term. It needs to tackle climate change, reducing emissions and building more resilient communities, and it needs to build more inclusive communities for all. I am looking at how we do that. I am happy to work with the member—because I know the member cares about this greatly—and to get input from the member on what the best practices are. I know that in British Columbia there are some great initiatives. The City of Toronto has ways of looking at inclusivity. I think that really is the opportunity to make sure that we're getting multiple—triple—benefits from every dollar that is spent.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister McKenna.

We're now going to our second round. I have lined up, for five minutes each, Ms. Kusie and Ms. Jaczek; for two and a half minutes each, Mr. Barsalou-Duval and Mr. Bachrach; and for five minutes each, Mr. Kram and Mr. Fillmore.

We're going to start off with Ms. Kusie.

You have the floor.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, it's good to see you. Finally, we get to do our salutations here after some time. James certainly sends his regards as well. He asks about you from time to time within the house.

Minister, you just said something that really catches my attention, as well as that of the opposition and Canadians. It's that you're outcomes-based. However, your CEO of the Infrastructure Bank received a performance bonus for zero outcomes; that's zero projects completed. It doesn't seem to me to be very outcomes-based that someone would receive a performance bonus—your outgoing CEO—for zero projects completed under the Infrastructure Bank.

I'm not sure if there were other metrics that you used in an attempt to reward him—initiative or motivation or other types of things. Perhaps you can explain to me, the committee and Canadians why your outgoing CEO received a performance bonus for zero projects completed under the Infrastructure Bank.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I should just note, and I think this is really important, that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is an arm's-length Crown corporation, and it absolutely does need to deliver on its mandate to invest in major nation-building projects. This is something I've been absolutely focused on since I've come in.

I'm very pleased that we were able to attract Michael Sabia, the new chair of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, who just announced a \$10-billion growth plan.

We now have a new CEO. I note that the CEO's base salary range and performance pay compensation total is 40% lower than previously. I have high expectations for the CIB and for Mr. Cory. I know they're going to deliver on their mandate to get more infrastructure built across this country, nation-building projects, projects that really would never have been built under a Conservative government that wanted to cancel infrastructure projects from coast to coast.

We need to move forward. This is how we are going to grow our economy. Investments in infrastructure are the largest driver of GDP, of growth of our economy, but also great jobs, union jobs for Canadians. I talked to the unions about how important these jobs are—

• (1615)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Minister. I agree with you.

See? We're getting along already. We both agree that performance is important. That's fantastic.

The Chair: Ms. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you so much, Chair.

I'm going to move on to a question regarding the Ontario government. In May, the Government of Ontario sent you a letter requesting a formal agreement in regard to the subway transit plan for the greater Ontario area, but they have yet to receive a response. That was six months ago.

Minister, when can they receive a response in regard to that important plan?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I have many discussions with my counterparts in Ontario, and I think there's a huge opportunity to get public transit built. As I said, we've already spent 13 times the amount that the previous government spent on public transit. It's key, including in my hometown of Hamilton, where we're really hoping that the Ford government will step up. LiUNA, the union, is very keen on this happening. They want to be a partner, as does the Chamber of Commerce.

Look. My goal is to get infrastructure built, but what we need to see are business plans. I'm responsible for taxpayers' dollars—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Minister, you're saying, then, you'll release the funds. Both the City of Toronto and York Region are waiting for the \$5.1-billion release of funds. Is that a commitment today to release those funds?

I'm glad you brought up business plans, because it turns out that for the Réseau express métropolitain in Montreal, as well as the Broadway subway in Vancouver, both of those projects apparently did not require business plans. Therefore, it seems as though your application process is inconsistent as well.

What I'm hearing you say today is that you are committed to this project and that you're willing to release those funds, so when can they expect the \$5.1 billion?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I just want to be clear that I'm responsible for taxpayers' dollars. We need to see business plans. We need to understand costing. That's critically important. I'm not going to apologize for that to a Conservative member, who I assume would want to make sure that's exactly what we're doing.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: You didn't require it for the Réseau express métropolitain in Montreal or the Broadway subway in Vancouver. There seems to be inconsistency. It seems to me here that we're agreeing that it is an important business practice to be consistent, yet that doesn't seem to have been the case.

I'm very glad you've brought up that the federal government is willing to do its part, because both the provincial and the municipal funding commitments are there. Therefore, I'm just asking you whether you can commit today to providing your funding, the \$5.1 billion from the federal government, that is desperately needed to finish this project.

It sounds as though we're both in line here in terms of expecting performance, wanting results, commitment to better transit, and committing these funds to projects that benefit Canadians. Can you make a commitment to release the funds today, please?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Look. We're working very closely with the Government of Ontario to understand the numbers. I know my deputy can talk about her good, very strong relationship with her counterpart in Ontario, but once again, we are responsible for taxpayers' dollars. I believe it is on me to make sure that we have plans, that we are very clear about how these investments are going to go.

I am keen on getting more public transit built. We've invested 13 times what the previous government invested. You were the Conservative government, and we want to get—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Then release the money. Let it flow.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I just am surprised. Would you like me to release the money? Should I just give money to people without holding them accountable?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Well, apparently you did that in Montreal and Vancouver in support of transit.

The Chair: Okay, thank you, members. We are now going to have to go to the next speaker.

Thank you, Ms. Kusie; thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Minister; and thank you, Chair.

The Chair: We are now going to go on to Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here with your officials.

It seems like Ms. Kusie and I are often on the same wavelength because I was going to ask you to highlight some of the investments that we have made since 2015 in public transit. She mentioned a couple. Perhaps you could fill us in on the range of investments in public transit that the ministry of infrastructure has actually made to date.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: That's great because I think it is really important to talk about. I said it 13 times and that's actually good because it's \$13 billion that we have invested in public transit since we were elected. I remind you that Conservatives ran on a platform to cut \$18 billion in infrastructure spending, so maybe that was all of the public transit investments that we've made that wouldn't actually have gotten built.

Let's talk about the transit hub in Brampton, Ontario. I was just making an announcement with the mayor of Brampton. He is so excited about this transit hub and how it is going to transform Brampton and get more people around faster in more affordable and cleaner ways.

There's the transit hub in the Cowichan Valley in B.C. There are projects like electric school buses and charging infrastructure in Charlottetown, Milton, Durham region, Kawartha Lakes, Kingston, St. Thomas, Oakville, Waterloo, Stratford and Guelph. I could go on.

Since coming to office at the end of 2015, we have invested more than \$13.3 billion in public transit projects across the country. That's 13 times more than the previous government that only invested a billion dollars.

