



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities**

---

TRAN • NUMBER 004 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, March 7, 2016**

—  
**Chair**

**The Honourable Judy A. Sgro**



# Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Monday, March 7, 2016

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

This is the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the mandate of the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

Minister Sohi, I welcome you. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank you for responding so quickly to our invitation. Congratulations on your new role. We will very much enjoy the opportunity to talk to you and to ask you many questions on your important portfolio.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), we have the main estimates of 2016-17, votes 1, 5, and 10 under the Office of Infrastructure of Canada.

Minister, I will turn it over to you. Would you like to introduce the officials who are with you today?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities):** I will.

First of all, thank you so much for inviting me to speak with you.

I would like to extend my congratulations to you, Chair, as well as to Luc Berthold and Linda Duncan on their recent elections as vice-chairs.

I have been asked to appear today to speak with you about my role in the development of a 10-year Canadian infrastructure plan and the delivery of a refocused new building Canada fund. I also want to talk about what my department is going to do to support the government's commitment to transparency and openness.

I'm joined today by my deputy minister, Mr. Tremblay, as well as associate deputy ministers Yazmine Laroche and Helena Borges, and assistant deputy minister Darlene Boileau.

I will begin by addressing the items on the main estimates.

Infrastructure Canada's total authorities for 2016-17 are \$3.9 billion. Included in the department's main estimates is \$2.1 billion through the gas tax fund, which is predictable funding for Canadian municipalities for their infrastructure priorities. There is also \$1.6 billion in contribution funding available for provincial and territorial infrastructure projects. The remaining amount identified represents operating funding for Infrastructure Canada to administer and deliver these programs, and capital funding for the acquisition of land for the

new Champlain Bridge corridor project and the Gordie Howe International Bridge.

Infrastructure Canada's expenditures match the pace at which funding partners build infrastructure projects and subsequently submit claims for eligible expenses. If recipients do not claim the expenses they forecast in any given fiscal year, Infrastructure Canada asks Parliament to re-profile program funds through future year appropriations to meet the cash flow needs of the recipients.

As you know, our government has committed to invest \$60 billion in new infrastructure over the next 10 years. This funding does not appear in our 2016-17 estimates, but we are working with Minister Morneau as he develops the budget.

Now I will speak about the 10-year infrastructure plan and the refocusing of the new building Canada fund.

Everyone in this room knows that there are significant advantages to infrastructure investments, both in the short term and in the long term. Well-planned investments in infrastructure generate economic growth, create jobs, and leave a lasting legacy for Canadians.

But infrastructure is so much more than the structures themselves. It's more than concrete and water pipes, or roads and bridges, or buses and train tracks. Infrastructure is really about people. It is what connects Canadians to their communities and allows them to be active participants, both socially and economically.

Infrastructure is about parents sleeping in peace knowing that their children will have clean and safe water to drink. It is about a safe haven and a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence, and clean and safe housing for someone who has no other options. It is also about Canadians having decent, well-paid jobs that allow them to raise their families and give them a high quality of life. Infrastructure can do that.

Infrastructure is the foundation that shapes our communities, making them more livable and sustainable and providing the places where we want to live, work, and play. Our infrastructure investments must be made strategically, collaboratively, and with a long-term vision. They need to focus on projects that are not only shovel-ready but also shovel-worthy.

All orders of government have an equal role to play in building strong communities, and I'm working collaboratively with our government partners and indigenous communities, as well as our stakeholders and municipal association partners, to build the infrastructure this country needs. Collaboration will be key to our success.

I have already had extensive discussions with our provincial, territorial, and municipal partners and have met with mayors from across the country and representatives from indigenous communities. I have met numerous times with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I met last month with the Big City Mayors' Caucus, and I have met with other key stakeholders and associations, such as the Canadian Urban Transit Association. We are designing our new approach to infrastructure in collaboration with our partners. By working together, we will provide the long-term, dedicated, and predictable funding that will help build communities for the 21st century.

Let me talk about our plan.

We have committed to doubling infrastructure investment over the coming decade. This means \$60 billion of additional investments over the next 10 years that will focus on three strategic areas: public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure. In our desire to start supporting communities as quickly as possible, we have also committed to investing \$10 billion of that money in the next two years.

We are also planning changes to the building Canada fund to make it more focused on strategic and trade-enabling infrastructure priorities, including roads, bridges, transportation corridors, ports, and border gateways. Also, we are looking at ways to make the application process more responsive and flexible to allow communities across the country to access funding more easily and rapidly.

Moving forward, we are faced with the challenge of getting infrastructure investments into our economy quickly while ensuring that we also act in a long-term and strategic way. Our work and investments over the next two years must lay the foundation for longer-term transformative change.

We know that infrastructure across the country is not in a state of good repair. The recent report card of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities reported that the condition of one-third of municipal infrastructure is between fair and very poor, and that at current reinvestment rates this infrastructure will continue to deteriorate. My consultations with partners reiterated that this critical aspect of infrastructure—recapitalization and repairs—demands attention. By focusing on the repairing of our existing infrastructure, we can fix what we have now instead of delaying and paying more to fix it later.

As we begin to invest in infrastructure, we also propose to make investments that can enhance municipal planning, asset management, and data collection capacity. This will help all orders of government make evidence-based decisions and put us on a more sustainable path.

By providing targeted infrastructure investment in social, green, and public transit projects and refocusing the new building Canada fund, we will be able to address the real needs of Canadian communities.

Finally, as I mentioned in my introduction, I want to speak about my department's commitment to transparency and openness. My department, like several others, has posted on our website the table of contents for the briefing binder I received when I was sworn in as minister. Anyone can reach out to the department and request to receive a copy of my briefing materials at no cost.

We have posted the signed project agreements for the work being done on the new Champlain Bridge. Last month, we posted a breakdown of the funding remaining in the new building Canada fund for each province and territory, which provides a clear picture of how much funding we have remaining to accelerate in the coming months and years, as we have committed to do. Also, I have been posting updates to our website that tell Canadians what I have been doing as Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, the partners I have met with, the meetings I have attended, and the projects I have visited.

As you know, our government has an ambitious plan to build communities that are sustainable and inclusive. By working in partnership with other orders of government and key stakeholders, we can develop and implement an evidence-based, strategic, and collaborative plan, one that will support us as we work to build the communities in which Canadians desire to live.

Thank you so much for having me here today.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister Sohi. I appreciate your being brief. You still had two minutes left, so that will leave more time for the committee members.

Starting with the Conservative side is Ms. Watts, for six minutes.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Thank you very much. I appreciate you and your staff giving this time to the committee. It gives us a good opportunity to have some good dialogue and flesh out some things.

I first want to thank you. I know you've mentioned the gas tax fund numerous times, so I want to thank you very much for doing that. As you know, it has been in place for I guess almost a decade. We've had very good success with it with respect to our government and, of course, with respect to doubling it and then indexing it to make sure that it would remain in perpetuity. That's been very helpful to communities. When I was a mayor, I had the benefit of that as well.

I have a couple of questions in terms of the 10-year infrastructure plan. I know that's under way now, but when you're saying that there's not any additional monies that will be figured into the plan because it's not in the budget, is it anticipated that it will be in the budget?

The reason I ask this question is that I know there was an announcement of, I think, \$10 million over the next two years that will go to roadwork. There was also an announcement by the Prime Minister of another \$2 billion over two years for projects to reduce carbon pollution, and another \$5.4 billion over four years for green infrastructure projects.

Are these already included in the budget and not as part of the additional...? Because under this stream, it would be \$20 billion over and above the existing budget.

• (1540)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that question.

What we have committed to do is spend \$10 billion of additional money—

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Existing money.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** —the additional money that we committed to in the campaign, which is under green infrastructure, social infrastructure, and transit infrastructure. That \$10 billion of additional money will be part of the budget process for approval. This is the new commitment that we made on top of accelerating the existing funding that is available to communities under the building Canada fund.

As you may recall, in 2014 the previous government allocated \$14 billion under the new building Canada fund. Very little of that money has actually been spent so far, so we have about \$9 billion in one component and \$3 billion in another component that is left to be committed. Our goal is to commit that money as the projects come to us from provinces, because this is the provinces' money, allocated based on each province. In addition to that is the new commitment of \$10 billion for green infrastructure, social infrastructure, and transit infrastructure over the next two years, which is part of the budget process.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Right. Okay. Just to go a bit further on that, because I know there's been especially within the green fund.... Again, thank you for using the green fund. We set that up in 2009. In terms of the \$20 billion for each strand and the \$10 billion for the next two years, how much is going to be allocated within each of those strands?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Our overall commitment over the next 10 years is—

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** No, over two years.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Over 10 years—let me explain it. Over the 10 years, it's \$20 billion for public transit, \$20 billion for green infrastructure, and \$20 billion for social infrastructure.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Yes.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** For the first two years, our commitment is to spend \$10 billion of that in each category in a similar amount. Over two years, it will be \$3.4 billion in each—

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** In each strand?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** In each of the three categories.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Okay. That's over and above the existing—

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** That is over and above the existing building Canada fund.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** The existing amount? Okay.

