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Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke



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• (1540)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 25 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, February 3, 2022, the committee is meeting to study Reducing Red Tape and Costs on Rural and Urban Canadian Airports.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House Order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[English]

Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending the meeting in person must wear a mask, except for members who are at their place during the proceedings.

I'd like to take a moment to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

For interpretation, for those joining us on Zoom, you have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either floor, English or French audio. Those in the room can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

All comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patient understanding in this regard.

Appearing before the committee today, we have the following witnesses. From the Department of Transport, Colin Stacey, director general of air policy; Craig Hutton, associate assistant deputy minister for policy; Aaron McCrorie, associate assistant deputy minister, safety and security; and Stephanie Hébert, assistant deputy minister of programs.

From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Denis Vinette, vice-president, travellers branch.

From the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, joining us in person today, we have Nancy Fitchett, vice-president, corporate affairs and chief financial officer; as well as Mr. Neil Parry, vice-president, operations.

From Nav Canada, we have Mr. Jonathan Bagg, director, stakeholder and industry relations; and Leigh Ann Kirby, vice-president, chief legal officer and corporate secretary.

From the Public Health Agency of Canada, we have Kimby Barton, acting vice-president, health security and regional operations branch.

Thank you all very much for joining us either in person or virtually.

Before I turn it over to Transport Canada for opening remarks, if my colleagues will permit, I just want to say on behalf of this committee, on behalf of all members of the House of Commons and, of course, on behalf of all Canadians, thank you, all, for the incredible and diligent work that you've done over the last two years to support Canadians and keep them safe.

With that, I want to turn it over now to Transport Canada for your opening remarks.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Craig Hutton (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Department of Transport): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for inviting us to speak with the committee today.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada recognizes the impact that significant wait times at some Canadian airports are having on travellers.

[English]

Transport Canada is working with federal partners, including the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Public Health Agency of Canada, as well as industry, including air carriers and airports, to implement solutions to reduce delays as we approach the summer peak season.

[Translation]

Our goal is to streamline services for inbound and outbound passengers, so Canadians can travel efficiently and safely as the sector recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

[English]

Air transport was affected more severely by COVID-19 than most sectors. Traffic levels dropped by more than 90% from pre-pandemic levels for more than a year.

As COVID-19 measures are easing at home and around the world, the air sector is seeing a surge in demand. In January 2022, air traffic was less than 40% of 2019 levels. By May, that grew to almost 80%. The surge in air travel is positive for the recovery of the air sector; however, increased volumes have also placed pressure on all aspects of the transport system.

Canada's not alone in facing the challenge of airport congestion. We are witnessing similar phenomena at other airports around the world and, given the global nature of the aviation industry, delays and congestion overseas contribute to delays and congestion also in Canada.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Some travellers have been experiencing delays during the outbound security screening process that happens before a traveller boards a plane. The challenges have been most prevalent at Toronto-Pearson and Vancouver airports, which are Canada's busiest.

[English]

The biggest source of outbound delays has been staffing shortages at CATSA. While 75% of screening officers were retained during the pandemic, labour market shortages have made it difficult to recruit back up to 100% of what is needed. When traveller delays became evident, the Minister of Transport instructed his officials to bring together CATSA, the major air carriers and the top four airports to understand the challenges and implement immediate solutions.

Actions to date, since the creation of the new airport operations recovery committee, include the accelerated hiring and training of new screen officers by CATSA and their deployment to where they are most needed. In fact, since April 1, CATSA screening contractors have recruited almost 900 new employees. CATSA is now over its 100% target in Toronto and Vancouver to meet its national standard of 85% of passengers screened in 15 minutes, which was actually exceeded in some cases over the past week.

Operators in CATSA are also working together to improve the screening process for passengers. In addition, all partners are improving communication and information sharing, including messaging to passengers to help them plan and avoid delays.

[Translation]

The concrete action we have taken together is having an impact. We have seen significant improvements in wait times over the past month, with fewer passengers waiting in long lineups.

[English]

During the week of June 3 to 9, an average of 10% of passengers were waiting more than 15 minutes at Pearson, which was down from 23% the week of May 9 to 15. At Vancouver, this number improved to 13% from 26% over the same period.

In addition to delays when boarding a flight in Canada, there have been delays for international travellers returning to Canada, primarily at Toronto Pearson. These delays are due to a number of compounding factors, including overall staffing levels in the system, infrastructure limitations and delays overseas, leading to a convergence of flights and public health measures.

[Translation]

Presently, there are infrastructure and capacity limitations in the customs hall that restrict passenger offloading, which has resulted in travellers being held on aircrafts.

In addition, travellers are also experiencing delays due to other airport services—including baggage handling. Ground crew labour shortages are also having significant impacts.

[English]

To resolve these issues, over the past month, Transport Canada has been actively working with CBSA, PHAC and the industry to identify efficiencies through the travel journey to streamline processes of reduced wait times.

Changes are being made. For example, new kiosks to process more passengers are being installed, and the Government of Canada announced the suspension of mandatory random testing until June 30 to streamline the border arrivals process and relieve congestion.

Mr. Chair, congestion and delays are frustrating for travellers. As noted, they are due to a variety of factors. That is why Transport Canada continues to work with federal and industry partners to address these challenges and support the recovery of the air sector while maintaining safety and security for Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next, we will go to the Canada Border Services Agency.

The floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Mr. Denis Vinette (Vice-President, Travellers Branch, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Many thanks for the recognition in your opening remarks. I truly appreciate it. We've had some great staff working diligently for the last two and a half years, doing all they can to protect at the border.

It is a pleasure for me to appear and speak with you today about the Canada Border Services Agency and what we are doing to improve the overall traveller experience at our airports. I would like to begin by noting that the CBSA is fully aware that Canadians are more eager than ever to resume their regular travel after more than two years of restrictions, as evidenced by the current volumes at our airports.

During the month of May, we gradually resumed border services at select airports affected by the temporary measures put in place as a result of the pandemic. Travellers are returning to a border that is being managed very differently this summer, with evolving COVID-19 requirements.

We recognize the impact that significant wait times at some airports are currently having on travellers, as stated by my colleague from Transport Canada. We are working with airports, air carriers, baggage handlers, other government departments and all partners to implement solutions to reduce delays as we approach the summer peak period.

The CBSA continuously monitors volumes and wait times to allocate resources and adjust staffing levels accordingly. We have increased officer availability at major airports, and student border services officers are now at work across the country.

There are also things that travellers can do to make the process easier for themselves and other travellers. Travellers can help reduce wait times at the border by coming prepared and by completing their mandatory ArriveCAN submission within 72 hours before arriving at the border.

- (1550)

[*Translation*]

ArriveCAN collects contact, health and travel information to protect the health and safety of travellers and expedite processing at the border. It is the fastest, easiest and most secure way for travellers to show they meet public health requirements.

The CBSA is constantly looking for innovative ways to facilitate and expedite border processing, without compromising health and safety. Over the coming months and years, the CBSA will undertake a series of major improvements as part of our traveller modernization initiative. The various components of this initiative will position Canada to manage future travel volumes without compromising public health priorities or economic recovery.

We are modernizing the border processing experience through the use of new digital tools and technologies to create a more streamlined process for travellers. One of these new tools is the advance CBSA declaration.

[*English*]

One of these new tools is the CBSA advance declaration. This is a feature within the ArriveCAN online application currently that gives air travellers the option to prepare their customs and immigration declaration 72 hours in advance of their arrival in Canada. This feature will be expanded to the ArriveCAN mobile app later this month.

In addition, over the next year, the CBSA plans to launch the CBSA advance declaration feature nationally at all airports with primary inspection kiosks. Travellers who use the advance CBSA declaration feature of ArriveCAN online will greatly reduce their processing time when they enter Canada through airports. On average, travellers using this new platform will complete their processing using the primary inspection kiosk in just over one minute—in as little as 68 seconds.

With the increased volume of travellers at our points of entry, there have been increased pressures on the government and industry to keep up. We trust that the traveller modernization initiative is steering us in the right direction.

I hope you have found this information beneficial, and I look forward to providing you with more insight on these important initiatives. I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we have the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.

You have five minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Neil Parry (Vice-President, Operations, Canadian Air Transport Security Authority): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, honourable members.

[*English*]

This year marks CATSA's 20th anniversary of operations. As you're likely aware, CATSA is a Crown corporation responsible for security screening services within Canada's civil aviation system. We're regulated by Transport Canada. CATSA is accountable to Parliament through the Minister of Transport, and we're funded by parliamentary appropriations.