I like the ambition of provinces like Ontario. I want to get more public transit built. I want to get more public transit built in Hamilton. I think that we need to be moving forward.

I've heard from Jerry Dias. He said that it's so important that we get the streetcars for Toronto because that's good Bombardier jobs in Thunder Bay. I think that's what this is about.

Why? These are the "triple benefits" I spent so much time talking about—public transit, jobs, Canadian supply chain, electric buses, streetcars and economic growth. The largest driver of economic growth is investment in infrastructure.

Climate action.... When we talk about public transit and electric buses, that makes a huge impact in reducing emissions. Of course there's inclusivity, because who is taking public transit? It's often our essential workers who we have seen in the pandemic depend on public transit. It's people who do not have access to vehicles; they cannot afford vehicles. It's young people who don't even want cars. I found that out from my kids—they never want to have a car; they just want to get around on public transit.

This is really the opportunity. This is how we're going to build a better country, a cleaner country and a country with good jobs where it is inclusive for all.

• (1620)

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Minister.

I would turn to the Yonge North subway. I represent a riding in York region, and this is an extremely important project to all the members in York region—both government and opposition of course.

You talk about the need for a business plan. I am someone who is extremely familiar with the topography, as an example, of the potential route, and that is a very hilly part of York region. I can only imagine that there's a need for a very close examination of the potential routes and the options that are available, such as underground or over ground, etc.

Could you just elaborate a little bit on the need for the level of detail that you require from the province?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thanks very much for the question.

I should start by saying that we're already supporting the Yonge North subway extension. We've done so by providing funding for preliminary engineering in York region. I think this is a really good project.

Of course, we need to look at where the route is going to be, details about the costs and the full business case. These are a requirement because in the end, like the province of Ontario has to do, I have to go to my Treasury Board and justify every dollar, which we should. We need to be accountable. These are taxpayer dollars.

We've been really encouraging the province to give us the business case for this project and to really help our government to understand, so that we can make sure we're accountable to taxpayers while moving ahead on a project that would be great.

It's just so interesting. I'm not very used to Conservatives attacking Liberals for being prudent about taxpayer dollars.

I am someone who believes we need to be fiscally responsible, but we have to be ambitious on infrastructure. It seems that the Conservatives don't want to be fiscally responsible and we know they don't really want to invest in infrastructure, so it's kind of the opposite.

Look, we support the Yonge subway extension and we've said so extensively on the public record. It's really up to the province to get its ducks in a row and get us the information we need to do a proper funding evaluation, so we can get this project underway.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McKenna. Thank you, Ms. Jaczek.

We're now going to move on for two and a half minutes to Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

You have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, in your presentation, you spoke about the Port of Montreal and the Contrecoeur Terminal. When you were asked about that, you said that it's more Transport Canada's responsibility. When I asked you about the gas tax, you said that it's more Quebec's responsibility. We know very well that, in both cases, it's your responsibility. When things are positive, they are yours; when things are negative, they are not.

The Canada Infrastructure Bank is associated with one project: the high-frequency rail project in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. In government documents that were made public not so long ago, the recommendation was to drop the segment from Montreal to Quebec City.

We said earlier that Quebec is not getting its fair share of infrastructure investments. I would like to know whether there will be a concrete commitment from your government to bring the project to fruition and for the segment from Montreal to Quebec City to be part of it

In your answer, I would ask you not to tell me once more that it is not your fault.

• (1625)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: It's important to work with Quebec. I really love the province. We have done a cost-benefit study of high-frequency rail. It is very important for people in those regions of Quebec and Ontario to have access to trains. We are examining the project and we will make a decision in the coming months.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Is your government committing to funding the Montreal-Quebec City segment, yes or no? Are you going to abandon Quebec again?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: First of all, we are not abandoning Quebec. We have made historic investments in infrastructure all across the country, including in Quebec. I am very happy when people talk to me about the investments we are making in public transportation. The investment that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has made in the REM is but one example and shows the importance of working with the Government of Quebec.

As you know, Michael Sabia...

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I am going to have to interrupt you, because I would really like an answer to my question.

You say that you are not abandoning Quebec, but the figures do not lie. Reports from the Parliamentary Budget Officer and from the Auditor General are very clear: federal infrastructure investment in Quebec is underfunded. The same goes for the National Trade Corridors Fund that I mentioned earlier.

Are you going to give us a guarantee that you are going to fund the Montreal-Quebec City segment of the high-frequency rail project?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Minister, could you give a short answer, please?

[Translation]

Hon. Catherine McKenna: A study on the high-frequency rail project is currently underway. We are not abandoning Quebec; we are investing in the province. We examine Quebec's projects to determine whether we will fund them. I have spent a lot of time in Quebec and I know how important infrastructure projects are because they help to grow the economy, to fight against climate change and to make communities more inclusive. We will continue to invest in infrastructure in that province.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Now we will move on for two and a half minutes to Mr. Bachrach.

The floor is yours.

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

Minister, I'd like to come back to one of my previous questions on rural broadband.

In the question I asked previously, you deferred to the industry minister. It reminded me of a report that was tabled at the heritage committee, I believe in January or February, "Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act". There was a specific mention in that report in the section around rural broadband that said the lack of a single minister in charge of the rural broadband file is something that is potentially holding back progress on that issue.

Who is in charge of delivering rural broadband?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: That's a really great question.

In fact, when you look at our rural broadband plan...and I must correct myself. We didn't put in \$1.5 billion; we actually put in \$1.75 billion. We enhanced the fund, but we also increased coordination.

For a number of reasons, with provinces and territories, they asked, through our investing in Canada plan, that broadband be one of the opportunities under rural and northern, but not exclusively, so it's up to them to decide. Then ISED has a significant role to play. The Canada Infrastructure Bank's role is very specific—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Sorry, Minister, the question was—

Hon. Catherine McKenna: —so you want to have the bank doing something different, which is actually leveraging the private sector. The CRTC is independent, so they—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Just in the interest of time, Minister—

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: The question was, which minister is accountable for delivering the outcomes that you've promised around rural broadband? Is there a minister who is accountable for that? Which minister is the lead?

• (1630)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: All the ministers who have within their portfolio aspects of broadband are accountable, and ultimately our government is accountable. Canadians will hold us accountable. Let me tell you that we have heard from Canadians on how important investment in broadband is. That is why we're accelerating our investments in broadband. That's why we've increased the amount of money being invested in broadband. That's why the bank is providing \$2 billion in funds. As I say, they are looking at over 750,000 homes, and I'm going to hold them accountable on that. We need to get that done quickly.

