



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

TRAN • NUMBER 125 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, December 6, 2018

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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I'm calling to order meeting 125 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing a study of the mandate of the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

With us today we have the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, and from the Office of Infrastructure Canada, Kelly Gillis, Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Communities. Welcome to you both. We've been waiting anxiously for your appearance, so thank you for coming today.

Minister Champagne, I'll turn it over to you.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Chair, sorry, just as a bit of housekeeping before we get to the minister's much anticipated comments, I'm hoping he'll address in his opening remarks that he wasn't here for the estimates. I know he's here on his mandate letter today, but I just want to make sure we've flagged the fact that most of the time, ministers come for their supplementary estimates as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

Minister Champagne, you have five minutes, please.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a real pleasure to be in front of you and your colleagues today.

It's my first appearance at this committee, but as a start, I am very delighted to be with all of you and to talk about progress in infrastructure. I think, Madam Chair, that infrastructure touches the lives of Canadians in every community, whether urban or rural.

Good morning and thank you for inviting me, members of the committee.

I'm joined by Kelly Gillis, my very able deputy minister, who has been very active on this file to deliver for Canadians.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the outstanding work of my predecessor, Minister Sohi. Minister Sohi was responsible for this file, and we all know he's truly passionate about infrastructure, almost as much as he is about his hometown of Edmonton. He left a

good legacy in the projects and the program. He's been a strong voice for his region, and obviously the province of Alberta, and continues to be in his new portfolio as Minister of Natural Resources.

[Translation]

I would also like to thank my Deputy Minister, and the whole department of Infrastructure Canada for their hard work and dedication over the past three years. Thanks to their continued efforts, we have made enormous progress in delivering modern infrastructure to Canadians everywhere in the country.

[English]

Let me give a brief overview. Since I was appointed Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, I was fortunate enough to see first-hand our investments in infrastructure across the country. I recently attended the groundbreaking for the Port Lands flood protection project in Toronto, which will help transform the Port Lands into beautiful new communities that will be surrounded by parks and green spaces. It will also add affordable housing to the Toronto region.

I also visited the Inuvik wind generation project in the Northwest Territories, which will provide an efficient, reliable and clean source of energy for Inuvik residents. I was pleased that this was the first project under the Arctic energy fund, which is helping to move communities in the north from diesel to renewable energy.

• (0850)

[Translation]

I also visited an underground garage in Montreal that will increase the city's fleet of metro cars, improve the frequency of service, and, of course, support the anticipated growth in ridership on Montreal's public transit.

[English]

Let me briefly touch on a few successes that we've had so far. Our plan of investing \$180 billion over the next decade in infrastructure across the country is truly historic. I am proud of the progress we have made so far and the positive impact it has made on people across the country. The plan is being delivered by 14 federal departments and agencies.

[Translation]

All 70 new programs and initiatives are now launched and more than 32,000 infrastructure projects have already been approved. Nearly all are underway.

[English]

Since Minister Sohi's last appearance at this committee in May, I am pleased to note some of the significant milestones we have achieved together. The first one, which I'm very proud of, is the smart cities challenge. Finalists were announced this summer, and the winners will be announced in late spring 2019.

[Translation]

The Canada Infrastructure Bank announced its first investment, which is \$1.28 billion in the Réseau express métropolitain in Montreal. With this investment, the bank does exactly what it was intended to do: free up grant funding so that we can build more infrastructure for Canadians.

[English]

Despite the fact that very little was done to advance this important project when we formed government, the Gordie Howe international bridge is now finally under way. That is truly historic for Canada. We know the Windsor-Detroit corridor has about 30% of all merchandise trade between Canada and the United States. This project is truly building on our current and future prosperity.

[Translation]

Infrastructure Canada has also signed bilateral agreements with all of the provinces and territories for the next decade. We have already approved funding under these new guidelines for

[English]

the Green Line in Calgary, the Millennium Line extension in British Columbia,

[Translation]

and Azur subway trains for Montreal,

[English]

and the water treatment system in the Comox Valley Regional District in British Columbia.

Lastly, we also launched the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. We've already received a number of applications for funding and are currently reviewing them.

I also had the pleasure to meet with my provincial and territorial counterparts in September. One key item we discussed was how to better match the flow of our funding and our processes with the construction season in the sense that we want to make our intake, review and approval process faster and better, and make sure that our processes, whether federal, provincial or territorial, are in line with the construction season. I have impressed on my colleagues that we need to work diligently on that.

I visited several projects where work is well under way, but the claims for reimbursements have not been submitted, for example the Cherry Street water and lake-filling project in Toronto and the Côte-Vertu garage in Montreal, Quebec. To address this issue, we recently launched a pilot project with Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Alberta to test the effectiveness of a progressive billing approach. We know that Canadians want to see funds that match milestones in projects, a "percentage of completion" type of approach, and we have asked our

colleagues in the provinces to work with us to achieve that outcome as well.

[Translation]

In closing, I would like to thank the committee members for giving me this opportunity to update you. I hope that together, with each member of the committee, we will be able to build 21st-century infrastructures, modern, durable and green, for all Canadians.

Thank you.

• (0855)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Champagne. We appreciate all of your comments, and the fact that you kept them to five minutes so that the committee can ask the umpteen questions they have for you.

Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here today.

Have you heard from stakeholders, who I know you meet with frequently, about the social impacts of male construction workers, specifically in rural areas?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: One group of people I meet most often is construction workers. They are the true heroes of what we're doing. I was just recently on the Champlain Bridge in Montreal. I can say to my colleague that when I met the 1,600 workers who are working seven days a week, day and night, in good and bad weather, I really listened to them. I always made sure to repeat to them that my first priority on every construction site is the health and safety of the people and the benefits to the community in which they work.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I know you know this, Minister, but Montreal is not a rural area. My specific question was about rural areas. The Prime Minister recently made a statement that there are negative social impacts of men, specifically construction workers, in rural areas. I'm wondering if you've heard the same thing.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: The member is right. I was referring to an urban project, but since we have more than 4,000 projects across the country, he would appreciate that I do that not only in urban areas, but also in rural areas. I always engage with workers, making sure I understand about their health and safety and the benefits to the community in which they operate. I was recently with the member at the Fort Edmonton Park extension, and we met with workers and people who are going to be doing the work there, and everywhere they are—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Again, Minister, Edmonton is not a rural area. I'm speaking specifically about rural areas and the Prime Minister's comments. Yes or no, do you agree with the Prime Minister's comments?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I appreciate that Edmonton is not a rural area, just as Montreal is not, but everywhere I go, whether it's rural or urban, I meet with workers and I make sure I listen to them. I engage with them, because they are the true heroes of our infrastructure projects across the country.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: It was a yes or no, Minister. The Prime Minister made a comment this past weekend. Did you agree with his comments?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: As I said, again, my role is to ensure that across the country we build infrastructure for the 21st century that is modern, resilient and green, and obviously the workers across the country, male or female, are key in delivering for Canadians across the country.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'll ask this in a different way, Minister. Does applying the—

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux, I think you've beaten that issue up a little bit.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, it's my time. I'm allowed to ask whatever question I wish during my time.

The Chair: You cannot be repetitive on the same issue.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, I ask you to first of all pause the time, and to quote from which standing order it is that says I'm not allowed to ask a repetitive question.

The Chair: Would you like me to read it?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Please.

The Chair: In *Procedure and Practice*, at pages 1058-9, it's any time that it is "repetitive or are unrelated to the matter before" us. It's the issue of being repetitive. It's the third time that you've tried to get the same question on the table.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: It was the second time, Madam Chair, and I wouldn't say that. I'm asking it in a different way this time.