We operate our mandate through a third party screening contractor model. The contractors employ the screening officers directly, while CATSA, together with the screening contractors, ensures that critical elements of the transportation system are secure, from passenger and hold baggage screening to the screening of non-passengers at designated airports in Canada.

We've recently seen the pent-up demand for air travel materialize at airports much earlier than I think many anticipated. As such, there were some challenges in servicing demand, particularly in early May. This follows two tumultuous years for the civil aviation industry.

CATSA and its screening contractors have been targeting the hiring of 1,000 screening officers this year, in addition to the over 1,200 screening officers who were recalled in the fall of 2021. I'm pleased to report that despite those challenges in May, and despite the labour market challenges that continue to persist, we are on track to meet those targets.

I'm also happy to report that over the last three weeks CATSA has met its government-funded service level target of screening 85% of passengers in 15 minutes or less across the system. We've exceeded that over the last three weeks, but we still have work to do.

While screening contractors have been working to increase staffing levels, they're not immune to the recruitment challenges experienced by the broader commercial aviation industry and, indeed, by many industries across Canada. CATSA aims to achieve or exceed the wait times service level as established by the funding provided by the Government of Canada, where, as I mentioned, 85% of all passengers wait 15 minutes or less at class I airports.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Ms. Fitchett and I are available to answer questions from committee members.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Parry, and thank you very much, Ms. Fitchett. Thanks for being here once again.

Next we have Nav Canada.

The floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Ms. Leigh Ann Kirby (Vice-President, Chief Legal Officer and Corporate Secretary, NAV CANADA): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Nav Canada is the not-for-profit corporation that owns and operates the world's first privatized air navigation system, ensuring the safest, most efficient movement of aircraft from the Pacific to the Arctic to the mid-Atlantic, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Nav Canada operates the world's second-largest air navigation system. To support our 45,000 customers, we employ 4,000 people and are deploying groundbreaking technologies to keep the skies safe. Safety is why we exist, and our safety record is one of the best in the world.

Nav Canada is a critical part of the supply chain infrastructure, which keeps people, goods and services moving by air to and from communities large and small across Canada and around the world.

[Translation]

NAV CANADA would like to thank the committee for its invitation to discuss reducing red tape and costs on Canadian airports.

[English]

Nav Canada's customers are the airlines and private aircraft operators that fly in Canadian airspace. As a not-for-profit, we charge our customers using a fee-for-service model. We have delivered multiple decreases to our customers since our inception to help them reduce costs for air travel, while investing more than \$2 billion to improve the air navigation system transferred to Nav Canada by the federal government in 1996.

Even with the latest rate increase in September 2021, our service charges and increases on average have run below the rate of inflation since our inception. Our cost structure is heavily weighted to fixed costs. For example, if the number of flights in Canadian airspace drops by 80%, Nav Canada must still maintain 100% service coverage in Canadian airspace. This weighting towards fixed

costs is illustrated when you realize that labour costs make up approximately 70% of our operating costs.

During the pandemic, we saw passenger air traffic, as measured by revenue, drop significantly. In fiscal 2021, our revenues were down by 55.7% compared to those from prepandemic traffic. As most of our costs are fixed, our revenue model was put to the test. On the operational side, I'm very pleased to report that Nav Canada and its employees managed the pandemic without any airspace closures due to infection rates.

Nav Canada's model and favourable credit rating allowed us to borrow at record-low rates in the debt market to continue our seamless operations. Unfortunately, a rate increase was necessary to meet the covenants of our earlier bond issuance. As we understood that our customers were also dealing with challenging business realities, the 29.5% increase in fees was only to meet covenant requirements, not to recover Nav Canada's revenue shortfall. To further assist our customers, Nav Canada implemented a fee-deferral program for the next five years.

Nav Canada was pleased that the federal government brought in business assistance programs during the pandemic. The Canada emergency wage subsidy provided critical support. However, after two years of the pandemic, Nav Canada, similar to other industry organizations, such as airports and airlines, has increased its debt levels. Currently, we have a \$600-million deficit in our rate stabilization account, which represents the amount that will need to be recovered over time and in consultation with our customers.

Nav Canada empathizes with air travellers who have seen an increase in delays over the past three months. Air service represents a complex ecosystem, with many different partners and factors influencing operations. We work actively to minimize impacts such as weather, equipment repairs and, at times, unplanned absences, including COVID-related absences. However, delays related to airport construction, COVID testing, customs, security processing, ground services or aircrew staffing are beyond the scope of our mandate.

Where we can have an impact, we will. Our long-term strategic direction will result in more efficient airspace use and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and will drive significant savings for our airline customers through reduced fuel consumption.

I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you very much.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll begin our round of questioning today with Ms. Lantsman.

Ms. Lantsman, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you to all the witnesses for their time.

A special thanks, of course, goes to the frontline workers, who have gone through a tumultuous two years and continue to be at the centre of what we deem a disastrous handling of the airports, as noted of late.

I'll start with Mr. Parry, at CATSA.

When did you first know about capacity issues at airports? The second, follow-up question is, with whom did you share that information?

Mr. Neil Parry: We have been planning for the recovery since the pandemic began. That was back in 2020, when we retained 75% of the workforce, despite over 95% of the passenger traffic disappearing almost overnight. We began a process to recall 1,250 screening officers over the summer of 2021. That was planning for the recovery.

The recovery, from a CATSA perspective, had two false starts. One was the delta variant and the next was the omicron variant over Christmas, when we ramped up, stopped, ramped up and stopped.

We work very closely with the airports, with the air carriers and with our colleagues at Transport Canada to forecast out demand. The forecasting process, on which we base the scheduling of required capacity, has been extremely volatile over the last two and a half years, making it very difficult to forecast with precision. We're seeing that improve. We have daily and weekly engagements with air carriers on what their load capacities will be.

We were planning for a busy July-August summer. I think the entire industry was focused on a July-August summer. We were working closely. We were part of Transport Canada's COVID recovery working group, with stakeholders, led by Transport Canada. We shared openly what our plans and strategies were for recovery. The demand that occurred in April and May was well above our forecasted demand. I would wager to say it was above industry's expected demand. There was a sudden surge—

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I'm going to pipe in here.

Did you let the government know? Did you let the airports know? Did you let the airport authorities know? Who did you share the information on forecasting with?

Mr. Neil Parry: It was with all of the above. We shared this with our colleagues at Transport Canada. My CEO and I met with the Canadian Airports Council. We met regularly with airport CEOs and other air carrier executives.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I'll follow up with a question.

Mr. Parry, if you knew that air travel would see a sharp increase in June and July, and you've seen an even sharper increase.... The

information from our supplementary estimates—that budgeting process—shows that over 25% of CATSA's budget went unspent last year.

Could you tell us why?

Mr. Neil Parry: Last year, the passenger volumes were extremely low, so we managed that budget based on the capacity we needed to serve the demand at that time. The passenger volumes did not start to recover last year. They remained very low right up until March of this year and then into April and May, when we saw the spike in passenger volumes.

We weren't going to spend a budget to have people stand in an airport and do nothing. We felt that would be an inefficient use of the parliamentary appropriations.

• (1605)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Despite forecasting for a larger travel season, you decided not to spend 25%.

Do you believe that letting those funds lapse is a reason for some of the delays we are seeing at airports?

Mr. Neil Parry: I believe the availability of the labour force to be able to meet that demand is a far bigger factor than the 75% of our budget that we spent.

As I mentioned earlier, we retained 75% of the workforce when there was no traffic at the airports. We will obviously reflect on whether we should have retained 100% of the workforce. I think, in hindsight, we might have been subject to some criticism, had we done that when everybody else was laying off. We thought it was a prudent strategy at the time.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: To remind people who are watching this committee, I don't think this is a run-of-the-mill government agency. I know that Canadians pay some of the highest security fees, and it's a user-pay model.

I'd like to know how often CATSA collects the data on processing times at security. How many people can one CATSA employee process per hour? How much has that changed in the sense of how many they could process pre-pandemic?

Mr. Neil Parry: There are two parts to that question.

The first part is on how we collect and measure processing times. We do it in a number of ways.

We scan boarding passes as passengers arrive in the queue. We do that at the busiest 15 airports, which represent over 90% of passenger traffic. We use that information collected between the first scan and the second scan to derive a wait time. We do that 24-7 at those airports. We have one of the most accurate wait time measurement systems in the world, I would argue, because of that checking of the boarding pass.

In terms of processing on the line—

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: How many does a—

Mr. Neil Parry: I'll answer your question.

In terms of processing on the line, we don't look at it in terms of how many passengers one screening officer can process, but in terms of a line. Depending on the type of line and whether it is a CATSA Plus advance line, we can get up to 260 to 270 people an hour through on one of those lines.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lantsman, and thank you very much, Mr. Parry.