I know that the P3 screening has been removed. Will there be additional screening for infrastructure projects added to that? I know that it was removed for the process piece to speed things up. Are there additional processes we're adding on top of that?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** What we are doing is streamlining some of the processes that we have in order to flow the resources to communities as quickly and effortlessly as possible. Part of that streamlining is the removal of the P3 screening for any project that is over \$100 million.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Right.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** We don't own the infrastructure that we support. The communities own the infrastructure. We believe it should be up to the private proponents to decide how they're going to procure their projects and whether they want to go with P3 or not. That decision should be up to them.

What we do is see if those projects fit into the federal criteria in the existing funding. As we develop the new funding for the additional \$10 billion, we will be developing the criteria to support the federal outcomes of growing the economy, making it more productive and efficient, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and building inclusive communities.

• (1545)

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

I'm sorry, Ms. Watts, your time is up.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Thank you, Minister.

**The Chair:** Mr. Badawey.

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being with us today. It's something we've all looked forward to for quite some time.

In your comments, you've identified with respect to transportation and the economy how important it is that they're both aligned, as was most recently identified within the Emerson report. You correctly identified a need to make the application process more responsive and to focus on trade-enabling infrastructure and those priorities, including transportation corridors, ports, and border gateways.

Mr. Minister, the Minister of Transport recently tabled in Parliament a report on the review of the Canada Transportation Act and identified a few recommendations. One of those recommendations includes transportation infrastructure. The report recommends that the federal government develop a comprehensive, long-term, 20-year to 30-year transportation infrastructure plan.

My question through you, Madam Chair, to the minister is, does the government plan on implementing the recommendations, and if so what are the timelines for developing this plan, and what is Infrastructure Canada's role in its overall implementation?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that question.

Through you, Madam Chair, as you may recall, part of the mandate letter from the Prime Minister aims to refocus the existing building Canada fund toward more trade-oriented infrastructure. In consultation with my colleague Minister Garneau, we are looking at how we can align some of the infrastructure funding that is available to us toward the outcome of the Canada Transportation Act review that is under way. Minister Garneau will be able to fill you in on the details of the review, at what stage it is, and how much time it will take.

You're absolutely right. In order to grow the economy, we need to make sure we have efficient transportation corridors to move our goods and services. We will enhance our international trade with the work we're doing on the Gordie Howe bridge and the new Champlain Bridge, as well as support additional investments in the trade corridors. These are some of the requirements. The expectation of the Prime Minister is that my department work with Minister Garneau's department, and we're doing that.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Minister. I'm excited for that, and hopefully it will be an expeditious process.

That deals with moving trade, but let's move on to moving people and reflecting the government's commitment to invest an additional \$60 billion in infrastructure. The mandate letter identifies public transit, social infrastructure, and green infrastructure as key priorities for infrastructure investment.

How will these priorities be reflected within the new infrastructure investment plan? Will this focus have an impact on the amount of federal funding available for other types of infrastructure?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** In response to your first question, through you, Madam Chair, there will not be any impact on the existing funding. This is additional money on top of what is available for communities now. Public transit is a critical aspect of making our economy more productive and efficient. Anyone who lives in an urban centre knows the gridlock that is faced by people in major cities. We want to deal with that. That is why we have decided to invest \$20 billion in public transit.

We also will support other communities with their transit needs through the building Canada fund, as well as the additional money that is available. Under social infrastructure our focus is going to be on housing—affordable housing, social housing, seniors housing, and shelter for women fleeing domestic violence—as well as early learning facilities and cultural and recreational facilities. Under green infrastructure we want to build communities that are more resilient to climate change and effects, such as floods. We want to provide support for green technologies. We want to make sure our indigenous communities have safe drinking water. We want to end boil-water advisories on indigenous communities.

That will be the focus of the three new buckets on top of what we already support through existing funding.

• (1550)

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister.

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

Ms. Duncan.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** It's nice to see you here, Mr. Minister. I extend my condolences to you on the loss of your father.

I appreciate how dedicated you are. You are continuing to do good work. I congratulate you.

Some of my questions were asked, but I'd like a little more detail. I concur with your former colleagues, such as Edmonton's Mayor Iveson, and I know that the city council in Edmonton and other jurisdictions are happy to see the backside of P3s unless they decide that's the route to go. One of the questions that's being raised by my mayor and other mayors has to do with those who were essentially forced to go P3 on projects, such as LRT extensions. They only received a quarter of the money from the federal government instead of a third as they were promised. Are you going to be adjusting that so we equalize the transfer of funds for those who were forced to go with the P3?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that question, and through you, Madam Chair, you're absolutely right. One of the reasons we removed the condition of P3 screening was to allow municipalities to make their own decisions. The other thing you have identified is that it limited the funding for municipalities to 25% of the total eligible project costs. Under the traditional model, municipalities would receive up to one-third, and in some cases up to 50%, depending on the project. Under the P3 approach, there was a limit of 25%.

As we move forward on removing the condition of P3, we will be adjusting that cost-sharing formula for major projects that fall under that big project category.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I'm sure various mayors would like to hear it's going to be adjusted for existing approved projects as well, but so be it.

One of the recommendations of the Emerson report, the report under the Canada Transportation Act, was for the federal government to give assistance to municipalities wanting to relocate rail or deal with rail that is interfering with the safety of cities.

I know of the three priorities the City of Edmonton has identified, and probably a number of prairie jurisdictions have identified, is federal money for that purpose. I'm wondering if you are giving consideration to a separate pot of money, potentially in co-operation with the Department of Transport and in co-operation with some joint funding from the rail companies, to address the safety issues, to address the backup of traffic and so forth, to relocate these rails, or to provide overpasses and underpasses.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, one of the things I mentioned earlier is the refocusing of the existing building Canada fund. There are three components to the building Canada fund. One is for small communities; one is for provincial-territorial infrastructure, and one is for national infrastructure. What we are looking at is having those discussions with Minister Garneau's department as to where the alignments happen on that with the focus on the Canada Transportation Act review.

In terms of the projects you are mentioning, I'm well aware of those projects. I'm from Edmonton. One of the things I should mention is that I have wonderful people who are working with me in this department. We are constantly in touch with all mayors throughout the country, as well as our provincial and territorial counterparts who understand what their needs are and how those needs fit into our priorities. We are working together with the provinces and municipalities to ensure we are there to support them to build the necessary infrastructure that they need to build, whether it's rail separations, grade separations, or any other sort of infrastructure.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I'm not sure that I got a clear yes or no, but I'll pursue it later with you.

The third quick question I have is on northern infrastructure. Of course, in Alberta we often think that we're in partnership with Northwest Territories. There's a lot of toing and froing. I'm interested to hear that of the \$20-billion green infrastructure, a lot of that is for northern or isolated communities.

I'm aware that the Northwest Territories has decided they're going to try to shift from having dirty, expensive diesel to renewable power. I'm wondering if you could tell me what exactly you think will be included in the green infrastructure, how much of that is under you, and how much is under the Department of Natural Resources. Also, are these the kinds of projects that you might be financing?

• (1555)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, green infrastructure, as I said earlier, will focus on water and waste water, and on clean technologies as well as flood mitigation.

I have met with the northern caucus. I'm open to meeting with any MPs who want to reach out to my department to share their concerns, whether they're from the north or not. We have heard those concerns related to how they transition from diesel to more electrical systems for their infrastructure there.

I can't give you the exact answer at this time, because we are still developing the criteria for the new money, for the \$10 billion over the next two years, but as we progress on that, I hope to be able to come back and give you an update.

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

Mr. Hardie.

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

Thank you, Minister. Is it true that you used to drive a bus?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Yes, I did.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Then there is a friend in transit in the room, that's for sure. That's great to see.

By the way, it was also great to see you attend a news conference in Surrey a few weeks ago now, to announce some 53 projects across British Columbia, all in the interest of state of good repair. They're not exactly spectacular ribbon-cutting opportunities when done, but they certainly are foundational initiatives that will definitely help those communities.

