



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 032

Thursday, October 6, 2022

Chair: Mr. Robert Kitchen



Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Thursday, October 6, 2022

• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 32 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The committee is meeting today to begin its study of diversity in procurement. We have representatives from Public Services and Procurement Canada with us today. The last 30 minutes of the meeting will be devoted to committee business.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely by using the Zoom application.

Regarding the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain the consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether participating virtually or in person.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants who are here at this meeting that taking any screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

I would like to welcome the witnesses here today, and Ms. Royds again, who was with us on Monday. It's good to see you again.

You will each have five minutes for an opening statement.

I understand, Mr. Mills, that you will begin.

Mr. Michael Mills (Assistant Deputy Minister, Procurement Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I would like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak to Public Services and Procurement Canada's commitment to diversity in procurement in my role as the assistant deputy minister of procurement.

I'm joined today by my colleagues Mollie Royds, PSPC's associate assistant deputy minister of procurement; Levent Ozmutlu, director general of our strategic policy sector; and Clinton Lawrence-Whyte, the director general of Procurement Assistance Canada.

[Translation]

As you are aware, PSPC procures goods and services on behalf of federal departments and agencies. Those procurements range from office supplies to military ships and everything in between.

The department buys approximately \$24 billion worth of goods, services and construction each year from nearly 10,000 suppliers.

It is part of PSPC's responsibility to use our purchasing power to support Canada's economic, environmental and social policy goals. That includes ensuring a wider diversity of suppliers from under-represented groups, which have historically faced systemic barriers to success.

[English]

Mr. Chair, I would like to take the next few minutes to explain our actions to attract a wider diversity of suppliers. Consultations with indigenous peoples, Black and other racialized Canadians, women, 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians, Canadians with disabilities, and other communities have been critical to their development.

In January 2022, PSPC launched its supplier diversity action plan, which includes concrete steps to increase the participation of businesses from under-represented groups in federal procurement.

Recent pilot projects were critical in informing this action plan. For example, PSPC administered a Black business procurement pilot to expand procurement opportunities for Black entrepreneurs.

A cornerstone of this supplier diversity action plan is our policy on social procurement. This policy has broadened the definition of value for money of federal contracts in order to foster greater economic and social opportunities for under-represented groups, and it empowers our procurement specialists to pursue their objectives in their day-to-day work. This policy demonstrates our commitment to continue to promote federal procurement with under-represented suppliers.

[Translation]

By enacting this policy, we are making it clear that including more under-represented groups among our suppliers is now a core objective of our procurement function.

To support the department's efforts, we are currently developing a supplier diversity program, which will outline concrete actions to support increased participation from under-represented suppliers.

[English]

In addition, Mr. Chair, PSPC has also been working towards addressing the inequalities that exist between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

In August 2021, the minister of PSPC announced the implementation of a mandatory requirement for federal departments and agencies to ensure that a minimum of 5% of the value of their contracts are being awarded to indigenous businesses. PSPC is working in close collaboration with indigenous partners and other government departments to develop tools and guidance to support the implementation of the 5% target across government.

By increasing contracting opportunities, we are able to help generate economic prosperity in communities that have not traditionally shared in this country's economic wealth.

PSPC is also modernizing its procurement practices by making procurement easier, faster, and more accessible for suppliers, particularly those from under-represented groups.

As part of our modernizing efforts, a new electronic procurement solution was launched in 2021, and more recently, CanadaBuys replaced Buyandsell as the official source for tender and award notices for federal procurement. These innovative tools will give us access to better procurement data, which will further support our decision-making processes.

[Translation]

These are some of the examples of how PSPC has been modernizing the federal procurement processes, and is working towards a world-class procurement system that drives value for money and simplifies its procurement process.

In conclusion, PSPC is committed to moving forward on this very important work of modernizing procurement and diversifying the federal government's supplier base to ensure that it better reflects the Canadian population. And while we have taken important steps, we recognize that more needs to be done.

Thank you.

I'd be pleased to answer questions from the committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mills.

We'll now go into questions. We will start with Mr. McCauley for six minutes.

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

Witnesses, thanks for joining us today.

Over four years ago, this committee tabled a unanimous report called, "Modernizing federal procurement for small and medium enterprises, women-owned and Indigenous businesses". Fifteen of the 40 recommendations were specifically toward indigenous and women-led and women-owned businesses.

How many of those 15 recommendations, keeping in mind it was well over four years ago, have been implemented?

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

I believe we're making progress on the majority of those—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. I didn't ask if you were making progress. How many of those 15 have we implemented, keeping in mind it was June of 2018?

● (1550)

Mr. Michael Mills: Some of the items will take a longer period of time to fully implement. We are making progress on the majority of them. I'd be happy to get back among those which were able to be implemented in short order and how many—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. This may give you a sense of déjà vu, because I asked the identical question probably about two years ago in this committee, and we got back nothing, actually. We got word salad back. I would like concrete information on when you're getting back to us.

I'm going into this because, again, it was over four years ago that we presented very clear, straightforward information. One item was on tracking how much business is going to women-led or indigenous businesses.

When I look at GC InfoBase, the most recent numbers for results, under "Percentage increase in participation to procurement processes by businesses owned by women", I see that the date is to be determined. Here we are, four years and three months after we recommended it, and it's "date to be determined". If you look for indigenous, and this was right from Treasury Board, you see it's "date to be determined".

I have to ask what PSPC is doing when, four years and three months after the fact, we're still looking at date to be determined.

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think this is one on which I don't want to get too detailed, but we are in the process of implementing a new electronic procurement system. Within the electronic procurement system—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Let me interrupt right there. It's been four years and three months, and we still don't even have results. We don't even have a goal for these items. What's it taking?

When I look GC InfoBase, I see the number of bodies. The full-time equivalents at PSPC has grown, I think, by over one-third, so it's not a lack of resources. Is it a lack of will?

Mr. Michael Mills: Mr. Chair, I would like to clarify.

We are doing procurements with women-owned businesses. We are doing procurement with indigenous-owned businesses. We're doing procurements with diverse businesses. As we implement a new electronic procurement system, we are making efforts to make sure we collect the information that, going forward, will enable us to more accurately track in real time the volume of that procurement.

What I'm not able to report on right now, because we're still in the implementation—to be completed by June 2023—of the electronic procurement system—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Why does it take so long to just simply track that? Again, it's been four years and three months. If you were in the private sector and someone said, "You know, you've got four years and two months to get this done", you would have had it done. Why is it that four years and three months later, we're still implementing?

I look at your "2022 to 2023 Departmental Plan" and "Percentage of participation in procurement processes by Indigenous suppliers", and of course it goes back several years. For 2018-19, it's "Not available"; 2019-20, "Not available"; 2020-21. The "2022 to 2023 Target" is 11%, but it says "This target has been established in accordance with the following baseline data" as a guess of what it was for previous periods.

You have unlimited resources, it seems. You've added thousands and thousands of bodies to PSPC. It's a priority. It was recommended by this committee. It's a priority from this government in the mandate letters. Why does it take so long to get done?

I'll be blunt here. I'm doubting the sincerity of PSPC's desire to actually get this done if we're seeing four years and three months and you're just now kicking off an action plan.

Mr. Michael Mills: Again, Mr. Chair, the implementation of our systems is very complex. It's a multi-year process to do that, and we do now have the systems in place.

Another dimension is that collecting the information on the identity of business owners requires a careful analysis of privacy considerations, ensuring that we're safeguarding the collection of that important private personal information within our systems. We had to do the necessary work to make sure we were collecting that information in a secure fashion that was respectful of legislation such as the Privacy Act, and that has taken time.

I would also like to note that over the course of that period, we were also very taxed as an organization in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I would understand the taxed part if you were a regular organization with x number of bodies that hasn't changed, but your department has grown from 12,000 to over 17,000. I don't see how adding thousands upon thousands of bodies would leave you taxed on something that is not only a high priority from this committee but is also set out in the mandate letter by the minister herself.

I'm dumbfounded that again I'm asking these questions, and nothing seems to be getting done.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

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

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Mills, for your opening remarks.

You talked about how PSPC launched its supplier diversity action plan in January 22. Help us set the stage. You've talked about pilots and you've talked about some of the programs, but if we take a step back, can you explain to us where we were, for example, three years ago, and the dimensions of this diversity program and where we are today?

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I might ask Levent to answer this one in terms of the policy responsibility. He can talk a bit about the policy context and where we've been over the last three years.