Next we have Ms. Koutrakis.

The floor is yours. You have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank all of the witnesses for being with us this afternoon, along with their hard-working and dedicated teams.

My questions are for Transport Canada officials.

Prior to the pandemic, to what extent was Transport Canada involved in the day-to-day operational decisions of Canadian airports, such as work schedules and the number of employees assigned?

If Transport Canada or the minister wanted to micromanage these kinds of operational decisions, would they have the authority to do so?

[*English*]

Mr. Craig Hutton: Normally, Transport Canada would not be involved in operational issues among partners in the sector. As committee members know, we're a regulator, not an owner or operator of transportation services.

However, we acted quickly when it became clear that volumes were increasing sharply and in a way that was challenging the capacity of the system to cope. An approach that brings all partners in the system together allows for some better planning to get us through this period. It allows the targeting of specific problems—the identification of those problems and bringing the appropriate measures to address them—and the development of some innovative solutions at the same time.

We've very much been playing that facilitator role to improve the information sharing and planning that needs to go on in the system in order to address the volume challenges we're currently experiencing.

• (1610)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Hutton, as far as you know, does the minister have that authority?

Mr. Craig Hutton: No, the minister does not have authorities to.... I know he's in a position to direct operators. Again, we sort of set the regulatory framework broadly. It is up to partners in the system—airports, carriers, agencies—to conduct the work that's needed to manage staffing levels and operational changes in the way they see fit to address the services they're providing.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Would it be fair to say that there are a very large number of factors that would explain why we have been seeing delays at airports?

Mr. Craig Hutton: Right. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, there has been a confluence of factors. Of course, as we're noting, the labour shortage across the sector has been a significant challenge for airports and air service operators, and I think that is something that is staying with us.

Despite those challenges, we are working hard to figure out how to best address the shortages, but we also see other challenges in the system, such as a greater concentration of flights at certain times of the day, and delays in parts of the system, including overseas, which have an impact here in Canada. We see customs pre-clearance. We see different passenger patterns, such as more carry-on luggage. We also see weather conspiring against us at exactly the wrong times as well, as it will do.

All of these things create this situation where there's a knock-on effect, and we need to make sure we understand what is driving the issues at a given moment in time. That allows us to tackle those issues head-on. I think having this collaborative forum through which we're working together is helping us to do exactly that.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Given all these various issues that are cumulative and are causing these delays, does this present a communication challenge in terms of trying to explain to the public how we're addressing delays? I mean, the general public has this feeling that it's the federal policies or mandates in place that are causing these delays. How much of that is giving us a challenge in communicating the correct message?

Mr. Craig Hutton: It is challenging, because there are many factors at play. Of course, there are factors at play in arriving at the airport and being ready to be screened and getting through screening in time for your flight. There are also factors in terms of aircraft arriving and the process by which, particularly internationally, you're coming back into Canada.

Exactly on this challenge, the communications aspect of what we're working together on is something we've been addressing to get better communications amongst partners. That way, when we're communicating about what travellers can expect in terms of managing delays and how they'll get through screening or other border measures, it's clear, it's consistent, it's in time and it's messaged by all partners in the system. No matter where that traveller might be, the information's available to them to make the choices they need to make in order to have more efficient travel through the system.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Chair, do I have time for a short question to the CBSA?

The Chair: You have 35 seconds left, Ms. Koutrakis.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Okay. Let me see if I can get this done.

To the CBSA, can you comment on the issue of staffing shortages at U.S. Customs and Border Protection? What have you observed? How is this affecting airport operations?

Mr. Denis Vinette: Regretfully, I can't speak on behalf of U.S. customs and their current personnel. They work with our public safety portfolio or lead agency in terms of providing some of the pre-clearance capacity.

On the CBSA side, I will say that we are all hands on deck. We plan for summer volumes. We are increasing our own staffing, at least for arrivals into Canada, through both additional officer availability and the student border services officers who work for us in airports each summer.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Koutrakis and Mr. Vinette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

I'll start by saying that I was surprised to hear the parliamentary secretary's remarks. She said that the minister had no responsibility and that he could do nothing about the delays. That's a bit like saying that the minister is useless. I find that a surprising way of looking at it.

My question is for the people from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, or CATSA.

If you were contacted by the minister's office, would it have had an impact on your activities or would it be routine?

• (1615)

Mr. Neil Parry: Thank you for your question.

[*English*]

As to whether we receive directives from the minister's office, yes, the minister has the authority to direct a Crown corporation in line with the regulatory framework.

[*Translation*]

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

You said earlier that you adjusted the number of employees working in your offices based on the volume of passengers arriving.

If, theoretically, the adjustment is made as you go along, why are there now bottlenecks?

[*English*]

Mr. Neil Parry: If I understand the question, yes, that's correct. We adjust the capacity to service passengers based on the forecasted volume of passengers and the arrival patterns.

As I mentioned, there's been a lot of volatility in what actually materializes at an airport versus what is forecasted. There are pressures throughout the system that disrupt those passenger arrival patterns. It means that sometimes we have staff when the passengers aren't there. Sometimes there are not enough staff because a schedule has changed, or an aircraft has arrived late or was held, or the connections traffic is off. All of those things affect screening. Our objective, though, is to have as many screening officers available as we can, and to have as many lines open to serve the public.

The factors that have also affected that have been the attrition rates within not just our organization but the industry. The labour market has been a significant challenge in terms of getting people onboarded. There are other factors at play, such as volatile passen-

ger traffic. Again, that's through no fault of the industry's. I think they're scrambling to recover as well. There are also processing challenges. We're seeing a lot more passengers show up with carry-on bags, and it takes longer to process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have another question for you.

You said earlier that you estimated the wait time at the moment to be 15 minutes on average. From what I understand, you estimate it from the first scan, so when people scan their passport at the kiosk, until they meet an agent.

I wonder if this data underestimates the actual wait time. In my own recent experience, when I came back from abroad, the airport was so crowded with passengers getting off planes that just getting to the first scan was a feat. So there's also a queue before you get there.

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to measure the data from the time of deplaning of the aircraft?

[*English*]

Mr. Neil Parry: First, I will just clarify. I didn't say that passengers wait only 15 minutes or less. What I said was that the government-funded target service level on average is that 85% of passengers on an annualized basis will wait 15 minutes or less. We have met or exceeded that target for over six straight years.

In terms of the measurement, you're correct, the measurement should be taken at the end of the queue, the end of the line, so that you have an accurate measurement. We have, through the month of May, been working with some of our stakeholders on this to alert us. We have significant numbers of brand new screening officers whom we need to remind, in taking the measurement, that you don't stand in one spot. You have to move to the end of the queue. There is a compliance factor there.

We do oversight on compliance. That compliance is related to the performance pay that our screening contractors receive, so they have an incentive to measure correctly. We take action when there is inaccurate measuring, and it does occur, but overall the compliance rates are above 90%.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I'd like to know if you feel that the situation will soon return to normal or if, on the contrary, wait times will increase in the next few weeks.

Should the wait time increase, approximately how long will it take before everything returns to normal?

[English]

Mr. Neil Parry: I believe that, over the last couple of weeks, we have returned more to normal. The trend is positive. Wait times are coming down. We are hitting the service level targets where we are continuing to focus our wait times at peak. Everything is about the peak period. That's what's most important to our stakeholder partners. Those wait times have come down.

The summer is a busy period. There will be wait times. There have always been wait times in the summer, but we want to see those continue to trend down to normalized levels, and our staffing capacity has been increasing, particularly at the top four airports, where we've met most of our targets. We're continuing to onboard new people.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a question for Mr. Vinette.

Mr. Vinette, you must have been affected as well by increased wait times and volumes at the borders.

Has this had the effect of putting pressure on the Canada Border Services Agency to process traffic more quickly, and in that sense, has this affected the level of verification or security?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we won't have time to hear the answer. Perhaps you can answer it in the next round.

Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today with us to answer our questions.

I want to take a moment off the top to acknowledge the work of screening officers and frontline airport workers all across the country, who are really bearing the brunt of the chaos at our airports and working under some exceptionally difficult conditions.

We've been told several times by the government that this is an international phenomenon, so it might be instructive to look at what other airports are doing.

I noted that Amsterdam Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands negotiated an agreement with airport workers that includes a raise over the busy summer months that's equivalent to Canadian \$7.14 per hour. By contrast, in Canada we have CATSA creating something called the summer attendance incentive program, which pays \$200 a week bonus to employees who don't take their holidays.

