



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

TRAN • NUMBER 120 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, November 8, 2018

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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

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• (0800)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the subject matter of clauses 688 to 747, divisions 22 and 23, of Bill C-86.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here so early in the morning.

To our folks in British Columbia especially, we recognize that it's five o'clock in the morning. We really appreciate the fact you're up and are going to share some thoughts with us.

Before we go to our witnesses, Mr. Jeneroux has a point he wanted to raise.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Sorry, Madam Chair. I'll be quick about this.

This is pertaining to the agenda. In the first bit, we're hearing witnesses on the BIA. Then we're moving on to discuss the overall recommendations and report phase.

This is with regard to the 9 to 9:45 a.m. period, which is just before the PBO comes to the committee. I would like to ask if we could hold that part of the meeting in public instead of in camera.

The Chair: I would have to ask what the committee's thoughts are.

Normally, committee business and this kind of thing would be done in camera, as the clerk has indicated here. Mr. Jeneroux has suggested that he'd like to do that in an open session.

Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): I simply wanted to say that I support the suggestion. Discussions about such an important matter as the one we are debating, in such a short timeframe, are definitely in the public interest.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Just as one point of clarification, it's technically clause-by-clause, not committee business. But that's

neither here nor there. I'm just hoping that we can do this in public for the length of the report.

The Chair: We won't be doing clause-by-clause. That will be done at the finance committee when they do clause-by-clause on the issue.

Mr. Jeneroux has asked that we make public our 9 to 9:45 a.m. discussion on Bill C-86.

All those in favour? Opposed?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: We'll be in camera.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'm sorry, but I just think it's such a big report. We're trying to be open and transparent as much as possible. We've said this at the committee time and time again, on both sides of this. To go in camera I think is really...

I'll be moving the motion again, prior to our going in camera. I hope in that spirit we're able to keep this transparent. I think we as parliamentarians owe a service to this act. As significant as it is, and with the amount of stakeholders we've heard from, I think this certainly is something where we as a committee can work in a non-partisan fashion to keep this in a fashion that's open as opposed to in camera.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

We will move on to our witnesses, and I will suggest that we first go to Ms. Venton from Ecojustice Canada.

Please take no longer than five minutes so that the committee has time to ask you some important questions.

If you can hear me, Ms. Venton, please hold on. We have a bit of a technical issue at this end. We have no sound.

While we correct that, maybe we can go on to you, Mr. Burrows.

• (0805)

Mr. Bruce Burrows (President, Chamber of Marine Commerce): Sure, I'd be pleased to.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

[*English*]

Thank you, Madam Chair, clerk and members of this committee for the invitation to speak today.

I'm pleased to see so many of you a short while after our Marine Day on the Hill event on the 16th, during which I hope many of you learned more about the marine mode and what my members are doing for Canada.

I had not anticipated a meeting under today's circumstances. For those who may not know, I am Bruce Burrows, president of the Chamber of Marine Commerce or the CMC. I am joined today by Sarah Douglas, the CMC's senior director of government and stakeholder relations.

Further to my reference to the circumstances behind and purpose of today's discussion, I understand that divisions 22 and 23 of Bill C-86, before you today, seek to amend the Canada Shipping Act and the Marine Liability Act. However, it wasn't until mid-August that Transport Canada was in position to begin a more substantive consultation on these two issues, which are part of the oceans protection plan, and it was a broad discussion at that.

With that consultation closing on October 26, CMC provided specific constructive feedback on improving the CSA and MLA, and I hope you are able to read our submission in detail. You can then understand how concerned we are, in the interest of effective consultation, about there being such a rapid turnaround between the end of the consultation period and the sudden tabling of legislation.

I preface my next point by saying that the CMC has a good relationship with Transport Canada, but then note that the government in its wisdom more broadly has elected to veil important pieces of transport legislation under the cover of an omnibus bill. There's now an accelerated time frame under which these legislative proposals are proceeding. This is inappropriate in our view.

Before turning to my colleague, I'd like to make clear that the marine mode in Canada is the safest and most environmentally friendly means of transportation. Every year more than 230 million metric tonnes of cargo is transported through the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River waterway. Moving this cargo safely is the top priority for the marine transportation industry, which works to maximize protection of people, property and the environment. Comprehensive regulatory oversight, investments in advanced navigation technology and sound safety practices have produced significant safety achievements, and more investments are being made by industry.

Ms. Sarah E. Douglas (Senior Director, Government and Stakeholder Relations, Chamber of Marine Commerce): In our experience, we believe that a collaborative approach is required to identify priorities of concern to Canadians when it comes to making new regulations, policies or introducing legislation. At the end of the day, the marine industry operates in a number of geographic areas that are particularly sensitive environments, but the people living there still need marine services.

In the proposed amendments to the CSA, we see three major areas that would change how the marine mode is governed. One, the introduction of interim orders; two, the expanded regulatory powers for marine environmental protection; and three, the ability to amend certain regulations by order or variation orders, as they've been called at committee before. We look to each of these sections with concern, as they increase the scope of powers available to the government.

We recognize the intent for powers to issue interim orders, however it's important that interim orders are only used in urgent or unforeseen circumstances, as intended, and that a commitment is made to consult to the fullest extent possible under the circumstances. The process must be governed by robust policies and procedures to ensure interim orders are not used to circumvent the regulatory process or evidence-based decision-making, and do not sidestep the ongoing collaboration the government has with the marine sector.

We have specific recommendations for you in this regard, and are happy to take questions on it at that point.

We believe that rapid intervention measures could have significant impacts and unintended consequences for voyage planning, safety, shipping schedules, contractual commitments, fleet planning and competitiveness, all of which impact communities, businesses and jobs that depend on marine shipping to grow. Notwithstanding the short-term nature of such an order, we believe there's a need for ensuring adequate consultation with the marine industry and other affected industries. The marine industry has much to offer in identifying concrete measures, weighing alternatives and assessing industry impacts to inform decision-making.

● (0810)

Mr. Bruce Burrows: In terms of regulation-making powers for marine environmental protection, we can't stress enough that science and evidence are essential to the development of any new regulatory measure to ensure that they are effective, and we would also note that industry already has a great record of voluntary measures to protect the environment. In fact, these voluntary measures and guidelines, such as those promoted and implemented through the green marine program, have proven to be successful in the past in many areas of ship operations. When supported by evidence and developed in consultation with industry, voluntary measures are an effective tool and provide more flexibility over regulation.

In sum, we are very cautious about the proposed changes, as it is critical that these kinds of expanded powers be limited with proper safeguards. We also want to ensure that such powers are used in collaboration with industry to improve safety and protect the environment.

On the remaining question of amendments to the Marine Liability Act, some of the changes are quite extensive and given that there is a very complex regime in place here, we need more time to consider and provide reasoned comment.

We're happy to take any questions you may have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Burrows.

We'll go on to Ms. Venton.

Please go ahead for five minutes.

Ms. Margot Venton (Director, Nature Program, Ecojustice Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the committee for inviting me to speak today regarding the amendments to the Canada Shipping Act and the Marine Liability Act proposed in Bill C-86. I'm a lawyer with Ecojustice Canada.

Ecojustice is Canada's largest environmental law organization, supported by approximately 20,000 individual donors throughout the country. With offices on both the Pacific and the Atlantic coasts, Ecojustice is dedicated to ensuring legal protection of Canada's oceans. Through my practice, I largely focus on marine conservation issues. I'll make my short submission on the proposed changes to the Shipping Act.

The proposed amendments reflect our expanding understanding of the environmental impact associated with shipping, including ship-source pollution, physical disturbance and noise pollution.

Significant expansion of already busy port facilities on the west coast is proposed or already under way. Our Shipping Act must be able to respond to increasing threats that will accompany this expansion. Current gaps in the regulatory system must be filled before further expansion occurs.

The Salish Sea, for example, is a nationally significant marine ecosystem, home to a diversity of plant, fish and marine mammal species relied on traditionally by indigenous peoples and more recently by settler communities, and it is also home to Canada's busiest port. The Salish Sea has been degraded and many marine species in the Salish Sea are struggling, including the endangered southern resident killer whale whose population has declined over the summer to just 74 animals. Pollution and disturbance from marine vessels, along with reduced prey availability, are identified as key causes of decline and as barriers to recovery for these whales. Shipping also affects beluga whales in the St. Lawrence and the North Atlantic right whale on the Atlantic coast, each in a slightly different way.

To survive, killer whales need an acoustic environment that allows them to hear the subtle clicks of echolocation and the distinct calls of family members, and ship noise interferes with both of these things. Despite knowing for nearly 20 years that physical and acoustic disturbance from vessels threaten killer whales, little action has been taken to address the threat. This is in part because the Shipping Act does not explicitly allow for the regulation of ocean noise, nor does it clearly enable Transport Canada or DFO to order the kinds of mitigation required to address ocean noise such as speed reductions, route changes and most importantly, noise caps, vessel design and retrofitting. These were the kinds of tools only used to address marine safety issues and not protection of the marine environment. As a result of the legislative gap, limited action has been taken to address physical and acoustic disturbance from vessels and that limited action has been through voluntary initiatives. Unfortunately, this voluntary approach has failed to limit the whales' decline.

Clear and enforced rules work to regulate conduct. As a result of mandatory, enforced vessel slowdowns for marine safety purposes put in place under the Shipping Act on the Atlantic coast to protect endangered North Atlantic right whales, no whales were killed this year by vessel strikes, and we need similarly strong, legally binding rules to protect southern residents and other marine features from ships and ship noise.

The proposed amendments to the Shipping Act fill a gap, providing clear rule-making power for protection of the marine environment and additionally propose interim order provisions that provide a useful tool that allows for nimble response to new and emerging issues, such as shipping noise and other emerging issues and emergencies. It can take years to develop regulation; an interim order allows for quick, targeted action to address a problem while creating space for the development of a more comprehensive and permanent regulation.

Our recommendation would be to extend the period of the interim order to reflect what we understand to be a realistic time to develop regulation, which would be closer to two or three years from the existing one year. Experience shows that progress was made in pollution reduction for both airplane noise and tailpipe emissions for vehicles following the imposition of regulation, and we need to take this same successful approach with the environmental impacts of shipping.

Thank you.

•(0815)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

By teleconference we'll move on to Mr. Lowry, manager of communications.

Mr. Michael Lowry (Manager, Communications, Western Canada Marine Response Corporation): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the committee.

I would like to provide the committee with an overview of how Western Canada Marine Response operates within the current regime, and then provide our input on the proposed amendments.

Western Canada Marine Response, or WCMRC, is the only Transport Canada-certified marine response organization on Canada's west coast. On average, we respond to 20—typically small—spills each year. We have successfully responded to oil spills for more than 40 years, starting in 1976 as Burrard Clean. We became Canada's first certified response organization under the amended Canada Shipping Act in 1995.

Our mandate under that act is to ensure that there is a state of preparedness in place when a marine spill occurs, and to mitigate its impacts on B.C.'s coast. This includes the protection of wildlife, economic and environmental sensitivities, and the safety of both responders and the public. Our mandate covers 27,000 kilometres of B.C. coastline out to 200 nautical miles from shore, meaning our work is often extremely remote.

WCMRC is certified by Transport Canada as a response organization under Canada's marine oil spill preparedness and response regime. Transport Canada sets the response planning standards, and WCMRC must demonstrate that we meet those standards to maintain our certification. WCMRC has been exceeding the Transport Canada-recommended response standards over the last 10 years, with an average response time of approximately 60 minutes in the Lower Mainland.

Canada has a polluter-pay model for spill response, and WCMRC is an industry-funded organization with more than 2,300 members. Membership is mandatory for vessels of a certain size calling on Canadian ports, as well as for oil-handling facilities receiving or shipping oil across their docks. Members are required to pay an annual preparedness fee to ensure that they receive WCMRC's response services, including equipment and supplies, in the event that they pollute.

WCMRC's fees cover our annual operating costs. They do not cover the costs WCMRC incurs when responding to a spill, which as per Canada's Marine Liability Act must be paid by the polluter. Profits earned by WCMRC from a spill are either reinvested in the organization or used to offset future operating costs and lower fees.

With regard to our planning, and to help plan and prepare for spills on Canada's west coast, WCMRC has developed a coastal mapping program that gathers existing data to identify coastal sensitivities, including ecological, cultural and economic resources. Our field teams then ground-truth that data and develop protection strategies for these at-risk resources.

These strategies, called geographic response strategies, are entered into the mapping application, which catalogues the logistical, environmental and operational data for each GRS. In the early hours of an incident, this tool is used by our response teams to geolocate GRSs and gather the data required to implement them. This allows for the most efficient deployment of response resources, maximizing coastal protection, reducing response times and minimizing risk.

The coastal mapping program was founded on a partnership with coastal communities. Coastal and first nations communities can get involved in the spill response planning through a number of avenues, including providing data and hosting equipment packages.

WCMRC has developed more than 400 of these GRSs for the Salish Sea.