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu (Director General, Strategic Policy Sector, Procurement Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The journey began back in 2018 when we started a continual process of gathering more information and testing for improvements in relation to supplier diversity. This is one of the cornerstones of the supplier diversity action plan.

As you've indicated, since that time we've taken significant steps in establishing the social procurement policy and we are working towards establishing a social procurement program that will further allow us to implement the measures that we're looking at with respect to leveraging procurement for the benefit of all Canadians and for increasing supplier diversity in the businesses with which we do business.

We're expecting to see progress as it relates to data collection, which is yet another element of this process. My colleague could also elaborate on some of the steps that we're taking with respect to outreach with under-represented suppliers and the coaching services, as well as other supports that are being provided.

Thank you.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Ozmutlu.

I understand that naturally there are different stages of executing the program. Can you talk about the measures that these programs plan to have in place to enable us to be able to monitor their progress?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Certainly, yes.

As we start implementing the steps, we'll be looking at the impacts that we have with respect to the number of contracts that are awarded to under-represented suppliers, both in terms of participation of these suppliers in the procurement process, by bidding on them, as well as the number of contracts that are awarded.

As was indicated by Mr. Mills earlier, data collection is now under way. We've launched the supplier profile questionnaires in the EPS system, and CanadaBuys is now up and running. As we start collecting more data on the businesses we do these transactions with, we'll be in a better position to understand more fully what their profiles look like, and from there establish baselines that we can further analyze.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you.

I'll go back to make sure that I understand. We have rolled out programs, and you talked about the different programs. You've indicated that there are measures in place. Do you have targets for measures for a specific period of time that we could get as part of the regular reporting?

Let's say we are trying, for example, to achieve 5%. You talked about benchmarking. If we are at 2% for indigenous, do we have, as an example, concrete steps to take if we are planning to achieve 4% by this time, 5% by this time? Are such measures and such targets available?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

Indigenous procurement is one area where we can talk about some concrete targets. The 5% mandate, as you may be aware, was announced by the government, and we're implementing that as we speak, in a phased approach. We will have departments essentially meeting those targets in a three-year time period.

We have the first phase, which is ending at the end of this fiscal year, and within six months of the end of the fiscal year, we will have indicators as to what percentage of the business was actually awarded to indigenous firms. That includes contracts that were directly awarded to indigenous suppliers as well as subcontracts, because, as you know, the ecosystem is quite important as it relates to procurement.

• (1600)

Mr. Majid Jowhari: We have programs, and it looks like we have measures, and we have targets. You were very specific about indigenous groups in this area.

Do we have similar ones for other groups that we are trying to make sure are represented?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

As alluded to earlier, for the other groups that we are talking about, we are in the process of establishing the baselines by collecting information about the companies with which we do business so that we can get a better appreciation of the makeup of the businesses and what their profiles look like.

I would add that this is a multidimensional exercise, and we will be asking them questions about which groups they fall into. In many cases they actually fit into more than one group, so that's also another interesting aspect of this exercise.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you.

You opened up the concept of data and data gathering. Naturally, one aspect is setting a baseline, but there's also having the data elements that are needed to be able to monitor and track it.

Can you comment on what steps you are doing to make sure that not only do we have the data, but also the target, the years and the measures and KPIs?

The Chair: I'll give you 15 seconds.

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

This again goes back to our e-procurement solution. We'll be monitoring that type of data.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

We'll now go to Ms. Vignola for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here, gentlemen, and for working to make procurement more accessible to everyone. That's important not just to me, but also to thousands of small and medium-sized businesses, or SMEs.

This is always a sensitive subject.

My background is in history, which I used to teach. A historian's worst fear is that history will repeat itself. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and sometimes, we repeat the mistakes of the past—unintentionally. I'm going to choose my words carefully.

It's important to ensure that everyone has equal access to federal contracts. Is it necessary to intrude on people's privacy to achieve that?

Isn't there a way to keep discrimination and segregation from resurfacing in the process so that no one is affected, since the intention is to include everyone? I'm just putting that out there.

What can we do to prevent a situation where everyone is seemingly put into their own little box, off on their own little island?

It's a mistake I don't ever want to see repeated. Obviously, Canada isn't the U.S., but Canada and Quebec have made mistakes in the past. I don't want to see the same problems resurface.

I'm bringing this up because I read that LGBTQ2+ business owners didn't want to identify as members of that community.

If they don't want to self-identify, will they be lumped in with the majority and end up being rejected?

How can we make sure that we aren't engaging in segregation, despite our good intentions, which are to give everyone equal access?

[English]

Mrs. Mollie Royds (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Acquisition Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the question.

First, can I just apologize for not being there in person with my colleagues? Unfortunately, I'm recovering from a cold, so an in-person attendance wasn't possible today.

In terms of the question, I very much appreciate the concerns that have been raised. Certainly those are things that we have been focused on as we've been developing the supplier diversity program. Specifically, we have been engaging in consultations with the different under-represented communities in relation to their concerns and the things that would be a priority for them to see in our program. In fact, I as well have heard the same concerns that the member has indicated here.

As was indicated in the opening remarks, certainly it is our intention with the program to create opportunities for under-represented groups to increase their participation as well as to socio-economic benefits to those under-represented communities, and quite frankly, to remove or lighten barriers in procurement that we are aware exist.

We've discussed a little bit, as well, the social procurement policy and the importance of—

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Sorry to cut you off, Ms. Royds. Everyone agrees on the objectives. They are commendable, and I support them.

What I wanted to know was how we could achieve those objectives, or apply these criteria, without engaging in segregation.

In practical terms, how can we be sure we aren't putting in place a system that reproduces what we are trying to avoid?

I understand what the objectives are, and we can all agree that they are appropriate. My question is about what we can do to ensure that we aren't engaging in segregation if we seek out very sensitive information and open up a contract to women or members of the Black community.

To make contracts available to certain groups and not others is to engage in segregation.

How can we avoid practices that cause segregation so that everyone feels included and free to submit a bid, knowing that it will be seen, read and considered?

[English]

Mrs. Mollie Royds: Thank you very much for the question. It's important again to highlight the extensive engagement that we have undertaken with the under-represented communities and the many issues that they have flagged to us in terms of the barriers to access to procurement opportunities, so our focus is very much on ensuring that we do remove those barriers and encourage the participation of under-represented groups in the procurement processes.

We definitely intend to do that, being conscious of some of the potential unintended consequences. We want to ensure that these benefits do go to the communities that we are targeting, but we also want to ensure that we are abiding by the policies, laws, trade agreements and regulations that govern our procurement processes.

We are still finalizing the details of the supplier diversity program, and in line with the action plan we released in January, it is our intention to be releasing the program in winter of this year.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Royds.

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

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Thank you.

A Globe and Mail article that was published today about the ballooning costs of the ArriveCAN app describes a lack of transparency with respect to subcontractors. A company that has been awarded millions of dollars in federal contracts for work on the app seems to rely almost exclusively on subcontractors.

Maybe someone can explain how the government supplier diversity action plan and policy on social procurement applies to subcontractors. Could Mr. Mills explain, maybe?

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

With respect to ArriveCAN, I want to make a distinction between subcontracting to companies and subcontracting to employees.

In this case, my understanding is that the firm in question was subcontracting employees to do the work. In terms of that piece, from a contracting perspective, we do look and we are working on systems to capture the value of subcontracts to companies, but not necessarily subcontracted resources that are, for purposes of a contract, treated as employees.

Mr. Gord Johns: According to the article, there were several companies that were subcontracted. Where are you going in terms of ensuring that those subcontractors or employees are meeting the requirements?

• (1610)

Mr. Michael Mills: Certainly we are looking at having the ability to make sure that we're capturing subcontracts. That's so that when we do large contracts that will necessarily involve subcontracting, we are creating positive incentives for them to follow some of our actions to make more opportunities available for diverse businesses and to make sure that they're not reimposing barriers that we've tried to remove through our normal contracting process. It's so that overall, the large contracts will also have greater representation of diverse suppliers within them.

Mr. Gord Johns: To me, it seems like there are lots of ways to circumvent the whole process. That's my concern.

There was a press release from the Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business back in October, 2019. They stated that “aboriginal businesses could supply 24% of the federal supply chain.” We’ve heard Carol Anne Hilton from Indigenomics. Obviously, she talked about the impact that this would have on indigenous people and the potential in opportunity.

With that in mind, what challenges exist for departments and agencies in meeting a 5% indigenous procurement requirement? When does the government expect to meet that target?

Mr. Michael Mills: As my colleague indicated, we’re rolling out the new initiatives to meet the 5% target. We’re looking to meet a three-year timeframe overall for the government to meet that target. Some of the barriers to meeting that target would be around the nature and location of commodities and services.