Here's the most alarming part. I have a memo here written by one of your contractors that describes the program to its workers. This memo states that workers who take time off because they are sick won't qualify for the bonus. This is essentially creating a financial incentive for employees to go to work sick during a pandemic. Does CATSA think that's appropriate?

Mr. Neil Parry: I disagree with how you've characterized what the incentive is intended to do.

A screening officer who is sick or takes their scheduled vacation is not disqualified from the program.

I'll back up just one step, to your reference to Schiphol.

CATSA is not the employer of the screening contractors. The service is delivered through a third-party contractor.

The process for negotiating compensation is the collective bargaining process. Many of the airports in Canada have concluded agreements already, and there are a few places—Vancouver is one, and Ottawa is another—where the collective bargaining process is under way.

The attendance incentive was put in place because across the country there can be significant instances of absenteeism whereby people don't show up for their shift. The program is administered by the screening contractors. CATSA is making the funds that it underspent in April and May due to the capacity shortage available to incent people to show up for their scheduled shift. If somebody is sick and provides documentation to their employer, my understanding from the employers is that they would continue to be eligible over the 12-week period if they continue to show up for their scheduled shifts.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Parry, if I may interrupt, my interpretation is that it costs them 200 bucks if they take a sick day. I have a memo here by Allied Universal, one of your contractors. It has a Q and A on the third page, which says that if an employee misses their scheduled shift because they are sick, even if they provide a medical note, they are not eligible for the bonus that week.

Mr. Neil Parry: It's "that week". That is correct.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: There's a \$200 bonus on the table for that week, and if they get sick and need to take time off work because they're sick, they forgo that bonus. That's a financial incentive to go to work with a runny nose, a sore throat and COVID, possibly.

• (1625)

Mr. Neil Parry: I won't respond to that.

Okay—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: No, no, on the COVID.

Mr. Neil Parry: What's important to keep in mind I think is, this is supernumerary to the compensation, the total compensation, that a screening officer receives from their employer in the course of their duties. There is already a compensation package at all the airports, so there are hourly pay rates, benefits, pensions, holidays, sick days—paid sick days—that the screening officers are entitled to.

This offer was never meant to be mandatory for 12 weeks. It is an incentive above and beyond their existing compensation, their existing pay schedule and overtime rates. It's above that and it's available to those who are able to avail themselves of it.

We fully expected that most screening officers would not be able to take 100% advantage of it, because people get sick and they go on vacation, and that's perfectly acceptable. However, if you show up for your scheduled shifts, you have an opportunity to earn additional funds above what you're already entitled to.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Parry, if I may, I disagree with the characterization. It feels to me like an incentive. Earlier you said that you're trying to discourage absenteeism. Taking the holidays that you scheduled last November is not absenteeism.

Mr. Chair, if I may—

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'm a little confused. My colleague across is getting into—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Iacono, we're having a hard time hearing you in the room here. We're just going to verify if everything is okay with audiovisual and we'll get right back to you.

Feel free to proceed, Mr. Iacono.

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

I'm a little confused and puzzled by the questioning of my colleague across. His questions are about paycheques, pay scheduling, sick days and shifts. This is all with respect to the internal business of human resources. It has nothing to do with the Government of Canada. I don't know if it's appropriate, but he's questioning the witness on how they conduct their internal business on a human resource level, and I think it is not up to us to scrutinize that at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

Do you want to respond to that and perhaps expand on the line of questioning you're currently moving forward with, Mr. Bachrach?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I would. I'm cognizant that my time is running down, so if I can do it on a point of order, I'd be happy to. I appreciate my colleague's raising his concern.

This incentive program I'm discussing is a CATSA program. CATSA is a government agency. What I'm talking about is the inappropriate use of federal government funds to incentivize workers to not take the holidays they scheduled and potentially to incentivize their going to work sick during a pandemic.

I would offer that a more appropriate thing to do would be to use those federal funds to provide workers with a raise over the busy summer months so that they can be properly compensated. That would also help with recruitment and resolve this overall problem we're facing.

But, Mr. Chair, if I may—

The Chair: I'll let you proceed, and I'll start the clock again, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I appreciate the attempt to answer the questions.

I would like to move on to a separate topic. As members of the committee know, I have a motion on notice that I would like to move at this time. I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), an order of this committee do issue for a copy of all relevant documents containing public health advice and scientific modelling received by the Minister of Transport relating to the decision to issue on June 1, 2022, the Interim Order for Civil Aviation Respecting Requirements Related to Vaccination Due to COVID-19, No. 2.

• (1630)

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

Unfortunately, we have to address the motion presented by Mr. Bachrach. He has given the appropriate 48 hours' notice to move his motion. Unfortunately, we're not going to be able to continue with witness testimony.

Yes, Mr. Badawey, go ahead.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): I was under the impression that at the last meeting we agreed to go into committee business at 5 p.m. to deal with both motions that were on the floor, so I would ask the chair or the clerk to clarify that and whether, in fact, we would then need unanimous consent to entertain that motion now versus what we agreed upon in terms of dealing with those two motions during committee business.

I say that for two reasons. One, the decision was made, and I think that decision was made by all members with due respect to the folks here, who came out and gave us their time to address the issues we're dealing with regarding this study. We have a number of members here from CATSA and CBSA who, quite frankly, have given us their time, and their time is very valuable, as all members can well appreciate.

With that, I would recommend to the members of the committee that we continue with the witnesses and their very valuable testimony that's going to add to this study. Then, as planned and as supported at the last meeting, we can get into the two motions by Mr. Barsalou-Duval and Mr. Bachrach when we enter into committee business at 5 p.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I'd like to ask for the patience of witnesses appearing before the committee while we sort this out.

I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Jeneroux, followed by Ms. Koutrakis and then by Ms. Lantsman.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Badawey and Mr. Bachrach, for your interventions.

I believe it's within Mr. Bachrach's right to do this if he so chooses. He took up time, I guess, from his own line of questioning to do it, so I guess that's the sacrifice.

In speaking to the motion, if I could, I certainly would support this. I think it's a good motion. The only recommendation I would perhaps make to Mr. Bachrach is that he might want to put an end date for receiving those documents, like within like a month, two weeks or however he sees it, because, ultimately, it could drag out a while if we don't do that.

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

We'll go to Ms. Lantsman, followed by Ms. Koutrakis.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I will leave my comments to Mr. Jeneroux. I believe we should do this at five o'clock, as agreed, and I apologize on behalf of some colleagues who think that this is an appropriate time to do this even though our witnesses have given time for this.

Thanks.

The Chair: We have Ms. Koutrakis followed by Mr. Bachrach.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I echo a lot of the comments that have already been made. There was an agreement at the last meeting that we should listen to the motions at five o'clock, when the committee is to do committee business. I think it shows a lack of respect and consideration when we have all our officials here from the various departments who have given their testimony. Members of the committee have real questions that are relevant to the study at hand, and I think we should respect what we agreed to and we should go forward.

At this point, Mr. Chair, I would like to ask for a suspension so that the Liberal members have a chance to discuss among themselves.

The Chair: I'm going to respond to Ms. Koutrakis and provide a five-minute suspension for Liberal caucus members to discuss.

The meeting is suspended for five minutes.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: The meeting is now resumed. I see a couple of hands up.

Mr. Badawey, I believe you wanted to go first. Are there any other hands? Would anybody else like to speak?

We have Mr. Badawey followed by Mr. Bachrach.

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

Mr. Chairman, I move that debate be now adjourned.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, would you like to do a recorded division on the motion on the table?

• (1640)

The question is on the motion to adjourn the debate.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: We will resume the debate.

I will turn it over to Mr. Bachrach, followed by Ms. Lantsman, followed by Ms. Koutrakis.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'll make this very brief.

First of all, my apologies to the witnesses. I would love to have had another round of questioning.

I understand my colleagues' desire to discuss this motion in camera, but I think this is of interest to a lot of Canadians. I hope we can dispatch this in one round of comments around the table, and then potentially use the balance of the meeting to resume hearing from the witnesses and asking questions. That would be my hope. It's a very simple motion. Folks have had it for more than 48 hours.

That would be my desire. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

I have Ms. Lantsman, followed by Ms. Koutrakis, followed by Mr. Badawey.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Thanks, colleagues.

Given that we've had this motion for quite some time, and given the government's inability to take any responsibility for what is happening in our airports and our travel sector with regard to measures, it's important to have this tabled in committee and to take this with.... From our side, this will be our one round of support for this motion. We've been asking the government repeatedly, in all kinds of forums, to provide health data for its decision-making. It hasn't done so. I think the committee deserves an answer on that, as do all Canadians.