Allow me to ask the questions, please. We only have six minutes here to ask the questions.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Does applying the gender lens that the Prime Minister refers to then affect infrastructure getting built on time?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I would say that applying a gender lens is key in every program and project that we're delivering. Understanding the impact on different communities and on different people who will be working on our sites is essential—and on the community—so I think it's a great step forward for our country that we take into account the gender lens. Also, as part of the historic \$180-billion infrastructure plan, we have also, as the member knows, not only applied that lens but also put on an environmental lens to understand the impacts of our projects.

The more we understand how to deliver for communities across Canada, I think we're all better as Canadians.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Under your opening comments, Minister, you state that in the Canada Infrastructure Bank you freed up grant

funding. I don't think you necessarily freed it up. I'll give you a chance to rephrase that.

There's the \$5 billion you took from the investing in Canada plan under public transit systems. You took \$5 billion from trade and transportation corridors. You took \$5 billion from green infrastructure projects. There's now \$15 billion that is sitting in the Infrastructure Bank. You've mentioned that you built one project in Montreal, which was a reannouncement of what the Prime Minister announced back in June of 2017.

First, I don't see how that's freeing up money. That's just moving money around. Secondly, the Infrastructure Bank, for which you trumpet so much success in your opening comments, I think across the country, has been referred to as anything but. I've heard it called a disaster and a debacle. I'm hoping you can comment on why this infrastructure money isn't flowing.

Quite frankly, it's not freeing up anything. It's just moving money around at this point.

• (0900)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I'm very happy to answer that question. I think the Infrastructure Bank is another tool in our tool box to deliver better and faster for Canadians.

We obviously don't talk to the same people. I used to be trade minister, and I can tell you that investors around the world were looking to crowd in investment in Canada. For the Infrastructure Bank, like you said, the first project was the REM in Montreal. It was allowed to give a loan to get that project going, which is going to transform public transit in the city.

I can reassure the member that I speak with the CEO of the bank, although it's an independent entity in its management and investment decisions. I talk to the CEO regularly. They are currently looking at more than a few dozen projects. They have had, I would say, hundreds of conversations across the country with community leaders and representatives of territorial and provincial governments.

For me, it's about doing more. It's making sure that we have more money available to deliver across the country. The bank is allowing us, for example—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You're just moving money around, Minister. That's all it is. It's the investing in Canada plan. You've moved money from there to the Infrastructure Bank.

On the REM project, was it or was it not a reannouncement from a previous announcement?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I would say no, and I would correct my colleague in a sense. The fact that the bank has provided the loan is freeing up investments that would be otherwise taken from the public transit allocation that Quebec had.

For me, to have been able to attract investors like the Infrastructure Bank to this project is a great thing. It's going to allow us to do more. I can tell the member that we're looking at interties, and we're looking at other light rail transit systems across the country. I think we should celebrate that. Canada was one of the few G7 countries not having an infrastructure bank—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Nothing is getting built, Minister.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: —and having that is another great tool to deliver for Canadians.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: But nothing's getting built with the Infrastructure Bank, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll move on to Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here this morning.

Minister, first of all, I do have to express my appreciation for the over \$300 million that you have afforded my riding over the past few years, in terms of the infrastructure work that's been done. Of course, that alleviates the financial burden on those who pay property taxes, but also it enhances diverse business planning within many sectors of our business community. In partnership with the business communities, our municipalities are looking at sustainable funding envelopes to satisfy community improvement planning and community improvement strategies but also at aligning those investments for better returns on those investments for, once again, enhancing the overall structure of the community as well as the different sectors that are part of the community.

Mr. Minister, can you speak on some of the sustainable funding envelopes that are being made available for both communities and the businesses within them?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Thank you very much for the question.

What we have done, which is truly transformational in this country, is to provide stability and predictability in the funding for municipalities. The FCM called it a game-changer. I know the member comes from municipal government, so he well understands what it is to be able to plan infrastructure. I keep saying that when we take money and put it in infrastructure, we invest, because by definition, that goes more than a fiscal cycle. It is for 10, 15 or sometimes even 100 years ahead.

I would say that the \$180 billion we have provided is really a game-changer. It's historic in our country. If you look at the stream of investment we have decided on, for me public transit is key. Not only does it afford more mobility so that people can spend more time with their families and friends, since commuting is essential in our communities today, but also the green infrastructure stream is really in line with our values. I think Canadians understand today that we want 21st-century infrastructure, which is green, resilient and

modern. The social stream is allowing us to bring Canadians together in the community centres that people want to see across Canada. Trade and transportation are very much linked to the 1.5 billion consumers that we have access to now through our various trade agreements. Making sure our goods go to market is essential. Finally, the rural and northern communities stream is allowing us to take into account the particular needs of communities across Canada.

I would say to my colleague that, indeed, what we are doing, especially with the integrated bilateral agreement—which provides funding over 10 years to communities, and they understand where we want to invest—is to fix the framework, but we let communities decide what is best for them in terms of specific projects.

● (0905)

Mr. Vance Badawey: With respect to meeting what I call the “triple bottom line”—economy, social, environment—in working with municipalities, do you find that the investments you are making are more from a whole-of-government approach and are not just siloed in different ministries, and that those investments are aligning with strategies coming from, say, the departments of transport, environment, or family and children services, and things of that nature?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Yes, it's key. We have put the framework together, as I said, with objectives such as increasing mobility within communities across Canada and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, but the way to do it...

Phase one of our program was an asset-based program. The second phase is based on outcome. I think the streams we have developed leave all the flexibility for communities to do what's best for them. We're not here pretending that we know—saying that we were recently in Saanich or Inuvik or Norman Wells—what is best for their community. However, what we have done is the framework to allow them to see, with regard to meeting the objectives we have set nationally, what is best to deliver for the people in their community. I would say that all of these projects—which is why I think this committee is essential—are about delivering for people. My mission is to improve the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I was in Inuvik, where we are going to have the first wind project in the Arctic, which is going to remove about three million litres of diesel from use, and thousands of greenhouse gas emissions.

This is truly what we want to do, and obviously my colleague Mr. Badawey understands what it is, because, coming from a municipal government, he knows that our role is to set the policy agenda but to leave the communities to decide what's best for them.

Mr. Vance Badawey: With respect to pollution-related costs, right now municipalities are being defaulted upon with respect to those costs. For example, one-hundred-year storms are now five-year storms, and, therefore, oversize pipes have to be placed in the ground, and the costs are defaulting to those who pay property taxes.

How is your ministry working with the environment ministry to, once again, alleviate a great deal of those costs to the payers of property taxes?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, I'm very happy to have that question. It's right to the point.

That's why we put forward the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. I've always said it's better for us to invest in adapting communities to climate change events, which are more frequent and more severe. We have put \$2 billion aside to really deal with these issues. I always say that either we invest in adaptation or we'll have to invest in recovery. It's better to prevent that, to remove, I would say, the chance that these disasters would affect communities and people.

We know how disastrous that could be. I look at other members who had flooding, for example. In my own region we know the social toll of that is tremendous. Investing in infrastructure that would withstand storm events, for example, is the right way to go, not only to make our country more resilient but also to prevent the harm and the stress that communities that have to live through these disasters from season to season undergo.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Minister, thank you for joining us this morning. I am probably one of the rare opposition MPs to have such close contact with you, since we are from the same region.

It seems to me that I have heard you many times, particularly in our region, speaking in support of VIA Rail's high frequency train, the HFT. Here is my first question. Given the concerns about mobility and reducing greenhouse gases that you were talking about earlier, does your department's philosophy or vision see the HFT as a green infrastructure project?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: My thanks to my colleague, Mr. Aubin. He and I represent much of a major region of Quebec.

The high frequency train has been one of my priorities since I was elected, if not even before. For our region like ours, it is essential in the development of the economy and of recreation and tourism, as well as for labour mobility.

I feel that Mr. Aubin and myself have, in every possible forum, repeated how much the project could make great things happen for the region and even for Quebec. There is often talk about a labour shortage. With a high frequency train between, say, Trois-Rivières,

Montreal and Quebec City, people living in other centres would be able to come and work in ours.