As an example, in the national capital region, we own a significant real property base that requires a significant indigenous labour force in this region to be able to meet those kinds of targets. The indigenous population currently is relatively small—given the size of Ottawa—relative to a city like Winnipeg, so that is a challenge. As a department, we’ve been working with stakeholders and local communities to think about how we can bridge some of these gaps.

Mr. Gord Johns: That’s great.

What do you do when it comes to populations like Nunavut, where 80% or more are Inuit and the procurement policy is 5%? Are you re-adjusting to meet the local indigenous population? Five per cent would actually mean they’re getting far less than they should in terms of procurement.

Mr. Michael Mills: We are working on the north to figure out how we ensure that we are, first and foremost, respecting our comprehensive claims and land claim agreements. In the case of Nunavut, the Nunavut agreement would have much higher requirements for procurement with Nunavut beneficiaries than the 5%. We will continue to work to respect that.

Mr. Gord Johns: What are the feedback mechanisms that exist for businesses, especially indigenous businesses, that bid but aren’t successful in obtaining a federal government contract?

Mr. Michael Mills: We have Clinton Lawrence-Whyte with us from Procurement Assistance Canada. One of the things that we really do focus on is making that agency a vehicle for businesses to understand why they may not have been successful. We have coaching pilots and other mechanisms to address the specific issue that prevented them from being qualified or winning. It’s looking at how they can develop their competencies to be better positioned for those next sets of opportunities.

Mr. Gord Johns: In listening to them, is there a way for businesses that are owned or operated by equity-deserving and indigenous groups to share their thoughts with the department or PSPC on the process and identify any barriers that they might have experienced?

Mr. Michael Mills: As we mentioned, through the development of our socio-economic policy and continued work on the program, we have been engaging indigenous businesses. Procurement Assistance Canada does have a lot of outreach and engagement with business.

We also work with Treasury Board and Indigenous Services Canada, which has an indigenous reference group of representative organizations, such as the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers and the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, to understand their needs and get their feedback. We try to make sure that our program is aligned with the excellence and capabilities within the indigenous business community so that we can increase their involvement in our procurements.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mills.

We’ll go now to our second round and Mr. McCauley. You have five minutes.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks, Chair.

Looking at the departmental plan for PSPC, I notice that on page 13, it states, “target that at least 5% of the value of federal contracts be awarded to businesses managed and led by Indigenous Peoples.” In previous years, it was businesses “owned”. Why the change?

This question of how we determine what’s best for the community has come up in the past in this committee: indigenous-owned but 50 non-indigenous workers, or non-indigenous-owned and 50 indigenous workers. How are we working out what’s best for the community, and why the change?

Mr. Michael Mills: Thanks for the question, Mr. Chair.

On this one, I would say it has been moving with the input of the indigenous reference group and indigenous business communities.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Will it be the same for women-led and Black-led businesses?

Mr. Michael Mills: Yes. The context of the change is that there was a concern that there may be individuals who would own a business—that would be 51%—but have nothing to do with it.

The leadership—owned and led—is to make sure of those values and that over time and across the population of businesses, there is a stronger likelihood that a greater level of secondary and tertiary benefits will accrue to those communities as—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: But this is specific. You mentioned owned and led. This is specifically “managed and led”, as opposed to “owned”.

Mr. Michael Mills: Ownership is a requirement for us.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It is stated differently in the departmental plans. Is that just an oversight?

Mr. Michael Mills: It may be an oversight in terms of the language, but in terms of the policy, it's 51% owned and led.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You talked about difficulty with privacy laws. Can you provide to this committee, in writing, what those concerns are and what the specific laws are? We have tracked such businesses before. I don't think it's a new issue.

I don't want to get into it now, but can you provide to the committee the exact laws you're talking about that have been a barrier to achieving the recommendations set out in our previous study?

Mr. Michael Mills: Yes, we'll follow up on that, and Mr. Chair, I would like to respond quickly to the point of the earlier question. Particularly for the LGBTQ+ community, there are serious concerns about revealing their identity, who would have access—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm talking specifically about the ones who were identified in our 2018 study and recommendations, which were for women-led and indigenous-led businesses. It sounded like that was the reason we weren't able to identify indigenous-led businesses for tracking.

Mr. Michael Mills: Mr. Chair, again, those are a part of the groups covered by our policy. As we're doing the overall policy, we're not segregating group by group.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. Would you just provide us with more precise...?

Mr. Michael Mills: We'll be providing it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Getting back to the original study, would you be able, when you inform the committee on our recommendations from 2018, to identify which ones have been accomplished and which ones are halfway through or almost done, as well as a date by which the other ones will be achieved or whether there's no intention of following that specific recommendation?

I want to walk through some of the barriers. I know from the previous study and from other studies we've done here about the difficulty in filling out the procurement forms. Sometimes you need one or two full-time people to fill out an RFP to sell a single pen.

What other barriers are you seeing for indigenous businesses in being able to procure from the government?

Mr. Michael Mills: One of the key barriers that we've heard repeatedly are requirements for bonding. Businesses that are located on reserve have a barrier, in law, to pledging their property to access capital to bond.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Let me interrupt you. That was an issue that came up for all SMEs. It wasn't just indigenous.

Will PSPC be addressing it for everyone? This was the issue we heard about needing unlimited liability to sell the government a roll of toilet paper. It was frankly asinine and it only exists, I'm sure, with Canadian procurement. Will you address it for indigenous and also other Canadian SMEs?

Mr. Michael Mills: Mr. Chair, with respect to indigenous businesses, the inability to pledge on-reserve assets to secure bonds is a

unique problem that exists in the Indian Act. That's the issue that we're looking to address.

• (1620)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: When will we be able to get by that? Does it require legislation on PSPC's part? Is it an order in council? How easy is this to address?

Mr. Michael Mills: Mr. Chair, I would say that addressing the legal impediment within the Indian Act to pledge on-reserve assets to secure bonds is a very—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I don't mean Indian Act rules but PSPC rules. You could waive those.

Mr. Michael Mills: Again, Mr. Chair, we're working with Indigenous Services Canada, which is a lead in terms of the programming of potential solutions and workarounds to address this problem, in partnership with indigenous organizations such as the National Aboriginal Corporations Association.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

We'll now go to Ms. Thompson for five minutes.

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ozmutlu, do you find that there are differences across regions in Canada with a diversity in procurement? What is it that you can do to improve diversity in procurement programs?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Given the demographic differences across the country, yes, of course we can expect to see differences in terms of representation in different procurement opportunities. The demographics in a place like Toronto obviously will be vastly different from those in a rural community.

What I can say is we're trying to design our programs in such a way that when the procurements are for the Government of Canada, they are obviously open for bids regardless of where the suppliers are located. There may be certain instances in which geographic proximity to where the requirement is unfolding may be required or may be a bit of an advantage, but certainly our approach is to look at it on a pan-Canadian basis to ensure that we're not leaving any region or any group in a region behind.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Thank you.

I will follow up with another nudge for specifics or a little more detail in terms of that pan-Canadian strategy. What does it look like to really assist more under-represented groups in terms of expanding diversity, and what does it look like to really assist in the process of the procurement? I'm sure it can be quite daunting.

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Thank you again for the question.

Maybe I'll start off and then I can turn to my colleague Clinton Lawrence-Whyte, who can elaborate a little bit more from the perspective of Procurement Assistance Canada.

What I was alluding to was that when we have procurement opportunities, they are typically not limited to any particular region. Even if, for example, there is a requirement for a goods procurement in the national capital region, you don't have to be in the national capital region to fulfill that requirement. With that view, we are looking at representation across the country.

I'll turn it over to my colleague Clinton, who can elaborate a little bit more about the services they provide in different offices across Canada.

Thank you.

Mr. Clinton Lawrence-Whyte (Director General, Procurement Assistance Canada, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the question.

We've talked about my organization, Procurement Assistance Canada. It has the mandate to aid small and medium-sized businesses to participate in federal procurement and to support efforts to increase supplier diversity in the federal base.

As mentioned, recognizing that there is a diversity across the country, Procurement Assistance Canada has a network of six regional offices that we were able to leverage to work closely with community partners to help them secure the support they need. We also establish partnerships with key players in the regions and we're able to put in place different types of supports, including educational supports. We provide direct assistance and we do webinars. All of this is with the goal of helping these different communities to be more comfortable in their ability to actively participate in federal procurement.

Our intent at the end of the day is to have these different businesses ready to bid and confident that they can participate in federal procurement.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Ms. Royds, along the same thread, could you speak about the methods and criteria in place to verify whether a business meets the diversity procurement criteria?