From our side, I think that will be it. We support the motion. I hope not to see members opposite filibuster this one.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lantsman.

Next is Ms. Koutrakis, followed by Mr. Badawey.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm wondering if my colleagues on the committee would entertain an amendment to this motion. I propose that the motion, as amended, would read as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), an order of this committee do issue for a copy of public health advice and scientific modelling in support of the decision to maintain existing public health measures received by the Minister of Transport relating to the decision to issue on June 1, 2022, the Interim Order for Civil Aviation Respecting Requirements Related to Vaccination Due to COVID-19.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Koutrakis.

We have an amendment on the floor. Does anyone want to speak to the amendment as proposed by Ms. Koutrakis?

Mr. Bachrach, I'll turn it over to you.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I don't have the amendment in front of me, but it seems to me that there is a substantive change to the wording.

I wouldn't mind hearing from my colleague what her intention is in making this amendment, because it seems very similar to the current wording in front of us.

The Chair: Ms. Koutrakis, if it's okay with Mr. Badawey, I'll turn it back over to you.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Basically, we're removing "all relevant documents containing" and adding "public health advice and scientific modelling in support of the decision to maintain existing public health measures".

I think what is important with the motion here is to ensure that we provide our colleague and the committee and all Canadians any information that the public health advice and scientific modelling was showing us to make the decisions that were made. That should be the most important point.

• (1645)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Ms. Koutrakis.

I think the questions that are being asked, and the questions that have been asked over the past week, are really around the timing. It seems that, all of a sudden, there was a decision to suspend the mandate without an explanation of what changed. What I'm interested in knowing is what advice was provided to the minister, and when, to indicate that something had changed in the presentation of the virus, and in the strategy and the epidemiology, that warranted the extension of the mandate.

I want to avoid getting to a place where we simply get general documents explaining how vaccines work and that kind of thing, and make it specific to when the Public Health Agency of Canada started telling the minister that the domestic air travel mandate may no longer be appropriate given the current context. We ended up in a very strange situation in which, when we asked the government in the House of Commons to explain why certain measures were still in place, the government stonewalled us. Government members said they trusted public health. We then asked public health, and they said it's up to the politicians. It goes back and forth like this.

I think it's pretty clear to most Canadians that the way it's supposed to work is the public health officials provide the advice to the government, and then the government takes action. We're interested in when the public health officials first started advising the government that these specific measures were no longer effective and could safely be suspended.

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

I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Badawey, before going to Ms. Koutrakis.

Mr. Badawey, thanks for your patience.

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

I was going to call a point of order. I'm trying to keep this clean and consistent with how we've operated as a committee for the last several years.

We had planned, once again, on going into committee business to discuss this issue. Obviously, members know that when we go into committee business, it's a closed session discussion, especially with some of the sensitivities we might be discussing, like human resources, etc.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I would put a motion forward, since we didn't need unanimous consent—which, quite frankly, I disagree with, but that's a discussion for another day—to go into a closed

session and into committee business, as was originally planned. I would see you at five o'clock.

Mr. Chairman, I would put that forward as a motion.

The Chair: The first thing we have to do is deal with the amendment proposed by Ms. Koutrakis.

Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Clerk. We have Mike, the clerk, who's joining us virtually and would like to say something very quickly.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): The motion to move directly in camera would supersede that. We could take a vote on that right away, to see whether or not the committee moves in camera.

If that were to occur, and we had a positive decision, we'd have to send out all new Zoom links to the members who are participating via Zoom, and we would excuse the witnesses from the room.

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

Keep in mind, colleagues, that this is a motion that will determine whether or not we keep the witnesses on with us or not. Please keep that in mind when you're considering this motion.

I'll turn it over to you for the vote on that, Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I believe that in previous meetings, when we've ended up in a spot like this and it looked like we might not finish our discussion in the next 20 minutes to half an hour, we've allowed the witnesses to go and have just recognized that we're probably not going to get to additional rounds of questioning.

It sounded like you were characterizing it as though, if this motion doesn't pass, the witnesses have to stick out the rest of the meeting. I don't think that's the case.

The Chair: No. I'm sorry, Mr. Bachrach. That wasn't my intent. If anything, if this doesn't pass, I'm still going to end up asking the witnesses to log off. If I see it go any further, I don't want to waste their time.

I'm going to turn it over to the clerk now for the vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That brings us back to Ms. Koutrakis to speak to her amendment.

We'll have Ms. Koutrakis, followed by Mr. Badawey and then Mr. Chahal.

• (1650)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to ask for a vote, please, on my amendment.

The Chair: There are still hands up, Ms. Koutrakis, to speak to your amendment. Unfortunately, I can't call a vote on your amendment until no hands are up.

Right now, I have Mr. Badawey, followed by Mr. Chahal. They are still on the speakers list.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, are we going to proceed and have the witnesses endure this debate, or are we going to dismiss the witnesses?

The Chair: That's a good question, Mr. Rogers.

I was going to wait until it reached a certain period of time to see whether or not we could resolve this as a committee and then resume the business with the witnesses. I'll give it a little longer, and if I see that we unfortunately haven't resolved this, then I'll ask the witnesses to kindly log off.

Mr. Badawey.

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

Seeing that we're going to be staying in an open session, it actually might, to some extent, be a more robust discussion.

My question is for a clarification that I would ask either of you, Mr. Chairman, or the clerk. We have the witnesses here with us. We're going to be debating a motion by the NDP member, and now that we're in open session, it may be of benefit to ask the witnesses some questions that pertain to the NDP motion.

I'd like to ask the clerk if we can have this robust discussion and debate the motion with some input from those who are in the business and can really give us an idea of how credible this motion would in fact be in terms of how we move forward. As many of us know, there has been a decision made on this issue already this week. I don't think the timing is an issue, besides the politics of it. I get that. Other than that, with the decision being made and the mandates lifted, I'm not sure what will actually come out of this besides a few tweets and some social media for the member.

With that, I would ask, would members be allowed to get more information to then make a proper decision on this motion? Would it be allowed for us to ask some of the witnesses we have here with us some questions that would pertain to this motion, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

I'm going to defer to the clerk on this one. Just give me one minute.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Mr. Chairman, if I can add to that, too, I think that on the NDP member's questions and some of the comments that he was making in clarification with respect to the amendment, the witnesses here can add a great deal to those questions that are being asked, as well as the information coming out of the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I appreciate where my colleague, Mr. Badawey, is trying to take this. He keeps looking at the witnesses from CATSA. I don't think they have any relevance to this motion.

It's more the witnesses from the Public Health Agency of Canada that would relate to the advice—

Mr. Vance Badawey: Right, but I'm looking at whoever's in the room. It's hard to look at the people on the screens to—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Anyhow, just so no one is confused.

Mr. Vance Badawey: They represent all witnesses, because they're here physically.

Voices: Oh, oh!

• (1655)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That's very much putting them on the spot. They were brave enough to come in person.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach, and thank you, Mr. Badawey.

I conferred with the clerk. The witnesses are not here to debate the motion, so unfortunately they cannot be a part of this discussion. It's among the members themselves.

With that, I will continue with the debate on Ms. Koutrakis's amendment.

We will go to Mr. Chahal, who will be followed by Ms. Lantsman, Ms. Koutrakis and Monsieur Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Chahal, the floor is yours.

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

To debate Ms. Koutrakis's amendment, let me read out the motion as amended, so that everybody can be clear on what is being asked for and I can add my further comments on it:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), an order of this committee do issue for a copy of public health advice and scientific modelling in support of the decision to maintain existing public health measures received by the Minister of Transport relating to the decision to issue on June 1, 2022, the Interim Order for Civil Aviation Respecting Requirements Related to Vaccination Due to COVID-19.

I believe the amendment to the motion as proposed is a good one, because public health advice and scientific modelling to support the decision-making of public health measures are extremely important. In the province of Alberta, I've seen many decisions made over COVID and all the challenges we've faced over the last number of years that did not follow public health advice and the scientific modelling that was being presented.

That provided tremendous challenges, colleagues. You may have seen that our Conservative premier said last year that we were going to have the “best summer ever”, and proclaimed it publicly on and around Canada Day. I can tell you, folks, that it was not the best summer ever.

Following, as Ms. Koutrakis has advised here, public health—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to redirect the member back to the amendment at hand. Certainly, if he wants to debate bad decisions that particular leaders have made, I would point him right to his own Prime Minister. However, if he sticks to the point of the amendment, I think that would help speed things along a little.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

I would ask that all members try to address, as best as possible, the amendment or the motion at hand.

Mr. Chahal, the floor is yours.

Mr. George Chahal: Thank you, Chair.