I should point out, for any Canadians who might be watching, that up to \$150 million of the funds under the recently announced universal broadband fund will be available immediately, right now, for rapid response for projects that can be completed in the 2020-21 build season.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: The challenge is that with no single minister accountable, it's difficult to hold the government accountable for the outcomes it has promised.

I want to move on, Minister, to one more question around the electric buses. In talking to the electric bus sector, one of the key challenges in delivering the 5,000-bus target is the lack of a funding stream specifically for cities to fund feasibility studies to ensure that they are using and implementing the technology effectively. Are you aware of this concern? If so, how is your government planning to address it?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Be quick, Minister McKenna.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thank you very much. I've learned a lot, actually, about electric buses and how it's not just the buses you need to be investing in but also the charging infrastructure. I have heard about the need for feasibility studies. There are some opportunities through the FCM, but this is something we need to look at. Of course we need to be supporting municipalities so that they have the capacity to do what we committed to do with them, which is 5,000 electric buses.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister McKenna, and thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: We'll now move to five minutes.

I believe the next five-minute frame will be split between Mr. Kram and Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Kram, you have the floor.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I will be splitting my time today with my colleague Mr. Shipley.

Thank you, Minister McKenna, for joining us today at the committee.

Two months ago, Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe sent a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau outlining some of my province's concerns with the federal government. I would like to follow up on one of those issues today.

In terms of infrastructure, only three municipal projects in Saskatchewan have been given funding by your government since March 1. Can you tell us if this number is still accurate?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Well, I mean, it's good to look over at my deputy. Once again, with our infrastructure program it's critical that we actually receive projects from the province. That's how our program works. They have to hit my desk. Then we have to do a review of the projects. We've been encouraging Saskatchewan and working with them to have more projects.

My deputy is right here. She can speak to the number of projects we've approved and provide an answer to the question.

Ms. Kelly Gillis (Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Communities, Office of Infrastructure of Canada): To date we have approved 375 projects in Saskatchewan: 25 under the IBA; five under disaster mitigation and adaptation; and one under the smart cities challenge. Also, from budget 2016, under the public transit and infrastructure fund, there were 14. Under clean water and waste water, there were 110; innovation for climate change, eight; and asset management, 106.

So a number of projects, valued at \$716 million, have been funded and approved for your province.

Mr. Michael Kram: All right, then. Thank you.

As I said, I will be sharing my time with my colleague Mr. Shipley. I don't want to eat into his time, so I will hand it over to him.

The Chair: Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

Minister, earlier today you mentioned that the Infrastructure Bank is an independent and arm's-length agency. If this is accurate, how is that you, the minister, could be present when the bank announced a new growth plan filled with politically motivated projects?

• (1635)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: The Canada Infrastructure Bank is independent, but our government sets the overarching priorities for the bank. They're extremely broad priorities.

When you look at their growth plan, they developed a plan that reflected those priorities. I think it's to be applauded that Michael Sabia, the new chair, works with the board and the staff at the bank to look at what areas would make a difference in the shorter term.

The bank has overarching priorities, including public transit, transmission lines and other things that it's working on, but it asked, "What can we do in the shorter term that will create jobs now that will also make a big difference in the pandemic?" Let's just talk about broadband, the importance of connecting Canadians to broadband.

They are committing now to connect, in the shorter term, 750,000 homes and businesses to broadband. I think that's an example of them looking at opportunities, which I hope you would agree are really important. I know that I hear from Canadians about how important it is to be investing in broadband.

Also, it's great to see that the first project actually was an Alberman project, the bank working with Premier Kenney to do a project that's going to make a real difference to irrigation. This is about farmers. This is about ranchers. This is about the ag tech sector. It's about Canadian exports. I certainly applaud this.

I think we have to be more ambitious. We have to invest more in infrastructure, and we need to be doing it while working hand in hand with the private sector.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Thank you, Minister.

I have one final question on the Infrastructure Bank.

Pre-pandemic, the bank allocated billions of dollars and completed no projects. Now you have reannounced this bank with a more political mandate. Once again, it seems that you were just expecting us to trust you on this.

Why should we trust you to complete in the future what you couldn't complete in the past?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I'm not entirely sure what that means, but look, the Infrastructure Bank is doing really good work. As I said, it announced a project that I think Premier Kenney was extremely pleased with. It will make a real difference when it comes to irrigation in Alberta.

When you look at the REM project in Montreal, that's an incredible project. I hear from Montrealers. They're so excited to see that it's actually being built and creating thousands of jobs.

The Infrastructure Bank's role is actually looking at where there are opportunities for investment, where they can attract the private sector on projects and how they do that. I have great faith in Michael Sabia. The new CEO of the bank, Ehren Cory, comes from Infrastructure Ontario, where he had a lot of experience leveraging the private sector and looking at innovative financing tools.

I think there's a huge opportunity, and it's great to see, as I say, interest by Conservative premiers in actually moving forward and getting more infrastructure built.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister McKenna; and thank you, Mr. Kram and Mr. Shipley.

We'll now go, for our final five minutes, to Mr. Fillmore.

Mr. Fillmore, the floor is yours.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Minister, thanks for being here. It's wonderful to have you here to talk with us about the infrastructure program.

I want to ask you broadly about the the impacts of the infrastructure program that you are managing at the moment, under two headings. The first is the impact on climate change, on severe weather and on GHG reductions, the impact on our ability to reach our 2050 net-zero targets. We'll go there first.

Secondarily, if we have time, I'd like to ask you about the economic benefits in communities across the country.

Perhaps you could start with the environmental, climate and carbon impacts.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thank you very much.

I have a great parliamentary secretary who cares greatly about climate change, who actually brought in a private member's bill, which is hard to get passed, but it passed in the House, setting up a climate lens. Climate change really is critically important, as we think of the infrastructure we build.

It's interesting because when you look at the opportunities, you see that I made an announcement about a net-zero pool, the Drayton Valley pool. The the amount of excitement about that pool is huge. It's just an example of how we can make a real difference. That investment does not seem like a big deal, but for that community, it's actually using heating from the local arena for the pool. That's just smart.

I've seen these investments across the country that are reducing emissions, which is critically important. These investments include electric buses; investments in renewable energy and in district heating, something I know you care greatly about; investments in active transportation and linking that to public transportation, such as thinking about cycling as a way that people can get to and from work, which we often haven't thought of like that, but as just being a pastime.

We are also building resilience, because unfortunately climate change is already having a huge impact on communities. So, as I say, the investment we made in Brampton under our disaster mitigation and adaptation fund is really critically important.