I know that state of good repair will be the focus for the first couple of years, but my community in Surrey is absolutely eager, as is all of metro Vancouver, in fact, to see rapid transit expand. I guess the simple question is, where is that on the horizon?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, as I stated in my remarks, one-third of municipal infrastructure is basically, I would say, in poor condition. We need to invest in refurbishment, in modernized existing infrastructure, and also in optimizing existing infrastructure in order to get better use out of it.

But that does not mean we will not support new projects. I have been very clear in my conversations with the provinces and the municipalities that our focus will be on repairs for the first two years, yes, but if a municipality has done a good job of investing in and maintaining their existing set of infrastructure, they should be able to use that money for new projects. This is not about doing one at the cost of the other. It all depends on the local municipality's priorities.

In the case of your community, if they want to focus on building new infrastructure, we will work with them. If they want to focus on designing or doing preliminary work for the building of new infrastructure, we will work with them. If they want to put their money towards repairing the existing infrastructure, we will work with them. We believe that local communities know better what the needs are, and we are here to work with them to support those needs.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Through the chair, Mr. Minister, how do you balance respecting the direction in which municipalities wish to go and leaving the decision-making to them, in terms of the projects that go forward, with your need as a minister to produce infrastructure projects that contribute to the economic foundation of the country and that will help us improve our economy, not only internally, but in terms of international trade as well?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** What I have learned, so far, in my conversations with various partners, is that there is so much in common with what local governments think, what the provinces think, and what we, as a federal government, would like to achieve. It's about tapping into that common interest and common outcomes, and working toward those.

In the three categories where we have new funding that will become available, our outcomes are very clear. We want to focus on public transit to reduce gridlock. We want to focus on social infrastructure to build sustainable, inclusive communities. On the green infrastructure, it's about climate change and building resilient communities. Any project that ties into those three broadly defined outcomes will be supported, as well as under the existing building Canada fund for the projects as well as trade corridors.

I hope that answers your question.

• (1600)

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Do I still have time?

**The Chair:** You have two minutes.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Oh, excellent. Then I have another two-minute question.

The Emerson report that was referenced by my colleague earlier talked about moving rail lines away from existing built-up areas. We have one specifically in South Surrey through White Rock, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe, which follows the coastline, which is subject to impacts of climate change more and more these days: erosion, rock fault, and everything else. Would the green infrastructure funding which is available to help communities be more resilient to climate change possibly be a source of funding, along with others, that could get that rail line relocated?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I am going to ask my DM to talk about the interconnection and collaboration between my department and Transport, because we also shared the DMs until a few days ago. We haven't defined the criteria on green infrastructure yet.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay (Deputy Minister, Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Department of Transport):** The CTA review report includes 60 recommendations, as you know. It is also a report that includes a lot of big talk; the breadth of this report is quite exceptional. It is too early to know exactly what the response to the report would be. Minister Garneau would be consulting and working on what would be the government's response to the report over the next month. Those issues of what to do with this recommendation, as well as the 59 other recommendations, would be considered in that context. I think it's too early to know, to be honest.

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

Mr. Fraser, go ahead.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Minister, for being here. I really do appreciate that you've taken the time.

I am from a place that consists of small towns and rural communities. When we think infrastructure at the federal level, the tendency is to focus on big cities. I know through the meetings with the big city mayors that has been a focus.

Are there any plans that you or the department has to ensure that small towns and rural communities aren't left behind and that their infrastructure needs are met?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, thank you for that question.

You are absolutely right. We will not do one at the cost of the other. Overall, we have committed to invest \$60 billion over 10 years. You will see small communities, mid-size communities, and larger urban centres receive their fair share of the funding.

We also learned in other conversations with other partners that a cookie-cutter approach does not work. We need to have flexibility built into our system, to design our system to meet the varied needs of each community, whether it is smaller, mid-size, or larger. Urban centres have a need for public transit, but smaller communities may have a need for water facilities, a need for a recreational centre, or some other needs that fall under social infrastructure or green infrastructure.

We will design our plan in a way that reflects the diversity of our country and is nimble enough to meet the needs of all communities regardless of their size.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** To follow up on a comment about public transit in my home riding, I know a modest investment in public transit would be transformational. The lack of access to public transit has had a disproportionate impact on people living in poverty, on seniors, and on persons with disabilities. Although this is typically reserved for the bigger cities, is public transit for smaller communities that can't necessarily afford their traditional one-third contribution still going to be on the radar?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** We have very extensive ongoing discussions with mayors from across the country, as well as with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Along with other things we heard from them is the municipalities' capacity to match their share of the one-third funding that has been traditionally required by the federal government. We are listening to them very carefully. We acknowledge the challenges they face. As we develop our new plan for the new money, we will be looking at different options. I don't know what those options are going to be at this time.

I want to make it clear that for the existing funding under the building Canada fund which is midway through implementation, we cannot change that funding formula. Some communities have already received their share at one-third. If we change that midstream, it creates complications for our relationship with the provinces and municipalities. For the new money, we are looking at a different set of arrangements, for how much the federal government should contribute to our municipal infrastructure.

• (1605)

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Thank you. I'd like to shift gears a bit.

I'm approached frequently by NGOs or community organizations in my riding that have a specific infrastructure need that would greatly benefit my own community. Do you have any advice as to how these groups could best access any infrastructure funds? Is it by going through the province? Is it by partnering with the municipality, or is it by reaching out through me to your office directly?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** The process that exists now is that each community will prioritize their own projects through their own internal processes and bring that over to the province. The province will bring that forward to us. That is the process that exists now. As for the new money, we don't know what process or mechanism we're going to develop. For the existing money that is available, if a community has a project they want us to look at, then they need to go through the local community and then the province before it comes to us.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** When you say community, can I assume you mean the municipal government?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** It depends. Sometimes if a municipality is a funding partner, then they promote and advocate that project. In most cases in my experience municipalities are partners in those community-based infrastructures.



**Mr. Sean Fraser:** I will put on your radar then that in my experience there are certain communities that fall within a larger municipality, but because they don't form part of the population centre, they sometimes feel ignored. In your deliberations, I ask that you keep those communities in mind.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Okay.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Do I still have any time, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Half a minute.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** I have a quick question then.

On green infrastructure, you mentioned flood mitigation as a priority. Will there also be room for severe weather protections?

I live in an area that has lots of fishing communities, and often fishermen won't fish out of certain harbours due to choppy waters. Would something like a breakwater that protects against severe weather be possible under the green infrastructure plan?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for sharing that. We will take that into consideration as we develop our plan.

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

Mr. Berthold, for six minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, it's a pleasure to have you here today, along with your team, whom we had the chance to meet with a couple of weeks ago.

I'm going to continue along the same lines as my colleague and discuss small communities in a few moments. But first, I'd like to pick up on something else. When we were studying the supplementary estimates, the committee had the opportunity to hear about the elimination of the Champlain Bridge toll. We learned that the department was to assume another \$4 billion.

Will that money come from the new investments the government is making under its infrastructure plan or from existing funding?

[English]

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that question.

Through you, Madam Chair, I want to assure this committee that no infrastructure dollars from the existing funding or from the new funding are allocated or are thought of being allocated for the Champlain Bridge. The cost of the Champlain Bridge project is already built into the fiscal framework. The tolling revenue would not have gone to pay for the bridge. It would have gone into the general revenues of the government.

The reason we made a commitment to remove the toll from the Champlain Bridge is that it is a replacement bridge, not a new bridge, and it was done without any consultation with local communities, the local mayors, or the local business community. The communities impacted by the toll were not consulted in the design of the toll.

We are going to live up to that commitment to remove the toll from the Champlain Bridge, but there will not be any impact from that on the infrastructure dollars that are available to communities,

whether they're existing dollars or whether they're the new \$60 billion, because everything related to the cost of the Champlain Bridge already has been built into the fiscal framework.

● (1610)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** I have a bit of trouble believing that taking away \$4 billion will have no impact whatsoever. Unless I'm mistaken, the government is going to lose revenue but will have to pay you the same amounts as before.

[English]

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, as I said earlier, the complete cost of building the Champlain Bridge has already been budgeted into the fiscal framework.

The tolling revenue was not designed to be used to pay for the cost of the bridge. The tolling revenue was designed to go to the general revenues of the government, so there is no linkage in that way, and there is no linkage to taking money away from my department's resources to compensate for the lost tolling revenue.

I can ask Helena to perhaps add a little more to that.

[Translation]

**Ms. Helena Borges (Associate Deputy Minister, Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Department of Transport):** As we said two weeks ago, the total cost of the new bridge is already included in the fiscal framework. No additional funding is necessary to cover the costs of the project. It's already been approved. It's already been budgeted into the fiscal framework.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Okay, so we'll ask about the loss of revenue at a different committee. Thank you for your answer.