Of course, I feel that the high frequency train is a component in 21st-century smart mobility. If we look at what is happening in a number of cities around the world, we can conclude that this is the kind of project that we want to support. That is why, in its recent statement, VIA Rail announced a massive investment in rolling stock, a vital requirement...

● (0910)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Minister. Unfortunately, I have very little time. I hope that the Minister of Transport will hear your testimony, because it really goes in the direction that everyone is expecting. We are no longer talking about consensus in this matter, we are talking about virtual unanimity.

When we look at the amounts being spent on the REM project in Montreal, for example, and the endless wait for the simple announcement of the government's desire to move forward with the HFT, we get the impression that major cities and regions are treated differently. Is that perception of mine correct?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: As a minister from a region of Quebec, I always energetically stand up for the regions in Quebec and in Canada. I can assure you that we have set aside significant sums in the recent budget, specifically to conduct the studies needed. Of course, building a high frequency train between Quebec City and Windsor requires a certain number of technical and environmental impact studies.

We are certainly going in the right direction, in my view, first investing in rolling stock and then in allocating funds in the budget for the necessary studies. Those are two steps in the right direction.

It must be understood that these are complex projects in terms of engineering and capacity. I feel that the Minister of Transport, you and I have come out in favour of the project, as you heard on stage at the Chambre de commerce et d'industries de Trois-Rivières. In other words, we have to do the studies and everything else that is required so that we have all the information we need to make the right decision.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Minister.

In your answer to a previous question, I heard you talk about the Canada Infrastructure Bank as a means to do more and to do it more quickly. The principle seems commendable, but I feel that the results are debatable, to say the least, since the process is not very quick and very few projects have been funded.

I am really in favour of public financing, because financing by the Infrastructure Bank would eventually result in increased costs being paid by the consumers. In your opinion, should the HFT project be financed by the Infrastructure Bank or from the public purse?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Setting up a new organization like the Canada Infrastructure Bank requires a certain amount of time. Having myself seen Invest in Canada get under way, another agency in the portfolio I was responsible for previously, I know that you always have to create some buzz at the start. Fortunately, a CEO is now in place to make sure that the agency is well managed.

Several dozen discussions are underway around the country specifically to answer that question. This is the kind of project that the Canada Infrastructure Bank could study and, in my opinion, as you recall, it has to do so more quickly. I understand that my colleagues are asking us to do more, and, in Ottawa, I am one of the ministers who is the most anxious to see things move forward quickly. However, these products do present us with a degree of complexity. Because of the confidentiality of the negotiations and discussions under way, you will understand that I cannot talk about the projects under consideration. However, I can assure you that we are monitoring what is happening and that the bank is in the process of analyzing a number of projects all over the country.

Mr. Robert Aubin: However, this year, the bank has asked the government for \$6 million to cover its operating expenses. That does not seem to me like financing a lot of projects or moving forward quickly, or doing more. Moreover, we are still faced with the divide between the scale of the projects financed by the bank and the scale of the projects that the small communities that you and I represent can afford. Is there not a substantial difference between the intentions announced when the bank was created and its accomplishments after three years?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Aubin, to answer your question, I would remind you that establishing a new agency requires some unique expenditures, the cost of premises, for example. I can also tell you that the bank has hired someone to be responsible for investments, and that will, in the coming months and years, mean an increase in the number of projects in which the bank will invest.

I am also very aware that the bank must serve not only urban communities but rural communities as well. That is why we are discussing with the bank projects that would see some northern communities move from diesel to renewable sources of energy.

• (0915)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will move now to Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to pull back a bit for the benefit of the people who might be either listening or watching—this is televised—and talk about the big picture on infrastructure. Back in the mid to late 2000s, the previous Conservative Government rolled out a fairly substantial infrastructure program, and it was in response to the recession. I think the issue there was to get people working and to use the opportunity to get some things built. The side effect was the changing of the environmental regulations, which of course had proven to be an impediment to the pipeline expansions, etc. Then when we came along, we had this \$180-billion infrastructure program at a time when we were coming out of the recession, and in fact we're not even anywhere close to that now. That took a lot of people by surprise, but it seems to me that there are some really fundamental differences in approach, and the kinds of results that we're looking for in the program we have today versus the one that Mr. Harper's government had back 10 years ago.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, I totally agree with my colleague on that. I mean, we faced an era in which there was a decade of underinvestment in infrastructure. Anyone in that field will understand that you then need to invest exponentially. That's why we put together a historic plan of more than \$180 billion to address issues that Canadians watching us would understand. When we're talking about public transit, for example, I think the people who live in urban areas in our country would understand that it was about time we made these historic investments to allow people greater fluidity.

In terms of the big picture, as I always tell my colleagues, infrastructure is key in our country. Modern, resilient green infrastructure will help us attract investment and talent. For me, when we invest in infrastructure, we invest in not only our current prosperity but future prosperity. In terms of our plan, we asked ourselves this: What is one of the biggest challenges we have to tackle as human beings? It's climate change, so when we're building infrastructure, people are watching us. We understand that we cannot do things today the way we did them in 1980. We need to build in a way that will be resilient but also green. Canadians expect this when we are investing in this.

I can give you the example of Saanich. I was in B.C. recently at the Commonwealth pool. They decided to change from fossil fuels to biomass. By doing so, they reduced their energy costs by 90%. That's the type of project we want in communities. You're improving lives and at the same time you're reducing your carbon footprint.

When I think about social infrastructure, as the member from Trois-Rivières was saying before, this is also about making sure.... You know, infrastructure means different things to different people. If you're in an urban area, you may think about a bridge or a road. If you are in a rural community, you may think about a community centre or broadband access. You may think about cellphone coverage. I come from a riding where about half the riding has no cellphone coverage and no Internet coverage.

Obviously, when you talk about infrastructure, it touches the lives of people. When we talk about rural and northern communities and the way we structure it, to the member's point, I can provide another example of why we have a stream that is very specific to rural and northern areas. When I was in Saskatchewan recently, people were telling me that if we gave them the funds to increase, for example, the length of the runway about 200 metres or 300 metres, they could land bigger planes, reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the fewer planes needed, and reduce the price of food by about 50% in northern communities.

That's why we have projects that are tailored to the needs of Canadians across the country.

Mr. Ken Hardie: With respect to the Infrastructure Bank, I have, like some of my colleagues, a municipal background. I worked with the transportation authority in metro Vancouver.

Thank you, by the way, for the funding for our new SkyTrain extensions. We appreciate that very much. It will go right through my community, in fact.

The Infrastructure Bank represents something that I've seen happen before—public-private partnerships where the private sector comes in as another funding partner. To me, that has to alleviate the pressure, first of all, on municipal governments for their share, provincial governments for their share, and it makes the given funding from the federal government go further. Is that a fair assessment?

• (0920)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Totally. As I've said before, the Infrastructure Bank of Canada is there to do more for Canadians. I'm the former trade minister for Canada, and I can tell you that people in the world want to invest in Canada. Why? We have stability, predictability, rule of law and a very inclusive society that cherishes diversity. People want to invest in Canada to help us build the infrastructure that Canadians need.

Exactly as my colleague said, Madam Chair, that's why we created the Infrastructure Bank. It's just like in Australia, for example, where they created a vehicle to make sure they would have a pipeline of projects where they could crowd in the investment. By crowding in the investment, we can free capital to invest in the types of assets that governments need to invest in and that we know the private sectors will not invest in. It frees up capital to do more. The REM is a good example of where you're better to take a loan from the Infrastructure Bank to do that project and free up capital for us to invest in other projects—for example, in this case, in the province of Quebec under the allocation—where we don't want the private sector to invest.