To my colleague, Mr. Jeneroux, it's actually directly applicable to me, as an Albertan and a Calgarian, in relation to all the lives that were lost due to some of the poor public health decisions that were made and the advice that was not followed by public health. In terms of scientific modelling, many doctors came forward at the time, asking us to take further action and bring forward further public health measures to protect Canadians.

Over the last year, we had a significant conversation on that in Alberta, where I'm from. I was a councillor with the City of Calgary at that time. Ms. Koutrakis's amendment here is clear: "public health advice and scientific modelling in support of". I remember on city council at the time conversations in which we asked the province to provide that scientific modelling. I think it would have been great if our municipality and others at the time had had the scientific modelling to support the decision-making process.

That's why I think this amendment that Ms. Koutrakis has brought forward, asking for that, is extremely relevant to the debate today. It's what we should be looking at—making decisions, having a conversation, and having the documents, with the scientific modelling, that can help support the decisions that are being made. I would also like to add that on the decisions recently made by the Minister of Transport, he would have looked at this important information and consulted even many of the folks here today, and others, prior to making the decision.

I think Ms. Koutrakis's amendment is quite appropriate at this time. I think it's quite relevant. I hope all my colleagues here can support her amendment.

• (1700)

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

Before I move on, Ms. Koutrakis, could you kindly send your amendment to the clerk so that we can circulate it, please?

Before I turn it over to Ms. Lantsman for her remarks, I want to respect the time of the witnesses who are joining us.

Based on the list of speakers I currently have before me, it doesn't look like we're going to be able to get to your testimony today. I apologize for that, but we have to deal with the business before us right now, which is the motion that has been presented before the committee.

I would kindly ask you to now log off. I want to thank you on behalf of the committee for the time you have given us today. Thank you very much.

Ms. Koutrakis is sending that out to the clerk—thank you very much—so I will ask Ms. Lantsman to take the floor.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Do you know what? I'm glad that Canadians are able to see members of the government trying to put this committee into closed doors, into secret conversations, because that is all we've seen when we've demanded public health advice.

We have asked consistently for the public health advice that has led to the decisions on airport testing and mandates. Time and time again, we get the same answers. I can name you at least 15 occasions where the minister, the parliamentary secretary or members of the government have said, "We are following the expert advice." Even the president of PHAC told carriers and airports that they would remove testing from airports in January.

All this committee is asking for, on behalf of all Canadians, is to know that the half-measures that were announced just days ago by this government to remove some of the restrictions from airports, and certainly not all of them.... Why have they othered an entire segment of the Canadian population? Why, for so long, did they not allow four or five million people to travel domestically? Why are the quarantine rules inconsistent with the rules we have in this country, where we have to quarantine for 14 days but, if you have a COVID infection, there are some provinces where it is five days?

It's June. It's almost July, and we still have not seen any evidence from the government.

Now we see an amendment to a motion that allows the government to continue to say what it has been saying all along: "Something, something, we rely on the experts." We have not seen any expert testimony.

I'm glad Canadians are able to see this conversation open in committee, that they're able to see members of the government filibuster this motion to the point that this committee meeting will be over and they still will not have provided the public health advice that has led to the decisions that are causing the chaos in our airports, which, earlier in this meeting, they said have nothing to do with the government. This government's abdication of responsibility around airports is something Canadians should be able to see. I'm glad we're discussing it in committee.

We don't support this amendment. We support the original motion that would require the government to table at this committee the public health advice that has led to its decision-making. Every Canadian has been asking for it. Every parliamentarian has been asking for it. To this day we have not seen it.

I think Canadians deserve that. I think this committee deserves that. I think Parliament deserves that. I think there's been enough of this filibustering. Allow this motion to carry.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lantsman.

On the list I currently have Ms. Koutrakis, followed by Monsieur Barsalou-Duval, followed by Mr. Badawey and then Mr. Iacono and Mr. Rogers.

We will turn it over to you, Ms. Koutrakis. The floor is yours.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm really happy to hear my colleague Ms. Lantsman's comments that she likes that Canadians can see the hard work that our government has been doing and continues to do to make sure they and their families and our economy have always been kept safe.

The number one issue for our government has been, from day one, since the COVID pandemic, first and foremost, the safety of all Canadians, the safety of our transportation system, the safety of our employees, and the safety of all Canadians and our economy.

Mr. Chair, the reason for my amendment to the main motion by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is that I think it would allow for the main motion to pass. I proposed striking the words about ordering the sharing of “all relevant documents” and replacing that with the following formulation, “a copy of public health advice and scientific modelling in support of the decision to maintain existing public health measures”.

Mr. Chair, my rationale for the amendment is the following. I wish to focus on what I think is the key question. The key question is this: Is there a public health justification to maintain certain health measures in place for air travel at this time? If so, what is this justification?

I proposed striking the formulation “all relevant documents”, as what is or is not relevant is open to interpretation. I think narrowing the focus like this will prevent a fishing expedition. We've seen this time and time again in various committees, where, instead of working on the real, important issues, committee time is wasted to make partisan or political points and is just used as a fishing expedition.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, we have often seen in recent years prolonged deadlocks in committees, including this committee, over a so-called motion to produce written documents. This often turns into lengthy, time-consuming debates about what information should or should not be presented. That inevitably ends up attracting the law clerk, which generally takes up a lot of time. The purpose of this amendment is to avoid such a situation. I think this committee has done a good job, and I don't want us to get bogged down in a prolonged procedural battle.

Parliamentarians, including those on this side of the table, want information. They want to ask questions and get answers to those questions. I understand that, and I recognize that it is perfectly legitimate. I also recognize that every government, regardless of political affiliation, must protect certain types of information for reasons that most members of the House understand: legally or commercially sensitive information that could be damaging if made public has to be protected. We also need to preserve space around the cabinet table and in ministers' offices to have those frank dis-

cussions. Similarly, individual MPs need a certain degree of privacy and space to discuss matters with their caucus members, staff, and so on.

It's also important for members to consider that governments not only have to consider the implications of a particular motion on the production of documents, but they must also absolutely pay attention to all the information that is produced in writing in order to avoid any misinformation or misunderstandings that could be detrimental to business and the good work that the government and the departments have done to date.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Koutrakis.

Go ahead, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

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

First, I would like to thank my colleague for moving the motion before us, which I find very relevant. It's too bad we don't have the opportunity to discuss it because we haven't dealt with the parliamentary secretary's amendment yet.

Let me explain why I prefer the proposed motion to the amendment. The purpose of the motion is to find out what scientific public health advice the government used to make its decision. Not so long ago, we asked ourselves this question. A few days ago, when the government announced that it would put an end to random testing, we wondered whether that was a good thing or not. However, there is no data to help us determine that.

The government also announced that vaccination would no longer be required to travel by plane or train. Personally, I have no problem with that, but, once again, there is no data to support this decision. It gives us the impression that the government is making decisions on the back of a napkin. If they could give us that data, it would tell us whether these decisions are good or not.

Given the way passport applications are managed and the huge lineups at airports, one has to wonder whether the government has done things right. We have good reason to want to know more about how decisions are made and on what basis the government has made them.

I'm very much in favour of the motion, but I am a bit disappointed with the amendment that was proposed, because it's not intended to request all relevant documents, but only those that support the government's decision. There may be documents that don't support the government's decision, but they wouldn't be sent to us, so we wouldn't have all the information.

I find it strange that such an amendment comes from the government side, Mr. Chair. Even though I wasn't a member of Parliament during the Harper government, I remember the media decrying on a daily basis how obscure the government was and how it wasn't giving people the information they were entitled to expect.

I'm very disappointed to see that this kind of filibustering is going on or that amendments are being proposed that weaken a motion to the point where it loses its meaning.

In closing, I would like to point out that I had another motion that I would have liked to discuss today. It's almost 5:15 p.m., and we will soon be 45 minutes into this discussion.

I'm sorry about that, because it would have been interesting to have information on other issues that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities could have come and talked to us about, such as bilateral infrastructure agreements with the provinces, which he decided not to honour. There is also a motion to provide documentation and exchanges that support this decision. That's another request for information that would be very relevant.

If the government side would stop filibustering, we could pass these motions. If it weren't for the famous filibuster, we'd have been able to ask the witnesses questions today.

• (1710)

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

Mr. Badawey, you have the floor.

[*English*]

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

I find it interesting that Ms. Lantsman and Mr. Barsalou-Duval are sitting here talking about filibustering. We could have had this dealt with two meetings ago with Mr. Barsalou-Duval's motion, when we had the minister here and the questions could have been asked. Done.