I think there are many other opportunities. As we look to move forward, what I would like to see are more opportunities directly with cities and municipalities, big and small, across the country. We have seen leadership from municipalities on climate change in every province and territory across the country. It is estimated that 40% of emissions are within the control of municipalities, so we certainly need to be enabling them to make the decisions that are going to really help reduce emissions and ensure that there is cleaner air and cleaner water in their communities, and also a better quality of life for people.

When you look at the impacts of having better public transit or of having district heating or more cycling paths or more access to nature—we haven't talked a lot about natural infrastructure—you see that makes a real, practical difference in people's lives, while creating good union jobs. I have to emphasize this. I think there is just so much opportunity, as we are trying to build Canada up, and also building our way out of this pandemic, in making sure that we're making investments that are creating good union jobs right now.

I hear from unions across the country. I have to give a shout-out to all the construction workers who have been working hard throughout this pandemic to keep that sector open and get things built in a safe way.

● (1640)

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Do we have another minute or two, Chair?

The Chair: Yes, you have about a minute and a half.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Okay, great.

You began to make the segue there to the economy. You and I speak often about the fact that this infrastructure program is a chance, given its magnitude, not just to move the dial on the environment but also to move the dial on the economy and employment, and particularly now with COVID, even more so.

Can you go down that path a little bit and talk a bit about the economic impact as it relates to our recovery, and even beyond that, just in general about creating prosperity in our communities across the country?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I think that's really important.

We need to be making sure right now that we're creating good jobs, but also growing our economy.

Let's just take some statistics. I am someone who really cares about stats. In 2019 alone, if you look at the construction industry, you see it accounted for approximately 7% of Canada's GDP and employed about 1.7 million Canadians.

We know that infrastructure investments are a significant part of our economy and that every public investment of 1% of GDP in infrastructure boosts growth by 2.7%.

If you look at investments in traditional infrastructure, you see that an investment of \$1 million generates between two and eight jobs, so that's water treatment facilities, bridges, storm sewers. When you go to clean infrastructure like public transit, more energy-efficient buildings, you find the payoff is even bigger, between five and 14 jobs for every million dollars spent.

I could talk about all the different projects that are creating jobs. The mayor of Brampton talked about the tens of thousands of jobs that will be created by the investment we made in flood mitigation in Brampton alone. If I think about all of these projects across the country creating good local jobs, I think it's a real opportunity.

We know that we need jobs. We're in the largest recession since the Great Depression and we have to make sure that we're creating good jobs for Canadians and building the cleaner, more inclusive future we want.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister McKenna, and Mr. Fillmore.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thank you.

The Chair: That ends the first session. I want to thank Minister McKenna for being here with us today. It was great work by all of you and great questions.

We're now going to suspend for a few minutes so we can change over to the next hour. I am expecting departmental officials.

With that, we will suspend for about three minutes.

● (1645)

(Pause)

● (1645)

The Chair: Good afternoon, folks.

Welcome to the witnesses. It's great to have you out this afternoon at this meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

We are going to start the second hour with six minutes for Mr. Scheer.

Mr. Scheer, you have the floor.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the officials. I appreciate your time today.

I just want to point out a couple of things from the minister's comments.

I believe I heard her say that one of the reasons the Yonge extension couldn't be approved right now is that they don't know where the line is going to go. I just wanted to let you know that I found the line. It took about two seconds with a Google search for me to find the proposed route, and I'm happy to send that to the minister. Maybe that will speed up the approval process.

I want to clarify another one of the minister's responses to my colleague, Mr. Kram.

Premier Moe did send a letter just before the throne speech, in which he indicated that since March 1, only three projects had been approved. The official gave a different number. I'm just wondering if you could bring some clarity to that. Were there a whole bunch of new approvals done in the last few weeks?

● (1650)

The Chair: Ms. Gillis.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: For all of our approvals in each of our streams within the integrated bilateral agreements, we actually do post them online. It's available on our website.

For the integrated bilateral agreements, I have 25 projects that have been approved and announced—

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Is that since March 1?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: I can ask some of the my officials to look at the exact dates. I don't have them in front of me right now. I do know that 25 have been approved and announced for \$151,880,000, and so far there's been \$14,000,691 claimed. That hasn't been since March 1, but it's been through the integrated bilateral agreements.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Right. And as you know, those agreements go back some time. I think the premier's point was that—

Ms. Kelly Gillis: These are the IBAs for the \$33 billion that we actually have active right now. It's our most recent program.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I understand.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: For the remaining ones that I did quote, some of them are from before. You're correct. They were from the first round of integrated bilateral agreements from the 2016 budget.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Those 25 are from the more recent one.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I believe the premier's point was that since March 1 there were 123 proposed and only three received approval. When we talk about a construction season in Saskatchewan that doesn't go too deep into the winter, I think that's the issue that was being highlighted.

I wanted to ask you a question. There have been numerous reports about trying to quantify the percentage of infrastructure dollars that go to what are traditionally considered actual infrastructure, such as types of roads, bridges, ports and water systems. Many analyses have shown that what is considered “social” infrastructure—spending on things that have traditionally not been included in the infrastructure envelope—may be worthwhile initiatives and may be filling needs, but usually have been captured in other areas. There's a sense that this government is trying to call a lot of things infrastructure and give it that label to give the sense that this type of spending does have a return on investment in terms of economic growth.

Does the department have any type of criteria that determines the different types of infrastructure spending it approves and that breaks down social versus what we might consider more traditional infrastructure projects?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you for the question, Chair.

When we look at our programming right now, under the integrated bilateral agreements, where I would say the social type of infrastructure, which we have traditionally funded, is under the community, culture and recreation stream. It is an overall allocation, a national allocation of \$1.3 billion. At this point, we have 155 projects that have been approved, for almost \$400 million across the country.

Now we have just recently, because of the pandemic, created something called the COVID stream. I know that the minister briefly mentioned that, based in the \$33 billion, provinces and territories can transfer up to 10% of their allocation. A couple of the eligible categories, such as retrofits and upgrades, as well as pandemic resiliency, do go into a broader definition of social infrastructure. Any buildings that are owned by provinces, territories or municipalities, such as hospitals, schools or long-term care facilities, would be eligible under that stream. Normally that's more under provincial or territorial jurisdiction, so we don't fund those types of infrastructures, but we do and we have for many years funded community, culture and recreation infrastructure.

The other streams are public transit, wastewater and renewable energy types of programming. As well, as in our rural and northern stream, we do have 18 different categories, but not in normal social

infrastructure as you might be talking about right now. I hope that clarifies.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Thank you.

When the minister and the Prime Minister make claims about the effects on GDP, does the department do an analysis to determine whether or not there's the same type of benefit with social infrastructure spending as with more traditional infrastructure?

• (1655)

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Mr. Chair, thank you for the question.