This is really, truly another tool in our tool box. I'm not suggesting in front of members that this will solve every problem. What I'm saying to Canadians is that it's great to have another tool in our tool box. We're in 2018. Modern countries are looking at different ways to provide infrastructure. We know that in OECD countries there's a huge deficit in infrastructure. Every time we invest in infrastructure, we're giving ourselves the means of our dreams. We can attract better investment. We can attract talent. We know that we are facing labour shortages across Canada. We also know that people move to places where you have modern infrastructure, where you have quality of water, where you can have mobility, where you can have community centres, and where you can have green buildings.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Champagne.

We move on to Mr. Iacono.

[*Translation*]

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

Minister, thank you for being here this morning. On October 25, you had the opportunity to update the media on the Champlain Bridge situation. I would like to thank you for the transparency you are showing to Canadians about it.

Can you tell us about the significant steps forward with the work on the Champlain Bridge?

We know that some work cannot be done until the good weather returns. Do we have a timeline for the work that remains to be done until the bridge opens?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: First, Madam Chair, may I thank my colleague Mr. Iacono for that question.

Yes, I was in Montreal recently, in October, to inform the people of Montreal and Quebec about the Champlain Bridge situation.

I explained that the bridge structure would be complete by December 21 at the latest, but that the bridge would open permanently for vehicle traffic in June 2019. The reason is that some work, such as waterproofing the structure and applying asphalt, cannot be done in winter conditions. The waterproofing, for example requires a certain level of humidity and temperature for three consecutive days.

I have always told Montrealers that my priority is the health and safety of the workers. Sixteen hundred people work on that site around the clock, rain or shine.

The project's durability is another priority. This structure is built to be in service for the next 125 years. Clearly, therefore, we want to make sure that the work is done well.

The matter of the timeline is also essential. I have told Montrealers that, if there are deficiencies and delays, there will be consequences. That is the way the contract with the builder is structured.

Mr. Iacono, I can tell you that I will continue to provide Montrealers with information on the exact status, because the infrastructure is important.

More than 60 million people use that corridor each year. If I recall correctly, the value of the goods shipped to the United States over the bridge is more than \$20 billion. The corridor is therefore essential.

As I have always been transparent and open with people, I believe that Montrealers fully understood the situation.

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

I represent the constituency of Alfred-Pellan, located in Laval. I am aware that the realities of urban communities are not the same as those of rural communities, especially in terms of infrastructure. That is why it is critical to understand the infrastructure needs of those communities.

Can you tell us about the efforts being made to support infrastructure projects in small communities and rural communities?

• (0925)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: That somewhat goes back to the question from our colleague, the member for Trois-Rivières.

In the bilateral agreements we have with the provinces, there is a component for rural and northern communities.

The reason why we created a specific program is that we are aware that rural communities, for example, have specific needs.

We also departed from the traditional three-way sharing of the funding between municipalities, provinces and the federal government that was in effect in the past.

For example, if a project is eligible for the infrastructure program for rural and northern communities, and if the local population is under 5,000, the federal government could provide up to 60% of the funding for the infrastructure, the province could assume 33% of the costs, and the community would pay the remaining 7%.

That allows things to be done that would be otherwise difficult to do, given the municipalities' tax base. The program can greatly help small communities in Canada, both in Quebec and in the west, in Alberta, for example. It is one of the programs in which the government has invested \$2 billion, specifically for small communities.

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

In your speech, you mentioned that a pilot project had recently been started with the provinces to test the effectiveness of a progressive billing approach.

Could you give us a little bit more detail about that? What will the effects be? What are the expectations?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Thank you for your question, Mr. Iacono.

At the last federal-provincial-territorial meeting, I raised three issues.

First, we had to make sure that our respective processes, federally, provincially and territorially, align with the construction season. Given that the construction season will not change—it is the same each year—it is up to us to plan our projects so that the workers can do their part during each construction season.

Second, we had to see how we could establish a process to make projects easier to call for, to study, and, of course, to approve. That means we have to work in concert with the provinces and territories to come up with a review process for the easiest and quickest projects.

Third, we had to make sure, as Mr. Iacono mentioned, that we have a billing process that takes into account how projects are moving forward. In some cases, provinces send us invoices when projects are complete.

That is in line with what my colleague Mr. Jeneroux asked me earlier about the impact of the projects. I can give you an example.

The Prime Minister and I went to visit the site at the Côte-Vertu metro station in Montreal. This is a major project for an underground garage for metro cars. I saw about 200 to 300 workers there. I am not an engineer, but I would say that the project is about 70 or 76% complete. The work has been going on for several years. The impact on the economy, the workers and the community is clear to see. However, up to now, the federal government has not spent one dollar on the project, because we have not received any invoices.

So we are trying to come to an agreement with the provinces so that they send us invoices as the projects move along. The federal government can then release the money gradually.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We move on to Mr. Godin. Welcome to our committee, by the way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My greetings to my right honourable colleague, the Minister of Infrastructure. Our constituencies are also adjacent.

So I would like to agree with Mr. Aubin in saying that there is unanimity on the HFT, the high frequency train project in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor, while expressing the hope that service to Portneuf will not be forgotten.

Mr. Minister, earlier you provide an update on the Champlain Bridge. I believe that the Champlain Bridge is really important, and that the people of Montreal, and all Quebecers, look forward to being able to take advantage of that infrastructure.

On November 14, I wrote to you for clearer information and an update on the project. The questions that seem to me very important deal with the costs. Will there be additional costs? Will the penalties for which the consortium is liable be maintained and imposed? What changes have occurred as the process moves to completion?

Just now, you said that they need three days of good temperatures so that the workers, who are working seven days a week, can finish their work properly. This summer has been great for our workers, I feel, and we cannot blame the temperature for the delays. Let's understand that the crane operators' strike lasted six days.

Initially, the bridge was supposed to be open to traffic on December 1. That date was pushed back to December 21, and now the opening has been postponed until the end of June 2019.

Will you make the commitment, before the committee this morning, that Montrealers will be able to use their infrastructure after a perhaps-justified six-month delay? That's the information I would like.

Will you make the commitment that, at the end of June 2019, just before the federal election campaign, the people of Montreal and Quebec will be able to use the infrastructure?

● (0930)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: First, I would like to thank my colleague, Mr. Godin, who is also my riding neighbour, with whom I share a large part of the territory.

I am pleased to talk about the Champlain Bridge and to answer all of my colleague's questions, as I did last time when I provided an update in Montreal.

It is important to note that the Champlain Bridge is one of the largest construction sites in North America, so it is a major project. As the member mentioned, there are more than 1,600 workers working around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In terms of costs, I have always said that, if there are delays, there will be consequences. In conjunction with the announcements I made in Montreal last time, there are currently commercial discussions between the contractor and the Government of Canada.

When the builder informed us, a few weeks before my announcement in Montreal, that it was impossible to do some of the work, I asked for second opinions. I received confirmation that, to do some of the work, a constant temperature and humidity level for three days was required. It is important to understand that the work is being done over the St. Lawrence River.

I would like to remind my colleague that my priority is always the health and safety of the workers. None of the measures we have taken should jeopardize the health and safety of workers.

The durability of the work is another important factor. The bridge is expected to last more than 125 years. We do not want to make any compromises that could affect the durability of the work.

Finally, there is the timeline for the construction of the bridge. I told Montrealers and I am pleased to repeat it to the committee today: the bridge structure will be completed before December 21. I will cross the bridge before December 21 to demonstrate to Montrealers that the structure is complete. Anyway, people can see the progress of the work on satellite photos. However, the bridge will be permanently open to traffic later in June—

Mr. Joël Godin: Unfortunately, I cannot let you finish your answer because my time is limited. I have only one minute left.

I have another very specific question about the bridge. The original contract provided for toll booths, and there are costs associated with those booths.

Can you tell us how much those toll booths would have cost? Does it reduce the bill for Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Since I made that announcement, we have been in commercial discussions with the builder. When the negotiations are completed, I will be transparent, like last time, with Quebecers and the committee by providing them with all the information on the agreement we have reached with the final builder on all the costs of the project.