You talked about the existing building Canada fund. Having been the mayor of a municipality, I'm more familiar with the situation in Quebec. I know how much the building Canada fund can help small communities carry out large projects. Right now, however, obtaining the funding appears to be difficult in Quebec.

Minister, where do things stand in terms of finally giving Quebec's municipalities access to that funding?

[English]

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that. You're absolutely right. The Province of Quebec was allocated almost \$176 million under the small communities component of the existing building Canada fund, but unfortunately, none of that money actually has been invested in any of the communities in the province of Quebec. That is the case in other provinces too.

That is why we are looking at what barriers in the existing program took away the ability of the provinces to actually get their money in a timely manner. We are looking at streamlining our processes. We are looking at removing some of those barriers so that provinces such as Quebec get their fair share of the money from the existing building Canada fund, both for the small communities and also for the provincial-territorial component.

When I took over this department, that's one thing I learned about: what are the reasons that communities are not getting the support they need? We're looking at streamlining and removing some of the barriers that exist so that communities can get the money they need.

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

Mr. Sikand, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here.

I know you're aware of the missing link project. We've also talked about it. In light of today's discussion, I'm trying to plot where it would be on the funding spectrum. Would a project like that fall within the other types of infrastructure in this additional \$60 billion?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** What has happened so far is that I have met with the mayors from the region as well as both the transport minister and my counterpart in the province of Ontario to understand the need for this project. This is a very high priority for area municipalities as well as for the province. We are working to assist them.

There has to be some preliminary work done, not only in looking at where the funding is going to come from, but a lot of work has to be done to facilitate some of the partners to bring them to the table, whether it be CP, CN, or other stakeholders.

That's where we are. We're using the federal government's facilitative role to bring those partners together. Unfortunately, I missed the meeting because I had to attend my father's funeral.

Maybe the deputy minister could give you an update on the meeting between Transport and some of the other stakeholders.

• (1615)

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** It's a very good question. It's a bit premature to know.

We're going to have to see the development of the project and suggest that it be included in public transit. Some see it more as a transportation corridor which would be beyond public transit. We will need more discussion to see the detail of the project before assuming which envelopes can actually take it. When the project is further developed, we will see how it will fit inside those different envelopes.

One thing that is sure, as the minister said, we've been engaging with Ontario over the last few months on this one and it's clearly one that we want to look at in detail. As you know, it's big and very complex.

We're also going to have to understand the first steps. There's the work with the railways and there's an environmental assessment that will also have to happen. We'll have to dig further in terms of the project before knowing exactly the envelope and the time frame.

**Mr. Gagan Sikand:** I have a second question. What changes will Infrastructure Canada implement that are intended to improve the transparency and speed of the approval process for existing infrastructure projects?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** One of the things I mentioned is the removal of P3 screening which will streamline some of the processes. We are looking at when and how the announcements

are made and how they tie into the readiness of the communities to deliver on those projects. We are also looking at making some changes that will actually reflect the needs of each province. What works for Ontario doesn't work for Saskatchewan. What works for Saskatchewan doesn't work for British Columbia. We can't have a one approach fits all situations.

Those are the things we are exploring. Hopefully, the next time I come to this committee, I'll be able to give you more concrete examples of what we are doing. We are having those consultations at various departmental levels.

Our goal is to ensure that it should not take as much time as it takes now to get projects approved. Once they're approved, we should be actually flowing money to the communities as quickly as possible. How we do that is something that we are discussing.

**Mr. Gagan Sikand:** Thank you, Minister, for the answers.

**The Chair:** Mr. Arnold.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the minister for being here today and making his time available. I offer my condolences on the loss of your father.

Local governments typically know their local needs the best. It sounds like these decisions are going to need to pass multiple levels of approval, first at the municipal level, and then the provincial level, and now at your level. Is that correct? Maybe you can explain it a little further.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, the way the current process works is that local communities prioritize what the project is, and they go through their approval process. Then it goes to the provinces, and then it comes to us.

We require additional information. Sometimes it's appropriate information that we need. Sometimes it's duplicate information that we ask for. That is what we are looking at when we talk about streamlining and where we can reduce some of the unnecessary things.

We don't hold projects if they're complete, if they're ready to go, if the funding is in place, and if the criteria is met. My goal is that we will be developing some performance measurements and standards soon in order to measure our performance against those standards.

We want to get the projects approved as quickly as possible, keeping in mind we want to make sure our objectives are met and we're putting money where money should go. The projects should be worthy projects. They should not just be projects that come to us regardless of what outcomes they will achieve.

You are right that in some cases there are multiple layers of screening that are sometimes unnecessary. We are looking at how we can streamline some of those things.

• (1620)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you.

A word change I've picked up on as the budget speech came out was that the focus seems to be away from transportation and on to transit. As a rural MP, and I've spoken with other rural MPs, we're concerned. We want to be sure that some of the transit or transportation needs in other areas of the province outside of our urban centres are of equal focus.

We have some transportation corridors we have been improving upon, but they continue to need improvement because of the cost of building them.

Can you elaborate a little more on how you're going to look at those projects as well?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that questions.

Through you, Madam Chair, the new money, the \$60 billion, is allocated for three strategic outcomes: public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

In the existing money that is available, which is about \$13 billion, there are resources available in that funding envelope for transportation projects, including roadway projects. We are looking at the list we get from the provinces. They prioritize. They have the ability to do so. If a province determines they need to put that money toward building a bridge, then they can do that. If they feel that money needs to go toward building their transit system, then they have the ability to do so. We don't determine where the money goes. It's money allocated to the provinces, and they determine what their priorities are.

There is about \$13 billion available that can go toward transportation infrastructure based on the needs of the local communities.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** To clarify, is that existing money?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** That is the existing building Canada fund that is available now, which was initiated in 2014.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Okay. If I can continue then, is the new funding all going to transit, not transportation?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** The \$20 billion over 10 years is going to transit, but if you look at the Prime Minister's mandate letter, it asked me to refocus the existing building Canada fund toward transportation and trade corridors.

Having \$20 billion available for public transit in the new money makes the existing money available for other transportation needs. If the new money was not available, then different players would have been fighting for that pot of money, that \$13 billion, for different needs, such as public transit needs, roadway needs, drainage needs, or recreational facility needs.

What would end up happening is that the additional \$60 billion would reduce pressure on the existing \$13 billion that we can refocus toward supporting more transportation infrastructure.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Duncan for three minutes.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Thank you.

I'm happy to see that you are proposing a national housing strategy, which our party has long called for and the FCM has called for. I'm sure you were part of that, Minister.

It would be my understanding that your ministry would take the lead on a national housing strategy, regardless of whether a good part of it would include affordable housing which, as your staff has been trying to explain to me, is under Minister Duclos. Of course it also affects aboriginal communities and northern communities.

Could you tell me whether you are moving forward on your national housing strategy, who you are going to engage in that, what it will include, and how much of that you are going to lead?

• (1625)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, it's a shared responsibility between my department and Minister Duclos' department. His department is taking the lead in engaging the stakeholders for the design of the national housing strategy. I'm there to support his initiatives. We can provide you with more information on that, the stage they are at, at this time, but it is Mr. Duclos' area that is taking the lead on developing that long-term strategy, as well as the different components to it. They're included in the mandate letter, whether it's supporting co-ops, or restoring the subsidies that were lost, or that will basically be transitioned if they're not restored. It's his department that is taking the lead.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I would appreciate, Mr. Minister, some kind of follow-up information—

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** We will.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** —explaining that, because when I look at one-third of your \$20 billion for housing, for seniors, shelters and so forth, I presume that would include co-operatives. As you're aware, there are eight co-operatives in my riding. They're very concerned that the agreement on supporting those is disappearing

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Yes.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Even though your mandate letter says that you will work on the national housing strategy, do we need to be speaking to a different minister?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** We will get back to you on that, because I can't give you the answer. It's a shared responsibility. One thing the Prime Minister expects from all of us as ministers is to work collaboratively and together with each ministry to fulfill the mandate that Canadians have given us. Housing is one of them, and developing a national strategy around housing is a high priority for our government, and is a priority for all Canadians, I would say. You've been advocating that for a long time; I appreciate that. FCM has been doing that as well.

We will get back to you on where we are on that and give you an update as we proceed.