Within Infrastructure Canada, we use the macro accounts from Statistics Canada. That is the model for economic analysis and benefit that we use, and that is a standard methodology within the federal government.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis. Thank you, Mr. Scheer.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Thank you, Ms. Gillis.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Fillmore for six minutes.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thanks very much, Chair. Thanks to the officials for being here with us today.

I'm wondering if you could tell us what the INFC, the Department of Infrastructure, is looking for in terms of detail for a project. What is the due diligence and rigour that is undertaken to release the funds before we can start to fund a project, in order to do this responsibly?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you, Chair, for the question.

For that particular question, it depends on the type of project. If we are doing a project that requires a Treasury Board submission—at this point, anything under \$100 million does not require a Treasury Board submission and anything over \$100 million requires us to go to Treasury Board—we need a full business case. So we need to understand the schedule, costing, risk, environmental assessment, the duty to consult, understanding the outcomes of what that particular project is going to attain and how it actually aligns to the terms and conditions of the particular program, as well as the ask that it has within the allocation. As we have integrated bilateral agreements right now with the provinces and territories—and all of those amounts are public—the province has to determine how much of that allocation it wants to use for that particular project.

When we're doing a Treasury Board submission, it is a full, quite substantive business case, similar to what would be undertaken within a province or a territory. If there is a project that is under \$100 million and it requires the minister's authority, then for each particular program there is a set amount of data that's required to determine eligibility and alignment with the terms and conditions.

With our integrated bilateral agreements, we've created a portal. It's very clear on the data sets that are required where a Treasury Board submission is not required.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Okay, thanks very much for that answer.

As you know, Deputy Minister, my background is as a city planner for several decades. I understand the complexities of large-scale infrastructure projects, and the detailed planning and business cases that are required to proceed so that they're not throwing money away. Rather, it's money being invested wisely.

You mentioned the IBAs. Let's just go there for a moment, if we could. The ICP has these complex and negotiated bilateral agreements that respect the authority and jurisdiction of the provinces. They also respect their knowledge about knowing what their priorities are on the ground in those respective provinces.

What is the role? Can you just tell us about the role of the provinces as we release money to these infrastructure projects across the country?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: As you articulated, the integrated bilateral agreements are about national outcomes, but respecting local priority-setting. Once the integrated bilateral agreements have been signed and agreed with all provinces and territories, which for the IBAs was \$33 billion, then each province and territory is creating—because there is a cost-sharing element to this—its own programs, its own intake process within its jurisdiction, and determining how that would go forward, as well as then, when it receives the projects, prioritizing which projects would be coming forward to us.

Each province within each stream is determining the time frame of when it is actually opening its intake process. It is making the evaluation of which projects should proceed and the determination of how much of its allocation will be used for each project, and then submitting to us the application. At that point in time, once we receive the complete application, we review it for due diligence from the various components, as I mentioned, for the data inputs and if there's a requirement for such things like a climate lens so that it's completed at the appropriate time. Then we put the application up for ministerial approval. If it's over \$100 million, it would be a more collaborative process for the information that would be required to submit a Treasury Board submission to our Treasury Board.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis.

Mr. Fillmore.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thank you.

Are we done, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: No, you have about a minute and a half.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Oh, wonderful.

Thank you, Deputy Minister.

Of course, the journey of a project from the municipal proponent through the provincial government—through its prioritization process—up to the due diligence required by Infrastructure is a necessarily detailed one because, of course, we're in the business of ac-

countability and getting good projects built. Thanks for that description.

In the time we have left, I'd like to turn to transit and active transportation. I wonder if you could characterize the experience of the department of infrastructure's increased demand and, I guess, surface area with the world of active transportation, and how that landscape is changing in terms of demand in the projects that we're seeing.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Certainly. I think active transportation is an area for which we are, especially during this pandemic, seeing the import increasing. Within our COVID stream that I mentioned before, there are certain eligible categories. That active transportation we put in as an eligible category. For that particular stream, we are actually paying 80¢ on the dollar so that we can support, hopefully, more active transportation coming through. It is subject to the same process where provinces and territories have an intake process and prioritize projects to us.

Within our funding so far within active transportation, we have funded, for example, 225 kilometres of bike paths and a number of the supporting infrastructure elements that go with it. It has been something that has been seen as important infrastructure for the well-being and health of Canadians.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Fantastic.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis.

Thank you, Mr. Fillmore.

We're now going to move to Mr. Barsalou-Duval for six minutes.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My question goes to Ms. Gillis.

In the last year, can you tell us the proportion of infrastructure investments in Quebec to those in the rest of Canada?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you for your question.

To date, we have approved 1,144 projects in Quebec for a total of \$6.5 billion. As for bilateral agreements, the amount allocated is \$7.5 billion. For that program, 289 projects have been approved and announced for a total of about \$3 billion. Those are the amounts invested in Quebec to date.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Do you have the figures as a proportion of those for the rest of Canada?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: I do not have that information at the moment, but we could send it to you.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you very much. We greatly appreciate it.

My next question is about the Canada Infrastructure Bank. How long has it been in place?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The Canada Infrastructure Bank Act was introduced in 2017. Much work has subsequently been done to create the Infrastructure Bank and bring it into force. In 2019, the first CEO was in place.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: How many CEOs have there been since its inception?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The second one—Ehren Cory—was announced a few weeks ago. He comes from Infrastructure Ontario.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Are there any reasons for the quick departure of the former CEO, who was in the position for about a year? I can understand that everyone has professional challenges, but when you're creating an organization, you do a lot of research into the positions that need to be filled. In general, when the incumbent of a position leaves quickly after an organization is created, it may not have been the right choice.

In fact, we have many questions about the validity and relevance of this organization. Does the instability in the management of the Infrastructure Bank demonstrate this lack of relevance?

• (1705)

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The Infrastructure Bank is an independent organization managed by an independent board of directors. I can't comment on the decisions of senior management.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: The projects in which the Infrastructure Bank has invested to date are almost all public projects led by municipalities or provinces.

Could you give me examples of cases where you've been able to get non-public investments?

I'm wondering about the relevance of creating a bank that is supposed to attract private investment, something we don't agree on since we're not in favour of privatizing infrastructure. Concretely, we could very well have set up another program. Why is the bank necessary, if it's only a question of financing projects that could have been financed otherwise by private programs?

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Gillis.