• (1625)

Mrs. Mollie Royds: Go ahead, Clinton. Do you want to take this one?

Mr. Clinton Lawrence-Whyte: No, that's okay.

Mrs. Mollie Royds: Thank you very much for the question.

In terms of ensuring that we are targeting the right under-represented groups, there are various means of certification. One is self-certification. Another is some increased form of validation, and the third is having a third party certify the under-represented suppliers. As part of the supplier diversity action plan, we're currently evaluating our options in relation to that, and that will form part of the program as we move forward.

A big key component of this for us, obviously, is increasing our understanding of our supplier base, and my colleagues have already spoken about the e-procurement system we have launched and about CanadaBuys. One of the pieces of that is a supplier questionnaire, which collects disaggregated data in the way that we are asking for suppliers to identify themselves, and it will allow us to work in partnership with StatsCan to ensure that we have a good understanding of our supplier base. That also goes to the question of understanding it regionally as well as in terms of a specific under-represented supplier group.

The final point I would raise is in relation to the procurement strategy for indigenous businesses, for which our colleagues at Indigenous Services Canada have the lead. The criterion there is to be registered in the indigenous business directory, so that particular one has a specific process in place to support that policy.

I don't know if any of my colleagues have anything they want to add.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Royds.

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

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you very much.

Ms. Royds, you spoke earlier of the barriers SMEs owned by members of under-represented groups face. Let's contrast two SMEs: one owned by a member of an under-represented group and one owned by a member of an overrepresented group. Let's say they both have the same features and the same number of employees. They both bid on the same contract. It could happen.

What barriers would the business owned by the member of the under-represented group face that the business owned by the member of the overrepresented group would not face?

[*English*]

Mrs. Mollie Royds: As indicated, we are aware of the barriers faced by under-represented suppliers in procurement and we have engaged in extensive consultations with the groups. Some of the things we have heard are around an awareness of our procurement opportunities, so that's one of the important pieces of having CanadaBuys and its capabilities—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Forgive me, but I have to cut you off again.

I realize that awareness of procurement opportunities can be a challenge for SMEs. What I want to know is how that particular problem would affect the SME owned by a member of an under-represented group, but not affect the SME owned by a member of an overrepresented group, when both businesses are similar in size.

In that specific scenario, how would the barrier of procurement opportunity awareness affect the businesses differently?

You seem to be saying that, if a business belongs to a member of an overrepresented group, even if that business is a SME, that business owner is aware of all procurement opportunities, whereas the SME belonging to a member of an under-represented group isn't aware.

How do you explain that? How does that barrier affect one business, but not the other?

Everyone should be affected by that barrier when you're talking about SMEs. How does it become a criterion that incorporates judgment, and if it is, why does it apply to only one group?

[English]

Mrs. Mollie Royds: Thank you for the question.

In particular, in relation to under-represented groups, again, we have various supports. My colleague Clinton, who's at the table, can speak more on Procurement Assistance Canada supports available to those that do not have the same experience or success in our procurement processes. Some of these are about awareness of opportunities and some also relate to the complexity of our processes.

We have complex statements of work and requests for proposals that we put out into the market. Many of the companies that are more familiar with the procurement process and are broadly represented within it, as was already discussed, have bid-writing units as part of them, and a lot of—

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Sorry to cut you off, but I just want to point out that a SME is not a company. A SME with five employees is still a SME with five employees no matter who runs it. They should all run into the same barriers.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Vignola—

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I wanted to know which barriers those businesses did not face. You can provide a written answer.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lawrence-Whyte, if there's something further you could add to that answer, if you would submit that to the clerk, it would be appreciated. Thank you.

Mr. Johns is next, for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Gord Johns: I'd like to hear which departments are furthest ahead in achieving diversity objectives in their procurement, especially indigenous procurement, and whether there any lessons that can be applied to departments that are lagging.

This would be for Mr. Mills.

Mr. Michael Mills: Thanks for the question.

I think we're waiting for the end of this reporting cycle to have clarity on who is the best, but from more anecdotal notes, recently Health Canada has had very strong results in terms of their indigenous procurement.

I believe what I heard was that they're in the teens in terms of their percentage of procurement from indigenous businesses. I was involved in some of their code procurements and I know that they

took a strategy to try to ensure that if there were indigenous suppliers, they were included, and that helped contribute to it.

We have engaged with Indigenous Services Canada to bring in their chief financial officer, who's responsible for procurement for that department, to a committee of multiple departments to explain what their strategies have been in order to achieve those results and to try to replicate them in other departments.

Mr. Gord Johns: It would be good to learn where it's working, where it isn't working and what you're going to do about where it isn't working.

The 2021 annual report by the procurement ombudsman listed the top issue of federal procurement, identified by stakeholders, as evaluation criteria that were “unfair, overly restrictive or biased”. Stakeholders were concerned in these instances that only one bidder would be able to meet the criteria. Another top-ten issue was timelines that were so tight that only an incumbent contractor would be able to meet them.

Can you talk about what steps PSPC is taking in response to these issues to level the playing field so that new entrants, especially indigenous entrants, have a better chance of success?

Mr. Michael Mills: In terms of the evaluation criteria and the actual requirements, those are elements of the procurement package that are developed through the departments to define what their needs are. They define what they're putting priorities on in terms of the selection.

One thing we realized, having identified this, is that we need to do a higher level of due diligence with a lens that looks at how fair these are and some of the potential pitfalls, and then provide more guidance to departments on those aspects.

More generally, through contract simplification and simplification of procurement documentation, we are looking to try to simplify the process. We are looking to reduce the amount of work that is required of firms in responding to bids and we are trying to make sure that the evaluation criteria and what the departments are demanding is reasonable and approachable for a wider range of businesses.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

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

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Thanks very much.

Thanks for being here in person for your appearance today. It's good to see.

First, in the last four years, let's say—I don't know how closely you track it—what is your estimate of when you've done business with indigenous businesses? Do you have a number?

Mr. Michael Mills: Internally to PSPC, we have been around 5%. It varies from year to year in terms of what we procure on behalf of ourselves. Overall, for the government as a whole, it's a little bit less. I'd have to get back to you with a precise number.

Part of it is that procurement, when we're serving the overall government, uses a number of different systems. Some of those systems do not have the markers for the contract and whether it's with an indigenous business. We have to do a calculation after the fact to identify which of the businesses we've done contracting with are indeed indigenous.

• (1635)

Mr. Ben Lobb: That brings up an interesting question that I was thinking about as well, because I know the CanadaBuys system. It looks like it's an SAP platform—

Mr. Michael Mills: Yes.

Mr. Ben Lobb: —and I'm pretty sure most of the government stuff is Microsoft, if I'm not mistaken. I could be wrong about that, so how many different systems have to communicate with one another for you to actually get your 5% target? How many different software systems are there?

Mr. Michael Mills: Right now, we would probably be at about half a dozen different systems, but with the full implementation of the electronic procurement solution, we will be moving to one system.

One of the things we are doing in parallel is looking at our data analytics as a whole and being able to remove the data from these systems, put them in the warehouse, and then use one data analytic tool to be able to analyze all of the data coming from the different systems.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Okay. Have you been able to identify how many indigenous businesses there are out there that you could actually contract with?

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you for the question, Mr.—

Mr. Ben Lobb: I mean, the goal is 5%. Is it even possible, and if it is impossible, how many years do you project it would take to actually be possible?

Mr. Michael Mills: Again, when we've talked to the business representative communities for the indigenous businesses, such as the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, and the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers, they've indicated that 5% should be a floor and that there is much more potential out there in the indigenous business community to supply more than 5%.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Are there particular...? You know, you go through CanadaBuys and some of these contracts are very specific and very technical and very detailed. You just can't walk in off the street and do these. Are there specific areas that you have identified that would be more readily available to the workforce?

Mr. Michael Mills: Internally, I'd say we look to the largest categories, which would be in the area of construction—so, subcontracting to construction—as well as in the information technologies, from supplying technologies such as hardware and software to even consulting within the IT domain.

Beyond that, we do a number of contracts for goods that are not manufactured in Canada. They're actually companies that get the rights to distribute and supply certain goods. Those are other areas where we've seen strong potential for indigenous suppliers to be

able to enter and provide goods. For example, during the pandemic, in order to administer the mRNA vaccines, we needed to use low dead-volume syringes, which were a new item and very hard to get. One of our key contracts was actually with an indigenous supplier who was able to get us a supply of those from overseas and make them available for Canadians.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Do I have any more time there, Mr. Chair? It must be pretty well five minutes.