With Mr. Bachrach, today, all the witnesses are here, PHAC was here, and you could have asked the questions. Done. But no, that's not happening. My question is, why? What is the agenda behind this? I think we all recognize that, just by following Mr. Bachrach's Twitter account.

We talk about the possibility of even a study. If there was some sincerity behind this, maybe a study would be warranted. Then we could get some of these answers that Mr. Bachrach is looking for. Again, thought, that could have been dealt with today. PHAC was here. Why weren't those questions asked? It's not filibustering; it's making a point.

I'm happy, actually, that all Canadians, as Ms. Lantsman said, are watching today, to see the games that are being played here when we're actually trying to get work done. Hence, the study that we're doing right now. Hence, the questions that could have been asked today. Hence, the questions that could have been asked weeks ago when the minister was here, when that motion was first dropped on us.

I ask the opposition to come clean in what their agenda actually is and tell that to Canadians who are watching today. This committee has been working very effectively in the last seven or eight months since we got back, very effectively. We've been getting some work done. We have reports going to the House. We've all been working together, parking the politics, parking the partisanship and getting some great work done. It's unfortunate that we have pivoted, or turned on a dime to where we're going today.

Again, though, I have to say to Mr. Bachrach, with the amendment that we are debating right now, and actually to the point you made earlier, there really isn't a difference. It's just trying to move it forward—trying to give you what you want—and then giving us the ability to deal with and get back to the important work that we have within the next two meetings before we rise for the summer. Otherwise, we're debating it. It's not filibustering. It's making points, debate, and then hopefully coming to a conclusion that will in fact be a direction this committee can take. Of course, we can follow that up by dealing with Mr. Barsalou-Duval's motion.

I want to make the point, Mr. Chairman, after a lot of the mud that's been tossed over the table, in particular by Ms. Lantsman and others: Don't throw a stone in a glass house.

We're doing good work here, guys. Let's continue to do that work. We don't have to play politics.

Again, I'll reiterate, and I apologize for repeating myself: We had the minister here, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. Those questions could have been asked. Your motion could have been dealt with.

Mr. Bachrach, we had the team here today. PHAC was here. You could have asked them those questions. You could have had your answers and therefore your tweets for tonight ready to go, but here we are, playing games. It's unfortunate. It really is unfortunate when, once again, we have work to do. As some of your colleagues say here in the province of Ontario, let's get it done.

• (1715)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You can tweet about it on your Twitter account.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I don't tweet about stuff like this. This is work. It's getting our sleeves rolled up and getting it done. This is unfortunate. I'm very disappointed. I really am. I am very disappointed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Yes, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move that we limit ourselves to two interventions on the amendment and two interventions on the proposal, and then go to a vote.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. As you know, if people wish to speak, we need to continue the debate.

The next names on my list are, in this order: Mr. Iacono, Mr. Rogers, Ms. Koutrakis and Mr. Bachrach. Before giving the floor to Mr. Iacono, I just want to issue a warning.

[English]

If we don't have the support of all party whips, we will have to adjourn at 5:41 p.m., as you know. We have two hours for this meeting, and we do not, unfortunately, have the authorization for House resources to continue past that time unless we have the support of all party whips, which I do not believe we have.

[Translation]

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor.

• (1720)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I'd like to appeal your ruling and check with the clerk to see if the proposal I just made applies, pursuant to Standing Order 116(2) (a).

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Cédric Taquet (Committee Clerk): I would ask the clerk of the committee, maybe, to—

The Chair: Could you make a ruling on what Mr. Barsalou-Duval just shared?

[Translation]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, could you repeat what you just said to the clerk?

Thank you.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Standing Order 116(2)(a) states that proposals may be made to limit the time for debate on motions or amendments. I would just like to know if the proposal I made applies in this context.

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

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: This is a dilatory motion. They already tried that. They can try it again.

It's a dilatory motion, so are you going to adjourn debate or are you going to let it continue, period? There is nothing in between.

The Clerk: Could I just jump in there, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: I believe there is a standing order that applies. It's to prevent chairs from arbitrarily ending meetings without the consent of a committee and whatnot, and that would not technically apply in this situation.

In this situation, we have certain resource limitations that are beyond anyone's control here. Our interpretation crew is going to be up against its two-hour cap, and unless we bring in another entire crew—and we would need the whips' approval to do that—and not only the interpretation crew but MMS and all the other services, we will have to adjourn at that time.

My advice to you, Mr. Chair, is that it's not applicable in this situation.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you would like to move that the members of this committee may not speak more than twice to the amendment or motion. Is that correct?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Yes, that was what I proposed. I found that people had had ample opportunity to express themselves thus far, so I made the proposal in an effort to get to a vote.

The Chair: All right.

[English]

Mr. Clerk, what Mr. Barsalou-Duval was asking for was to make it so that all members would be able to speak only twice on any amendment or on the motion itself. He referenced Standing Order 116, if I'm not mistaken, and he's looking for a ruling from you on whether or not that applies here, Mr. Clerk.

I'm sorry, but we can't hear you. I don't know why.

• (1725)

The Clerk: I'm sorry. My microphone had just stopped working.

Can you hear me now?

The Chair: Yes, we can hear you.

The Clerk: As I was attempting to say before, I can offer only advice. I don't rule on anything, so it would be just my advice to you, as chair, that I do not believe this standing order applies in a situation in which we would need to adjourn due to lack of resources.

If the committee wanted to set a limit on the number of interventions by members and set a time limit on itself, it could of course do that, but that in itself would be a debatable motion. That's something you would need to set up in advance. You can't just move it without debate and have it voted on right away.

At present we are debating the amendment of Ms. Koutrakis.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Clerk. That was very helpful.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I'm not entirely convinced, but I'm not equipped right now to answer to that. Perhaps we will have an opportunity to explore this further at another time.

The Chair: All right.

We will now resume debate on Ms. Koutrakis's amendment.

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor. Then we will go to Mr. Rogers, Ms. Koutrakis and Mr. Bachrach.

[English]

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

I want to highlight that one of the opposing colleagues was saying that my colleague Vance was looking at the witnesses. I'd like to point out that right now, I'm not looking at any witnesses, but I am looking at a show. I'm part of a show that we are being injected into.

I'm very happy that my colleagues across are satisfied that Canadians are watching us. I think what Canadians need to know is how contradictory my colleagues across from the Conservative Party are.

When we do something, you question it. When we don't do something, you question it as well.

When we refer to scientific and medical facts to justify our health measures or the travel restrictions we have made in order to save Canadians' lives, what do you do? You question them.

When we come out with all of the programs to help Canadians get through this pandemic, to get by and to relieve some of their financial burdens, what do you do? You question them again.

You accused us of indebting Canadians and future generations, because we were helping Canadians survive this pandemic. You then said that everything we were doing to help Canadians financially was not enough, and more had to be done.

One day, we are indebting Canadians. The next day, we're not doing enough.

I don't know which foot you guys want to dance on.

When we refer to scientific results, you question and challenge them. When we don't mention scientific results in decisions we take, you highlight that we've taken decisions and have not made any reference to any scientific results.

I'd like you to tell Canadians what game you're playing.

The bottom line here is this: You are simply never satisfied with what we do, because you don't care about Canadians, but you care about making this meeting a political show. We had witnesses who were present and who could have highlighted what is happening in airports today. This is what Canadians are interested in knowing.

What are we going to do?

• (1730)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Iacono. I have a point of order by Mr. Bachrach. Bear with me for a second.

Yes, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, can you clarify whether it's parliamentary to impugn other members by saying they don't care about Canadians? It seems out of order.

The Chair: I will take that under advisement.

Mr. Iacono, please continue.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Chair, I'm prepared to answer that. It's in one of the opposing parties' earlier comments. You can go and read the blues. He was making reference to the Prime Minister along the same lines.

I haven't made reference to anybody in particular. I'm talking about the opposing party.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Iacono. Please continue.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I should tell Canadians who are listening to go and look at my colleagues opposite. Look at their Twitter and Facebook pages and see what comments they make about today's activity in this committee. They're playing politics, instead of getting down to business and figuring out how we're going to help Canadians get by.

It's no joke. I want to raise that we are hurting ourselves. We're not solving anything. There's no political gain to be made here, because Canadians see very clearly what is happening.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Rogers, the floor is yours.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I understand and I recognize, of course, the legitimacy of all parliamentarians to engage in this debate, ask questions and seek information. However, I also recognize that every government, regardless of political stripe, needs to protect certain kinds of information for reasons of confidentiality—which I think most members understand—and to protect legally commercially sensitive information that could cause harm were it to be made public. Also, in order to do this, we need to follow some kind of protocol that preserves confidentiality around cabinet tables and ministers' offices for full and frank discussions in the same way, I would suggest, that MPs need a certain degree of privacy for discussion at caucus or with their staff, for example.