[Translation]

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The Infrastructure Bank is a model put in place by the government with the goal of having more infrastructure investment for the benefit of all Canadians, one that

[English]

the owner of the public institution remains

[Translation]

and so that there is more private sector investment in our infrastructure.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Actually, that doesn't really answer my question, but I accept your answers. I understand that you don't necessarily have all the answers. In the end, if we aren't able to support the relevance of the bank, this could be the answer to my question.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a major problem with Internet access, especially in the regions. Could you tell me what your government has done about this problem in recent months?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Ms. Gillis, we need a quick answer.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The last part of that question was not coming through on my microphone.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Since the start of the pandemic, what has your government done to facilitate Internet access in the regions?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you for your question.

As the minister mentioned, the universal broadband fund was announced a few weeks ago. This \$1.75 billion fund is designed to support high-speed Internet across the country.

At Infrastructure Canada, we've approved 11 projects worth \$340 million.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis, and thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

We'll move on for six minutes to Mr. Bachrach.

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

Thank you, Ms. Gillis, for being here today.

My first question relates to something I was asking the minister about, and that's the contribution of Infrastructure to our climate ambitions. We have the climate lens, which assesses in a very quantitative way emissions from projects worth over \$10 million. I'm wondering about accountability. Where does this all roll up, and why are there no targets related to that? Since we have this quantitative evaluation mechanism, why are there no targets around emissions reductions in the departmental plan?

• (1710)

Ms. Kelly Gillis: When we're looking at attainment of our climate lens and our climate objectives, there are different tools that we're using. You mentioned the climate lens, which has been one of the tools we recently created as a tool to understand the opportunity and build that into the project analysis process. Through that, it has kind of two *volets*. It has the GHG portion of it as well as the resilience portion of it. It has been used right now to almost 90% of our approved project values, so that is helpful.

We do have a national target on our infrastructure programming overall, which is 10 megatonnes. At this point in time, based on our attainment of the climate lens, we're just over two megatonnes. We have still two-thirds of our funding to be expended against projects.

There are other tools, though, that we have in place to help us attain our targets. We're working with the National Research Council on new building codes. We're working with the Standards Council on standards. We're also working with the FCM on supporting climate plans and providing capacity within the municipalities to have more awareness and expertise as they think about asset management. I don't think it's just one tool. I think all of them have to actually come together. As well, as we look to the future, what more needs to be done?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Ms. Gillis.

Along those same lines, is the 10-megatonne target a net reduction? I guess what I'm getting at is that some of the investments made in infrastructure actually increase emissions. Are those increases netted out to arrive at the net reduction, or are you simply counting projects that reduce emissions and not the ones that increase emissions?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: For the 10 megatonnes, it's calculated right now in using the climate lens for those particular projects that are subject to it. As we go forward with our climate plans, we will be looking at, overall, how we continue to learn and do better and what new tools may be in place, including right now assessing the climate lens and how it needs to evolve for the future.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'm still not clear. My apologies. Is it a net...? The climate lens tells you the implications for emissions. Some projects increase emissions and some decrease emissions. With the two megatonnes you've talked about that we've already achieved, is that a net of two megatonnes or is that something else?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: I will have to get back to you on whether it is a net or is just taking into consideration the ones that we are doing; I believe it is.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay. I'd really appreciate that.

The next question is on a slightly different topic. I mentioned to the minister this interest in the equity and infrastructure investment between rural and urban communities, rural and urban parts of Canada. Is that something your department specifically keeps track of? Do you specifically measure to ensure that equity?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: We do have our rural and northern stream, which is \$2 billion across the country. Then we have investments that are being made in that rural stream right now. The types of investments are quite broad. So far, we're about halfway through that particular stream, in the approved projects—about \$1 billion dollars worth for just over 400 projects.

That is a really important component, because it's quite a flexible stream where rural communities can determine what their priorities are and what their needs are for their infrastructure investments. That doesn't preclude investments in other streams that actually support rural communities, and that is a really important component of how we look at infrastructure going forward. Overall, recently within our programming, we've about \$10 billion that has been invested in communities of under 30,000 in population. Even in regard to our disaster mitigation program that the minister had mentioned, almost half of it has gone to rural communities.

As we look at investments, there are important ones being made in rural Canada. However, as I mentioned before when Mr. Fill-

more was asking about the process, the actual projects and prioritization are made by provinces and territories to us and we look at eligibility.

We have another aspect of this, although it's not rural specifically; that is, the community employment benefits, where we look at nine different population groups to see how some of our programs can benefit them.

• (1715)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It's purely out of curiosity and not meant to be a gotcha question, but does your department track the proportion of investment that goes to rural communities as a percentage of the overall infrastructure spend?

Do you have a sense of whether the overall infrastructure spend is equitable between rural Canada and urban Canada? Is that something that has come up in your department? Is it something that gets tracked? I haven't been able to find any reference to it anywhere.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: It's not tracked in that way. Obviously, it is specifically tracked in the rural and northern stream, because it's dedicated to rural and northern communities.

In looking at our programming overall, as I mentioned, the other streams also support rural communities. As well, something that is very important, the gas tax, also goes to a number of communities, including rural communities, across the country.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Do I have time for one more question? No.

Thanks very much, Ms. Gillis.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis and Mr. Bachrach.

We're now going to move on to the second round, which starts off with Mr. Soroka for five minutes.

Mr. Soroka, you have the floor.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Gillis, you know broadband is a big issue for me in my riding. With the universal broadband fund, the Canada Infrastructure Bank seems to be more about loans than actually about grants available.

When municipalities or organizations apply, are they going to be able to receive grants, or are these loans? As well, can they partner with other organizations such as indigenous community groups to get multiple different areas of grants available to them from different programs, or do they have to apply just from one?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: For broadband overall, with the new broadband program that was announced of \$1.75 billion, that is an opportunity to get grants; that is a granting program. As we're looking at the Canada Infrastructure Bank where they have, within their growth plan, put \$2 billion, it is not a granting program.

They are looking at opportunities for how to leverage all of the programs to get as much done as possible to meet the target for 2026. Communities should be looking at....and we will be coordinating within the federal government between the departments that fund broadband to make sure that we're maximizing the availability of the funding to do as much as we can.

It does not limit municipalities just to go to one. We actually coordinate among ourselves so we can look at what the best opportunities are for that particular community.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: That's great.

I'm going to switch gears here a bit.

You were talking about electrifying public transit and getting more electric buses and private electric vehicles on the road. My concern is with electricity. I don't believe there's enough generation out there, as well as the distribution, such as powerlines, and charging stations.

Do you have a plan to go along with how you're switching to more of a green tech economy with electricity?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Within transmission and electrification, we work very closely with our partner departments. Natural Resources Canada is the lead for the energy sector. Our green stream does fund transmission lines and renewable energy types of projects. We did an important one in B.C. for the Peace region.