The Chair: Yes.

We will now go to Mr. Kusmierczyk for five minutes or less.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mills, you mentioned in your remarks and in some of your answers the importance of disability inclusion. Can you speak a little bit about how we are doing in terms of procurement from businesses that are owned by Canadians with disabilities? In terms of the challenges, are there similar challenges that we're seeing with other under-represented groups? Are there different challenges that we have to focus on in terms of procuring from businesses owned by Canadians with disabilities?

Mr. Michael Mills: I would have to say that when it comes to businesses owned by persons with disabilities, this is actually a challenge economy-wide for Canada.

When we look at the general number of businesses owned by persons with disabilities, we see that it's very low relative to the percentage of the population. There's more work to be done with our partners at Innovation, Science and Economic Development, as well as the regional development agencies, to look at how we might build to increase the overall community of businesses owned by persons with disabilities in Canada and then make procurement.

From the procurement perspective, there are real challenges. As we move to an electronic procurement solution, one of the things we're very concerned about is the accessibility of those technologies and the barriers we could unintentionally create. That's one area that we're very focused on. We're trying to set a high bar in terms of accessibility standards for our web presence and whatnot, as well as look at how we make available other sources of interaction with businesses owned by persons with disabilities, if need be, because of that technology that has happened.

I will ask Levent to talk also a bit. We are concerned about this enough, and we haven't put as much discussion in today about what we're doing specifically on accessibility internally from an organizational perspective to try to address this.

• (1640)

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: As indicated, persons with disabilities face two challenges: One is that they are under-represented generally in the procurement space, and the second is that they have accessibility issues that we have to be mindful of. This includes having access to procurement opportunities, as well as being able to access the procurement materials that are being provided.

The systems are very important, but we also have to look at this from the perspective of contract simplification in order to make our processes less cumbersome and the documents shorter. Even with the great technology that we do have available today, we have to reduce those barriers even further.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you, sir. It's heartening to hear that this is a focus and a priority within PSPC.

You mentioned the need to grow the pool of entrepreneurs across these under-represented groups. Our federal government has a \$6-billion women entrepreneurship strategy and we have a \$250-million Black entrepreneurship fund. Is PSPC actively working with some of the ministries that have developed these programs and are rolling them out to see how PSPC can leverage and be partners on these programs?

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you for the question.

Yes. One of the key areas as we try to develop the program is to look at where there are areas of representation and how those map onto the types of goods and services we buy and, where there are not, to have that more focused discussion with our partners about how we grow businesses in those areas where we buy commodities, where buying goods and services may actually be catalytic in growing out those business opportunities.

That's definitely something we're trying to work with in terms of having a greater understanding of the overall market environment: how our buying maps the overall market and, again, where we can leverage this to actually help to grow the Canadian market and create business.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: That's excellent.

I have one last question. The U.S. utilizes set-asides quite effectively. Can you tell us what a set-aside is and how it would work to help us increase diversity in procurement?

Mr. Michael Mills: Generally speaking, a set-aside would be a procurement in which you would limit eligible participants to a defined group. If you were to say indigenous business, you might say that in order to enter, submit a bid and have an eligible bid in this process, you need to be a business that is registered with the Indigenous Services Canada indigenous business directory. They would be the only eligible participants in that process.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Do you have an example of a successful process like that? I don't want to put you on the spot—you could put it in writing—but I'd love to hear about it.

Mr. Michael Mills: I should have had one, but I don't have one on hand. I will say that within our comprehensive claims agreement and under the procurement strategy for indigenous businesses, when procurements are for the benefit of an indigenous community, there are many examples of set-asides. They've set aside that opportunity for only indigenous businesses.

We can work with Indigenous Services Canada to provide some opportunities for you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Kusmierczyk, and I recognize that “one last question” doesn't necessarily mean one last question.

Voices: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks, Chair.

I want to ask a couple of quick questions.

You mentioned—I think it's with PSPC—that you figure about 5% is going to indigenous businesses right now. How are you tracking that if we have all these privacy issues and this and that? How are you coming up with 5%?

• (1645)

Mr. Michael Mills: Since probably the late 1990s, we've had the procurement strategy for aboriginal business, and now it's the procurement strategy for indigenous business. Under those programs, we did make efforts to actually have businesses identify as indigenous within our supplier registration, and we've been keeping that data for a number of years.

I don't know, Levent, if you have a timeline of when we implemented it.

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Yes. It was in the late 1990s, I believe, that the data started to—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: But if it's a privacy issue that you can't track it, how are you tracking it so that you can claim it's 5%? You told me earlier that you couldn't fulfill one of our recommendations because of privacy laws and this and that, but somehow you are tracking it.

Mr. Michael Mills: Mr. Chair, when we look at the privacy issue, we have to look at it through a number of lenses, one of which is businesses voluntarily registering in a system with an acknowledgement of what their data would be used for and agreeing to submitting their data, versus holding data within a system that we're building and having new systems, versus the questions and the information we might ask for when we run a procurement process and hold that data. In terms of the indigenous data—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm sorry. I have one last quick question.

I just want to get back to the bond issue. About 40%, give or take, of indigenous people live on reserves, so 60% are off. How much of this bond issue is an issue for the 60% who are not living on reserve, to whom we're not saying to put up unlimited liability on land for which they can't legally do so? How easy is it just to remove altogether that bond issue in a procurement process?

We heard from the other small and medium-sized enterprises and other women-led mainstream companies that meeting the requirement to offer up an unlimited liability bond for a small contract was impossible. How easy would it be to just get rid of that bond requirement and instantly help indigenous businesses?

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you for the question.

As to the first one, you are correct that for businesses not owned by first nations and not on reserve, it is not a legal impediment to them as long as they have assets off reserve.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I also asked about the 60% who are off reserve. How difficult is it for PSPC to just get rid of that bond issue?

Mr. Michael Mills: We are actually running a pilot right now for a smaller construction procurement for which we did not require this. It is actually a Treasury Board policy for us to have security, so there would need to be some policy changes to make it more permanent.

I would also note that there are other stakeholders who have an interest in this issue. The Canadian Construction Association, for one, has noted reasons that they would prefer to continue with certain securities with respect to subcontractors—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's to keep out the competitors, yes. I'm sure they would love to.

Mr. Michael Mills: —so they're—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Stuff like that is very easy to do with an order in council, perhaps with Treasury Board or someone who could help out. That certainly would help a lot of small and medium-sized enterprises—indigenous and Black-owned and everything—without hurting Canadians and the Crown, I assume. That's overly general, but is that fair to say?

Mr. Michael Mills: I can't speak to Treasury Board in terms of how easy it will be to change that policy. We would have to work with them.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

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

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests for joining us today.

I'm curious about our veterans. How do veteran-owned businesses factor into the department's current procurement diversity goals?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

Maybe I could start off—

Mr. Parm Bains: Have they been considered?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: I think, Mr. Chair, it's important to make a distinction here. When we are referring to under-represented suppliers, we are at this time talking about indigenous suppliers, Black and racialized Canadians, other visible minorities, persons with disabilities and those in the LGBTQ+ communities.

Notwithstanding that, you may be aware that there are other opportunities for veteran employment as well. There is the long-standing RFR policy for the Corps of Commissionaires as an example. I would also add that designing a supplier diversity program is something we could iterate on; it's not that the groups we've identified at this point will be the same groups that would be identified in the future.

Thank you.

• (1650)

Mr. Parm Bains: Thank you.

Among our bidders, does your department recommend that certain types of businesses adopt a diverse supplier program?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: We are encouraging diversity within the supply chain to the greatest extent possible.

I would also note that there is the federal program for employment equity, which is led by the Minister of Labour. That is a program whereby any company that receives a contract worth \$1 million or more and has 100 or more employees in Canada has to sign up for employment equity provisions. We do ensure that the contracts we award to such companies are vetted against that list prior to award, and if they're not there, then they do have to commit to meeting those obligations throughout the performance of their contracts.

Mr. Parm Bains: Thank you.

Specifically to Mr. Ozmutlu, how do Canada's diversity goals compare to those of other countries around the world?

Mr. Levent Ozmutlu: Thank you for the question.

We have been looking very closely at other countries, whether the United States or those in Europe, and trying to learn some of the lessons from them. Australia has a very developed model as it relates to indigenous procurement and their certification process. Likewise, when we look at the United States, they've had a history of different set-aside programs. We'd like to see the results of some of what they have done so that we might borrow some of the strategies that are working for them.