Mr. Joël Godin: I have another question for you.

With respect to the excise tax, 28 municipalities in my riding are in the process of preparing their budgets and calculating the money they will have available for their activities next year, in 2019. The

Programme de la taxe sur l'essence et de la contribution du Québec 2014-2018 (TECQ) has not yet been renewed. However, it will end on December 31, 2018.

Can the minister assure Quebec municipalities that this program will be renewed?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I can assure my colleague that we will provide him with all the details in writing.

The renewal of this gas tax is in progress. I would be pleased to provide him with all the details in writing to keep him well informed on the matter. He will in turn be able to inform the municipalities in his riding. The gas tax is an important lever for small and large municipalities alike, allowing them to carry out infrastructure projects. I would be happy to provide him with details in writing, which he can then share with the municipalities in his riding.

Mr. Joël Godin: Minister, can you tell me if this program has already been renewed? Can municipalities count on that money?

● (0935)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Municipalities can count on the sustainability of the gas tax program. As for the details, I would be happy to send a letter to the member, providing him and the municipalities in his riding with detailed information.

With your permission, Madam Chair, I will send a letter to the hon. member detailing the amounts that each of the municipalities in his riding will be able to receive.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Would you please send that to the clerk so that all members have an opportunity to review the same information.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Just so I'm clear, Madam Chair, do you want me to provide that information for the gas tax for every member in their riding, or just for that member?

The Chair: Whatever you distribute to one member, we prefer it to be distributed in the same—

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: We'll do that for the member as he asked, and every other member can see it. Perfect.

The Chair: Yes, if the others would like to have it for theirs, they can ask for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Chair, I am not a member of the committee. Would it be possible to have the information forwarded to me?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, we will, Mr. Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Rogers.

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

Welcome, Minister.

I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague, Mr. Sikand.

Mr. Minister, I want to ask specifically about municipal issues. I come from a municipal background from a very small town as a mayor. I've been involved provincially as president of the municipal association and sitting on the FCM board, the federal board. Specifically, I'd like for you to inform the committee about what some of the things are that you're focused on or doing, in trying to assist small towns in rural Canada with their infrastructure needs, specifically things like water, waste water and other issues and challenges that they deal with every day.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I'd like to thank the member. I realize we have a lot of colleagues with a municipal background and that's good.

One of the things we have done is to work with FCM very closely in understanding the needs of municipalities.

As Mr. Rogers knows, I come from a riding that has 34 small municipalities as well, so I really understand the need. That's why I was saying that infrastructure means different things to different people. If you're in an urban area, like in the question before, I can talk about Montreal and the Champlain Bridge, or I can talk about things happening in B.C. or in Alberta in Calgary or Edmonton, but obviously when you're talking, for example, about Newfoundland and Labrador and smaller communities, that's why we tailored part of our program. The \$33 billion and the agreements, the integrated bilateral agreements, have a component that deals with rural and northern communities.

The reason was that we understood that for smaller communities you needed more flexibility, that in smaller communities sometimes what would be needed, for example, could be an Internet connection to change the lives of people.

I am very happy to be engaging. I was just, for example, in the province next to yours, in New Brunswick, and I met, for example, I think 30 small municipality mayors. I did the same thing in Alberta the last time I was there. I think it's the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

I like to do that because, first of all, it's about providing information. Second, it's about engaging with them about their needs and, third, I would say, it's about making sure that our programs are tailored to fit the purposes of small communities.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I have one other question. I appreciate the support you provide to municipalities because it sometimes alleviates the municipal burden or the tax burden on people within our small communities, especially, across the country. Today Internet and cellphone service are crucially important but sadly lacking in many parts of rural Canada.

I can specifically talk about my riding and the Baie Verte Peninsula, for instance, where there's very sparse cell coverage. People are calling out for and asking and requesting that I lobby my government for increased funding for Internet and cellphone coverage in my riding. Can you tell us what our government is doing to connect more communities with broadband Internet and improved cell service in rural Canada especially?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank my colleague, Mr. Rogers, because that's something dear to my heart. As I said before, I feel exactly the same as him. A good part of my own riding is not connected with either cellphone or Internet. I'm happy to advocate for him and with him on that very important issue.

The rural and community stream under our program is providing some elements of response to that. We have been able under the program to tailor the rules to be able to finance part of that. However, I would say, Madam Chair, this is only part of the answer.

I think that the connect to innovate program, under Minister Bains, has been very important with the \$500 million that was set aside to start connecting Canada. I think that people understand today that Internet connectivity is a bit like electricity in the old days, where this is allowing people to, for example, have remote education, remote learning, or remote medicine, for example, provided in their communities.

I understand the member and I can assure him that I'm on the same page as him. We would like to work with you to make sure that we can do more for communities across Canada with respect to the Internet.

● (0940)

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you.

I'll now turn it over to Mr. Sikand.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you.

I'd actually like to start by thanking you, Minister, for an over \$1-million investment out of the \$2-billion clean water and waste water fund, as it helped build the foundation drainage collector, the FDC pumping station and utility dewatering system in my riding. Thank you for that.

Following up with that, what has our government done to make sure that Canadians know what we're investing in or are aware of where the dollars are going?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I'm very happy. I think what you see this morning is that there are projects in every community around this table. Canadians watching us at home would feel exactly the same. We have more than 4,400 projects ongoing in the country. Obviously, each and every one of them is improving the quality of life of people.

The first project I announced, to give you an example, was in a community close to my hometown. It was about \$10,000. I remember people were asking me, “Minister, why would you make an announcement of \$10,000?” I said, “It’s because a small amount in a small community can make a big difference.” The example you give is that you have one in your riding. I could go around the table because I have a list of projects in every riding represented around this table.

The green infrastructure, for me, is one of the most important ones. You’re talking about waste-water treatment.

Many of these projects may not be visible to Canadians because they will be upgrading stations—for example, pumping stations like in Trois-Rivières—or other things. If Canadians want to know what kinds of projects they have in their communities, we have provided what we call the geo-map. If people go to Infrastructure Canada’s website, they’ll be able to zoom in on a map. We have tried to provide transparency to Canadians, so that they can see in their communities the types of projects that have been funded and their states of completion. Sometimes we can even provide pictures, so that people can relate to what we’re doing. We’re going to continue to do that because I think it’s important that Canadians realize that these projects, in different ways—whether it’s about water, whether it’s about public transit, whether it’s about extending a runway in a community—are making a difference in their lives.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Jeneroux, you have two minutes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I’d just like to remind colleagues on the other side of the table that this is taxpayers’ money.

Everyone’s thanking you, Minister. Even though you’re here in front of us, this is still taxpayers’ money at the end of the day, and it’s not from your personal account that you’re paying for these projects.

I want to ask you, yes or no, if the Infrastructure Bank is, in your opinion, delayed on announcing projects.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Just allow me, Madame Chair, to say that I think the member made a great point. I never pretend that it’s my own money. I’m just here to represent the public interest of the government, parliamentarians and Canadians. I always make the point, I would say to my colleague, to make sure that people understand that it’s taxpayers’ money. Our job is to manage it, and to allocate it in the best possible way to make an impact. I take that point very—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Is the Infrastructure Bank delayed in announcing projects, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: I would say that the Infrastructure Bank, as I said before, is looking at dozens of projects as we’re talking. Obviously my colleague, who knows these things well, would understand that there are commercial sensitivities about announcements. We will do the work. The bank will do the work. When it’s ready to announce, there will be announcements.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: In terms of timeline, Minister, it was part of the 2015 election that this was going to be a tool. Then it was announced again, in 2016, that you’re doing it. There was recently an

additional \$11 million drawdown on it. This is a \$35 billion bank. You have seen one project built in Montreal, which was a reannouncement from a previous project. Do you or do you not think that this bank has been an absolute failure for Canadians up to this point?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madame Chair, as the member said, our role as parliamentarians and as government, as the Infrastructure Bank, is obviously to invest public dollars. When we do that, I’m sure the member and the people watching us would expect us to do proper due diligence. I’m sure the member is not suggesting that we rush into any investment, but that we need to do the proper due diligence. As you said, those are precious dollars from taxpayers across the country. We need to do the proper due diligence on these projects. This is what is ongoing.