We support the federal government's oceans protection plan, and we share the government's commitment to improving marine safety, engaging in responsible shipping and protecting Canada's marine environment. We understand the importance of doing this in partnership with indigenous communities.

The proposed changes to the Canada Shipping Act further clarify the powers and authority of the Canadian Coast Guard to protect Canada's coast from environmental damage. We support these changes and believe strong coast guard leadership during an incident is essential.

The proposed changes to the Marine Liability Act are in line with changes first proposed by the tanker safety expert panel in 2013. By removing per-incident limits and improving the Coast Guard's ability to access funds, the proposed amendments help to modernize how the fund operates.

Thank you.

● (0820)

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

To both of our witnesses from British Columbia, a special thank you again for being up and giving your testimony early on.

Mr. Jeneroux for six minutes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll try to be prudent with my comments, because I took a bit of time at the beginning of the committee.

Thank you all for being here today.

I note that, despite our asking previously that Transport Canada remain here to listen to a number of the witnesses after their testimony, they aren't here again, just as they weren't at the second panel we had. This is frustrating, because I know there are a lot of stakeholders out there who are very concerned about this being an omnibus bill, as Mr. Burrows indicated.

Mr. Burrows, you made some comments at the beginning about how important it is to have effective consultation. This being an omnibus bill, it appears to us in the official opposition that this has been done very fast in terms of having any sort of consultation.

I'd just like to give you an opportunity to expand on some of that and express your opinions a little further before we get into some of the questions.

Thanks.

Mr. Bruce Burrows: Sure. We'd be pleased to do that.

To be clear, we share the goal of rapid response during a marine pollution instance. I don't think there's any debate about that. Therefore, in our opinion, they should only be triggered by urgent circumstances.

With the way this language is written, it is not clear that it reflects that need. We have to make sure that we protect against abuse and using the interim order system to circumvent a good, evidence-based regulatory process. I think that's one of our fundamental concerns.

We do have a couple of suggestions in that regard, and maybe Sarah could go through those three or four points.

Ms. Sarah E. Douglas: Yes, absolutely.

When we're looking at making interim orders in the transportation sector, one of the things we looked at in preparing our submission was the Aeronautics Act. We note that under part 1, section 6.41 of the Aeronautics Act, it provides for a very robust system for interim orders.

We note that the proposed changes to the CSA discuss that the minister can act when immediate action is required, where there's indirect or direct risk to marine safety or marine environment. However, there are three things in the Aeronautics Act that we see and really like, which we don't see as part of this legislation.

One of the parts of the Aeronautics Act stipulates the following:

Before making an interim order, the Minister...must consult with any person or organization that the Minister or deputy considers appropriate in the circumstances.

I think that consultation with all those affected parties, by an interim order, is absolutely fundamental before an interim order is made. I don't think that interrupts how quickly you might need to act in that kind of situation.

Another part that we would really like to see is the duration of the interim order.

In the Aeronautics Act, it stipulates that an interim order shall last for no more than 14 days, unless there is an extension granted by the Governor in Council for up to one year. I think that up to one year is crucial, because that ensures, and puts in the safeguards, that the regular regulatory process isn't circumvented.

We note that in the proposed changes to the CSA, that extension can be extended for up to two years, effectively creating a three-year-long interim order as part of the CSA.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Great.

On Tuesday, when we had our previous testimony—and you folks were ready to go as well then—Mr. Lewis-Manning, in his remarks, identified an issue with the ship-source oil pollution fund. He specifically highlighted a concern with clause 721 of this bill regarding the liability of the ship-source oil pollution fund. He feared that the proposed changes had the potential to open up the fund to unsubstantiated claims of pure economic loss and increase the exposure of the fund.

Do you share these concerns also?

Mr. Bruce Burrows: I'm not sure if I'm quite as concerned.

I think that certainly is a possibility, and for clarity it would be appropriate to perhaps tighten the wording up there as well, just in case.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: In your remarks, you also expressed concern with some of the proposed amendments to the Canada Shipping Act.

Do those concerns lead you to call for amendments to Bill C-86 in these areas? Specifically, do you think the provision of interim orders might be amended to provide the parameters that you think are necessary?

● (0825)

Mr. Bruce Burrows: Yes, and I think we basically just gave those examples of where we need the interim order process tightened up.

There are lots of other examples in terms of consistency across different pieces of legislation. There's the Environmental Protection Act, the CEPA process. I'm familiar, on the railway side, with the transportation of dangerous goods.

These are all areas where we have ministerial interim orders, and they're all very restrictive, for good reasons.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Iacono.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank witnesses for appearing before the committee today, whether in person or by videoconference.

I would like to respond to my colleague opposite about the absence of Transport Canada representatives. Although they may not be physically in this room, there is someone taking notes for them. There is always someone listening to what happens at this committee. You can rest assured that the organization is nevertheless present, in a manner of speaking.

My first question is for the representative of Western Canada Marine Response Corporation.

Like the members of the Canadian Coast Guard, you are superheroes when it comes to cleaning up the damage caused by different types of spills.

Can you tell us a little more about your role in the event of an oil spill? What are the differences and similarities between your role and that of the Canadian Coast Guard?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Lowry: I will provide some illustration of our role within the response regime. I should say that there are many partners in the response regime, both from the federal family and provincial, municipal, and first nation partners. There are a lot of players involved in response.

Broadly speaking, Transport Canada oversees the regime. They set the planning standards and they certify the response organizations. For example, this week we are going through a certification exercise that Transport Canada is overseeing. On the operational side, it's the Coast Guard that has the authority. We will be activated or respond to a spill either when one of our members or the Coast Guard calls us to respond. Once that activity happens, our vessels are typically the ones on scene. They're doing the cleanup, managing the cleanup, protecting sensitivities on the shoreline as well as doing any shoreline cleanup that is required.

That entire operation is run through something called the incident command system, which is very similar to how the firefighting service works, or if there's a natural disaster. This system is well in place and very effective at managing a number of different partners in a response. Our primary role in that system is the actual on-water cleanup and also mitigating the impacts of a spill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Please tell us how Bill C-86 will help improve the work you do at a spill site.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Lowry: None of the amendments directly impact response organizations. There are changes to the Canada Shipping Act that we've been looking forward to, but they are not found in this bill. Typically we've been looking forward to changes to planning standards, and we've been told that those are to come.

As I said in my remarks, generally we find that any attempt to further clarify the Coast Guard's powers... I think we should be clear that the Coast Guard has very broad powers under the existing Shipping Act. Any attempt to clarify that and ensure that there's no doubt that the Coast Guard is the lead agency in a response we find to be a benefit overall to the response regime.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

My next question is for the representatives of the Chamber of Marine Commerce.

The brief submitted by the Shipping Federation of Canada mentions that the industry is putting in place voluntary measures to ensure sustainable maritime transportation in Canadian waters.

Can you tell us about the voluntary measures implemented by the stakeholders you represent to ensure sustainable and safe maritime transportation?

• (0830)

[English]

Mr. Bruce Burrows: Certainly.

[Translation]

I will answer in English, if you don't mind.

[English]

I think we would have a couple of really good recent examples.

In terms of the whale situation on the east coast, there is a system in which we've implemented various voluntary measures, specifically whale watch reporting, wherein our captains report back to government ship by ship. Until the mandated slowdown, we in fact were doing a voluntary slowdown. It was effective on the east coast. It's been very effective farther down into the Bay of Fundy, where we also brought in a system of voluntary route changes. The evidence suggested after the fact that these, in fact, were more effective than slowdowns.

Also, up at the Saguenay fjord in the St. Lawrence estuary, again on a voluntary basis, we've been reducing speed in whale feeding grounds and frequently avoiding sensitive areas where beluga whale herds are composed of females and young. On a voluntary basis, speed reductions through 2013 to 2016 resulted in a nearly 40% reduction in the risk of ship collisions with whales.

I could go on. There are other examples where I think voluntary measures have worked very effectively.

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

Mr. Aubin, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I dislike using the time allotted to witnesses for other purposes, but I don't have a choice and am kind of stuck this morning.

I would like to be able to move and vote on a motion to invite the Chair of the Transportation Safety Board, or the TSB, to appear before the committee.

I would like us to vote on this motion this morning because the Union des municipalités du Québec is sponsoring a forum on rail transportation that will be held tomorrow in Trois-Rivières. I will be attending as will Ministers Garneau and Champagne.

Several mayors are very concerned by the fact that inflammable substances are being removed from the Watchlist. They have written to the minister and, to date, have received no response. I imagine it is coming.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to inform the Minister that we are aware of these concerns, that we share them and that we will try to get answers.

I would like to move the following motion, if committee members agree:

That the Chair of the Transportation Safety Board be invited to appear before the Committee to explain her decision of removing the transportation of inflammable substances from the Watchlist 5 years after the Lac-Mégantic catastrophe.

I tried to be as brief as possible.

[English]

The Chair: We've had sufficient notice and you've now moved your motion, Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): You said “inflammable”. Pardon me, my grade 10 English is failing me. You meant to say “things that will burn”. Is that not “flammable”, or is “inflammable” the same as “flammable”? Sorry, we should be precise here.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I would say that we have similar gaps in our knowledge of our respective second language. I don't know which term to choose.

Perhaps we could use “dangerous materials”, if you prefer.

[English]

The Chair: I think it would be “flammable”.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Yes, “flammable”.

The Chair: That would be the intent here.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: It's a friendly amendment.

The Chair: It's a friendly amendment, but we have to make sure it's specific.

Is there any discussion or comment on Mr. Aubin's motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will ask the representative from Ecojustice Canada, Ms. Venton, my first question.

Division 22 gives the Minister the power to make various regulations to better protect the marine environment. Everyone is on board with that.

This clause does not specify who the Minister should consult to clarify his regulations. Do you believe that the Minister of Transport is really in the best position to make decisions about environmental protection measures?

[English]

Ms. Margot Venton: I agree—along with all of the witnesses, I believe—that it is important to make environmental decisions based on the best available science, and that it is most likely helpful in these situations if the minister is in consultation with Environment Canada or, more likely, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, depending on the issue. Certainly, in developing environmental regulations, that would likely be an appropriate thing to include as part of the process.

With respect to interim orders, I'm a bit worried about consultation. I think it is important that decisions be made on the best available science at the moment, and for an interim order to be “interim”, we also have to balance against the need to be able to move quickly. I'm not sure how best to resolve that tension, but certainly science is super-important in these decisions.

•(0835)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

There is another matter that one of the witnesses could perhaps clarify for me. I have to admit that I could not see the rationale for this. Clause 689 of Division 22 gives the Minister the authority to exempt a research vessel from the regulations.

What is the rationale for and usefulness of this clause in the Act? I will start with you, Ms. Venton, but other witnesses are welcome to answer if they wish to do so.

[English]

Ms. Margot Venton: Just so I understand, which clause are you asking about?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I am referring to clause 689 of Division 22, which authorizes the Minister to exempt a research vessel from complying with this regulation. I want to know the underlying rationale for this clause. Why would these vessels be exempt?

[English]

Ms. Margot Venton: In the absence of an actual explanation from the minister's perspective, I don't really know, but I suspect it's much like exclusions under the Species at Risk Act or the Fisheries Act, where research activities are excluded from certain restrictions. For example, I suppose, if it's going into an area and boats are asked not to go into that area, it could be to facilitate ongoing research on an issue. It's not uncommon for those kinds of exclusions to exist, but I don't know the full motivation behind most of these clauses.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

Do you wish to add something, Mr. Burrows?

[English]

Mr. Bruce Burrows: If I could offer a view, too, I think my understanding—I've just reread this again—is that this also may be

an opportunity to exempt on the basis of testing for autonomous ships and for moving autonomous ships into various areas. That may be one of the rationales. Unfortunately, we don't have Transport Canada here today, but I would venture a guess that this might be behind it as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I would like to come back to you, Ms. Douglas.

In your preliminary remarks you mentioned that the interim order should not replace the regulation-making process, and you spoke about that again a little later.

Could you give me one or two specific examples of situations that you would not want to see as a result of this?

[English]

Ms. Sarah E. Douglas: When we're talking in the marine mode, because this is brand new, this power for interim order, at this point it would be pure speculation, but I think our concern is around just governance and the regulatory process. The government has many different tools in its tool box on how to enforce regulations, legislation or these orders. The regulation-making process is a very important part of the statutory instruments available to governments, and I want to make sure that in issuing an interim order it does not replace the regulation-making process on this.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, everybody, for being here.

My understanding, based on a question I asked at our last session, is that Bill C-86 is relatively narrowly targeted at certain financial provisions in some of the acts that are all bundled up in here. In fact, through other committee processes, the various acts we're talking about really did get a fair bit of scrutiny. We had witnesses both here and at the fisheries committee. That gave a lot of people a lot of time to give input, particularly with respect to some of the discretionary authorities that would flow out of this legislation.

Generally speaking, the government has gone forward on the idea that we can balance the economy and the environment. We can't shut down our trade, but at the same time, we can't allow trade to overrun species at risk. It isn't necessarily a delicate balance that we're talking about; it's about what we can do to promote both in going forward and prospering.