We do have many of the same challenges. To the extent that we can take some lessons learned and make those work for our purposes, we are doing that.

Mr. Parm Bains: Okay. I believe one of my other questions was already answered. It was asked by my colleague, so those are all the questions I have for today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bains.

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

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My apologies if I got carried away earlier. It's just that I had asked the witness twice to compare two SMEs, not to compare a large company and a SME.

Mr. Mills, are francophones part of an under-represented group or an overrepresented one?

[English]

Mr. Michael Mills: Thank you for the question.

Within the current policy, they are not one of the under-represented groups, so they'd be in the—

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: That means francophones are not an under-represented group for federal procurement purposes.

Thank you.

Mr. Lawrence-Whyte, my understanding is that it's hard for SMEs to access information on Buyandsell.gc.ca. Just for fun sometimes, I look at the site, and on average, I see 840 contracts a day. A SME with some 40 or 50 employees at most would likely find it onerous to check the site every day to find out which contracts are still posted, which ones keep coming up.

How can we make it easier for a SME to stay on top of available contracts and realize that they are open to everyone, regardless of skin colour, religion or gender?

All types of businesses should be able to apply.

Not very many people look at newspapers anymore. Is it better to go through chambers of commerce?

What can we do to make the process easier for businesses?

Mr. Clinton Lawrence-Whyte: Thank you for your question.

One of PSPC's priorities is to reach out to businesses all over Canada to help them better understand how things work in government. Ensuring that websites and other such tools are fairly user-friendly is also very important.

We work directly with businesses to teach them how to use the tools, so they can do things like sign up for notifications to find out when certain procurement contracts or tender opportunities are available. We help people create that capacity. We also help people in searching for tender opportunities.

For us, it's really about helping small and medium-sized businesses, mainly, navigate the system with greater ease, and we provide that service across Canada.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

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

Mr. Gord Johns: We talked a little bit earlier about Nunavut, as a good example, with an 80% Inuit population. You said there's a Nunavut agreement. I live in Nuu-chah-nulth territory. I'm from the Tla-o-qui-aht area in the five central region nations of the west coast of the island. That area, in particular, is 50% indigenous.

Can you speak about how you're readjusting? You talked about how in Ottawa you've over-met the target of 5%, which is great. What are you doing in areas where you're not hitting the target,

where you're below it? How are you gauging the 5%? You're looking at a nationwide target, but there are areas, for sure, where you're falling far short and you're not coming close to the population percentage. What are you going to do to adjust that?

Mr. Michael Mills: One of the things that we're really trying to work on with our broader client base of departments is to have a better forecasting of what their procurement opportunities are in the future for the next two to three years and see where those are geographically located. From that, we would be able to look at some of our strategies. If they're buying goods or services in areas, such as Nuu-chah-nulth territory, where there is greater capacity, then maybe we look at targeting more of our activity there and over-procuring there, because in other areas there wouldn't be the opportunity or the population of indigenous businesses that could meet the opportunity.

We really want to look at how we can have a better understanding of where the businesses are located and what their capacities are and, for opportunities where it makes sense—where they're going to be very location-driven—to try to take advantage of those opportunities.

Mr. Gord Johns: I guess the thought would be to work with the tribal councils and with the individual nations to explain where they are at in terms of the threshold and target.

A 2021 paper prepared for the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business recommended introducing a new micro-contract policy for federal contracts of less than \$10,000. These micro-contracts would be exclusive indigenous set-asides and would be written in plain language.

Can you talk about the federal government introducing this type of micro-contract policy, and do you think it would reduce barriers of entry to indigenous businesses? I certainly believe it would, and for the Nuu-chah-nulth territory nations as well.

Mr. Michael Mills: One of the things that we are really trying to figure out, from a procurement modernization perspective, is where we're over-expending effort internally and demanding external purchase, so we're looking at smaller dollar-value contracts in which maybe we can use even more informal processes.

Some of our colleagues have experimented with processes whereby businesses are invited in. They describe a challenge, and it's almost like a speed-dating exercise. The businesses would say how they might meet that requirement. Then procurement can say, "Okay, that approach meets our need", and then go and negotiate.

We're looking at those kinds of opportunities where the engagement procurement process would be much more scaled to the actual size of the opportunity and the nature of the business. That is something that we really want to look at more and more for our simplification.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

With that, we have come to the end of our questions.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today. Thank you to those here in person and to Ms. Royds for being with us again virtually.

Ms. Royds, we hope that you're feeling better soon and are able to come in person next time.

Mr. Mills, Mr. Lawrence-Whyte and Mr. Ozmutlu, thank you very much for being here.

With that, I will dismiss the witnesses.

We'll now move on to the committee business. Just so that the committee is aware, I will remind you that we are in public.

We have a couple of things I want to cover. The first is that Ms. Vignola has her motion on the table. She has now presented another motion. My understanding is that there have been discussions among everybody that there's general agreement on accepting the new motion as she's presented it. Is that correct? We need you to move that first, if that's the case.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Other discussions took place today.

Initially, I reworked my motion in light of the suggestions I received. I was told that it shouldn't be a problem.

Since I didn't get a response within 48 hours, I figured I wouldn't run into any problems.

Today, however, new amendments were brought to my attention. I'll let my fellow members move those. Then we can quickly discuss them. The changes concern what is being submitted and when, as well as what we are asking for and when.

We all agree that we want the documents. I think what my fellow members want to revisit are the dates.

[*English*]

The Chair: Before we get there, Ms. Vignola, I need you to move the motion if we're going to discuss it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: All right.

It reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the expenses of the Office of the Governor General's Secretary for its representation activities abroad and in Canada for the years 2015 to the present [in other words, for Mr. Johnston's last two years, Ms. Payette's time in office and Ms. Simon's time in office];

(1) that, in light of the information disclosed since the meeting on Thursday, September 22, concerning the testimony of representatives of organizations related to the decision-making process and the use of budgets by and for the Office of the Governor General's Secretary, the committee invite the following witnesses to testify:

Christine MacIntyre, Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol Branch, Office of the Governor General's Secretary;

Stewart Wheeler, Chief of Protocol of Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development;

Senior officials of the Department of Canadian Heritage;

Senior representatives of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;

Any other witnesses whom the committee deems appropriate to invite;

(2) that testimonies take place over for at least three meetings and that the committee has his first meeting on its study at the latest on Monday, November 15, 2022; the other meetings being scheduled in accordance with the schedule prepared for the other studies taking place [upon agreement with the clerk and the chair];

(3) that Department of National Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Department of Canadian Heritage and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police table the financial reports of the expenses incurred during the trips of the Governors General from 2015 to present, broken down by trip and by item of expenditure including, in particular, accommodation costs, catering costs, caterer costs, travel costs, security costs, and costs for alcohol and drinks, indicating the number of people included for each delegation;

(4) that copies of invoices associated with the March 2022 trip to the Middle East of the Office of the Governor General's Secretary be produced;

(5) that the said documents be submitted in English and French and forwarded no later than Monday, October 31, 2022, at noon to the Clerk of the committee and that the Clerk forward them upon receipt to the members of the committee;

(6) that the committee report its observations and recommendations to the House.

● (1705)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Vignola.

Now the floor is open for debate. Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I'm going to try to put all of the different amendments that we discussed into the motion. I can maybe give a synopsis of what we propose beforehand and then we can go with the discussion.

There will be one amendment, but I'll read it all together as I've drafted it.

Basically, we would propose that this be limited to foreign travel of the Governor General, not domestic travel. We would ask for production by October 31, in number 4, "the invoices associated with the...trip to the Middle East", and we would add to number 4 "a list of all the foreign travel undertaken by the current Governor General and the two previous Governor Generals."

When the committee receives that document on the travel taken by the current and former Governors General, we would select two years from each Governor General and ask that the travel be produced for those years, once we see what travel took place in what years. Instead of asking for all of the voyages since 2015, we would pick two years for each Governor General so that there would be a comparison.

The first thing would be to get a list of all the foreign travel taken by the Governors General in each year since David Johnston first became Governor General.

Those documents—because that would be complex and that's not easy—that are set out in number 3 don't exist right now in a synthesized format, that we know of, anywhere. It would mean that the Office of the Governor General would need to put it all together and compile it. Those documents would only have to be produced in January, before the House returns, before we have our last two meetings on the subject.

Basically, October 31 would be for copies of the invoices for the trip on March 22, 2022, and a list of all the foreign travel of each of the current and two previous Governors General. The committee would then decide the years for which we wanted production of all of the documents—presumably two years for each Governor General—and then that would be due in January.