So we are looking at it. If provinces and territories do prioritize those types of projects, they are certainly eligible within the integrated bilateral agreements within the green stream. It is an important component to move forward.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: As well, with electric generation, the provinces are starting with funding small modular reactors to generate electricity. Ontario, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick are already developing them. Could you give me your thoughts on nuclear generation on these small projects?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: For us within Infrastructure Canada, we fund projects that are going to be operational and generating energy in the communities right now. That type of technology is in development and would be looked at through Natural Resources Canada in terms of how that might be coming into operation in the future. Once it is in operation and can actually provide energy, that could be something in the future that may be supported by our type of programming, but it is not in operation right now.

• (1720)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: On the Infrastructure Bank, the government claimed that the infrastructure spending would increase GDP by 0.3% a year, when in fact the PBO estimates that it fell short of that by 67%. Could you please explain where the 0.3% increase in GDP came from?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: I don't know that reference offhand by the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I can get back to you. I do know that

when we are looking at GDP or job numbers, we use the macroeconomic accounts from Statistics Canada. I would have to look at that particular reference regarding the PBO and the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Statistics Canada's own infrastructure economic accounts show that there has been almost no increase in infrastructure spending under the current government. The PBO has shown that the provincial capital spending was \$5.4 billion lower than it should have been during the years of the Liberal infrastructure bank.

Again, the figures aren't adding up right. You're talking about spending \$53 billion in the last three years, and we're hearing that no projects have been completed. Now Statistics Canada is actually saying that infrastructure spending has decreased.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: I'll re-reference these, but in looking at the infrastructure hub on Statistics Canada, public sector infrastructure increased 19.5% from \$51.9 billion to \$62.04 billion in 2009, while private sector infrastructure investments stayed relatively steady at 4.5%. Public sector infrastructure has significantly increased since 2015.

That is on their infrastructure hub. I'd be happy to provide the committee with the source of information for those particular metrics.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I would like to see that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Soroka.

We'll now move to Mr. Fillmore.

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

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thanks very much for that.

Thank you, Deputy Minister.

I wonder if we could talk a little bit about the larger transit projects that we're seeing in the country. You mentioned the elevated levels of oversight required for projects with a benchmark over \$100 million, is that right?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Correct. It's \$100 million right now until the end of 2021, but previously it was \$50 million. After the end of 2021, we will go back down to \$50 million, where a Treasury Board submission will be required.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Okay.

You know, I'm going to change my mind here. Given what's happening across the country right now with surging COVID numbers, I think folks might be more interested in hearing about the new COVID stream and how that is rolling out. Could you just talk about the details of the funding allotments that were created for that and what kind of early uptake you might be seeing from provinces? What kind of criteria is there for those projects?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The COVID stream was created to be able to adjust our programming to be relevant to living in the times we are right now with COVID. Provinces and territories have the option, but do not have to avail themselves of this opportunity, to transfer up to 10% of their original allocation into this particular stream. Just over \$3 billion could be available across the country for this.

Because of the hard times we're living in right now, the government has decided to pay 80 cents on the dollar. So we'll pay 80% of the projects. For indigenous communities and indigenous recipients, we'll pay 100% of the projects.

It is time limited. It's in place until the end of 2021. It's for projects to a maximum eligible project cost of \$10 million, a lower value so they can be done in a shorter time frame. The categories for them are retrofits, rehabilitation of provincial, territorial and municipal buildings, including as I mentioned before, opening up to types of infrastructure like education, long-term care facilities, hospitals that are needed right now.

Another category is pandemic resilience, so allowing for infrastructure investments and capital investment to allow for social distancing and safe use of buildings.

With regard to active transportation, we know that investing in active transportation is really important right now, as well as mitigation and adaptation. That is also quite important, as we're seeing the severity of weather.

Those are the types of categories that are in place for this particular stream.

At this point in time, we have a number of provinces and territories that have availed themselves of it, but not all. We have Alberta, which has availed themselves of it, and Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Newfoundland, Nunavut and Ontario. They are in the process of transferring funds over into this stream and will be submitting projects.

It is actually happening right now. Provinces are deciding whether they would like a take-up of this and then how much they would like to transfer in.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis. Thank you, Mr. Fillmore.

I'm now going to move on to Mr. El-Khoury.

Mr. El-Khoury, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course, in recent years, we've seen major climate changes, which are leading to extreme weather events. I think people need to feel protected and safe, especially when the forces of nature hit us.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, we're hearing the translation and the voice at the exact same level and we can't hear either one.

Is Mr. El-Khoury on the same speaking channel?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Soroka.

Mr. El-Khoury, could you put it on—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: I'm on the French channel, so it should work properly now.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: We know that with the increase in extreme weather events, we need to ensure that our communities are resilient.

Can you tell us about the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund and how this program is helping to protect critical infrastructure?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you for your question.

This is a major \$2 billion program. We've announced 59 projects totalling about \$1.7 billion, and two-thirds of those projects are flood-related. These are major events that affect communities. This type of program is designed to make investments up front to reduce the risk of future disasters resulting from the magnitude of climate change. It's an important program.

In addition, in the COVID-19 resilience stream, which I just mentioned, there is mention of the types of projects that are eligible. They must not exceed \$10 million in value. And in our green component, these types of projects are also eligible. So there are different ways to support these types of projects to reduce the risk to Canadians.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Thank you.

We know very well that infrastructure is the most powerful engine for growing the economy and creating jobs.

This government, I presume, has set a record for infrastructure investment across the country. This government has made unprecedented investments in our communities and across the country, creating good jobs for Canadians.

Could you talk about the number of projects that have been approved under the investing in Canada infrastructure program, or ICIP, and the types of infrastructure that have been built, particularly as a result of that program?

• (1730)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. El-Khoury.

Give a quick answer please, Ms. Gillis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you for the question.

In all components, we've approved almost 1,300 projects.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Ms. Gillis, could you repeat that?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Among the announcements that have been made recently is a new Ronald McDonald House in Halifax. It was a \$4 million investment in the community to build a facility to care for families with sick children. It's an important investment in taking care of Canadians in their community.

We have another solar energy storage project in Prince Edward Island, with a \$26.3 million investment that will include the construction of a 21-megawatt battery power storage facility for the community.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis and Mr. El-Khoury.

We're now going to move on to Mr. Barsalou-Duval for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Ms. Gillis.

I know your government—the federal government certainly—often says that the environment is important to them. There are investment programs for charging stations, for instance, that come out of Infrastructure Canada, if I'm not mistaken.