On the fisheries side, we quite often talk about the application of what we call the “precautionary principle”, which means that there are times when we don't have all the science, but we know something is wrong. We have to do something and we have to do it quickly. Based on the commentary I've heard, the misgivings or concerns people have aren't necessarily over what we're trying to accomplish; it's the “how” part.

We've seen examples where some of the orders coming down have been far too broad or far too blunt an instrument, and could have been refined either before they were implemented, or certainly afterwards. I think we need an ongoing process to refine them. We may come in with a very broad order on an interim basis, but the door has to be open to refine it so that we're not causing undue damage to either side of this equation.

The other piece that comes up very often at the fisheries committee is our use and understanding of local knowledge. In the marine industry, local knowledge, particularly on the west coast, would include the properties of an individual ship and the speed at which it is going to emit the least amount of noise. Coming down with a heavy-handed order that says that all ships must go at a particular speed might, in fact, create more difficulties than it's trying to solve.

The other piece has to do with the local knowledge of the people who live there, particularly on the indigenous side.

Mr. Lowry, this is where I wanted to deal with you a little bit on the issue of the *Nathan E. Stewart* at Bella Bella. People from far away came in and were giving orders to the locals about how to deal with that tugboat that was on the rocks but had not breached. The locals believed firmly that they could have prevented the spill had they been allowed to act, but they were prevented from doing so. The local knowledge was ignored, and as a result, we ended up with a huge catastrophe that has a material impact on their lives.

Mr. Lowry, I know you're not necessarily responsible for the whole suite of things that happened here, but I would like your commentary on the application of local and indigenous knowledge to respond more effectively and efficiently to issues when they come up.

● (0840)

Mr. Michael Lowry: Broadly, when we're looking at indigenous involvement and knowledge in spill response in particular, there are two sides we can look at. The first is the planning side. WCMRC and other agencies have really worked hard to involve indigenous knowledge in planning for spills.

I mentioned a program that we have been working on, a coastal mapping project. Once we've mapped an area, we do involve indigenous communities in making sure that there are no gaps in our knowledge of that area and sensitivities that we may not even be aware of. Typically, that approach is done orally with indigenous communities. We are very clear that we involve and include that knowledge in our planning and protection strategies for the coast of B.C.

In terms of the *Nathan E. Stewart*, I can't speak to any of the early prevention measures and what happened there. That's not a piece that our organization plays into. But what I can say is that in spill response, we do operate in the incident command system, as I mentioned earlier. A key piece of that is something called "unified command". That means that all decisions are signed off by the unified command. That unified command typically involves a federal representative, which is the Coast Guard, a provincial representative through the B.C. ministry of environment, a first nations representative, a responsible party or polluter representative

and the municipalities. The first nations are involved in that decision-making and are part of that unified command.

● (0845)

Mr. Ken Hardie: I would submit though that—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Hardie, your time is up. We move now to Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madame Chair. I just want to make two points before I ask questions. I want to thank the finance committee for punting this over with respect to division 22 on the Canada Shipping Act and division 23 on the Marine Liability Act simply because they are relevant to this committee and we're trying to get as much input as we can. The legislative objective, of course as we all know, is to better protect our marine environments while trying to balance out economy that utilizes our marine environments. Second to that is to put an emphasis on prevention response and liability and compensation.

With that, I have a question for Mr. Burrows.

Mr. Burrows, we've known each other for quite some time, you and I, throughout the government but as well through Transport Canada. The relationship you have with Transport Canada is quite robust. Do you consider the Chamber of Marine Commerce to have good consultative communication on an ongoing basis with Transport Canada?

Mr. Bruce Burrows: I think we do, and I sort of inferred that in fact in my opening comments. My concern was with the broader, as I put it, response of the government in terms of how this bill is being packaged up on an omnibus basis. I agree that we do have a good relationship. Things can always be better in any relationship of course. There could always be some more consultation, but by and large they're pretty darn good.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Bruce. I also want to thank you because that consultation process, for the most part, does lead to the recommendations that we bring forward in legislation. We don't just sit around and have tea and have a cocktail and shoot the breeze about the hockey game last night. We talk about many issues on an ongoing basis. Again, a lot of the legislation and a lot of the issues we discuss here at committee, as well as throughout our caucus and in other caucuses and throughout government, are a result of those conversations and that consultation. I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation, because a lot of what we're seeing here is a result of those conversations, and I want to thank you for that consistent communication.

With that, my second point is with respect to emergency preparedness. I want to focus in on the response, on being prepared and of course being proactive, but also responding when those situations do happen. I'm going to lean on Mr. Lowry here a bit. I'm going to ask Mr. Lowry first and then I'll go back to Mr. Burrows.

Mr. Lowry, I'm assuming that in your relationship with the Coast Guard, as in our relationship with the marine sector, with respect to emergency preparedness and response areas and responsibilities, that local jurisdictions have to have protocols in place and to be prepared, and that those protocols are actually exercised on a regular basis.

Mr. Michael Lowry: That is correct. In fact I'm in Sydney right now for one of our annual exercises. It's a 10,000-tonne simulated spill and the Coast Guard is always involved in our exercises. As I mentioned they're part of the unified command, but their staff are also involved in different sections within the command post and, of course, on the water as well. The Coast Guard does have their own spill response capabilities and we do train with them in doing on-water skimming operations. That applies to the entire coast of B.C. I would say that the relationship and training and partnership between WCMRC and the Coast Guard on the west coast is extremely strong.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Mr. Burrows, with respect to being prepared, yes, of course we rely on our emergency services, but how aligned is the industry with protocols and preparedness and working with people like the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation, emergency services and local municipalities or jurisdictions? With regard to that preparedness, is there a regular protocol that the marine industry abides by?

Mr. Bruce Burrows: I think we are well prepared. I think our concern here, Mr. Badawey, is not with the level of coordination that we have with people like the Coast Guard and other response authorities. Rather, one of the concerns we have here is that there may not be clear coordination in lines of authority between, for example, the ministry of fisheries and oceans and the ministry of transport. In an emergency, the responsibilities and the lines of command and control must be clear, and, again, I think this is an area where the language needs to be tightened up so that our ship captains have clarity, when they're out in the water, as to who is in charge. I think that's a potential problem.

● (0850)

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Burrows.

Mr. Lowry, can I just get this last question in?

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Badawey, but your time is up.

Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I tried. I tried.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Maybe if he's nice, I'll give him a minute of my time.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. Lowry, if I heard you correctly, you indicated in your presentation that there really haven't been any issues in some 40 years, and that you've responded to everything you were required to respond to. I would like your comments on the following. This is a government that says it prides itself in facts and evidence, and not on ideology. Is there evidence that these changes are required on the west coast, or are we just pandering to the internationally well-funded environmental groups?

Mr. Michael Lowry: The regime that is in place now was the result of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill back in 1989. It created a very strong and very robust regime, which has done an excellent job in preventing the kind of catastrophic spills that the *Exxon* presented, or potentially presented, to the coast.

Correct, we have not responded to a spill of a significant size on this coast. We train and prepare for a spill of up to 10,000 tonnes. The largest spill we responded to in that 40 years was only 100 tonnes. We don't see those large-scale spills. If you're looking at

spills from, let's say, oil tankers or vessels carrying oil as cargo, we've never responded to a single spill from those types of vessels.

Mr. Ron Liepert: The evidence doesn't appear to be there.

Mr. Michael Lowry: No, what I would say is that we can always improve the regime, and what we support is the general movement towards a more risk-based model. When you're looking at risk, you're not only looking at probability. You're also looking at the consequence. Obviously, on the west coast, that consequence side is very, very important. When you look at risk, you have to look at both sides of that equation.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Thank you.

I think Mr. Burrows would like to respond as well.

Mr. Bruce Burrows: Since the seventies, the carriage of oil has doubled but the number and magnitude of oil spills is down tenfold. So I agree, the evidence does not indicate that we have a bigger problem. We have a far smaller problem.

A recent study showed that since the mid-nineties, there has not been a single major spill from oil tankers or other vessels in any Canadian waters. In addition, compared to pipelines and rail, marine tanker transport has been found to result in the fewest number of accidents.

Mr. Ron Liepert: So you would also agree, Mr. Burrows, that the evidence for making the substantive changes really isn't there. It's driven more by ideology.

Mr. Bruce Burrows: I certainly couldn't argue against that.

Mr. Ron Liepert: We also always hear about the government trying to balance the environment with the economy, but it seems as though every time we are considering new legislation, it involves more regulations that business will have to take into account in their daily activities. Is this another example of business continually being strangled by regulations?

Mr. Bruce Burrows: If you're asking me that question, my answer is yes. As I said earlier, there is so much we can do on a voluntary basis that is often more effective and more considered, so I would agree.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Now that I've got the answers I want, I'll give my last minute to Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's so kind of you.

I just need a couple of seconds. With respect to the comments made by Mr. Burrows, I just want to ask a last question about defining responsibilities and working with emergency service providers, etc. In my view, this is what this bill is actually doing. I'm not expert when it comes to that line of work. I'm just here to help govern and put legislation forward. So I'll ask the expert we have with us, Mr. Lowry.

Mr. Lowry, do you see this legislation as a mechanism or a tool for you to actually do your job a lot better?

• (0855)

Mr. Michael Lowry: As I mentioned earlier, the amendments do not directly impact Western Canada Marine Response, but we do feel they clarify and improve the ability of the Coast Guard to respond with authority and leadership to incidents on the coast. We feel that's a net positive.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Great. Thank you, Mr. Liepert.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We'll go on to Mr. Rogers.

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

I have a question for Ecojustice, in particular, pertaining to the east coast of the country and the right whales. I sit on the fisheries committee as well. We've heard from many witnesses from the fishery, the shipping industry, the tourism industry, and whale watching operations and so on about the impact of the legislation or the measures taken by DFO to protect right whales on the east coast. They've been fairly significant. The result has been great in terms of protecting the whales. I guess we have had no loss of whales in 2018, after a disastrous 2017.

I want to ask Ecojustice whether you think the measures taken were stringent enough. Should the same procedures be applied in 2019? In your opinion, will the cumulative effect of all of the legislation or the measures they've put in place protect the right whales going forward?

Ms. Margot Venton: I think the evidence, the outcome of the measures put in place in response to the volume of ship strikes and entanglements in 2017, going from quite a large number, a very significant percentage of the global population, dying in Canadian waters to no whales dying, speaks for itself. My understanding is that there is an ongoing discussion about how we can modify the orders that have been issued with respect to fishing and shipping to ensure that they are responding to our evolving information and understanding. That is why I think it's really important to introduce the power to have interim orders into the Canada Shipping Act for environmental purposes. You can see that you can tailor them, alter them and amend them in a way that is much more challenging to do through the regulatory process.

Whether the orders go forward next year in exactly the same way they have in 2018 I believe is the subject of a very complex discussion and consultation with multiple stakeholders on the east coast. I'm not going to offer an opinion on how that's going to land. I think it's a really good illustration of how using notices to shipping and fisheries orders, which are themselves interim orders, can be a balanced decision-making process but with a regulatory backstop to make sure that hard decisions that need to be made are made. We see that the outcome of this has been that no whales have died in 2018.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you very much.

From the shipping industry perspective, what's your opinion on what was done on the east coast of the country?

Mr. Bruce Burrows: That's a very good question, and I have quite a few opinions, but let me be very brief. I'm picking up on Mr. Hardie's earlier comment. He was quite right that we have to be careful with interim orders and so on. There could be damage from too broad an application of rapid intervention. In fact, that was the case with the whales. The government, in its haste, had to contort itself like a cirque du soleil gymnast to find a fit for some regulation, and the application was too broad because there wasn't proper science-based consultation.

All the lanes were affected in a way that was really inappropriate initially, and that affected a lot of communities along the north shore, where we had to change schedules. We do a lot of community service, in people and goods, to maintain connections, because it's a very remote part of the country, and it was not applied appropriately. That is a good example of what not to do.

We finally did have a result that was clearly beneficial. After lots of consideration, I think we still have an interim order, a notice, that's not quite appropriate for next year. Hopefully there'll be some further modification.

• (0900)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Churence Rogers: That's fine, Madam Chair.

I just wanted to focus on the east coast for now and the impact of the regulations.

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux, did you have some remarks for the committee?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be brief.

We've just heard testimony here today about how rapid this consultation has or hasn't been, and the scope of the omnibus bill. I've counted the time. We've had one hour of testimony. It was one hour with the officials. We then had 20 minutes of questions with stakeholders and then this hour here with stakeholders. That's an hour and 20 minutes of consultation with stakeholders when it comes to this bill, and it's a significant bill.

Let's keep in line with what happens at the finance committee when they have the officials there in front of them. It's in public. There's a lot of back and forth in a transparent manner. That's typical of what happens at the finance committee, and we should also do the same here at the transportation and infrastructure committee.

We have the next 45 minutes. Instead of going in camera, I move that we remain in public. I put that motion before the committee.