That's what we discussed with Ms. Vignola.

Mr. Chair, I've gone through the paragraphs. In order for this to make sense, what I would suggest is reading the amendments, and then we could have the discussion.

The Chair: Once you're done with that, the clerk can make a copy of it.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Of course. I've only written it in a scattered fashion right now, so I'm hoping that we can better produce it.

Number 3 would now read at the beginning, “For the years selected by the committee,” that Department of National Defence.... Nothing will change other than that. Then, in the third line, instead of “trips”, it would say “foreign trips”, and instead of “the Governors General from 2015 to present”, it would say, “of the current Governor General and the previous two Governor Generals....”

I'll just wait until you're clear on that, Mr. Clerk, and then I'll go to the next amendment.

Would you like me to read it back as it would read completely?

• (1710)

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Paul Cardegna): Yes, that would be very helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: In my view it would be,

For the years selected by the committee, that Department of National Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Department of Canadian Heritage and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police table the financial reports of the expenses incurred during the foreign trips of the current Governor General and two previous Governor Generals, broken down by trip and by item of expenditure....

Nothing else would change.

The Clerk: Right. The rest would be the same.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: On number 4, it would say exactly as it says now, “that copies of invoices associated with the March 2022 trip to the Middle East of the Office of the Governor General's Secretary be produced; as well as a list of all foreign trips undertaken by the current Governor General and the two previous Governors General....”

The Clerk: This would be the two previous Governors General?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, meaning Payette and Johnston.

When you're ready, Mr. Clerk, in number 5 it would be, “the documents required under section 4 be submitted....”

Then number 6 would be, after “to the members of the committee”, “that the committee will determine the years for which the documents set out in 3) will be produced, and that those documents be produced no later than January 25, 2023.”

The Clerk: I beg your pardon, Mr. Housefather. For number 6, could you repeat that, please, so I can make sure I have it all down?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Sure: It's “that the committee will determine the years of production for the documents required under section 3), and that those documents shall be produced to the clerk of the committee no later than January 25, 2023.”

The Chair: Mr. Housefather, on a point of clarification, would number 6 that's on the document now become number 7?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, sir.

My colleague Ms. Thompson has mentioned to me, which is absolutely true, that if the “that” at the beginning is part of the resolution, the words “and in Canada” should be removed, so it should be “for its representation activities abroad” and it should be “for the years selected by the committee” in the “that”, if that's part of the resolution. I'm not sure if it is.

The Clerk: I need to know what section you're referring to.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: If you go to the beginning, Mr. Clerk, before number 1, there's a “that”. I'm not sure if it's really part of the motion or not, but if it is, then we'd need to remove the words “and in Canada”.

The Clerk: Okay. You're saying to remove “and in Canada”.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Then after that it would be “for the years selected by the committee”, not “2015 to the present”, because the committee will select the years of the travel for which it wishes to receive reports.

The Clerk: So it's replacing “and in Canada for the years 2015 to the present” with “for the years”—

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes: “for the years selected by the committee”.

The Clerk: Thank you.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I know that's complex and I should have had this all written down, but we just talked about it before the meeting, so I did my best.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You just hate us.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Hate you? No, not at all. I love all you guys.

The Chair: We have an amendment.

Go ahead, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I tease you about this, but what you're asking for does seem over-complicated.

A lot of this stuff we can get from an order paper question, and the National Post was able to get their ATIP request back within a month, so I question the desire to only say two years here. We can do an order paper on the costs and the breakdown—liquor, food, security and travel—and get that back in 45 days.

The other items are the actual paperwork, and if the National Post was able to get it within a month or two, I'm told, I'm not sure why we'd want to limit any of it.

I'd hate to also exclude trips inside Canada. I'd like to get an idea of expenses in Canada, something they can show us that says, "Well, this is what the costs in Canada are—nothing." Great, and if it's nothing, let's not bother, but I don't want to exclude them out of hand.

If it's one trip from each or even the last couple of trips within Canada that show normal numbers, then okay, they have it fixed for Canada, but I'd hate to exclude internal travel until we know for sure what their cost controls are like.

I'm not proposing any changes to Ms. Vignola's motion or what you have. I just feel that it's a bit over-complicated.

• (1715)

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, are you done?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Oh, yes. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: I'm concerned about the domestic part. We're really focused on this international foreign travel. I think it's going to be really complicated if we ask for domestic travel, because we heard from the witnesses that they're stopping at air bases and they're using military aircraft and they're using some commercial domestic travel. It's going to be so erratic that I don't believe we'll be able to have good comparables. I think it's going to be.... I just don't want to see us wasting taxpayers' money pulling everything out from everywhere when it's not going to be something we can use.

I want to make sure that we can use the foreign part. It's going to be crystal clear. I want to make sure that we look at the last three Governors General and all their expenses so that we can make a true evaluation of where this came from. That's just my thought.

We did hear from witnesses who were clear that they use military bases. It's hard to quantify. That's what we heard.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That's what I'm saying. We can certainly use the order paper for the domestic stuff. If it is crazy, we can look into it more.

Mr. Gord Johns: I'm open to the conversation. I wanted to throw in that we heard that. I want to get to the bottom of this as much as everybody else does.

I think the timeline for getting documents.... We have to be reasonable in order to make sure we get the documents. We've been told things about numbers and then the next day, we've learned that they're different. I want to make sure that we get the right numbers, so let's give a reasonable time frame, but we want this information quickly as well.

I support what you're proposing. I think we all want to move forward with this issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Johns.

Go ahead, Ms. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I would be fine with asking for a list of all the trips, including domestic ones, but I think we should focus on

international trips for the time being and use the Order Paper questions to find out more about the trips within Canada. If we see anything inappropriate on that side as well—so not just in international travel—we could decide to include that in our study.

As for the list of years, it's not that I disagree. It's simply that I don't understand which criteria we would use to determine what is an appropriate baseline trip or year and what isn't. Would it be 2014, 2015 or 2017? Call me a bookworm, if you like, but I prefer to have all the documents, as opposed to just half. The period referred to in my motion is from 2015 to 2022. That's my criterion: seven years. You're proposing six. Would that make a big difference in the number of documents? I don't know.

I appreciate that this covers a large number of documents, some of which are archived and would need to be compiled, analyzed and so forth. Anything having to do with the Governor General is kept. After all, we still have documents pertaining to King John and Richard the Lion-Heart, so I understand that. What concerns me, though, is how we are going to determine which years and trips constitute appropriate baselines, when we could do an initial analysis and then decide which trips we are going to focus on.

For that reason, I'm going to keep my motion as is. I'm fine with removing the reference to Canada, as long as we not rule out the possibility that we may need to examine domestic travel at some point. I need clarity on how we are going to determine which years and trips we're going to look at.

• (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Mr. Paul-Hus and then Mr. Housefather.

[*Translation*]

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

First, in light of the numerous amendments that were proposed, I'd like to have the clerk send us the amended version so we know exactly what we are voting on.

Second, I want to discuss the amendment pertaining to the two years for each Governor General. Since the period referred to in the motion is from 2015 to today, let's start with January 1, 2015. David Johnston was the Governor General then, right up until October 2017. That's about a year and three-quarters, so nearly two years for Mr. Johnston. Ms. Payette's term began in 2017 and ended in 2021, when she resigned three years and four months later. One of those years was during the pandemic, and since she didn't really travel during that time, we can round it down to almost two years. Ms. Simon took office in 2021, a year and two months ago.

I don't see why we need to specify a period since the time frames more or less line up, with Ms. Payette not travelling for a year because of the pandemic. She was having Rideau Hall renovated, but that's another story.

The expenses are posted on the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General's website. You can even find charts showing the variations in spending. It's public information, so there's no reason why we wouldn't be able to get the supporting documents quickly.

You said that the information wasn't easy to pull together, but at the very least, some information is already available on the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General's website. The departments of national defence and foreign affairs would have to do some work to provide the rest.

My comment really has to do with the two years. I think it should be January 1 to today, regardless of how long each Governor General was in office.

[*English*]

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Housefather, Mr. Paul-Hus has asked for a copy of the amendments.

I'll throw out there that you can adjourn the debate on this if you want to, until you see that copy. I will leave that there for now.

Go ahead, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: First, Mr. Chair, I was hoping that this amendment would be an amicable one. I've given it to the clerk, and he can't disseminate it until it's translated. I'm not going to be able to draft it and translate it in five minutes. That's not plausible or possible right now.

[*Translation*]

I listened carefully to what my fellow members had to say.