I would hope that the member realizes that the bank is a tool to do more for Canadians. I think that if he were to talk to some of the investors I talk to, and Canadians, they understand that—

● (0945)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: It’s a very expensive tool, Minister. It’s a very expensive tool, from which we’ve seen very few results.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: We’re building a bank for the next century. If I were the member, I would look back at that. I’m sure one day he will see the impacts of that, whether we’re looking at interties and other things that will make a difference not only in his province but across Canada. This is a tool to build the types of things that Canadians want. This is about thinking big. This is about thinking smart. I’m sure the member is with us when it comes to building better communities across Canada.

The Chair: Minister Champagne, thank you very much for being here with the committee today. We waited impatiently. We appreciate all of the information you have shared with the committee.

We will suspend for a moment while we change witnesses—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, before we suspend, I have just a point of order on the quote that you quoted to me, in terms of asking repetitive questions. Typically that’s used for repetitive speeches in the House of Commons. I’d like you to come back to this committee with examples of when it’s been used in terms of committees here. If you’re able to do that, fantastic, because I don’t want to raise this in the House and make the Speaker rule on something like this. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

I’d be happy to share the book with the rules in it, on page 1058, chapter 20 on committees and the ability of the chair to decide whether it’s repetitive or out of—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Chair, the request was to bring back examples of when it's been used in the capacity that you're using it. It's been used in the House in terms of saying word for word the same speeches, but in terms of what you're using it for, the committee would love to see examples of when it's been used in the past.

Thank you.

The Chair: If you would like to challenge the chair, certainly, Mr. Jeneroux, you're welcome to do that.

I will attempt to supply to you what I have, and I doubt that there will be examples, because I just don't think I'm going to ask the clerk to go looking for examples. If you're unhappy with my ruling, you certainly are welcome to challenge the chair, sir.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, I don't want to be repetitive, but I'd just like to thank the members for their questions and their passion in delivering 21st-century infrastructure for Canadians. I think it's the best way to attract talent and investment to our country, and we will continue. I would be happy to come back to answer any questions from the members.

[Translation]

Madam Chair and colleagues, thank you all for welcoming me here this morning.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will suspend momentarily.

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0950)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We will have half an hour to review the study we're doing on assessing the impact of airport noise in the vicinity of major Canadian airports.

With us we have Nick Boud, Principal Consultant for Helios.

Mr. Boud, you have five minutes to address, please, or maybe six, since you're the only witness, and we look forward to your testimony. Thank you.

Mr. Nick Boud (Principal Consultant, Helios): Okay.

Good morning, Madam Chair, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting Helios to appear before you today.

Helios is a U.K. aviation consultancy working for clients around the world and across the whole of the aviation industry. I lead the airport consultancy business within Helios and have 26 years of aviation experience. Helios is currently contracted to provide independent technical analysis and support to the GTAA as they move forward in the delivery of their latest five-year noise management action plan.

Over the past two and a half years, Helios has completed one study for Nav Canada, two for the GTAA, and one for Aéroports de Montréal. I have submitted four reference documents ahead of today, of which the first two were written by Helios. I'll come on to explain each of those documents.

The first one is the "Independent Toronto Airspace Noise Review", prepared for Nav Canada, which provides noise mitigation recommendations and conclusions focused on the Toronto airspace, as well as a lot of informative background information.

The second document is "Best practices in noise management", which was prepared for the GTAA and provides an excellent overview of 11 different noise management practices across 26 international airports that are comparative to Toronto Pearson.

The third document is an analysis paper prepared by the Airports Council International and published earlier this week, addressing the future of aviation noise. This was prepared in response to the recent release by the World Health Organization on their latest environmental noise guidelines.

The final document that I've submitted is a paper from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. The paper concludes that the data used by the World Health Organization and the analysis conducted in establishing the relationship between aviation noise and annoyance has, in the author's words, had "a huge impact on the final recommendations". The author goes on to conclude that the recommended noise level to avoid adverse health impacts from aviation noise should be eight decibels higher than those proposed by the World Health Organization. An eight-decibel increase is substantial. It is generally accepted that the human ear perceives a 100% increase in volume for every 10-decibel increase.

Aviation noise management is a complex, multi-faceted topic, and I'm going to have a chance to only make a microscope dent in it today.

Helios finds the same aviation noise complaints and challenges everywhere we go. However, the solutions differ, because the urban, social, geographic, political, regulatory and operational environments are never the same.

I must apologize, for I am about to make a generalization. It is the aircraft that makes the noise, yet time and again, the party not present at public meetings, and generally the last at the table, are the airlines. Meaningful progress is only possible if all stakeholders are present at the table on a voluntary basis, work corroboratively, are prepared to give and take, make tough decisions and are committed to the objectives of delivering noise reduction and mitigation.

Moving noise from community A to community B on a long-term or permanent basis for no other reason than to pacify community A is not a solution. It is only likely to inflate the problem exponentially. The short-term relocation of noise on a predictable and regular basis, often referred to as "noise sharing" or "noise respite", can be a valuable mitigation in some situations. Many airports have worked for decades and invested millions of dollars to reduce or mitigate noise, yet they still have a large number of residents who are not satisfied. This does not mean that we should not continue to try, as major improvements have been made and there is more that can be achieved in the weeks, months and years ahead.

One of the common questions raised by this committee is about what national standards there are to protect people from aviation noise. As far as I'm aware, there are two in Canada.

•(0955)

The first is set by Transport Canada and requires airports to prepare a noise exposure forecast, which is used to inform urban zoning strategies. The acoustician, Dr. Colin Novak, spoke about some of the challenges with using the NEF metric. I suspect, based on trends elsewhere in the world, that public tolerance of aviation noise has reduced since the NEF 25 and NEF 30 levels were set by Transport Canada, and I offer that the majority of noise complaints come from people outside of the geographic areas enclosed by these NEF contours.

The second standard is the aircraft noise certification requirements specified by ICAO, which have become more stringent with each generation of aircraft, meaning that aircraft have become quieter. Aircraft remain in active service for 30-plus years, so it can take a long time for noisier aircraft to be retired.

I would like to provide an element of perspective on what flights are in the night at Toronto Pearson. An analysis being undertaken by Helios Technology Ltd. for the GTAA shows that over 80% of night flights are passenger services, with the remainder being cargo, at 10% to 15%, or general and/or business aviation.

Night flights account for 3% of all flights at Toronto Pearson. Airports and community groups argue about whether the number of noise complaints recorded is an accurate indication of the scale of the problem. I counsel that you look at complaints as only one piece of the wider evaluation as to the scale of aviation noise as a problem. There are many factors that mean you cannot directly compare the number of complaints between airports. Identifying the percentage of new complaints each year can be an informative metric, but again, it should never be considered in isolation.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, but the committee members have many questions.

Mr. Nick Boud: I have four lines.

The Chair: Please continue.

Mr. Nick Boud: Helios Technology would happily provide further support to this committee, but I hope you understand that the reality is that we are a commercial organization and must limit our non-fee earning work. Up to this point, we have invested our time on a voluntary basis, and I hope our input will be valuable.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

It's on to Mr. Liepert for four minutes.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Thank you, sir, for your work.

One of the things that I think the committee has had trouble determining—I know I have—is who owns this issue. It seems like the airport authorities say, “We only land the planes that want to land here.” Nav Canada says, “Our job is to make sure they land safely.” It seems like Transport Canada has kind of hived off responsibility to Nav Canada.