**The Chair:** Ms. Watts, for six minutes.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Thank you very much.

I want to understand a bit of the process. I know that when the building Canada fund came into being, the consultation process included a steering committee of 33 infrastructure experts, 200 partners, 12 ministerial round tables, 18 written submissions, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. That consultation process was undertaken. The federal government supported more than 43,000 projects across Canada. Of these, 688 were green infrastructure projects, and 33 were public transit projects. In the communities component, now under the building Canada fund, over 900 projects were approved, of which 590 are completed and 410 are in process. We were ranked second among the G7 countries for public infrastructure investments.

I know that it's important to keep the whole program going and moving forward, so I'm glad to see there are some significant alignments. I go back to our green infrastructure program, which was waste-water infrastructure and green energy, and I see that under the mandate letter those coincide and some of these things are getting built upon. Is it the intent to redo all of the consultation process with all of the work that's been done, or build on the successes that we've already had?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, I think some of the references you are making are related to the old building Canada fund. There are too many building Canada funds. One was designed in 2008-09 and then there was another in 2014. Sometimes the public gets confused about which one we are we talking about.

To your question, what we want to do for the existing Canada building fund, which is the new building Canada fund started in 2014, is look at where some of the challenges were. We're not going to go back and do over the whole program. That's not going to serve us, and it doesn't serve the communities. What we want to do is look at where some of the challenges are and remove those challenges. One of them is in P3, and another one, which you identified, is the different layers of analysis that have to be done for projects. The other one was how the rural communities access—

• (1630)

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** One of the biggest issues, long-standing even back then, I think, has been the conflict in the priorities of the provincial government, the priorities of the cities, and the priorities of the federal government. I'd like to understand how you will square that one.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Well, thank you for that. You served as a mayor for many, many years, so if you have any ideas you can share with me....

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** I think we should take the middleman out and just go.... Yes, and that would be the province.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I would love to hear from you on those ideas.

But you have identified a problem that we will have to solve. I don't know what the solution will be.

One thing I have been working hard to do is to build a strong relationship with all players, with all partners, our municipal partners and our provincial and territorial partners. The more we can bring

them together at the same table to talk about these issues, maybe there's a way for us to streamline.

We can't get the middleman out—

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Yes, and good luck with that.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** —because it is a constitutional right, but I think there's a desire to work together.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Right.

I have a last question before I run out of time. What's your national tolling policy? It seems different depending on what province you're in, so I'm just curious.

**Ms. Helena Borges:** We have a tolling policy for the federal government, for the federal assets, but each jurisdiction does its own tolling policy, as you're suggesting, because most of the roads are owned by provincial governments, not the federal government.

Most of our assets tend to be bridges. We have tolls on pretty well all of our international bridges. We don't have tolls on our domestic bridges, which are the bridges in Montreal primarily.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Will you be looking at an overall road pricing strategy in conjunction with provincial governments?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** Yes, that would have to be in conjunction with the provinces.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Yes.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** It's more in their responsibility. But it's an interesting idea.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Is that a yes or a no?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** No, it's not a yes.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** I'm trying....

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** First of all, I'm not going to abolish the provinces, and second, I would respect their areas of jurisdiction. As you know, some municipalities have started talking about this issue over the past while.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** When you look at the cost of infrastructure not only within the jurisdiction of the provinces, but right across Canada, the cost of maintenance and upkeep is significant for everybody. The road pricing makes it fair and equitable for everyone, as opposed to....

Ken and I have had this conversation for years. It seems to me that this would be a way to generate...and it's done, it's a best practice all over the world, except for some provinces in Canada.

I'll leave it at that.

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

Mr. Iacono, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

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

I'd like to welcome the minister and his team, and thank them for being with us today.

My question pertains to the Champlain Bridge.

As per your mandate letter, the new Champlain Bridge will be toll-free, requiring changes to the project agreement. In addition, the federal government will have to compensate the private consortium for lost toll revenue, on top of other costs associated with the bridge over the 34-year agreement.

Does the federal government also plan to remove the toll on the federally owned Confederation Bridge between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island?

[English]

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, we have committed to removing the tolling infrastructure that would have been built on the Champlain Bridge. We have communicated that to our private consortium, the partners who are building that piece of infrastructure. We are in the middle of negotiations in order to achieve that.

As far as removing the tolling on the Confederation Bridge is concerned, it is a new bridge, I understand. It wasn't a replacement bridge. I think the federal policy calls for having a toll charged on a new piece of infrastructure, not a replacement piece of infrastructure. I think that's the distinction between the Champlain Bridge and the other bridge, or the Gordie Howe bridge, for example, because that is also a new piece of infrastructure.

• (1635)

[Translation]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** That was precisely my next question.

What is the federal government's intention with respect to tolling on the federal Gordie Howe International Bridge between Windsor and Detroit? Will it be the same?

[English]

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** It is. A toll will be charged on the Gordie Howe crossing from Windsor to Detroit. It's a much needed building project. Almost \$100 billion of trade crosses that crossing each year.

If we want to grow our trade, we need to build that bridge. It's critical that we continue to move forward on that, but it will be a cost recovery, and the toll will be revenue generated by the users of the bridge. That will compensate some of the costs of the bridge. There will be a toll on it, yes.

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

Ms. Duncan.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I have a very quick question about the 50%. I think one of my colleagues has already raised the question.

Through you, Madam Chair, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities wanted the portion from the federal government to be increased to 50%. Of course, we have number of jurisdictions, including the jurisdiction of Alberta and others, that depend on resource revenue and are struggling and probably can't provide the one-third.

I think that somebody asked the question—certainly, the mayor of my city has raised it—of whether the federal government will move to increase to 50% for projects and to cover full capital costs.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Through you, Madam Chair, as I said earlier, we have heard from municipalities across the nation that their capacity to match one-third of the funding required for any project is very limited. As you know, and as many of the people who have been part of the municipal councils or pay attention to municipal needs know, they collect less than about 10¢ of every tax dollar that we Canadians pay in taxes.

We understand that limitation in their capacity to match funding, but what would that additional support be from the federal government? We want to design that in consultation with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We want to do that in consultation with the cities, as well as the provinces. We can provide additional support, but there are more resources required at the other end, too. For example, provinces still need to contribute. Even though the municipal portion may go down, provinces still need to be at the table.

The approach I am taking is not a top-heavy approach where I impose the solutions. I think that would fail. What we need to do is work with them and see what the appropriate level of support is from the federal government, and then do that in consultation and collaboration with them.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I read very closely the Emerson report. Of course, some of it crosses into your portfolio, Mr. Minister.

I was particularly interested in the section on the north. It seems there are two conflicting interests and recommendations there. One is saying that we should hear from the people of the north, including the indigenous communities, on what the priorities should be for infrastructure dollars. An opposing one says that what we should do is prioritize some nation-building projects.

I wonder where you're going to fall on that. My colleague spoke about smaller communities, and of course, that's what they are in Canada's north. They also have critical issues dealing with climate mitigation and so forth. How will we make sure they get their fair share of the pie?

• (1640)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that question. Through you, Madam Chair, I will comment on the capacity issue, and I will ask the deputy minister to talk more about the Emerson report.

We have heard from our territorial partners and had conversations with some of my colleagues from northern communities. Again, this ties into the existing building Canada fund. We are looking at some options for how we work the small communities component and the provincial-territorial component. We can possibly combine them.

Every community in the north is a small community. Having a provincial program that has a different set of requirements and having a small communities program that has a different set of requirements doesn't make sense. We are looking at this, and we are having some conversations with them about how we can actually improve that and maybe bring two programs together.

Another thing that we have for the north is a federal contribution of almost 75% for all projects, and the territories contribute 25%. Another relates to the design capacity of northern communities. We can do some of the planning work that is sometimes difficult for them to do.

We're listening to them and we're working with them to have that flexibility that I talked about earlier. I want to repeat that the cookie-cutter approach is not something that is helping diverse communities.

**The Chair:** You have one minute left, Ms. Duncan.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I have a quick question. Maybe your deputy can answer. It's the question of when is "north" north? I also noticed that in the report they recognize that for some of northern Ontario, Quebec, the prairie provinces, and maybe even B.C., there are isolated aboriginal communities that have problems with ice roads and so forth. I'm wondering if you're looking at those together.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Yes, we are.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** Yes. Most of the time when we say "the north" we talk about the territories, because of the special relationship we have with them, as you know, from a constitutional perspective and a historical perspective. But there's the issue of remote communities. That would apply to the north of Quebec, the north of Newfoundland and Labrador, of course, and it would apply to the north of Manitoba, for example.

On your questions on the Emerson report, I'm not sure that it's actually a contradiction. I think what the report is saying is that you need to hear the needs of the community, but if you want to answer their needs, you're going to need national projects in some cases. For example, if you do transportation corridors, how do they benefit the small communities there? If they increase traffic—maritime traffic happens in the north, as some suggest—what would be the consequence of this development on the small communities?