My point was that Mr. Johnston was the governor general for a long time, not just in 2015 and 2016. The trips he took in 2010 and 2011 may be particularly relevant. It's not just that the governor general is linked to this government or that government. Former governor general Johnston took trips in different years, so we may not necessarily want to look at the expenses for two years in a row.

What isn't difficult to put together is the list of trips the governors general took. My understanding is that information on trips taken in previous years is located in more than one place. The Office of the Secretary to the Governor General has a fairly small team, so its capacity to find all this information for the committee is limited.

The date for producing the documents should be postponed until January because they can't be produced by October 31. It is possible, however, to provide the information related to the 2022 expenses and the list of trips, of course.

Then, the committee can decide whether it wishes to review the information for each year. That would be up to the committee. My preference would be to look at two years for each governor general. Once the committee sees the list of trips, it may not be unreasonable for the committee to decide that it wants to look at Mr. Johnston's expenses for 2011 and 2012, instead of 2015 and 2016. It's really everything, because the other expenses, generally speaking, don't change from year to year, except for international travel.

If the honourable member wants the list of international and domestic trips, I'm fine with that, as long as the supporting documents we request pertain solely to international trips for those years.

• (1725)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Go ahead, Ms. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I would really like it if we could reach a consensus. October 31 may not be tomorrow, but it's not that far away.

How would my fellow members feel if we were to start with the expenses for international trips? As suggested, we could ask for the information pertaining to the trip to the Middle East and a list of the trips taken since 2010—the year when Mr. Johnston was appointed—to be provided by October 31. On October 15, we could meet with witnesses we want to invite, if possible, of course. That comes back to what Mr. Housefather proposed.

Then, we could set aside time to review the list of trips and determine whether we wanted information on all the trips, or choose the years we want to focus on.

Does that work for you?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: In the end, the only major change is that we won't be looking at domestic trips for the time being.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: We can't ask for the information mentioned in item three to be produced by the end of October. We would have to request that information at a later date, in other words, once the committee decides which years it's going to review.

The only information we are asking to be produced in October is the information in item four, that is, the list of trips and the expenses for 2022.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: We are also asking for the list in October.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, for October, all we are asking for is the list of trips made by the three governors general and the list of their expenses for 2022.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: That's right.

After that, we will determine.... We are looking for that information by January 15, is that right?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: We are asking that it be produced by January 15 or 25. I can't remember anymore.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: We also need time to review other documents.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Does that make sense?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: For October 31, we are asking for the expenses from the trip to the Middle East and the list of trips taken by Mr. Johnston, Ms. Payette and Ms. Simon.

On October 15, we are going to hear from the witnesses and figure out which years we want to examine the travel expenses for.

In mid-January, so around January 15, we are going to receive the documents related to the trips and years requested. That is my understanding.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: That's exactly right, because the committee could opt to request documents that go back more than six years. The amendment refers only to the years selected.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Very well.

We won't spend forever trying to work out which trip-related documents we want to ask for. If we say we want the documents for 2016, those are the ones we will get. When the time comes to figure out—

Mr. Anthony Housefather: If we want the ones for 2016, yes.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Great.

Just a reminder, Mr. Housefather, the meeting is being recorded.

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes. You are being recorded.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: All right.

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: We'll move to a vote.

The Chair: Before we go on—

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Yes, it's the same ones.

[*English*]

The Chair: For clarification, are we talking about the amendment or are we talking about the motion?

We're talking about the amendment—

The Clerk: Is that the amendment of Mr. Housefather?

The Chair: —of Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: As I understand it—and maybe I am wrong—what Ms. Vignola just said is absolutely consistent with the amendment that I tabled.

On October 31, we're to receive the documents related to the 2022 trip and a list of all of the travel of the current Governor General and the previous two Governors General. The committee will then hear from the witnesses in November and we will decide which years we want to ask about for all of the foreign travel expenses. It could be six years or it could be more than six years, but that will be up to the committee.

I think what she said is exactly what I tabled. Those documents, when we decide on the years, would be due in January.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Do we agree that the documents related to the Middle East trip should be unredacted?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: We'll get that information by October 31.

Do we agree on that?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Wonderful.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Yes. I was just going to confirm that.

We're back on the 30th. Do you want to give it to the 27th, the Friday before we're back, as opposed to the 15th? I don't care. I'm just wondering.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: It will give me the time to read it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Okay. That's fair. I understand.

The Chair: We're keeping it at the 15th. That way you have time to—

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I'd say the 25th, but if you prefer the 15th, the 15th is fine.

The Chair: Is the consensus for the 15th? Is that correct? There is nodding of heads. Yes.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Paul-Hus.

[*Translation*]

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

I realize that my fellow members want to take a look back in time, but former governor general Johnston was in office for nearly a decade, if my memory serves me correctly.

I think it's reasonable to have the study go back to 2014. That would give us three years for Mr. Johnston, three years for Ms. Payette, and the rest of the time for Ms. Simon. That would be fair. If we select a period of more than 10 years, we are going a long way back and we could talk about Michaëlle Jean.

We could look at the last three years of each governor general's time in office. We could go back to 2014. Then, we could decide what information we want for the 2014 to 2017 period. That's three years. We would also have three years for Ms. Payette, which would include time during the pandemic.

I realize what my fellow members are trying to do, but we need to be fair about the period we examine from each one's time in office.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Fine, but if we have a list of the travel and we can choose the years we look at, what's wrong with asking for the trips Mr. Johnston took in 2010 or 2011?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: It's just about being fair in choosing the period of time we look at. Ms. Payette was in office for three years and four months. If we choose a three-year period for each, we would have the last three years of Mr. Johnston's time in office. That's all I'm saying.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Vignola.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: We have to think about the logistics of the request, both for the people who will have to find the information and for us.

It may be easier for the people doing the research if they knew that we were going to request information for the period from 2014 to 2022, so eight years. If we go back to them later and ask them for information pertaining to other years and other trips, it may be harder for them to dig through the archives. I'm not an archivist, but I think it could make things harder for them.

As I already said, I would like to reach a consensus. It's not that radical of an idea. It could be the option that makes things easiest for the people doing the research. I don't want to make this agonizing for them.

[English]

The Chair: As I look around the room, I see a couple of sights. I'll allow members a minute to discuss among themselves and to get back on this.

I'll just throw in my little two cents. Ultimately, in terms of going back 10 years, the cost of things 10 years ago is not the same as the cost of things today. We have to keep that in mind.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Housefather: We agree.

• (1735)

Mrs. Julie Vignola: In the first paragraph, the year would change to 2014, then.

[English]

Mr. Anthony Housefather: We're agreeing to not go back to the beginning of Mr. Johnston's tenure but only start in 2014.

The Chair: We're starting with 2014 as opposed to going back to 2011. Mr. Housefather's amendment is what we're changing.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes. Basically, it would be the two previous Governors General, but Mr. Johnston would only start in fiscal year 2014.

The Clerk: Just to clarify, it will be the two previous Governors General and the activities of Mr. Johnston following 2014.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: It would be the current Governor General, Madam Payette, and Mr. Johnston starting with January 2014.

The Clerk: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Sorry about that.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ben Lobb: I have a pretty important intervention here.

I just want to know if Mr. Housefather is doing this legal work pro bono today or if it's billable, and if so who he's billing it to.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: My Hockey Canada work was totally pro bono. For this one, you're going to owe me a coffee.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: There are no more hands up.

I'm looking at members around the room and virtually. We're all in agreement with the amendment. Is that correct?

(Amendment agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Is there any discussion on the motion as amended? I'm hoping not.

We're all in agreement with the motion as amended. Is that correct?

(Motion as amended agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Thank you.

The next thing we'll go to is from Mr. Johns, but before we do, we can resume consideration of that or we can still leave it—

Mr. Gord Johns: We're going to do it next time.

The Chair: Okay. We will leave that on the table.

Mr. Gord Johns: Happy Thanksgiving, everybody.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: All right.

We have two others things to follow up on. One, as you may be aware, is on the issue of travel. Ultimately, for the travel we've talked about, the clerk has to redraft the new agenda. We will be getting that out to you so that so we can resubmit it. We're talking a winter-spring time frame.

The second thing is the work plan. At this point in time, we have five studies. I'll ask around the room to make certain that members are still comfortable with the chair and the clerk coordinating and moving forward with the two studies, adding in these other amendments as we see fit, and recognizing also that we may have supplementary estimates coming in that we'll have to fit in as well.

Are you comfortable with that?

There are nods around the room. I'm seeing "yes".

Great. Thank you very much.

With that, happy Thanksgiving. I declare the meeting adjourned.

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

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

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

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

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

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