Suppose we were to come forward with certain recommendations. Let's just pick one out of the air, one that has been suggested by numerous witnesses: banning night flights, for example. In your

study of this issue, in your work, who do you see would actually have the ability or the authority to do that?

•(1000)

Mr. Nick Boud: From experience in other nations around the world, the only people who can do that would be those in the government. It would require legislation to achieve that. That is what is being done. There are some voluntary restrictions, but to ban night flights, I believe, would take formal legislation.

Mr. Ron Liepert: You seem to have indicated in your statement that this is multi-faceted and that there are various aspects that go into this whole issue.

We've certainly heard about the health aspect of it. We haven't heard a ton about the economic impacts of some of the things that would be the fallout from some recommendations. Can you talk a little bit about the complexity of taking one action that might have unintended consequences for a whole bunch of other things?

Mr. Nick Boud: I think it comes back to the fact that one solution doesn't fit all airports. Frankfurt, for example, which I know has been spoken of here before, has a period of the night when flights aren't allowed. Zurich has a period when they're not allowed, yet other airports in Germany and Switzerland do have night flights.

It can cause a relocation of services from the airport with the ban to other airports, which is moving noise from one location to another. The airlines, if there is a commercial business there, will find a means to achieve it. There is certainly an economic impact, and I know that the GTAA is looking to do an evaluation of the economics of night flights because we are employed to help formulate some of the traffic scenarios to feed into that study.

You cannot take one action without there being an impact on businesses not directly related to the airport, on employees at the airport and on the wider community.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Certainly, the consumer as well.... Our way of doing business as consumers has moved from shopping malls to online shopping, and that product has to get somewhere. I'm not suggesting that it has to come on a night flight. All I am saying is that it certainly creates, in all likelihood, more problems. Are there any thoughts about that in your work?

Mr. Nick Boud: The vast majority of cargo is moved on passenger aircraft. The percentage of cargo-dedicated aircraft is tiny, compared to the overall movements. Yes, the change in social attitudes towards shopping will drive up additional air cargo, but unless society changes its practices, it is not something we can avoid.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Sikand.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It was noted in the Helios report that Toronto Pearson's night period starts late and is shorter in duration than similar periods at other airports. What have other airports that are comparable in size and volume done to address the issue of noise?

Mr. Nick Boud: In relation to night, I believe there were two other airports with a similar length of night period as Toronto, but others certainly do have night periods of eight or nine hours. Some of them have implemented a quota system, where the noisier the aircraft, the higher the penalty implemented against a total point system.

Others have a total limit, similar to Pearson, as to the number of night flights they can handle each year. Others have put in additional charges, possibly two or three times the daily charge to operate at night. Others have, as does Pearson, a restriction on certain types of aircraft that can operate in the night period.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you.

My second question is that in the Helios “Independent Toronto Airspace Noise Review” report, it was recommended that Nav Canada should formally write to Transport Canada requesting them to consider the establishment of a sunset date of December 31, 2020, for the operation of the Airbus A320 series. However, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority has proposed incentives for the noise reduction modification to occur electively.

What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of an elective incentive program?

• (1005)

Mr. Nick Boud: They have been shown to work at other airports around the world. Lufthansa, in Germany, voluntarily modified their aircraft and were one of the first airlines to do so. Gatwick has introduced a financial penalty if airlines operate a modified aircraft.

It has to, again, be finding the right solution for Canada. I still stand by the recommendation that there should be action to persuade carriers to modify the A320. It is a simple refit or modification to the aircraft that can make a significant impact on noise.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you.

This is a question I have been asking because I represent a riding that's pretty much adjacent to Pearson airport. Based on your exhaustive studies, particularly in and around Toronto Pearson, what are your thoughts on the establishment of a new airport within perhaps Kitchener or north of the escarpment, anywhere in and around the GTA?

Mr. Nick Boud: I say to the establishment of a new airport or through-traffic distribution being directed to other airports, it is moving noise. Also, communities tend to grow up close to airports because they are an economic driver and people will want to be close to that because that is where the jobs are.

Time and again, building new airports may seem like the solution, but in the long term you tend to end up with communities, development, moving closer to the airport. It takes very careful planning to make that a successful solution.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Monsieur Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us.

Madam Chair, before I ask questions, I would like to make a comment for your consideration.

In his opening remarks, the witness referred to four documents he had submitted. However, I have learned that those documents are currently being translated. Because of their volume, they are not available in French.

When we plan our list of witnesses, we should ensure that witnesses only appear once the documents are distributed to everyone in both languages. If I had had all the documents in French, my preparation and my questions would have been significantly different. I probably would have found the answers to my questions in the documents and could have probed further. However, that's impossible.

Could we ensure that we receive the documents in both official languages before hearing the witnesses in committee? It would be much appreciated. I leave that for your consideration, Madam Chair.

I will now turn to you, Mr. Boud. You have already answered one of my questions in your opening remarks. You said that it seemed difficult to apply the conclusions of Helios' report for Toronto Pearson International Airport to each of the airports. There must still be some features that apply to all the airports you have studied.

Would it be fair to say that there can be two types of recommendations: recommendations for all the airports that are experiencing the same problem related to the surrounding communities and recommendations specific to each of the airports?

[*English*]

Mr. Nick Boud: There is certainly a common thread through the solutions that are out there. We do not have to reinvent solutions with every airport we go to, but just because a solution is right at one airport, it may not be immediately transferable to another airport. That is, flight routings into Vancouver have the option of coming in over the water, but that is not a solution that is available to Toronto Pearson. Yes, you can look at flight routings and try to make use of industrial corridors or rural areas, but it is not immediately transferable.

Keeping aircraft higher certainly is something that is probably achievable at a lot of airports, and it reduces noise, but again, you have to look at the local environment to see what obstacles are there, be they man-made obstacles or mountainous terrain, before you can conclude whether that solution is applicable in that area.

The distribution of residential communities around the airport again has an impact on what solution is right. If you look at the best practices report or the Toronto independent airspace review, when they're translated—and I appreciate one of them is a sizable document to translate—you will find that there is a common thread through there and you will be able to find elements that could be taken and considered for other airports, but bespoking them is still required.

•(1010)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: You have worked internationally on these issues. Do you think the committee could target one, two or three airports that could be leaders in noise reduction? Among the top airports, would there be a Canadian airport? When it comes to noise reduction, are Canadian airports at the back of the pack?

[English]

Mr. Nick Boud: I don't believe there's one or a small number that you should look at. Hence, when we undertook the best practices piece of work for the GTAA, we looked at 26 international airports, because it is from taking that broad view that you start to get the multiplicity of the flavours of solutions that are out there.

Schiphol in Amsterdam has made a huge effort to minimize noise in communities and swaps runways so many times a day that it becomes boggling for other airports to consider, yet they do not have a night ban. They have more night flights than Toronto Pearson. It really does need a look across a broad number of airports to pick up the different best practices that can then be applied.

The Chair: Monsieur Aubin, we're short on time.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I'll be brief. Is the international standard of 55 decibels achieved by a number of airports?

[English]

Mr. Nick Boud: Fifty-five is the standard that the European Union asks airports to report against. It is not a mandated standard that has to be achieved. It is a benchmark to measure the population affected, but it is not something that has to be achieved.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll move on to Mr. Maloney.

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Boud, thank you for joining us today. You and I have met on several occasions. You know I represent a riding, Etobicoke—Lakeshore, that is very much affected by air traffic noise and volume at Pearson Airport, so it's an issue close to my constituents' hearts.

You've been commissioned previously to do a study for both NavCan and the GTAA, and in the course of doing those studies, you reviewed what's referred to as ideas five and six, which very generally, from a high level—no pun intended—dealt with the direction of traffic on a regular basis. My constituents were concerned about redirecting traffic flow from east-west to north-south and the conclusion from your studies and the decision reached by the GTAA was that they weren't going to increase the north-south air traffic.