I'd like to ask for a recorded vote this time around.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux has asked that we go in public, rather than in camera, for further discussion on Bill C-86. It's a recorded vote.

(Motion negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

Again, to our folks from British Columbia, thanks for being up so early this morning, and have a wonderful day.

We will suspend for a few moments for our witnesses to leave.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

● (0940)

The Chair: I am calling our meeting back to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this is a briefing on the status report on phase 1 of the new infrastructure plan.

Our witnesses for this next hour are from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Welcome to you all.

Yves Giroux, Parliamentary Budget Officer, welcome. We're very happy to have you with us today.

Jason Jacques is chief financial officer and senior director of costing and budgetary analysis. That's a long title. Diarra Sourang is the financial analyst. Thank you all very much for being here today.

I'm going to open up the floor to Mr. Giroux. The committee has lots of questions. Thank you very much.

Mr. Yves Giroux (Parliamentary Budget Officer, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer): Good morning, Madam Chair, vice-chair, and members of the committee.

Before I start, I would like to apologize for my intrusion while you were in camera. There was absolutely no sign outside and I didn't want to be late and so I entered the room. I'm sorry about that. I didn't want to listen to any secrets you might have been discussing.

● (0945)

The Chair: It was extremely confidential.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ron Liepert: It would have been very disappointing for you.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yves Giroux: That's not a good way to start my seven-year mandate.

Thank you for inviting the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer to appear before you today to discuss our latest report on phase 1 of the infrastructure plan, released in August, and to provide you with an update following our March 2018 report.

With me today, I have Jason Jacques, senior director, and Diarra Sourang, a financial analyst in my office.

In May 2018, the PBO sent information requests to the 11 federal departments and agencies responsible for implementing phase 1 of the \$14.4 billion investing in Canada plan, also known by its acronym IICP. Federal organizations responded in June and July 2018, identifying total planned spending of \$13.7 billion over eight years. The gap of \$700 million between the original budget and current planned spending is partially attributable to a recent government decision to transfer \$200 million in spending from phase 1 to phase 2 of the investing in Canada plan. It's also due to incomplete reporting by some federal departments, namely, Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs.

[Translation]

Consistent with our previous findings, federal infrastructure spending continues to be delayed compared to the original Budget 2016 timeline.

In March 2018, my predecessor estimated that planned spending in the first two years of Phase 1 of the Investing in Canada Plan would total \$6.2 billion. The actual amount was revised to \$6.5 billion, but this compares unfavourably to the original \$10.2 billion in Budget 2016.

The spending delays are largely attributable to implementation delays by provincial and municipal governments. The federal government can only spend money as fast as the provincial government and municipal governments.

Monitoring by the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer of provincial capital spending indicates that there have been significant downward revisions between what provinces originally said they would spend and what they actually spent. This suggests federal funding, rather than being purely incremental, will at least in part replace provincial and municipal infrastructure funding.

Based on my office's updated monitoring data, we now believe that phase 1 infrastructure investment in 2017-2018 increased gross domestic product by between 0.13% and 0.16% and created between 9,700 and 11,600 jobs.

[English]

My colleagues and I will be happy to respond to your questions regarding our report and any other analysis from the PBO.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

On to Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to all three of you for being here and for recently testifying at the Senate transportation and infrastructure committee. We saw a lot of that testimony and we'd love to get some of it on the record here in the House of Commons as well.

I have just two quick questions for you before we get into some of the bigger questions. You've indicated in your report and in previous testimony that between 9,700 and 11,600 jobs were created. Can you indicate if those are part-time, full-time or temporary jobs that were created?

Mr. Yves Giroux: These are on a full-time equivalent basis. There might be some part-time jobs in these numbers, but we have converted them into full-time equivalents, so these would be full-time jobs. Of course, if they are part-time jobs, they're converted to a full-time basis.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Okay, like on an hourly basis. Thank you.

Also, this report is about phase 1, and phase 2 is the longer approach. It's the 10-year plan. Is that something you plan to do a yearly update on at your office, as opposed to you, at the end of 10 years, suddenly being facing a bunch of projects and you to try to figure them out? What has been communicated to you, I guess, or what is your intent for phase 2?

• (0950)

Mr. Yves Giroux: My intent, given the amounts that are at stake, would be to provide regular updates. I haven't decided yet whether it will be semi-annually or once a year. I'm open to suggestions depending on the interest of parliamentarians in that, but given the amount at stake, it would be at the very least an annual update.

We're talking about well over a hundred billion dollars over a 10-year period. Given that these are very significant amounts, personally I think it warrants at least annual updates, but again, depending on parliamentarians' interest, it could be more frequent. Personally, I think Canadians—and parliamentarians, of course—deserve to have regular updates about this plan.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I think that's absolutely appropriate. Anecdotally to you, Mr. Giroux, I'd say that it would be appropriate at least per year.

Your critique of the current phase 1 of the plan, including your opening comments of your Senate testimony, is about how provincial and municipal governments can spend.... Can you go into details on why they aren't investing the money right now? We hear time and time again, particularly from our municipal counterparts, that infrastructure is lagging in this country. I'm curious if in your investigation you've determined why that has happened.

Mr. Yves Giroux: It varies significantly across jurisdictions. In some instances, there are labour shortages that make it more difficult to invest quickly and promptly. In other instances, it's probably a lack of identified projects that are shovel ready, to use a widely known expression. It also speaks to the fact that some jurisdictions are financially constrained and it's not always easy for them to match dollar for dollar what the federal government is investing, especially when we—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Excuse me, if I could just pause on that point. There are five pillars that the federal government has identified. In terms of not matching dollar for dollar, is it because those pillars aren't necessarily encompassing what the municipalities want to do at the end of the day? Are they not being lined up directly with those pillars of infrastructure investment?

Mr. Yves Giroux: I wouldn't venture on that specifically, because there are a number of programs. I would keep my remarks probably at a higher level and more general in saying that it's probably a lack of funding. We've seen that through an absence of evidence of any incrementality in the federal funding. As I said in my opening remarks, our data to date suggests that the federal funding has displaced provincial and municipal funding to a large extent, rather than generating additional investment. To me, that speaks to financial constraints at the municipal and provincial levels.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: If the program were structured similarly to the gas tax fund, I would note that we haven't heard too much criticism of it. There are 18 criteria for investments under the gas tax

fund. If those types of criteria were in place, would that be more helpful to these municipalities and provinces?

Mr. Yves Giroux: It would certainly be easier for municipalities and provinces if they got some transfers similar to the gas tax fund's, which they wouldn't have to match. In essence, it would be free money for them. The fewer conditions attached—especially with cost matching—the easier it is for other levels of government to spend, obviously.

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

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

You noted that the impact in 2017-18 was an increase in GDP of between 0.13% and 0.16%. In an economy of \$2 trillion—help me with the math here—what's the actual dollar value of that lift?

• (0955)

Mr. Yves Giroux: Would that be \$20 billion?

Mr. Jason Jacques (Chief Financial Officer and Senior Director, Costing and Budgetary Analysis, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer): No. It would be about \$3.5 billion.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Does that account for the multiplier effect of the dollars going in?

Mr. Yves Giroux: Yes, and that multiplier effect is relatively small because the economy is running at or slightly above capacity. There's no slack in the economy for these investments to pick up, so the multiplier effect in these instances is quite small.

Mr. Ken Hardie: It's interesting. If you step back and kind of look at the macroeconomics of this, notwithstanding the fact that we have this enormous infrastructure deficit in the country, it doesn't sound as though the country was actually ready for the magnitude of this kind of investment.

Mr. Yves Giroux: The fact that provinces and municipalities are not incrementally spending and, to a large extent, not matching dollar for dollar but rather displacing provincial and municipal funding suggests that there might be a lack of shovel-ready projects. More likely, there may be financial constraints at the municipal and federal levels that prevent them from matching this funding or increasing the funding that they would otherwise have devoted. The evidence so far shows that federal funding has displaced provincial and municipal funding to a large extent, so I'm not sure if there's a lack of projects.

As you said, we hear a lot that the infrastructure in this country desperately needs investment, and we see that. For any of us who drive or take public transit, there is more than anecdotal evidence that suggests that roads are in need of repair and public transit needs improvement, yet we don't necessarily see the results fully reflected.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Being shovel ready means things like preliminary engineering have been done so that they're actually ready to put the money to work. Perhaps it's a capacity issue in many municipalities, that they simply don't have that kind of capability just sitting there waiting for a government program to come along. You also mentioned labour shortages, and again, with record-low unemployment, that has to be a factor as well.

This leads to a couple of thoughts, which may take us beyond where your focus was. Should we, for instance, as a government, look at increasing the percentage of the total project costs that our contribution can cover, expanding what's allowable, or, for the longer term, should we start looking at complementary improvements to the municipal ability to raise money so that they in fact are ready to take advantage of programs like this when they come along?

Mr. Yves Giroux: That's something that the government could consider. I don't think I'm in the best position to speak on that, but that's a policy decision the government could indeed make.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Similarly, if we are looking at labour shortages, does that not perhaps speak to a better strategy for getting underemployed people—and I'm thinking particularly of indigenous people—more involved in the economy? Should we be looking very specifically at our immigration strategy to ensure that we are getting the people coming to Canada with the skills that we need to actually fill the jobs?

We've heard a statistic that there are 114,000 jobs going wanting in Quebec right now. That suggests that the immigration strategy should be part of what it takes to balance this engine off so that it's running efficiently, as well as being more inclusive in some underemployed communities.

Mr. Yves Giroux: Yes, and when I said there are labour shortages, that's something that is well documented. There are not that many ways to solve such a situation. Tapping into under-represented groups, you mentioned one, namely indigenous people, and there are older workers, disabled persons and the immigrant population are the obvious ways to address labour shortages.

You mentioned unemployment being at record lows. That's true. Also, the employment rate is not at record highs but it's quite high, and higher than in the United States. That's the share of the population of working age that has a job. That suggests there is not that much slack in the labour force, which leads to labour shortages.

There is room to do better, especially for under-represented groups that still have employment rates below the average and unemployment rates above the average. There is indeed room for improvement in this area.

• (1000)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Sansoucy, welcome.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Giroux, I would like to thank your team for these two status reports. As you pointed out, the need for infrastructure is great. The communities we represent have high expectations. Most of Canada's

population lives in major centres, but the communities we represent are often small. In my case, 22 of the 25 municipalities that I represent have populations under 5,000.

One thing the government did to help small municipalities with populations under 5,000 was to provide for a federal contribution of up to 60% for infrastructure projects. However, in the implementation of phase 1 of the most recent agreement between Canada and Quebec, for example, only one of the programs has a federal contribution of 60%. The contribution is 40% for all the other programs.

If the federal contribution was 60% and the provincial contribution was 33%, the smallest municipalities would only be responsible for 7% of the cost. According to what I have seen, this would result in projects that would otherwise not go ahead given that municipalities cannot cover 33% of the cost.

Based on your analysis, do you believe that this would be a way to expedite the project implementation process?

Mr. Yves Giroux: I do not know if it would speed things up significantly, but this contribution would definitely make things easier for municipalities. In fact, I believe that this would actually help the process because municipalities would have to pay less out of their own coffers.

If the federal government covers a larger portion of infrastructure expenditures, municipalities will certainly be more likely to fund a smaller portion of the projects. Therefore, this should generate more projects and probably do so more quickly. There would not be much of a difference in regions experiencing labour shortages, but it would really make things easier for municipalities if their contribution was reduced.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: With respect to the study of your status report on phase 1, the committee heard that small municipalities had problems with their internal resources.

In the municipalities that I represent, the chief administrative officer is responsible for the funding applications, welcomes visitors, answers the phone, drafts the minutes of the last council meeting and prepares the next agenda, among other things. It is therefore difficult for these municipalities to benefit from a program with complex criteria, particularly when they lack the resources to properly identify their needs, obtain the expertise they require and complete documents on time.

Would you say that this complex process is one of the reasons why small municipalities have difficulty accessing these funds? Could this also explain the implementation delays?

Mr. Yves Giroux: It cannot be denied that such complex measures as accountability, which are imposed on municipalities, are completely justified, in my view. They are asked to submit detailed information for a project to be approved and this creates a far greater burden for small municipalities.

That said, the federal government faces the same dilemma when dealing with indigenous communities, for example. In some cases, there are programs to help indigenous communities increase their capacity in that regard.

It is easy to envisage federal or provincial assistance for municipalities. This would help them acquire the capacity, with their staff or third parties, to meet the infrastructure program criteria. The example you gave is probably quite common. Many municipalities and governments definitely find themselves in the same situation. It is the norm for small organizations to have one person who performs many roles.

I have a great deal of empathy for the chief administrative officers of small municipalities. They have to meet a set of criteria, fill out many documents, collect information, and liaise with elected officials and public servants at various levels of government. That is probably an important factor in the delays experienced or the time taken by certain municipalities to meet the requirements.