One thing he mentioned is also about passengers in the north and the cost for transportation. He kind of admitted, given the small communities and the size of the communities, that it needs a national kind of support in that aspect.

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

Mr. Badawey.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Once again, I appreciate the questions and comments.

I was a mayor for the past 14 years, and I'm sure some of my colleagues have been for quite some time as well. We recognize the needs. Quite frankly, again, congratulations on being very consistent with those needs. You're listening not only to the FCM and to some extent the provincial organizations, but obviously, based on your comments and your answers, you're hearing a lot from the mayors of big and small communities. Again, in terms of your comments, it's consistent with what they're saying.

In regard to focusing, this is what we hear a lot of at the municipal level. We hear about focusing on how infrastructure investments are becoming economic enablers, not only with respect to economic development but also with respect to sustainability within our communities, within asset management, lifespan, repair and maintenance, and of course, eventually and inevitably, replacement.

As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Minister, with respect to transportation, for example, transportation corridors and investing in those areas, ports, and of course border regions and border gateways, you once again correctly identified in your comments and answers

additional investments that lend themselves to economic sustainability.

With that, Mr. Minister, the 2016-17 main estimates propose a 5% decrease in the planned spending by the Jacques Cartier and Champlain bridges, as was mentioned earlier, incorporated with a related reduction in the project scope for repairs to the ice-control structure and the Bonaventure Expressway. In what manner did the project scope for repairs to the ice-control structure and the Bonaventure Expressway decrease?

• (1645)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I'll get my staff to comment on some of the technical and detailed financial aspects of your question, but I want to make one point. The way the funding flows for projects is different for capital projects than it is for operational projects. The capital projects take multiple years to finish, so money might be allocated in one year but may not be spent that year. It may be transferred over to the next year, and then it gets re-profiled in the next year.

That way, some of the numbers don't match in that sense, even though the overall project cost is the same and the amount of money being spent is the same. How much money gets spent in year one, year two, year three, or year four differs from year to year, depending on when the bills come in from other partners.

I'll ask the staff members to comment on some of the detailed numbers in the estimates.

**Ms. Helena Borges:** In fact, it's exactly what the minister is saying. The scope of the project hasn't changed; it's when the money is actually being utilized that it's being re-profiled to a forward year. In these big projects, often just the weather gets in the way. Unfortunately, during certain periods of time in the year, you can't do the work that you had planned to do, so it has to be deferred to the following year.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you.

In the same vein, the 2016 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card says that 62% of large municipalities, 56% of medium-sized municipalities, and 35% of small municipalities reported having formalized asset management plans, more towards the capital side, as well as, I'm sure, during that time frame, looking at lifespan as well as replacement. Those plans include bridges and roads, all the way down to water and sewer and CSO programs, and again, both capital and operational.

To what extent will Infrastructure Canada's work on enhancing municipal capacity in asset management take into account these different and existing asset management capacities? That's question number one.

Question number two, what are some practical ways in which those requirements for formalized asset management plans can be imposed on recipients of federal infrastructure funding?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I want to acknowledge the work that the FCM did on this report in identifying the gap in the repairs that have to be done in existing infrastructure. It also identified the lack of capacity on the part of municipalities to do the asset management or proper planning, in addition to having proper data to analyze all that information. Some municipalities have done a good job, and some have not. It's these kinds of investments that get reduced when times are tough.

We want to look at the role the federal government can play, where municipalities can rely on us to have that support, where they can actually dedicate resources to do the kind of analysis that is necessary to understand the state of the infrastructure they have.

As MP Watts mentioned earlier, on the maintenance of the infrastructure, optimization of the infrastructure, and how we actually pay for that infrastructure, municipalities need to grapple with those questions in order to build long-term sustainable plans. We want to assist them by providing some sort of dedicated support that will enable them to draw from the federal capacity to do that kind of analysis.

If we don't do that... I fundamentally believe in this. Our department officials have had quite a bit of back and forth discussions. We need to understand the state of infrastructure repairs in each community. Otherwise, we will never be able to deal with the big deficit that we have in infrastructure. We don't even know how big that deficit is. Different reports tell us different things. We need to have better data. We need to build the capacity of communities. Hopefully, through this budget process and discussions, we will be able to show some support to municipalities in order to do so.

• (1650)

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

Mr. Hardie.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Like many members, I spent some time at home last week. I was very pleased to have a visit from our local YMCA. I was surprised to find out that as an organization, it is probably the number one provider of child care across Canada. It has wonderful facilities and really good staff.

As my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock indicated, everybody is looking for a direct pipeline to the federal government to make their appeal for some very worthy projects. Understandably, we have to follow protocol, but I'm asking for some advice.

What can I say to the folks from the YMCA? What kind of mechanism would it follow, or could I follow as its representative, to ensure that its voice is heard when it comes time to allocate funding for things like child care?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** One of the things we have done is to meet with various stakeholders from the housing sector. I understand that Minister Duclos' area is also engaging the non-profit sector to seek their input into the design of not only the housing strategy but also the long-term early learning care strategy.

I can take that back with me. Thank you for that suggestion. This is something we have to grapple with. If we want to support local community infrastructure, how do we engage with non-profit sectors

that provide the kind of facilities and services you're talking about, that align with what we want to do as a federal government under social infrastructure, whether it's housing or child care facilities? I'll take that back to Minister Duclos and convey it to him. I'm pretty sure he's doing that already.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Thank you, Minister.

I have a further question, and this may be a far more difficult one. We obviously want to accomplish things with this heavy investment, and I asked you a little earlier about ways that we could see these investments produce results that help build the economy, etc. When the Prime Minister spoke in Edmonton almost a year ago at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities—he wasn't Prime Minister yet, but he was working on it—you didn't have to have a picture of the mayors to see them nod when he talked about predictable funding.

Predictable funding can extend not just beyond the municipalities as they go through their procurement, but the benefits extend to the people they do business with. For instance, in my former life in metro Vancouver's transportation authority, we were often sensitive to the sudden influx of orders that we would place with Nova Bus or New Flyer, or with a shipyard to build a new SeaBus.

One of the things that could come from predictable funding is predictable orders. I'm wondering if there's been some discussion that would see that kind of ripple effect go through to our manufacturing sector.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** We haven't done that kind of analysis yet, but you raise a very valuable point.

Long-term, sustainable, predictable funding not only assists the municipalities to plan for the long term, but also execute those plans for the long term, because it gives them predictability.

It also ties in to the economy as well. If our businesses know that in a certain community an investment into public transit will be done over a number of years or over a 10-year plan, then they can definitely build that capacity to bid on those projects because they know work will be available for those 10 years. It's the same thing with social housing and waste-water drainage.

You're absolutely right, and we can definitely do some analysis on that and how it sustains economic growth and how it helps us live with the downturn as well.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** So we don't get the dolphin effect.

I have one final quick question. What is the state of P3s in the country? We removed the screening, but do we have a lot of capital sitting there waiting to participate in that manner?

• (1655)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** You can touch base on that, but we can get back to you.

I understand about \$200 million is left in the P3 Canada fund. It was a \$2-billion program over a number of years, but the vast majority of the money has already been allocated.

One thing I want to show every one of you is that our removal of the P3 condition is not affecting any of the projects that are under way or that have been signed. Again, it's the local communities' decision. There are no additional requirements on municipalities to do this and there's no impact whatsoever on existing or future projects.

A few hundred million are left in the P3 and P3 Canada still exists, and municipalities can still apply to that corporation for funding.

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

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have one last question about tolling and the Champlain Bridge.

There was something that had slipped my mind, and now I've put my finger on it. Negotiations are under way with the Signature on the St. Lawrence Group regarding the elimination of the toll. My understanding was that the \$4 billion represented the cost of the construction over the next few years.

What still has to be negotiated with the Signature on the St. Lawrence Group?

[*English*]

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I'll ask my associate deputy minister to answer that question.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Helena Borges:** The agreement with the private sector covered the toll infrastructure that had to be built, such as the gates and electronic system. But since the bridge is going to be toll-free, those items are going to be deleted from the contract and the government will save some money on project construction.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** So an amount of money that could be called a penalty, or what have you, may be paid to the Signature on the St. Lawrence Group because that component will not be implemented.

**Ms. Helena Borges:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** That's what's being negotiated as we speak.

**Ms. Helena Borges:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Do you have an idea of the amount that could entail?