I have that right so far, haven't I?

Mr. Nick Boud: In general.... We looked at weekends and night flights.

Mr. James Maloney: Weekends and night flights, that's correct.

From a very basic level, and I know this because my brother's a pilot with Air Canada, it's safer for planes to land and take off going into the wind. Is that correct?

Mr. Nick Boud: Yes, as a basic rule.

Mr. James Maloney: As a basic rule, and the winds tend to go east-west, so that's a big reason why that happened.

I want to move on to night flights. A formula is used at Pearson in how many flights are allowed to come in and out of Pearson, and I believe the formula is based on an annual basis, as opposed to a per night basis. As a result of that, on any given night, depending on winds and other things, there could be a much higher volume of night flight traffic coming in. Isn't that correct?

Mr. Nick Boud: That's correct.

Mr. James Maloney: The night flights are also governed by the rules that apply to runway usage and whatnot.

Mr. Nick Boud: Yes, there are preferential runways.

Mr. James Maloney: You talked about the commercial aspect of night flights and the fact that most of it is arising because of passengers. Is it realistic, in your view, to ban night flights altogether at Pearson airport, factoring in the surrounding area and the available alternatives?

Mr. Nick Boud: Anything is possible, but there would be a significant economic impact because of it.

Mr. James Maloney: You said one size does not fit all. For example, if you're talking about European airports, if you ban night flights in one large centre, you probably have another large airport two hours away, give or take, that you can divert some of that traffic to. Is that a fair comment?

•(1015)

Mr. Nick Boud: Certainly in Germany, traffic is relocated from Frankfurt to Cologne and aircraft have been relocated because the aircraft doesn't just do the one flight. Overall, that has had an impact on Frankfurt's business.

Mr. James Maloney: Which takes me to my third point. Your options are limited in Toronto because you don't have other large airports nearby available to you. You said communities tend to grow up around airports, and that's exactly what's happened around Pearson, because when Pearson was put there, Mississauga and Brampton weren't anywhere near the size they are now, and they've developed those cities close to the airport, which has partially contributed to the problem.

I was in Edmonton this summer, and I was impressed by the fact that they had a very positive relationship with the surrounding communities and business community, and it's because they don't have that build up around the airport. We have the Pickering lands, which were secured many years ago, and there's a lot of space around that.

Wouldn't it be sensible to put an airport there, given the opportunity to develop a situation where you don't have that problem?

Mr. Nick Boud: Building a new airport and moving the whole of the business is a significant undertaking. It has been done by some cities. It is not just the airport you need to consider relocating, generally a huge amount of other infrastructure is required, and the development tends to grow towards that airport, but it is not impossible to do.

Mr. James Maloney: I have one quick follow-up. You don't have to move the whole of business. You're creating a second office. You're not shutting one down and moving it to another place. You're creating an alternative.

Mr. Nick Boud: History has shown that if you leave both airports open, a lot of the air carriers will not want to relocate, because relocation is a significant cost to them and their business. The first airport tends to have the best connections and the greatest value to them.

Mr. James Maloney: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We move on to Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: You have two minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Boud, the witnesses we received were essentially complaining about the lack of accountability and transparency on the part of our airport authorities. The optics it gives is that Canada is trailing behind in terms of noise management.

How do Canadian airports compare to airports in other countries in terms of noise management? How are noise advisory committees organized in other countries compared to Canada's?

[English]

Mr. Nick Boud: In the few days that I've been working in Canada, I would certainly say that Canada has come to the noise mitigation topic later than a lot. Europe and Australia have been looking at this for many more years. The U.S. also, to some extent, is ahead of Canada on this. I only have one real airport to focus on, because that's where I spend most of my effort here, which is Toronto Pearson, and they have made huge steps from where they were when I first came over here.

As to how the committees look, again, the best practice report did look at the structure of committees. There were some recommendations in there. I know that the GTAA is briefing the public this evening at their quarterly meeting about changes to the structure to try to become closer to the best practice that we've looked at across the 26 airports. There is learning to be had, and that can be implemented.

The Chair: Mr. Graham, you have two minutes.

Then we can get to Mr. Jeneroux for two minutes and that will be the end. We have committee business. I'm sorry.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Thank you.

The time I have is equivalent to about the wake turbulence gap between two planes, so I'll try to be quick. I have two totally different questions.

First, can passengers make ticketing decisions that affect airplane noise? Is there anything they can do when they are buying their tickets to influence when, where and how planes fly?

Mr. Nick Boud: Certainly, passengers could choose not to take night flights, as an example, and to travel during the day. That would be one situation such as that, yes.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: The other side of this is that you talked about the 30-year life cycle for aircraft, more or less. What's the noisiest part of a plane?

● (1020)

Mr. Nick Boud: It depends on which stage of flight you're talking about. For departures, it is the engines. For arrival, it is the body of the aircraft. It's the air rushing over the aircraft that makes more noise than the engines on the final part of the descent.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: How do you compare the plane noise of, say, a 787 to that of a 707 or a 747?

Mr. Nick Boud: There are generations of difference between them. If you could put a 707 back at Toronto Pearson and then fly in a 787 behind it, nobody would dispute the fact that they have become significantly quieter.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: We've talked a lot about the A320 fix. Can you describe what the fix actually is?

Mr. Nick Boud: The problem is that there are vents in the underside of that wing and the wind rockets over it, a bit like blowing over the top of a bottle. It is a small piece of metal that has to be attached just ahead of that hole so as to disrupt the airflow so that you do not get that humming-whistling noise as the air goes over the hole.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Do you know how much it costs to fix it?

Mr. Nick Boud: I don't. I've had different values quoted because different airlines have different maintenance agreements with Airbus. Some people quote \$5,000 or \$7,000. The cost of the piece is small compared with the cost of taking the aircraft out of service. You have to drain the fuel to be able to fit it, but that is not major compared with the cost of replacing an aircraft.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to use the two minutes allotted to me just to clarify my intent from the previous witness and the point of order. It certainly wasn't my intention to challenge the chair. I appreciate all that you do in terms of the good nature of our committee. I feel that we work quite well together for the majority of the time.

However, I think it's important that we on this side are able to continue to ask the questions. You in your role don't need to be protective of the minister in any form or fashion whatsoever.

I just want to read into the record a brief quote from page 1078 in chapter 20 of practices, policies and procedures:

There are no specific rules governing the nature of questions which may be put to witnesses appearing before committees, beyond the general requirement of relevance to the issue before the committee. Witnesses must answer all questions which the committee puts [before] them.

It states further:

The actions of a witness who refuses to answer questions may be reported to the House.

Again, I want to make sure that this committee continues to work together. I know that you had a piece of paper in front of you ready to quote the order you referred to. However, again, I would hate to see us come back in the new year and not remain in the friendly fashion that we've continued up to this point.

I just leave those comments there, Madam Chair, in further clarifying my point of order. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

There are no pressing questions that we actually have to get done.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): If I might, I have just one quick question.

The Chair: You can have a very short question, because we have committee business.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: You mentioned Schiphol in your study, but other than Schiphol, Pearson had the highest number of

night flights of any airport that was part of that study, three times more than Heathrow. Was there any particular reason that the study had no recommendations or suggestion that GTAA should reduce the number of night flights, or night flights per night as they have in the annual budget?

Mr. Nick Boud: No, there was no specific reason why we hadn't. It is a case of our making recommendations about extending the night and changing the controls on the night to potentially freeze the quantity of noise where it is, rather than taking a decision or a recommendation that would have an economic impact, which is something that, as aviation consultants, we feel is outside of our remit.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you to our witness. You can see that we really would have loved to have you for an hour but schedules just didn't permit. Thank you very much for your contribution.

Mr. Nick Boud: Thank you.

The Chair: We will suspend for a moment and then we'll go into committee business.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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