• (1005)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

You mentioned that the amount of \$247 million will be transferred from phase 1 to phase 2. We know that the need for phase 1 projects is great. Many mayors in my riding have asked me when they will receive funding for water, wastewater and sewer systems, which were funded in phase 1.

According to your information, could amounts transferred to phase 2 be allocated to projects that were actually eligible under phase 1?

[English]

Mr. Jason Jacques: The short answer is yes. With respect to the precise amount of money, it's \$247.5 million that's being transferred for a specific project in Manitoba, but all of the assurances that we've been provided with by Infrastructure Canada indicate that the overall spending envelope will remain unchanged.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

On we go to Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Madam Chair, please note that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, Mr. Sikand.

Your reports on infrastructure spending mainly focus on Budget 2016 measures. Yet, Budget 2017 provided for more long-term funding and bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories.

Does your modelling focus on the impact of overall infrastructure spending as opposed to the impact of only a few measures?

Mr. Yves Giroux: Are you referring to Budget 2017 investments or all investments? With regard to modelling, we have measures that let us determine the impact of the suite of infrastructure programs. I do not believe that our model is suitable for each individual program because some are quite large and others much smaller. It would be difficult to measure the annual impact, for example, of the \$30 million Canada Cultural Spaces Fund. Our model accounts for all infrastructure spending.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: All right, thank you.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada mentioned several times that infrastructure spending contributes to Canada's economic growth.

Can you tell us how these federal investments directly or indirectly contribute to economic growth? Can you provide concrete examples of this?

Mr. Yves Giroux: There are several concrete examples of how investments contribute to economic growth.

First, there are the direct effects, which I mentioned in my opening remarks. For example, the construction or acquisition of infrastructure generates employment and economic activity.

There is another aspect, which is more difficult to measure and which is identified more in the long term: infrastructure investments facilitate economic activity. Take the example of Ottawa's light rail line, which will pass right under our feet. It will make it easier for people to travel in the Ottawa area, which will make it easier for people to work without having to go into debt to buy a vehicle.

Another example is the construction of a bridge, which will help a manufacturer with sales and exports. Or, water treatment infrastructure that gives people access to good quality drinking water. This would also benefit companies that use water in their production process by giving them access to normal and reliable quantities of potable water. Wastewater treatment plants result in a healthier environment.

These are some examples of how infrastructure investments facilitate economic growth.

Another fairly obvious example is Montreal's Champlain Bridge. The flow of people and goods travelling between the South Shore and the Island of Montreal creates a bottleneck. Building a better bridge, which does not run the risk of crumbling, facilitates the flow of goods and provides some assurances to businesses to that effect.

• (1010)

[English]

The Chair: You have two minutes, Mr. Sikand.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you. I'll just ask one question.

In August 2018, in the report titled, "Status Report on Phase 1 of the Investing in Canada Plan", the PBO indicated that the infrastructure spending delays were largely attributable to implementation delays by the provincial governments.

What can the federal government do to help alleviate these delays?

Mr. Yves Giroux: I think the government can assist municipalities and provincial governments in developing capacity, and that relates to an answer I gave Madame Sansoucy.

There's a level of assistance that could be provided in developing capacity at the provincial and municipal levels. I think there could be better planning at the federal level. It's well understood that when you try to invest massively—and I think it's significant investments that we're talking about here—there are always delays.

It's a bit like HR. You try to—

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Sorry, I'm going to jump in, because I have limited time and it's the same answer.

If I were to rephrase that to ask, generally how do we get all the money that we're spending to translate to a streamlined version to have shovels in the ground, would that change your answer at all?

Mr. Yves Giroux: No, it wouldn't change my answer.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now, on to Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I was surprised when you referenced in your comments the delays and some of the reasons outlined for them. From my municipal background, I know that for years we've been lobbying hard for major infrastructure spending programs. I'm surprised to learn that the money is not being spent as quickly as anticipated.

When I talk to mayors and councillors in my riding, many of them are in very small towns, some with 500 people or fewer, and no large town is bigger than 10,000, they talk about how they've applied for funding for infrastructure programs for waste water, roads and those kinds of things, and it seems that they're waiting for long periods of time for responses. Some of that I know we can attribute to the provincial government, because it's all channelled through municipal affairs in a province.

I talk about the cost-shared ratios with municipalities, yet when the information hits their desk from the provinces, I see some discrepancies.

Do you monitor whether provinces are following the conditions outlined in the bilateral agreements for cost-shared ratios?

Mr. Yves Giroux: We don't monitor whether provinces are following the rules in the agreements that Infrastructure Canada establishes with them. It is more the role of Infrastructure Canada to ensure that provinces and municipalities abide by the terms of the agreements that the federal government has signed with provinces and municipalities. Our role has more to do with the spending at an aggregate level, whether it's being provided or spent at the rhythm or pace the government has set and whether the outcomes are as expected.

When it comes to auditing the results or whether or not the rules have been followed, that's within the mandate of Infrastructure Canada and ultimately the Auditor General.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Okay.

The other big concern around infrastructure spending has to do with waste-water treatment facilities. I was the mayor of a small town of 1,200 people, and one of the earlier requests we put out was to get information about treating waste water, which has to be done

by 2020 for high-risk systems, by 2030 for medium-risk systems, and so on, as outlined in the regulations.

One of the earlier requests we submitted to some engineering firms ended up with a price tag of \$4 million to \$5 million, which is a significant amount of money for a small community with a very limited tax base.

One of the challenges I keep hearing about from the municipal sector is how to access federal funding programs to help them meet these waste-water requirements. I suggest to them that they think about the gas tax fund, which is intended for these kinds of projects.

Are there any other suggestions arising from the bilateral agreements that have been signed with provinces as to where some of these municipalities might go for a funding program? Is there any particular fund they should be examining and applying for?

• (1015)

Mr. Yves Giroux: There are so many programs under the investing in Canada plan and the infrastructure plan. I have a list here on a bigger than legal-sized piece of paper, so I'm sure there is at least one program.

Not being an infrastructure specialist myself, I'll ask my colleagues whether they have ideas as to which specific program such a project could be funded under.

Diarra or Jason.

Mr. Jason Jacques: To Mr. Giroux's point, as part of phase 1 and phase 2, there are 35 discrete programs around infrastructure that have been implemented by the federal government, and there are at least 10, or roughly a dozen, under the pre-2016 programs. That gets you nearly 50 federal infrastructure programs. Amongst those 50 programs, beyond the gas tax, there's probably one that will meet municipalities' needs for water and waste water.

Mr. Churence Rogers: My recommendation to municipalities, then, would be to deal directly with their provincial municipal affairs departments on those issues if they were to try to seek out funding, because as Ms. Sansoucy said, capacity in staffing, and so on, is an issue in some of these small municipalities.

What about in terms of finding out which program might fit their particular needs, which direction would be best for them to go?

Mr. Yves Giroux: They could probably talk to their excellent member of Parliament—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yves Giroux:—but that's not something that's very helpful to you. They could certainly get in touch with officials from Infrastructure Canada. They have a very good grasp of all of the programs under the department's purview. There's an existing program in this list for water and waste-water infrastructure, pre-2016. It's \$204 million per year, ongoing. There are a number of other programs that could have a waste-water component.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I really appreciate the information. I asked the question directly this morning, because sometimes this goes around in circles and becomes frustrating when you try to deal with the municipalities and the provinces.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers, I'm sorry, but your time is up.

Mr. Giroux, I wonder if you could supply the committee with a copy of your list of all the various programs that you're referencing to.

Mr. Yves Giroux: Yes, with great pleasure.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'd also encourage them to contact the official opposition, which will fight hard for them in the communities if their member of Parliament isn't doing so.

I'll get back to my questions. In response to an earlier question, you mentioned the labour shortages in the country. Have you done an analysis, or is there one available, that breaks down by region the impact of the labour shortages on these projects?

Mr. Yves Giroux: No, we haven't done that analysis by region. My comments about labour shortages were more related to our work on the overall economy. We haven't done an analysis of the impact of labour shortages on infrastructure projects in the regions.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: It was clear in your initial report that, and it still sounds like, Indigenous Services and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs didn't provide the details on infrastructure spending. Have you since received this information?

• (1020)

Mr. Jason Jacques: Yes. Subsequent to our appearance before the Senate Committee when we were asked the very same question, very quickly after that the two government departments furnished us with the data.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Will you encompass that in part of this initial report? You have the information now, so what happens to it?

Mr. Jason Jacques: It's a great question. We will be incorporating that data in subsequent reports. In looking at the data they provided us, we used a modelling approach to estimate the planned spending by those two government departments. I would say that, by and large, our estimates were generally consistent with what they provided to us.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: It was consistent?

Mr. Jason Jacques: Yes, generally.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'd be curious to see that at some point. I don't know if it's going to be on your website, or if you could send it to us, or how that would work.

Mr. Jason Jacques: We can certainly provide that data to the committee.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you.

The Prime Minister often has said that his infrastructure plan is to "create jobs, grow the economy, and put more money in Canadians' pockets—not in a decade, but right away." That's a direct quote from him.

I'm curious as to your assessment of that. Is it doing what was promised, particularly in terms of the GDP growth rates that are aren't being met as part of the promise?

Mr. Yves Giroux: On the estimates we have come up with in our report for increases in GDP and the number of jobs, if you do simple math and divide the number of jobs created by the investments in

infrastructure, it comes up to a very expensive per job cost. The immediate stimulative effect is not that great, because the government is injecting money into an economy that's already running at full capacity. What this does is that it just creates overheating in the economy. Therefore, the timing might not be the best if the goal is to stimulate the economy immediately; it's just putting even more fire in an economy that's not red hot but operating at full capacity. While it can be helpful for longer term growth, the immediate impact is not to stimulate growth; it's to provoke inflation.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'll give my last minute to Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you very much.

The budgeting process by government, especially for infrastructure, has to be based on a coordinated effort between municipalities and the federal government. In this case, just make the assessment how many dollars you need to spend for how long and how quickly you can do that. Usually municipalities, when they respond, they do so on the basis of their having projects ready to go, but they're just lacking the funds, so where's the gap here?

I mean, the GDP growth is about one-third of what's been projected. The money has not been spent because there's a lack of projects, or lack of understanding, or the readiness of the provincial or the municipal governments is not at the level that the federal government provided for.

If I understand any of that, I would say that the projects being presented have not been fulfilled, or the federal government has not communicated or made a correct assessment to put that budget properly in place. If it did, you wouldn't end up with this gap or the overheated economy, as you just suggested. Can you help us somehow understand that?

Mr. Yves Giroux: I think multiple factors are at play. One is the way that Infrastructure Canada disburses funds. They disburse funds differently, depending on which projects are being undertaken. In some instances, I believe they pay at the advancement of the work. For others, a significant portion of the projects is paid only when they get a bill, and sometimes municipalities and provinces send a bill very late in the process. It can lead to disbursement by the federal government that are quite late in the process.

Nonetheless, I think the more fundamental issue with shared federal-provincial-municipal infrastructure funding is that it imposes a burden on municipalities and provinces that can be financially constraining, as some of you know. You can probably see it in some of your ridings. The cost-sharing imposes a burden on municipalities and provinces that not all of them are ready to absorb and face. The fact that it has to be cost shared, I think leads to delays in many instances, .

Also probably a couple of municipalities and provinces claim to have lots of needs, but they don't all have projects that are ready. Even though they have needs, they're not in a position to start the projects as quickly as they claim when they finally find with the money.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Congratulations and thank you, you guys. I know you guys had your hands full with this one, not only internally but also in partnership with the provinces and municipalities.

But let's not make any mistake about it. This is creating work. It's creating a higher GDP. Most importantly, it's alleviating a lot of pressure on the property taxpayers, and the water/waste-water ratepayers at the local level, which I'm most interested in. So when we look at whether the program this lends itself to, or if it's the pollution pricing program that we're now introducing in the provinces, it basically alleviates what is otherwise defaulted to the property taxpayer, and that's infrastructure, for whatever reason. Whether it's climate-related or it's age-related, regardless, the bottom line is that we're putting funding forward in different envelopes.

Coming from my former life as a mayor, one of the things I try to establish, over and above the gas tax, is another consistent funding envelope that lends itself to community strategies or community improvement plans. As you know, community improvement plans can run into many millions. I don't think anybody expects to get a successful application for \$40 million for a city of about 20,000 people—sometimes less, sometimes more.

Will there be an opportunity, or can we recommend an opportunity, to have a sustainable funding envelope very similar to the gas tax that aligns with community improvement plans that can then be funded over, say, a five- or ten-year period? That would leverage more funds from the private sector, from the feds, province and, of course, the municipalities, giving the municipalities more credibility to contribute right away to get that immediate impact, while long term, getting the entire project, the entire community improvement plans, completed.

The reason I ask is that they can leverage your green light, your okay to the program, by simply debenturing the project over a 10- to 20-year, or maybe even a 30-year, time frame, whereby your contribution in response to that successful application could fund that debenture over that time. Although interest will have to be paid, it still gives that opportunity to get the project done, to alleviate the pressure on property taxpayers and water/waste-water ratepayers, and to leverage monies that would otherwise not be recognized. Does that opportunity present itself?