**Ms. Helena Borges:** Not yet. I should mention that, during project planning, some elements may have already been included and amounts may have already been committed. We are talking dollars, as we speak. That is the focus of the negotiations.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Now I have an overview. Thank you.

Minister, earlier, my colleague Mr. Fraser brought up small communities and their concern that the three priorities identified under the plan appear to focus on cities.

I've spoken with a few of my old mayor colleagues in Quebec, and they are somewhat concerned that they'll be forgotten under this extensive infrastructure plan. I would just like to point out that these people are very anxious for support, especially since, as mentioned earlier, small communities in Quebec have yet again received nothing. So they are extremely worried. You ought to give them some reassurance regarding the federal government's involvement in these projects under your new plan.

I have here studies from the Union des municipalités du Québec showing that municipalities' contribution to infrastructure projects corresponds to about 70% of the cost, even though municipalities are the only ones whose investment does not bring in any tax revenue. They don't collect taxes from the construction workers involved in the projects. They are really contributing 100%.

You were a city councillor, so you know that municipalities don't see a return on their investment. I'd say they're expecting the federal government to give them a break in its next plan.

Funding has to be planned quickly if municipalities are to be ready. Can you go so far as to tell us what level of involvement you're expecting from small towns under your new plan?

[*English*]

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** The changes we will make in consultation with the FCM and other partners to the matching funding requirement from one-third to whatever the new level will be will benefit all communities, big communities, small communities, and mid-size communities. Every community will benefit from that.

There are needs in small communities that currently are not being met for water, waste water, flood mitigation, and for other things they need to do. I want to make clear that under the three new streams of funding—social, green infrastructure, and transit infrastructure—they'll be able to access funding from green infrastructure; they'll be able to access funding from social infrastructure, and they'll be able to continue to access funding from the building Canada fund. We're also making some changes there to allow them more flexibility to access more funding from the building Canada fund.

What I can assure you of moving forward, for the design of the new money, we will provide support to all communities, regardless of their size. We will treat all communities fairly, regardless of their size. We will provide them with funding based on their local needs, on the priorities they have identified.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Earlier, you mentioned efforts to cut needless steps out of the process, as part of the new plan currently being developed. Sometimes, certain steps involving the provinces may seem unnecessary, but they are nevertheless there. Getting infrastructure funding to small communities more quickly is quite the challenge, Minister. I think all of us who represent rural communities are going to do everything we can to help you get that money flowing directly.



Small communities have done a lot, they've invested a lot, and their capacity to pay is diminishing right now. Under the last fund, their debt level rose significantly, particularly in Quebec. Municipalities have made tremendous contributions to infrastructure funding. Your new plan—

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Berthold, perhaps you could end your question, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Yes.

Will your new plan still impose a financial obligation on communities?

[English]

**The Chair:** Just a short answer, Minister.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that question.

Through you, Madam Chair, part of my mandate letter is about the creation of the infrastructure bank. This is what I envision the role of the bank will be. How do we support municipal infrastructure where municipalities don't have the capacity to borrow, or if they borrow, they borrow at a higher rate? What role can the federal government play to give them low-cost loans or loan guarantees over a number of years, so they can do their matching in cases where they don't have the capacity to match?

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

Mr. Sikand.

**Mr. Gagan Sikand:** We're currently living in an era of drones. There's an app for everything. I notice that in your mandate letter, you were tasked to assist the Minister of Public Safety. I was wondering what the government currently has in place and will have in place to protect critical infrastructure from cyber-attacks.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for that question, because that is part of the mandate. My staff had some initial discussions with Minister Goodale's staff on this, because we want to make sure that, as this is being done, we put in place mechanisms to protect our infrastructure from cyber-attacks.

Maybe the deputy minister will want to talk a little bit more about where we are on this.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** Minister Goodale would be better placed to tell you what other measures are in place. Our role is to support him. I know that Minister Goodale is thinking about having consultations on cyber-attacks in the next month.

More important for us is the critical infrastructure. Especially for the projects we fund, we want to know what the critical infrastructure is, how we can identify it, and how we can make sure that the proponents, the people who own that infrastructure, know about the risk. Working with Public Safety would be essential to do that.

• (1705)

**Mr. Gagan Sikand:** I don't have a follow-up question.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Members, when you have your five or six minutes, you can share that time with one of your other colleagues, if you so choose.

Mr. Fraser, did you want to share some of Mr. Sikand's time?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Sure. I'm happy to jump in, and I don't think I need the full six minutes.

Following up on the line of questioning on the Canadian infrastructure bank, I think this is a unique idea that could benefit small communities.

Can you provide any guidelines that will help small communities with regard to what kinds of projects they might get low-cost financing for through the infrastructure bank?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** At this time I cannot say which projects will qualify or not. We are at a very preliminary stage in working with Minister Morneau's office on this. This responsibility is shared between my department and Minister Morneau's finance department.

The idea or the principle behind it is, first of all, to recognize the capacity issues of municipalities, and then to create a resource they can tap into to access those loans. If we identify any other issues in consultation with them, we will have other consultations for the design of the infrastructure bank. We will engage the private sector. We will engage municipalities. We will definitely engage and seek input from you, if you have any ideas on that.

I can't tell you which projects, but the principle is that we have recognized the capacity issue and we want to tackle the capacity issue through the creation of the infrastructure bank.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Sure. You mentioned consultations with the private sector. Is it possible that the infrastructure bank would potentially provide financing to private enterprise, or is it restricted to municipalities?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I can't comment on that at this time, because we don't know what the scope of the infrastructure bank is going to be.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** That's fine. I wanted to make sure that my understanding met yours and potentially that in the mandate letter.

I'd like to shift gears briefly, if I have another moment or two.

**The Chair:** You have two minutes.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Thank you.

I'm a member of the status of women committee as well, and I know that at home for me, there is a need to increase the number of women's transition shelters. I know that is part of the responsibility you share with the Minister of Status of Women.

What efforts have you made to collaborate with the Minister of Status of Women to accomplish this end?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Thank you for your question.

Through you, Madam Chair, we consulted with a vast majority of members of Parliament and with cabinet colleagues about the new money. One of the areas that Minister Hajdu has identified is investment into transitional homes—shelters as well as transitional homes—where there's long-term support available for anyone fleeing domestic violence.

The cost to the economy of not investing into that area is huge. It's about \$7 billion that our economy loses each year because we don't have enough places for women to go. Imagine the hardship on them and their families with the loss of their potential, the loss of the economic potential, and the way they can contribute to building the kind of communities that we all desire to live in. It is about helping those individuals, but it's also about building a society that we can all take pride in. It ties into the economic success of our society.

I am really passionate about it, as is Minister Hajdu and many of the other people at the table. We need to invest in this infrastructure in order to provide the proper support to women and children fleeing domestic violence. We are working very closely with her department on that and with Minister Duclos' department as well. This is a shared responsibility included in the mandate letter from the Prime Minister.

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

Mr. Arnold.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to ask the minister about the criteria around the decision to move the expenditures of the Champlain Bridge basically into general expense rather than recover it through tolls. Would the same criteria apply to an infrastructure project, say in western Canada, the Trans-Canada Highway that moves goods and people from all of Canada to our western shores and back? Would the same type of criteria apply there and would the funding flow on an equal level with that corridor being, in some opinions, far more important?

• (1710)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Let me make this absolutely clear. It was not my decision or this government's decision to flow the tolling revenue from the Champlain Bridge into the general revenue. That decision was made when this project was procured. The whole procurement process was designed in a way that all the cost of building the bridge, maintaining the bridge, and paying the interest to the private sector were built into the capital budget and the fiscal framework. There was a decision made at that time that all the tolling revenue would go into the general revenue and not be tied into the Champlain Bridge. It wasn't a decision that this government made as to where those resources would go.

On any particular project that you have in western Canada that is similar to that, please bring that to our attention, and I'll be able to give you a more informed answer. I can't just speculate on a hypothetical situation, but if you have a particular project in mind, please share that with us and we will provide more information relating to that particular project and where it fits into the subject of tolling.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you.

I'll share the rest of my time with Ms. Watts.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Thank you very much.

I have two questions.

We know that the federal waste-water regulations have changed and that a lot of our regional authorities and some cities have to upgrade their systems. They will need \$3.4 billion to meet one of the targets and an additional \$14.6 for the full compliance. Is there going

to be a special fund set up to meet those federal requirements for cities and regions?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** It is my understanding that municipalities will have to comply with federal regulations by 2020 or 2021.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** But there's a huge cost implication.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** One of the reasons we designed the green infrastructure fund is to assist municipalities to invest in water and waste-water infrastructure. With \$20 billion over the next 10 years, the municipalities will qualify for funding under that funding envelope in order for them to upgrade their water and waste-water facilities.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** I asked the question because a green infrastructure fund was set up way back in 2009 and waste-water infrastructure was under that.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** This is different.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** That's what I mean. Is it different and will you be adding additional dollars for the compliance of these regulations?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** The whole \$20 billion in green infrastructure—

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Yes.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** —part of that is to build the capacity of the municipalities to comply with federal regulations.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Perfect.