Would it be possible to obtain data on the total envelope, its distribution and the number of applications by province, for example? You'll find that comes up a lot, but I'm particularly interested in the province of Quebec. I don't know if you have this data and if you're able to provide it to us.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The data available to me doesn't exactly relate to charging station projects, but I can look for the information.

However, you'll find on our website a map showing all investment projects, which are listed by infrastructure. You'll find a description of all our Quebec projects in our green section. You can see, for example, whether a type of project is important for communities and for the province. It's available everywhere.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Okay. Thank you.

It also includes cost-related information, not just the nature of the project, right?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Yes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

I have another question for you. You know that airports have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps you'll be able to fill me in on this. I don't necessarily always have all the answers and all the information.

I know that this is primarily a Transport Canada issue, but I was wondering if there are any infrastructure components that you contribute to with respect to airports, such as terminals, runways or whatever.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you for the question.

We don't have funding for the major airports that are part of Canada's National Airports System. That is really the responsibility of Transport Canada. However, we can have funding for rural airports in Canada, in our rural and northern communities component.

I know that we've invested in these rural airports, for instance to extend a runway to ensure the safety of passengers or food.

This data is also on our website.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Okay.

My next question is about the Canada Infrastructure Bank. A lot of people have been appointed to all kinds of positions.

How many people in senior management and on the board of directors speak French?

• (1735)

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The Canada Infrastructure Bank is an independent bank. I could ask the bank to provide information on the language distribution. I don't currently have that information.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis, and Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Bachrach, you have the last round of questioning. You have two and a half minutes

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

Ms. Gillis, budget 2019 estimated that meeting the broadband target would cost \$6 billion. We have seen funds rolled out in a bunch of different areas. I'm wondering if all those funds add up to that \$6 billion. Is there still a gap between the funds that have been allocated to date and that target cost, or estimated cost, of \$6 billion?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: At this point in time, there is the \$1.75 billion that we've talked about, the \$2 billion from the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Our rural and northern fund is eligible for broadband; the gas tax for broadband; and the CRTC has a \$750 million fund, also eligible for broadband. That doesn't take into consideration the provinces and territories, who are also putting together programs to fund broadband right now, as well as investments from the private sector. Together, all of those different sources will advance and achieve the target.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you.

To go back to the question I asked the minister earlier about electric buses, one thing I've heard from the electric bus sector is that there seems to be a gap in terms of a funding stream for the feasibility studies that cities need to do in order to ensure that they're using the right technology and using it effectively. Is this something that your department is alive to? The minister mentioned a funded FCM, but I understand there are some challenges with accessing that fund specifically for these kinds of feasibility studies.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Yes, CUTRIC and transit authorities are speaking with us about what are the components and what are the needs to be able to successfully implement a transition to ZEVs.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you.

Looking at the main estimates, funding for public transit, infrastructure, the public transit infrastructure fund, the clean water and waste water fund, the green infrastructure fund, the capacity building for climate change challenges fund, the asset management fund and the strategic infrastructure fund have all fallen relative to last year in the main estimates. What explains that decline or reduction?

Ms. Kelly Gillis: The main estimate on how we base our funding is based on forecasts from provinces and territories, based on projects that are approved and moving forward. For each of them, we look program by program, project by project, and work with provinces and territories to estimate what the claims will be in the following year. When we do approve a project, it is a multi-year initiative. There will be different claims coming in each year. That is our best estimate of what would be required to satisfy our obligations in the future year.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gillis, and thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Thank you to the entire team at the department. Great work, people.

Ms. Gillis, you shouldered most of that, so thank you for your time. I'm sure you got some input from your team there as well.

Members, thank you for a great session this afternoon. I think for the most part we recognize the investments that are being made, and with that the benefits to communities, people, organizations and all those who are beneficiaries of a lot of the investments that are being made. Thank you.

Ms. Kelly Gillis: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Members of the committee, I'm now going to move to your will to look at one motion to receive the consent of the committee to apply one recorded division to the mains and the supplementary estimates. If I can have that....

Do I have a consensus to actually apply one recorded division versus going through every one individually? Do I have consensus on that?

Great. Wonderful. Thank you.

I will ask the clerk to now read off the names to vote, on consent of the committee, which I've already received, to apply the one recorded division, which the clerk is now going to call for, to the mains and the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Clerk, the floor is now yours.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): The question is on the combination of the mains and the supplementary estimates.

CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SECURITY AUTHORITY

Vote 1—Payments to the Authority for operating and capital expenditures.....\$562,700,000

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

CANADIAN TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$28,662,545

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$726,021,429

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$150,604,973

Vote 10—Grants and contributions—Efficient Transportation System.....\$617,297,513

Vote 15—Grants and contributions—Green and Innovative Transportation System.....\$133,823,550

Vote 20—Grants and contributions—Safe and Secure Transportation System.....\$40,197,681

(Votes 1, 5, 10, 15 and 20 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

MARINE ATLANTIC INC.

Vote 1—Payments to the corporation.....\$55,675,667

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

OFFICE OF INFRASTRUCTURE OF CANADA

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$140,524,931

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$32,589,953

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....\$5,509,279,924

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

THE JACQUES-CARTIER AND CHAMPLAIN BRIDGES INC.

Vote 1—Payments to the corporation.....\$327,620,136

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

VIA RAIL CANADA INC.

Vote 1—Payments to the Corporation.....\$546,909,001

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

WINDSOR-DETROIT BRIDGE AUTHORITY

Vote 1—Payments to the Authority.....\$778,634,323

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SECURITY AUTHORITY

Vote 1b—Payments to the Authority for operating and capital expenditures.....\$45,628,788

(Vote 1b agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

CANADIAN TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Vote 1b—Program expenditures.....\$9,585,524

(Vote 1b agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$28,205,543

Vote 5b—Capital expenditures.....\$180,467,398

Vote 10b—Grants and contributions—Efficient Transportation System.....\$228,768,849

Vote 15b—Grants and contributions—Green and Innovative Transportation System.....\$54,934,538

Vote 20b—Grants and contributions—Safe and Secure Transportation System.....\$24,197,532

(Votes 1b, 5b, 10b, 15b and 20b agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

MARINE ATLANTIC

Vote 1b—Payments to the corporation.....\$2,000,568

(Vote 1b agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

OFFICE OF INFRASTRUCTURE OF CANADA

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$48,283,519

(Vote 1b agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

THE FEDERAL BRIDGE CORPORATION LIMITED

Vote 1b—Payments to the Corporation.....\$832,083

(Vote 1b agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

VIA RAIL CANADA INC.

Vote 1b—Payments to the Corporation.....\$4,521,667

(Vote 1b agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

● (1740)

The Chair: Once again, I thank all of you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

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

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

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

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

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