Mr. Yves Giroux: I'm sure there's an opportunity to propose such a program, but the decision as to whether this program, or the program you suggested, would be in the best interest, or align with the government's priorities, is up to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, or the Minister of Infrastructure. This proposal should be made to them. I cannot comment on it, given my role.

Mr. Vance Badawey: The reason I asked you the question is that you're somewhat the referee here, the umpire, the person who scrutinizes, to some extent, the whole process—and, of course, we want to make sure the process is credible.

I'll ask the question this way. When you look at the processes that are happening right now, do you find that's being accomplished? Moving forward, do you think we can be consistent with the current model to then move forward over the course of the next five, 10, 15 years?

I'll give you a caveat to that. The big debate right now is carbon pricing, the pollution pricing, and the whole concept behind that is very simple. Everybody's making a big deal out of something that, quite frankly, is very simple. We're giving money back to the property taxpayers for something they're already paying for, namely, climate-related infrastructure. It's there. They're paying for it through their property taxes. All we're doing is trying to give it back, whether it through the provinces or directly.

At the end of the day, and moving forward and seeing more of an emphasis being placed on that, do you think we're going in the right direction? Do you think what we're doing, the model that we have right now, can be carried on for the next five, 10, 15 years?

Mr. Yves Giroux: I think there are probably two things the government wants to accomplish. It's saying that it wants to stimulate the economy and have long-term growth, but at the same time it also wants to help municipalities and provinces fund infrastructure programs. I'm not sure it's doing both very well, to be honest. We can do good projects and fund good projects. We can also relieve some of the pressure on provinces and municipalities, but trying to do both at the same time is a bit difficult.

Right now the government seems to be focused on its message that it's stimulating growth and providing good infrastructure for future growth. We're seeing that it's probably doing that, but it's also relieving some of the pressure on provinces and municipalities, and we see that from the lack of incrementality. In my opinion, the government should probably be honest in saying that it wants to relieve some of the pressure on municipalities and provinces, and not just be stimulating the economy.

• (1030)

Mr. Vance Badawey: Because it's doing both.

Mr. Yves Giroux: Yes.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We have Mr. Jeneroux for five minutes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Do you have a breakdown of the status of projects? Which ones have shovels in the ground, which ones are complete, and which ones have construction yet to begin on?

Ms. Diarra Sourang (Financial Analyst, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer): Actually, Infrastructure Canada has put that information on its website. You have access to the projects that are ongoing and are being funded, and the status with regard to what funding has to be distributed to them.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: It's all over the place on the website, as I'm sure you know.

You're nodding, Mr. Giroux.

Did you do something comprehensive with that? Do you have something you could submit to us that is better than that?

Ms. Diarra Sourang: At the moment, we don't, but it is something we could look into.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Wonderful. Thank you.

Do you know which provinces are holding up their commitments and why? I know we hear a lot from Alberta. They're holding up their commitments, or they haven't been spending a lot of the infrastructure money. I'm curious whether you have done an assessment as to why.

Ms. Diarra Sourang: Actually, since the investing in Canada plan started, spending delays are mostly attributable to four provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Wonderful.

It's interesting the governments that are in place in those provinces.

Lastly, on the process around accessing the money, again, it's a bit of a complicated process. Perhaps you wouldn't mind, Mr. Giroux or Ms. Sourang, providing how provinces and municipalities go about getting this money, and what you've learned in the process of doing that report.

Mr. Yves Giroux: That may be better answered by Infrastructure Canada, as you'd probably get a more accurate answer from them because of the multiplicity of programs, each with its own terms and conditions. I know, generally speaking, how it works, but I'm sure if I give an answer, somebody will be back to say it's inaccurate because this or that program has different terms and conditions.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I certainly wouldn't say that, Mr. Giroux.

Mr. Yves Giroux: Thank you.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I do think it's important in the overall process of accessing the funds, because a lot of the delays are being looked at in the municipalities and provinces. However, you speak with a number of the mayors there and they say, "I just don't fit in to one of these areas. I don't know how to access these areas." So I think, when speaking about the delays, it's part of that larger conversation as to where the municipalities and provinces fit and how they know about accessing that money.

The Chair: Is there any response?

Mr. Yves Giroux: Somebody said it's all over the place, and when you look at the infrastructure programs, there are so many that one can easily get the impression that they're all over the place. There's a program for virtually everything. Looking at the database of projects being funded, there is a radio communication system for public transit or a bus system. Is that really an infrastructure program? There are lots of projects that get funded. Bus shelters, for example, for a public transit system are indeed infrastructure, but is that really what Canadians have in mind when they think about infrastructure spending? I'm not sure.

There are a lot of programs, and lots of projects qualify. It's very difficult to have one clear answer to that question.

• (1035)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We move on to Ms. Sansoucy for three minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

In our study, we referred to sustainable infrastructure. In my riding, Les Carrières de Saint-Dominique, which is much more than

just a quarry, has significant environmental concerns. It spends a lot on research and development and works mainly with researchers at the École de technologie supérieure.

The General Manager, Claude Dupuis, was telling me that researchers have developed new products to build more sustainable roads. For example, a road built at a cost of \$5 million to last 10 years could be built for \$6 million and last 20 years.

Having worked at the municipal level, I know that the lowest bidder is awarded the contract because of the criteria. Sustainable infrastructure projects that cost a little more are rejected because of the criteria.

With respect to the budget, do you think that it would be a good idea for the federal government to establish sustainability criteria? Sustainable infrastructure can cost more in the short term, but in the medium to long term, it is more affordable. I think it is a good idea, but I would like to know what you think.

Mr. Yves Giroux: It is not just a good idea, it is key. There should be a cost-benefit analysis for every project.

When we ask people about their objectives and performance measurement strategies, we do not get many answers. A great deal of weight is given to the financing criteria and funds disbursement, but there seem to be significant gaps when it comes to measuring the objectives to be attained.

Objectives must be established when choosing the projects to be financed, but there does not seem to be evidence or data collected to establish which objectives were attained, if there were any. If that were the case, there would be greater uptake of the most viable and best projects.

In your example, this would ensure funding for projects that, at first glance, are a little more expensive but are more cost effective.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

May I ask one last question?

[English]

The Chair: Be very quick.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: I would like to know how we can help you do an even better job.

It was reported that 50% of the funds was spent by March, and 95% by August. However, in my opinion, 45% of the funds were not spent between March and August.

How can we ensure that you have the tools you need to help you give parliamentarians a true sense of the situation in real time?

Mr. Yves Giroux: We have a good relationship with the people at Infrastructure Canada. I believe that the department does everything it can to help us.

Some other departments are responsible for smaller projects, in keeping with their total budget, and for which there may be less interest. However, I believe that the people at Infrastructure Canada do a good job of providing the information they have available.

What needs to be improved is the establishment of clear objectives and performance measurement strategies. Do they have an idea of what they want to achieve by investing \$500 million, \$800 million or \$3 million in a project? What is the final objective. Few people think about this or, at least, few people report it.

When a municipality or province wants to invest \$500 million in a project, it certainly has an objective, but there is no clear accountability.

[English]

Sorry, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Hardie, you have a quick question that you wanted to get—

• (1040)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Actually, I have a whole bunch of quick questions, but I'll try to—

The Chair: Be quick, because you don't have that much time.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I know.

We went into this considering that this program was not a stimulus program, for the reasons you've already noted. The economy was percolating along quite well.

For public consumption, we talk about infrastructure, but I think we need to include the word “amenities” in there. A bus shelter may be nice to have in Vancouver in February, but it's really darned important here in Ottawa, for instance. Right? Leading from that, has there been an attempt to monetize the overall returns?

You quoted a figure on the cost per job, and I presume that's direct employment from people wielding those shovels in the ground. There are obviously spinoff jobs for the suppliers and everybody else who is feeding the project.

However, has there also ever been an attempt to monetize the other long-tailed returns—quality of life issues, environmental benefits, etc.—to get a full picture of the returns that we're really going to see from these investments?

Mr. Yves Giroux: That would be of great interest to many people, but that is something I think would be premature try to estimate while the projects are still being completed. Indeed, some of them are just starting to be completed. Given the long time horizon of several of the infrastructure programs, it would be very difficult to come up with a precise estimate of that. In my opinion, it would be very difficult to estimate these measures.

The measures you mentioned would be some of the main benefits of investing in infrastructure, or amenities, as you mentioned. It's very difficult to quantify the value of a bus shelter, for example, for somebody who just passes by in Ottawa in January. But for the person who is in that bus shelter during a snowstorm, it has immense value. It's very difficult to quantify the direct and indirect benefits of this, but it's obvious that there are benefits. I haven't tried to do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming, and congratulations on your position, as well. I expect that we will hear a fair amount from you in the years to come.

We will suspend momentarily while we set up our video conference for our next segment.

• (1040)

(Pause)

• (1045)

The Chair: By video conference, we have the Comité Anti Pollution des Avions de Longueuil, and Johanne Domingue. We also have Paul-Yanic Laquerre as an individual by video conference, and I believe Raymond Prince is also with us. From the Markland Wood Homeowners Association, we have Saulius Brikis, director, and Ilona Maziarczyk, also a director.

Welcome to all of you. I guess we should start with our video conferencing. Comité Anti Pollution des Avions de Longueuil, would you like to start?

• (1050)

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Domingue (President, Comité antipollution des avions de Longueuil): Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have already submitted a brief clearly explaining the problems that have arisen over the past 10 years. Today, I would like to help you understand some of them.

The Saint-Hubert airport has four flight schools. To provide some context, I will tell you that there were as many as 61,000 local flights in 2005, and 109,000 in 2009. Consequently, the noise level above homes increased significantly.

Given that this airport's runway is located in a densely populated area, the residents took action. We should not forget that small aircraft such as the Cessna 150 and Cessna 152, which are not equipped with noise suppressors, use this airport. There is a large number of local flights and more than 90,000 itinerant flights. The total number of flights is close to 199,000. For some years, this airport has held the Canadian record for the number of small aircraft flights and local flights.

Residents swung into action in 2009. It is impossible and unthinkable for residents to tolerate this level of aircraft movement. It is truly abusive and excessive.

We met with the elected officials of our town councils and held a public consultation in 2010, in which members of the community were very involved. We received 69 briefs, 200 solutions and 49 recommendations. One year later, despite all of this, the residents had to apply to the class action assistance fund in order to launch a class action suit as the matter was not resolved.

It is difficult for us, the residents, to come to grips with the fact that heavy trucks cannot drive through our neighbourhood whereas an aircraft can fly above our homes. There can be an aircraft taking off every 60 seconds. It is very noisy and we have been told that this represents almost 70 decibels every three minutes. We often say that it is like lawnmowers circling above our homes. It is difficult to understand that there has been no change in the policy concerning aircraft noise levels, whereas there have been noise regulations for our roads since 1970.

This brings me to the subject of quality of life. People who live near airports often feel like second-class citizens. They cannot enjoy a normal evening like everyone else. Cargo aircraft begin flying over homes at 4 a.m. At about 5 a.m., 6 a.m. and 7 a.m., there are itinerant flights headed towards the regions. Between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m., there are local flights by small aircraft that transport packages. We are woken up starting at 4 a.m. and constantly bombarded by the noise.

This noise level has an effect on health, which has been documented by the Montérégie Public Health Department. It found that the noise is real and that the citizens of Saint-Hubert are at greater risk. However, the noise levels were measured in decibels A, or dB(A), whereas the Public Health Department has informed us that the noise level should instead be measured in L_{Amax} . I will not go into the details because it takes a certain expertise, and mine is limited to the noise I experience.

Transport Canada uses a Noise Exposure Forecast system, or NEF, to measure noise levels, whereas the Public Health Department and Health Canada use different systems. Therefore, it is difficult for us to get a good night's sleep that is not disturbed by noise pollution in light of the different assessments.

Over the years, we redoubled our efforts. We realized that several organizations falling under different jurisdictions are responsible for this matter. We spoke to the people at NAV CANADA, Transport Canada, municipalities, the Public Health Department and Health Canada, but none of these organizations seems to have sole responsibility for this matter. We still do not know the exact noise level that we are exposed to and who can solve this problem. The departments work in silos, and there does not seem to be the will to solve it. Consequently, we, the citizens, are trying to solve it, but we have addressed only a very small part of the problem.

• (1055)

From a legal perspective, Transport Canada must revise its policies because the situation is becoming very difficult for us. For example, a Superior Court ruling ordered the airport manager to issue a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen), but Transport Canada had this requirement overturned.

We have been told that this falls under a certain jurisdiction and that it cannot be changed. All we want is a noise policy. We understand that the approval of aircraft noise suppressors or safety issues must be Transport Canada's responsibility. However, it should be possible for a noise policy to be managed locally. The only response we have had to date is that it cannot be done.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Domingue. We'll leave some time for some questions from the committee members.

On to whoever would like to go first, Mr. Brikis or Ms. Maziarczyk.