In terms of domestic violence, which you were just talking about, would those dollars flow from the federal government to the provincial government? It's under the mandate and jurisdiction of the provincial government to build transition housing, shelters, all of those things. I know—as I'm sure do many mayors around here—the struggle in terms of getting those facilities built in a community. Would you earmark those dollars for that specific mandate?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** We are at a very early stage on the allocation of the funding in terms of where and how much should go for each of the categories that qualify for funding under social infrastructure, which is \$20 billion over 10 years, but this is a need that has been identified and we are keenly aware of that need.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Yes, it's been a need for a very long time, but the challenge always has been getting the dollars out of the provincial government to make sure that those facilities are built and those measures are undertaken.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Some of these shelters and transitional homes are provided by the non-profit sector; some are provided by the municipalities, and some are provided by the provinces.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Operationally, not capitally.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I'm talking about capital dollars, because we don't support operational.

• (1715)

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** I understand that.

**The Chair:** Time is up again.

Ms. Duncan.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I have a follow-up question. It's, an interesting one that relates to when we're building infrastructure that crosses international borders. I understand Windsor-Detroit is now called Gordie Howe. Am I right about that?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Yes.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I'm told there were some problems in building the access way, the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway, that they had to reinstall some of the work because it was based on Canadian construction code standards. One concern being raised with me is whether the Government of Canada is going to make sure that the aspects of going forward with the bridge are going to be compliant with Canadian code. The second question is, are we going to face delays and are we still in negotiations for the purchase of the lands on the U.S. side?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** That's more of a technical question and I'm going to defer to my associate, Helena.

**Ms. Helena Borges:** To answer your question about complying with the Canadian bridge code, yes, the project on the Canadian side will comply with the Canadian bridge code. The part of the project on the U.S. side will of course comply with the bridge code in the U.S. They are very similar, so there's not a big discrepancy.

What you're referring to on the parkway was that it did comply; it's just that the steel that was used on the...the concrete that was produced was not compliant with what Ontario had requested. But it did comply with the code.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I understand that's a P3 project. Is the government going to intervene to make sure we don't run into those problems again on safety?

**Ms. Helena Borges:** Yes.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** We've had a few problems with bridges in my city, which I won't dwell on, Mr. Minister. We want to make sure that it's top quality work.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** It's all being recorded.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Not to name any particular bridges....

I want to go back to green infrastructure. Why is it that we only have allocated one-third of the money for green infrastructure? Why are we not applying those kinds of criteria for all of the work the federal government is going to fund, whether it's energy efficient housing...? I'm happy to see you have a separate fund for transit, which is of course totally green, but I'm wondering what kind of screening you're going to be providing for all the other funding that your government is going to be allocating.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** What I can do at this time is talk about the high-level goals we want to achieve through these investments. One of them is to grow the economy and make our economy more productive and efficient. The other goal we want to achieve is environmental sustainability and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The third goal is to build inclusive communities. Everything needs to come together. Investments that we will make into public transit not only will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but they will also deal with building inclusive communities by providing people access to public transit where they can go to work and meet with their friends, and access recreational facilities. It's the social mobility aspect of public transit.

**The Chair:** The time is up.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** The second is social infrastructure which ties into green as well—retrofits for example.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Portable housing.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Yes.

**The Chair:** We have a few minutes left. Is there anyone else who still has questions?

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** It is very rare, Minister, that we have a minister for two hours, and you've made very interesting comments.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** If everyone agrees, we can go longer.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will continue for another seven minutes.

Go ahead, Ms. Watts.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Thank you. I just wanted to go back to the issue around specifically earmarking funds for federal priorities and the challenge of aligning everybody. Many of the things you are talking about are things that cities would determine unto themselves in terms of how they want to shape a city, how they build a community, all of the engagement pieces. Is there a plan to take the municipal strategies and plans, overlay them with the provincial plans, overlay that with the federal plans, and come up with a master plan on some of these issues?

● (1720)

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** That's an excellent question, because we are grappling with that, too, as we are looking at streamlining some of the existing money, the building Canada fund, as well as how we design the new plan, and where the alignments are with a province, a municipality, and us. But we do leave the prioritization of the projects to local communities. We won't tell communities which projects they should build, right?

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** Right.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** We will look for, as I said earlier, the outcomes that we want to achieve.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** For sure.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** It's those outcomes tied to the three areas that I talked about.

**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:** In our area, and Ken will attest to this as well, the Massey bridge is a number one priority for the provincial government. For every mayor in the region it's not. They want public transit. They want a transit system that will be robust. You're at an absolute impasse right there. These are not little projects. They cost billions and billions of dollars.

I come back to how you're going to look at squaring that. That's why when we did the gas fund it went directly to municipalities so they could get going on their priorities. Typically the other dollars have gone via the province, so that's the mechanism that has to change. I don't know how you're going to do that, so I'll throw that back at you.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** You have identified a challenge that we would have to overcome. How do all these three orders of government and their priorities align with each other?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** Constructive tension.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** Constructive tension, my DM says.

One of the things I have been able to convey to all of my partners and stakeholders is that we want to have very open lines of communication. Let's sit down at the same table, talk to each other, see how we can work these things out. Some we'll be able to solve and some we won't be able to solve. It's going to be that ongoing collaboration and spirit of working together. In some cases we will be able to achieve results. We'll see how we proceed on this.

This is a tension that we have identified, and we are aware of it. You know that, right, Ms. Watts? You lived through that—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. We have time for one more three-minute round.

Mr. Badawey.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Once again, thank you, Mr. Minister.

Dianne, I have to say a lot of your questions are bang on in terms of some of those challenges that we're going to have.

With that, I just want to drill a bit deeper on a question that I asked earlier, on my first question with respect to developing a comprehensive, long-term, 20-year to 30-year transportation infrastructure plan that's been identified within the Emerson report, the Canada Transportation Act review. What I mean by drilling a bit deeper is that it does recommend a 20-year to 30-year transportation infrastructure plan. Mr. Minister, in your opinion, does that give consideration to the establishment of a national transportation strategy? There's a short answer by the way, and there's a long answer.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I can't give you the answer because this is Minister Garneau's area of responsibility. Minister Garneau is engaging with all of the relevant stakeholders and partners in order to prepare recommendations out of the review. Out of respect for his area of responsibility, I can't give you a precise answer.

In my conversations with business leaders—I met with the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade; I had a meeting in Toronto, as well as a meeting with the board of trade in Surrey—transportation infrastructure is identified as a need, and we need to have a long-term plan.

I will work with Minister Garneau's area to assist him in the design of the long-term plan. What that is going to look like and how long it's going to be will be determined by his area in consultation with stakeholders. Hopefully, we'll be able to assist him through some alignment of our infrastructure dollars.

● (1725)

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Minister. I think it goes to Ms. Watts' question with respect to being credible and accountable moving forward with different strategies and having, in this case, transportation strategies, and also establishing them as being economic enablers.

The Emerson report was very clear in its prefaced comments by stating that both the economy and investments that come through transportation do add to the overall economic situation and, of course, add as an enabler to the country's moving forward with economic development. We also need to take into consideration a lot of those investments.

Although I didn't get an answer, I hope that, as we see with all G7 countries, all of which, by the way, have a transportation strategy in place, except for us...

I expect that we will fulfill that mandate and add an economic enabler to the overall ability for different regions, especially those strategic areas that have the ability to take advantage of the strategy, and therefore ultimately, investments that come out of your ministry.

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

Minister, it is rare that we get a minister that provides us with two hours of his or her time. We very much appreciate that.

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi:** I'm happy to do so.

**The Chair:** I would like to suggest that you learned a lot from the committee. They're very engaged members. The municipal background is going to assist all of us as committee members. If you'd like to come back and ask the committee for some more information, guidance, and suggestions.... I think that today was a two-way street.

I thank you and your staff for supplying us with so much information. You're welcome to come any time to our committee.

We will vote when we complete the study on the mains on Wednesday. We won't be voting on the infrastructure portion today. We'll wait until we've finished the study on Wednesday.

The meeting is adjourned.







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

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

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

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

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

---

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

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

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

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

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

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

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>