Ms. Ilona Maziarczyk (Director, Markland Wood Homeowners Association): Madam Chair, committee members, my name is Ilona Maziarczyk and beside me is Saulius Brikis. We represent the Markland Wood Homeowners Association, a 60-year-old community organization. We are a residential community located

five kilometres south of Pearson airport in the riding of Etobicoke Centre.

Our community is made up of 1,200 houses and 1,400 rental and condo apartments. There are four schools that attract students from all over, and 2,200 students spend each and every school day in these schools. It's important to note that Markland Wood was founded in 1960. At that time, the airport was just Malton airport, long before it expanded into present-day Pearson. Pearson is an east-west airport, but it has two north-south runways, and they both produce traffic that passes directly over us.

How are we impacted by aircraft noise? Although the north-south runways are used less frequently than the east-west ones, the impact on our community five kilometres from the airport is significant due to aircraft speed and altitudes as low as a thousand feet. Noise interrupts sleep in residential areas. The preferential runway system means there is no night traffic south of the airport, except when weather makes it necessary. However, pilots and carriers request the use of our runways at night, and Nav Canada grants those requests routinely. The GTAA investigates breaches and many are sent to Transport Canada for penalties, with little consequence.

We've come to ask you to do three things: one, to ensure there is no increase in traffic on Pearson's north-south runways, no change whatsoever except to reduce traffic on both; two, to eliminate night flights, both scheduled and pilot-requested; and three, to remedy the lack of government oversight of noise.

Weather patterns make Pearson an east-west airport. Nav Canada built the 2012 STAR system based on this fact. The GTAA states that the north-south runways are only used—whether day or night—when needed for weather or maintenance reasons. Furthermore, at night there are strict rules for using only “preferential runways”, which exclude flights over Markland, except due to weather, but pilots ask to use these runways and Nav Canada's air traffic controllers give them permission.

This traffic impacts residents south of the airport due to the extremely low altitude and slow aircraft speed. In the first six months of 2018, over 28,000 noise complaints were filed in the riding of Etobicoke Centre. Traffic on the north-south runways is shared between the two, based on safety, runway length and aircraft size. We must reduce traffic on both north-south runways.

Aviation noise is linked to significant health effects. Night flights are particularly bad because they contribute to sleep deprivation. Airports claim that night flights are needed to maintain essential deliveries, but cargo flights account for only 12% of Pearson's night flights.

Airports and cities thrive even when night flights are banned, as they now are in Frankfurt and Zurich, and will soon be at Heathrow. Where there is political will, there is a way. Pearson used to have an overnight curfew; now there is none. Night flights are scheduled to increase. This is unacceptable. Eliminate night flights.

The lack of government oversight of GTAA is unprecedented internationally. The Transportation Safety Board oversees air safety in Canada, but there's no independent oversight of noise. Other countries have strong independent bodies to protect their citizens. The GTAA is not accountable. Their ground lease gives the federal government some authority. The lease stipulates that there must be a noise forum, but it has become essentially a mouthpiece for the GTAA.

We need an independent and empowered ombudsman. Lack of government oversight impacts all airport communities. Don't promote growth at the expense of health. Healthy citizens are the real economic engines of our country.

In summary, do not allow an increase on north-south runways, eliminate all night flights and appoint an ombudsman.

Thank you very much.

• (1100)

The Chair: We will go back to our teleconference.

Mr. Laquerre, would you please go forward for five minutes?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul-Yanic Laquerre (As an Individual): I would like to thank the members of this committee for giving me the opportunity to provide my testimony.

In June 2017, my wife and I acquired a property in the Vimont district of Laval. We used to live in Montreal's Ahuntsic district, and our decision to move was largely motivated by the unbearable noise of planes flying low over our home.

To our dismay, we soon discovered after a complaint to the public relations department of Aéroports de Montréal (ADM) that our new property, which is 31.2 km from the airport, is located directly under the air corridor used by aircraft landing on runways 24 when the winds are from the southwest.

[*English*]

The Chair: Could you slow down a wee bit? The translator is having a hard time keeping up. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul-Yanic Laquerre: Thank you, but I'm trying to stay within my five-minute time limit. I should also remind you that I sent in my speech ahead of time.

I am tabling here as exhibit 1 the maps provided by ADM indicating the position of our residence and the flight path in question. Since southwest winds prevail in the metropolitan area about 70% of the time, we actually find ourselves with the same aircraft flying over our heads as in Montreal, at only a slightly higher altitude.

We initially estimated at 30 to 40 the number of planes flying over our home every day. However, an exact count conducted over the

holidays in early August revealed that it is closer to 70 to 80 aircraft per day, with a frequency of one per minute at certain peak times. Needless to say, it is almost impossible to spend a summer day in the backyard without hearing the constant drone of aircraft, with the only lull occurring between 1:00 and 5:30 in the morning. The noise is audible inside the house, even with the windows shut. We get woken up at 5:30 a.m. on a fairly regular basis, as we were two days ago.

Faced with the apathy and indifference of ADM and NAV CANADA, we decided to contact the Minister of Transport to have him deal with these two bodies. I would like to table a copy of our letter to him as exhibit 2. In that letter, we pointed out that the number of flights has doubled since the 1960s and is expected to continue increasing at a rate of 2.5% per year beyond 2040. We also proposed that the minister ask NAV CANADA to move the air corridors such that aircraft would fly over highways and uninhabited areas, which are just a few hundred metres south or east of the current corridors.

We additionally mentioned the fact that pilots can currently descend by levels to 3,000 feet, 27 nautical miles from the runway threshold, at a very noisy engine speed equivalent to 85% of maximum speed. The alternative would be to adopt the continuous descent approach method by flying at 9,000 feet at 42 nautical miles and beginning their final descent about 30 miles from the airport, almost gliding the final distance, at a minimal engine speed, significantly reducing noise emission. CDA-type procedures are already in place in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Paris and London.

However, in his October 2 response, which I would like to table as exhibit 3, Minister Garneau denied any responsibility pursuant to the 1992 delegation of authority agreement between Transport Canada and ADM, as well as the Civil Air Navigation Services Commercialization Act. Yet, above and beyond the legal relationship under which ADM is still accountable to the Minister of Transport, the minister himself, as an elected official and member of the government, has a moral responsibility to represent Canadians who are struggling with noise problems that could affect their well-being. Indeed, members of the government establish the rules of law that govern us, and the decision to entrust the management of air corridors to NAV CANADA ultimately rests with the government and the Minister of Transport.

It is just not right that in a situation involving public nuisance, citizens have to deal with a private profit-driven company such as ADM, which denies the existence of a noise problem—as evidenced by the quote from its VP of public affairs, Christiane Beaulieu, that appeared in a 2012 article in the *Journal de Montréal*, which I am tabling as exhibit 4—and which itself delegates its responsibility to a third party such as NAV CANADA, whose last concern is the well-being of citizens, despite its commitments in the 2015 Airspace Change Communications and Consultation Protocol. There is no justification for the fact that the only recourse available to citizens is to take legal action, as the group Les Pollués de Montréal-Trudeau recently did.

The decision by previous governments to transfer part of their responsibility for aeronautical noise pollution to local authorities was an error made in good faith. This experience has nevertheless been harmful to Canadians. Given this failure, the government must review the National Airports Policy and require ADM and NAV CANADA to take into account the evolution in metropolitan land use in order to change the practices perpetuated over the past 40 years with total disregard for urbanization.

Thank you for your attention.

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go on to Mr. Prince.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Prince (As an Individual): Good morning.

I want to start by congratulating the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for addressing this problem, which affects hundreds of thousands of people. Kudos to you.

I also want to thank my MP, Angelo Iacono, for inviting me to this meeting.

My testimony is quite specific and personal, like Mr. Laquerre's. We've gone through a similar experience.

I lived in Ahuntsic until last year. Until 2012, I never had any problems with aircraft noise overhead. But in 2012, NAV CANADA suddenly changed its air corridors over Montreal. For me, it was hell. All of a sudden, I was seeing and hearing an unending stream of planes passing overhead, day and night, first at 3,500 feet or 3,000 feet, and later at 2,500 feet. In my yard, I had to shout at my wife to make myself heard, even if she was just three or four feet away.

I installed a noise measurement station, which calculated that in July 2015 alone, there were 3,700 aircraft overflights above my residence, generating noise in excess of 55 decibels, including 650 flights in the middle of the night. Yet my property was 10 kilometres from the airport as the crow flies. After five years of that hell, though I am a city-dweller and I love Montreal, I did what I never thought I would: I moved to the suburbs, to Laval, to regain peace and quiet.

Before buying a house in Auteuil, I spent a whole summer carefully studying the district, and it was perfect. When there were visible overflights, they were at an altitude of 5,000 or 6,000 feet. They made only a bit of noise, like the buzzing of a mosquito. I bought the property in the fall of 2016 and moved there in May 2017. When I arrived, I noticed that the planes were now passing over my new house at 3,000 to 4,000 feet, and there was a pretty steady flow. You can imagine my dismay. The kicker is that when those aircraft fly over my house, they are in the landing process, and they have at least 27 kilometres to go, as the crow flies, before they touch down on the runway. Mr. Laquerre mentioned a distance of 32 kilometres, so let's say it's about 30 kilometres. How can planes

be making so much noise over my home when they are 30 kilometres away from landing on the runway?

I'm certain the Government of Canada had good intentions when it supported the advent of Aéroports de Montréal, or ADM, and NAV CANADA. I remember statements indicating that Canada was the first country to privatize its skies, in 1996. It was a bold move, but with the blunders we have seen, we now know it was an unfortunate decision.

I spent huge amounts of time between 2012 and 2017 trying to get ADM and NAV CANADA to restore quality of life to thousands of Montreal residents, without success. I worked with the group Les Pollués de Montréal-Trudeau. I have come to the realization that those organizations are now being driven by the lure of money, to the detriment of our environment.

It's not the increase in air traffic that is causing problems, it's the fact that aircraft are flying lower than before. That enables the air carriers to save on fuel, a fact confirmed by Minister Garneau's office. Their excuse for making our lives hell is that they are generating less greenhouse gas. What a crazy pretext.

They also confirmed that lining up planes to land one after another or to follow the same flight path means fewer employees are needed in the control tower, saving NAV CANADA money. The carriers behind NAV CANADA have become so powerful that they dictate the rules. Both ADM and NAV CANADA say nothing has changed in a century. How can I, as an ordinary citizen, prove the contrary?

For example, NAV CANADA violated its June 2015 communications and consultation protocol when the altitude of flights over Laval was subsequently lowered to less than 4,000 feet. There should have been public consultations when this was done, but there were none. Who can confirm this state of affairs for me if NAV CANADA doesn't? And what should the penalty be for NAV CANADA? The protocol doesn't even specify any penalties.

ADM refuses to provide us with any statistics on the percentage of flights from the west or south that pass over Laval. Why do they fly over us and not over the south shore once in a while? Why don't they land from the west? ADM continually cites wind direction as the reason, but we can see that's not always true.

• (1110)

[English]

The Chair: Please close, Mr. Prince.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Prince: ADM is not subject to the Access to Information Act or to review by the Auditor General of Canada. Its daily noise data are kept hidden. It decides on exceptions to night take-offs and landings.

If Minister Garneau really cares about our well-being, Transport Canada must take back ownership of Canada's skies or, at the very least, rein in the organizations to which the government has entrusted them. After all, who do the skies belong to?

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you to all of our witnesses.

Mr. Iacono, go ahead for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I especially want to thank my two constituents for taking the time to give us a detailed explanation of what they are going through right now.

Last summer, I told you I would do everything in my power as an MP to invite you here to Ottawa so you could explain your situation properly.

There is still a fundamental question to be answered. The skies are there for planes to fly through, as we've said. What would you say is the most important thing we could do to reduce the noise and give you some peace and quiet? What's the easiest action we could tell Transport Canada and Nav Canada to take?

Mr. Prince, Mr. Laquerre, when I was listening to your testimony, I realized you've become experts in this area. I know this is a very emotional subject for you both. What solution would you suggest to us? This committee's goal is to propose solutions to our department in the hope that you can get some peace and quiet.

Mr. Raymond Prince: First of all, you should institute a real curfew, from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., so that people can get eight hours of sleep. That would be the first thing to do. You need to declare a moratorium immediately, before you start studying this issue. Next, you should look at flight altitudes.

I mentioned oversight. In Europe, there are independent bodies that handle public complaints and fine carriers for violating curfews or noise standards. That would be the first thing to do after the curfew comes into effect. An organization like that would study the corridors and examine landing or take-off techniques that are used around the world to reduce the impact of noise on people living in residential areas in cities and municipalities. I think that's the first thing that should be done.

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

Mr. Laquerre, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Paul-Yanic Laquerre: Mr. Iacono, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your dedication to this issue. I also want to thank you for giving us the chance to take part in today's meeting.

I see two solutions. The first would be to change the air corridors. In the map attached to the letter I sent to Mr. Garneau, you can see the Laval area and Highway 19. Right now, planes are flying over the urbanized area west of Highway 19. But what do we see east of Highway 19? The Duvernay woods and farmland. We also see that Highway 440 follows a line running almost exactly east-west within the air corridor of planes coming into Montreal. Nav Canada isn't taking into account the urbanization that has happened, for better or for worse, over the past 40 years. Residential developments have been built, but Nav Canada isn't taking them into account and is maintaining the same air corridors that were in place in the 1970s.

Aircraft are passing directly over the large urbanized area west of Highway 19 and straight through the middle of the entire urbanized area north of Highway 440. However, it would be possible to take the existence of Highway 440 and the farmland into account and move the corridor by just a few hundred metres, or at least try to find a solution. That doesn't seem to be happening, since Nav Canada has never done it.

• (1115)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: What's your second solution?

Mr. Paul-Yanic Laquerre: In my speech, I talked about the continuous descent approach method. As you know, the Montreal airport is surrounded by non-directional radio beacons that pilots use as navigational aids.

I'm not an aeronautics expert, but from what I understand, the situation right now is that a plane landing in Montreal can descend to 4,000 feet once it passes the beacon known as Maire, which is located 42 nautical miles from the runway. It will generally hit an altitude 3,000 feet when it's 27 nautical miles from the runway threshold, well before reaching the Sloka and Lonna beacons, which are 14 and 13 nautical miles from the runway. The plane's engine is then operating at 85% of maximum speed, which is very noisy. If the CDA method were adopted, planes would have to fly over the Maire beacon at 9,000 feet, which is much higher, and then start their final descent at about 30,000 feet, gliding the final distance with the engine at idle.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Laquerre, how did you come up with all that? What are you basing this on?

Mr. Paul-Yanic Laquerre: I'm not an aeronautics expert. I based this on the testimony of two experts, who testified in a report that was sent to a former Liberal MP who drafted an investigation report. These two aeronautics experts are Cyril Charpentier, a Boeing 747 captain, and Yan Burelle.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: My time is up, but it would be great if you could forward those two documents to us.

Mr. Paul-Yanic Laquerre: Sure. They're also attached to the report written by MP Marlene Jennings, entitled "Airport Noise Management: Challenges and Recommendations".

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I'm going to make a couple of comments. We have some very passionate witnesses here today, and so I want to get a couple of things on the record and get some responses to them.

First of all, I represent a riding in Calgary. Our riding is a good half an hour's drive from the airport. Yet, within the last three years, because they have put in a new runway in Calgary, my area is now in a corridor that never used to be there. I get complaints similar to what many of you are registering today. This is something I'm very familiar with, not your particular situations, but a similar situation in Calgary.

The difficulty we have, however, is that as elected officials, we have to trust those with the expertise, and I would hope that's what Nav Canada has. We have a very safe environment for our aircraft. That isn't to say that we can't question them, and we have.

The reality also is that we're a bit of a victim of our own success in Canada. In my particular case in Calgary, the number of flights has literally tripled in the last few years. People want to fly. They want to fly with convenient schedules.

The second thing is that we've become a society that no longer goes to shopping malls. We like to shop online. We want those goods the next morning. These are all the things I think we have to take into account when we're doing this study.

The final comment I will make, which our first witness talked about, is on pilot training. We are told that in Canada today, we have a shortage of some 3,000 pilots. The airline industries are that short of pilots. If they are able to fill those roles, there is going to be a lot more training required, and I guess you have to do it where there's a take-off and landing strip.

With all of the comments I've made, I don't think any of us should be under the illusion that this is a problem that's going to go away in the very near future.

I wanted to make some of those comments to see if anybody had any response to them.

• (1120)

The Chair: Would you like to—?

Mr. Ron Liepert: How do we deal with the fact that customers want to order online? They want their product tomorrow morning. That means we have to have overnight flights.

We have to balance what our constituents as customers want with the delicacy of the problems that all of you are experiencing.

The Chair: Would you like to make a comment in response to Mr. Liepert?

Ms. Iona Maziarzyk: Thank you for your comments, but this isn't our area of expertise. Obviously we're just here because of the issues that have happened over the years and continue.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I would like you to be in our position and help us, because we're not experts either.

Ms. Iona Maziarzyk: Okay.

You said people want to fly with convenient schedules. What's so convenient about flying at night? Why do two or three planes have to come in from Cuba at 2 o'clock in the morning?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Don't ask me.

Ms. Iona Maziarzyk: Well, that's the question.

Why can't there be larger planes? Consolidate. Why can't the industry, from one standpoint the travel industry, create larger planes and consolidate the three little ones into one big one? And do it during the day, so they don't have to come in at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning from Las Vegas and Cuba and wherever else down south.

With regard to shopping online, what's the issue? Why does it have to be within 24 hours? Really, that cargo is only 12% of the flights coming into Pearson at this point in time. That's the statistic.

Mr. Ron Liepert: One of the remedies that were suggested to us was that cargo traffic at Pearson could be diverted to Hamilton, as an example. That is a suggestion. In cities like Calgary, that's not an option, because there is no "Hamilton" within proximity of Calgary. I guess what I'm trying to just lay on the table is that, as elected officials, we represent everyone, and these are the kinds of things we have to balance off. We hear all the time about balancing off the economy with the environment. One of the things we've been told is that by some of these consolidated routes that have come forward, there's a significant reduction in greenhouse gas and emissions. Again, those are the kinds of balances that I think we have to take into account.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We move now to to Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank all our witnesses for being here today. Since I have so many questions and so little time, I'm going to ask my questions quickly and hope for brief answers.

Mrs. Domingue, in your presentation, you referred to a document prepared by the Montérégie public health department that demonstrates the harm of noise pollution. However, departmental witnesses who testified before us said no such study had been done.

Was this study carried out by the provincial government? Do you have the study at your disposal? If so, could you send it to us?

Mrs. Johanne Domingue: Yes, the study was presented during the public consultation, because an analysis had been done based on data from noise stations as part of Dessau Environnement's noise study. The Montérégie public health department analyzed the documentation and then presented it and indicated that there was a real province-wide risk. The document is included in the brief. I can give it to you later.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you very much.

I have two more questions for you. You mentioned flight schools. We're going to come back to that subject later for another study, which will be about flight training schools. I hope we'll get to hear from you again, especially with regard to noise pollution issues. You said that these small planes are flying without hush kits. That's certainly not because hush kits don't exist.

Has Transport Canada abdicated its responsibility to enforce these regulations?

• (1125)

Mrs. Johanne Domingue: Hush kits have been certified, but the construction process is still under way. We sent letters to multiple ministers of transport asking them to at least certify hush kits, but without success. It took a class action for hush kits to be certified, because Transport Canada didn't want to do it.

Mr. Robert Aubin: That is absolutely unbelievable. I'll have to stop you there because I have a lot more questions to get through, and we'll probably get a chance to talk about small aircraft later during our study on flight schools. Our study is about large airports.

What impact does Montreal's Trudeau airport have on noise in Saint-Hubert?

Mrs. Johanne Domingue: Saint-Hubert Airport in Longueuil recently announced that it could accommodate large carriers, and that stirred up major concerns. There was already a noise problem with the small aircraft, and it will only get worse if planes from Montreal's Trudeau Airport are sent to Saint-Hubert Airport. Don't forget, Saint-Hubert is Montreal's satellite airport. If Montreal doesn't have enough room, it sends planes to Saint-Hubert Airport.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Even at night?

Mrs. Johanne Domingue: It can happen any time of day, any day of the week. There are no restrictions and no curfews at Saint-Hubert Airport. Touch-and-go landings at the flight schools are the only time when there are restrictions. So users have free rein to use the airport.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

I have a quick question for Mrs. Maziarczyk.

You suggested creating an independent ombudsman. Does that mean you think the airports' consultation process with citizen committees isn't working?

Mr. Saulius Brikis (Director, Markland Wood Homeowners Association): It's important to understand that the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, or GTAA, is semi-independent. It's growing without strict supervision from the Government of Canada. An agreement between the City of Toronto and the GTAA was proposed in 2000. That agreement would have required the airport to obey certain rules regarding high noise levels, pollution and land use. But the agreement was never signed, and we don't know why. Neither party was interested in becoming good neighbours.

Business at the airport has picked up very quickly, leading to major public health and operational safety issues. In 2012 and 2017, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada investigated 25 close calls there. This is problematic. That's why we are calling for an ombudsman.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, and I'm sorry to have to rush you.

Is my time up?

[English]

The Chair: You have a minute left.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I'll be quick.

I have a personal question for Mr. Prince and Mr. Laquerre. You don't have to answer if you don't want to, but your answer would give us some insight. Both of you moved away. Did you have to sell your old houses at a loss? Are neighbourhoods being ruined because people are selling up at a loss so they can move away?

Mr. Paul-Yanic Laquerre: The flyover issue isn't being talked about at the moment. I think it's a taboo subject. To answer your

question, when I bought my new property, nobody mentioned that we were in an air corridor. That question seems to be out of bounds.

To come back to something you mentioned earlier, I can tell you that in 2014, the public health department of the Montreal health and social services agency issued a public health notice about the health risks associated with noise from aircraft movements at Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport. I can send you a copy if you're interested.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Definitely. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Can you please send that off to us?

Mr. Wrzesnewszkyj, go ahead for five minutes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewszkyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just before the clock starts, I have a quick question. There was an undertaking by Transport Canada in a previous meeting to provide the documentation that would give us clarity on who authorized the increase in the budget for night flights at the GTAA, whether it was the minister or Transport Canada itself. I was just curious as to whether we have received the documentation that will provide that clarity.

• (1130)

The Chair: We have not received that as of yet.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewszkyj: Thank you.

I'll go now to my questions.

Monsieur Prince, you talked about the billions of dollars of profits that seems to be guiding decision-making. We heard from Nav Canada. They used an ethical fig leaf to say they're reducing their carbon footprint, but it appears that the naked truth of it is that it's all about billions of dollars of profits. From the Toronto end, I understand that, without having consulted neighbourhoods, which they were obligated to do, they changed the Montreal/Toronto flight path at the Toronto end to reduce the flights by one minute, which provided great savings for the airlines that regularly fly that corridor but also impacted the neighbourhoods in the Don Valley region of Toronto. All of a sudden, neighbourhoods that didn't have noise were impacted.

The fig leaf they're using is that this reduces carbon emissions, but the airlines are very happy with the profits. Municipalities restrict heavy trucks through residential neighbourhoods, especially at night. They haven't abdicated their responsibilities. It's the federal government's responsibility with regard to airspace.

Perhaps you'd like to make a comment about Nav Canada and its arm's-length relationship with Transport Canada, the government. How often do they consult with your neighbourhoods when they make these decisions that impact your quality of life?

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Prince: As I mentioned, I noticed that flight altitudes have been lowered in Laval without any consultation, which goes against the protocol.

Nav Canada's 2012 annual report said that the new corridors would save customers of the Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal airports \$7 billion in fuel costs by 2020. I take it that in 2016, the carriers that control Nav Canada were looking for ways to maximize their profits. Did they lower flight altitudes over Laval, near Montreal, or maybe in Toronto as well, so they could save on fuel? They claim they're reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, but that excuse doesn't hold water, because they're still polluting. They're patting themselves on the back for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but they're still inflicting noise pollution on me.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

[English]

Thank you for that.

So there was no consultation—

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Prince: No.

[English]

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:—just as there was no consultation at the other end, in Toronto.

I'd like to speak to that particular issue of lack of accountability, whether it's NavCan or the GTAA. They have this so-called CENAC noise committee. Where do those meetings take place, in what building?

Mr. Saulius Brikis: They take place on the main airport, at the GTAA head offices generally.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: They hold the meetings in their offices. Who runs the meetings?

Mr. Saulius Brikis: It's hosted by the airport authority, with representatives from local municipal governments.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: The actual authority is the federal government, but this CENAC committee—this noise committee they've structured—runs the meetings in its offices, and there's once again a fig leaf of municipal councillors who actually have no say politically in the decision-making process. It appears that it's a facade.

Of course, they're the ones generating the noise, so they should provide the resources, but there should be an arm's-length noise committee that actually has real say and power.

● (1135)

Mr. Saulius Brikis: I agree. We all know about the health effects of airport noise on the population. An interesting model is that the City of Toronto has some type of health oversight over Billy Bishop airport. It's been in place for several years, yet there's no type of health-related oversight over the GTAA.

For a measure of accountability to start the accountability process for the GTAA, perhaps we should get the public health departments involved in providing oversight over noise emissions of the GTAA. That would be a start. Other implementations such as land use safety can come into place at a later time, but using public health agencies would be my suggestion.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much to the witnesses. We hear your frustration. If you could send in any of your documentation to the clerk for circulation to all committee members, we would very much appreciate it. Thank you all very much for taking the time to come today. We will be continuing this study at several other meetings.

Thank you to the members. We've been here since eight o'clock this morning, so it's been a very long day. Thanks to everybody for their patience.

I move that the meeting be adjourned.

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