That's what I find this motion is trying to achieve, and I certainly can't support that, although I certainly support the amendment of my colleague.

Mr. Badawey made reference to the fact that we had people here from the Public Health Agency of Canada who could have spent time answering questions for any member of the opposition or of the government in reference to what this motion is attempting to do. We could have gotten direct information from officials who are certainly very knowledgeable and would have provided some good information to all of us and to the public at large. In fact, the questioning certainly could have gotten to many of the answers that some people suggest they haven't gotten.

I think this motion is somewhat contradictory. When I look at some of the positions of some of the parties in terms of vaccinations and the kinds of things we've been trying to do, not accepting the amendment here seems almost anti-science. It's disappointing. It's certainly a stance that is contradictory—to me, anyway—to the stance that the NDP has taken this entire time in supporting vaccinations and other measures.

I don't know, as Mr. Badawey said earlier, what the objective is here, but I think the amendment by my colleague, Ms. Koutrakis, certainly is something that deserves every consideration. At the same time, the amended motion, I think, would certainly achieve what we would like to achieve, and that is to make sure we have some transparency and that people get the information they need.

The strange part about this committee—and I have to say this as well, like Mr. Badawey said—is that I think we've been doing some great work here for the last six, seven or eight months. We've been producing some good reports, some great reports, actually, with some excellent recommendations, and we've been very productive.

However, I don't see how this motion that was advanced by the opposition would do anything for us other than create turmoil within the public service. They would have to do this production of documents, which would take up a great deal of time and cost a lot of extra money for the taxpayers. Also, these are documents that, I think, would defy confidentiality and the kind of information that all governments need to protect. What kind of a system would we have if we couldn't have a certain kind of confidence in what our elected leaders do?

• (1735)

I know, for example, just as a small-town mayor, that many of the things we discussed were not made public, but that was for the right reasons. That was because we wanted to protect the identity of a certain individual in the community or the confidentiality of that person. That person, as a member of my community, deserved to be treated with the utmost respect.

You can't have a discussion about individuals, organizations, groups or businesses and expect that everybody that could get access to the information would truly understand the context in which it's presented. We have to have certain regulations and certain things that we need to consider to be of a confidential nature. For us to try to pass a motion that requests “all relevant documents” is, I think, a bit of a stretch. It sets a precedent. It sets a precedent that is not good for this government or for any future government.

I certainly would not vote to support that kind of a motion, but I would certainly be prepared to accept the amendment from my colleague Ms. Koutrakis and try to move forward around those kinds of amendments.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to say that maybe we should be considering another amendment, if you want to call it that, or an addition to the current amendment that was proposed by Ms. Koutrakis.

I'd like to add the following clause to the motion, and that would be “that the production of documents be consistent with relevant legislation concerning confidentiality”. I'd like to propose that as an addition to the motion.

The Chair: Just to be clear, Mr. Rogers, you're looking to add that to the amendment proposed by—

Mr. Churence Rogers: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. This is an amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Yes. It's “that the production of documents be consistent with relevant legislation concerning confiden-

tiality”, because confidentiality is something that we need to preserve in our democratic system.

Mr. Chair, if the clerk got that, I'd be prepared to move that as an add-on to the amended motion.

• (1740)

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

I have a point of order from Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, if this is an amendment to an amendment, I have no trouble with that. I think it's actually consistent with the ATIP rules that we operate under.

My point was that I believe that we're ending right at 5:40....

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I know that Ms. Koutrakis has her hand up.

I just wonder if my colleagues would allow me to have a brief word at the end, given that it's my motion that was put forward, before we wrap up for the evening and head off for the summer.

I'll just leave that there.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, unfortunately, for me—and I can't speak for the rest of my colleagues—

The Chair: Yes. I'm sorry, Mr. Bachrach. Unfortunately, we have the speaking order. I should respect it out of respect for the other members.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It was more of an appeal to my colleagues for just 30 seconds—

The Chair: It is 5:40. We're now going to be speaking to the subamendment.

Perhaps, Ms. Koutrakis, given that it was your amendment, you can respond to Mr. Rogers. Keep in mind that we have one minute before we need to suspend or adjourn.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: I have a hard stop at 5:41 for a previous commitment. I will not be able to stay past this time.

The Chair: It is now 5:41.

Colleagues, with that, this meeting is suspended.

[The meeting was suspended at 17:43 p.m., Thursday, June 16]

[The meeting resumed at 11:04 a.m., Monday, June 20]

[Translation]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone.

Welcome back to meeting number 25 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, February 3, 2022, the committee is meeting to study Reducing Red Tape and Costs on Rural and Urban Canadian Airports.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House Order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy of March 10, 2022, all those attending this meeting in person must wear a mask, except for members who are at their place during proceedings.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of those in the room, as well as members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function, and the clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

At the time of suspension, colleagues, the committee was debating MP Bachrach's motion and, more specifically, a subamendment moved by MP Rogers to the amendment by MP Koutrakis. When the committee suspended, MP Koutrakis had the floor and MP Bachrach, MP Badawey and MP Rogers were next on the speaking list.

Are there any other members who wish to be added to the list before I turn the floor over to Ms. Koutrakis?

Seeing none, Ms. Koutrakis, I will turn the floor over to you.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, colleagues. I trust we all had a great Father's Day celebration this past weekend.

Over the weekend, I reflected. It's really unfortunate that the debate got contentious last week. Up until this moment, I truly believe—and I think we will all agree—that the committee has been operating on a fairly cordial basis. It is my hope that we can get back on track.

We are not necessarily opposed to the NDP motion, but we are concerned about the precedent it might set when it comes to motions for the production of papers.

My colleague Xavier raised some really valid points at the last meeting about the wording I used in my amendment to the motion with regard to only taking studies that support the mandate. It was well received and very appreciated.

Colleagues, I would be willing to withdraw my amendment, and I would propose that we revert back to the original NDP wording but add the following clause as it was proposed by my colleague Mr. Rogers at the last meeting: “and that the production of documents be consistent with relevant legislation concerning confidentiality”.

If we can agree to vote in support of the NDP motion, that would be great. It would allow us to move forward with the very impor-

tant business we have at hand. I hope we will receive support from the committee to go forward with this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Koutrakis.

Do I have the support of committee members?

Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Yes. I have spoken with my colleague Mr. Bachrach, and we're willing to support that, but we would like to add the wording “and be returned to the committee no later than June 20, 2022”.

A voice: June 20 is today.

Mr. Charlie Angus: It's “July 20”. I can't even read my own writing. I want it this afternoon, but since it's Monday, I'm going to give you a month. How's that?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: I was going to say to my honourable friend across that it's impossible to do it today, but since it's within 30 days, I think we can all work with those timelines.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Fair play.

The Chair: There are a couple of housekeeping things.

I have consent from the committee to allow Ms. Koutrakis to withdraw.

As discussed, I can go to unanimous consent and skip the three procedures that I have on my list. If we have unanimous consent from all members, we will go with that.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you very much, colleagues.

We'll turn it over to Monsieur Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

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

The last time we met, I didn't get the opportunity to introduce my motion, because we had spent time on committee business. I actually had two of them, but some members may be relieved to know that one of them likely won't be needed.

The motion I wish to put forward reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), an order of the committee be issued for a copy of all relevant documents relating to federal-provincial bilateral agreements on infrastructure, including the 2018 Canada – Quebec Integrated Bilateral Agreement for the Investing In Canada Infrastructure Program; That these documents include, but are not limited to: (i) all communications, including letters, e-mails, text messages and messages on internal messaging software (Skype, Teams, Messenger, etc.), between the offices of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, and with the governments of Quebec, the provinces and territories; (ii) all communications, including letters, e-mails, text messages and messages on internal messaging software (Skype, Teams, Messenger, etc.), between the office of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities and Infrastructure Canada officials and the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat; (iii) all communications, including letters, e-mails, text messages and messages on internal messaging software (Skype, Teams, Messenger, etc.), between Infrastructure Canada officials and the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat; (iv) documents that track or show changes and differences in bilateral agreements between the federal government, Quebec, the provinces and territories; (v) all versions of the terms and conditions of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, the Gas Tax Fund (now the Community-Building Fund), the Community-Building Fund, the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund and the 2014 New Building Canada Fund, along with the dates for which said versions were in effect, as well as Treasury Board submissions for the approval of the aforementioned program terms and conditions; (vi) the final records of meetings of the management committees, management sub-committee and monitoring committee for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, the Gas Tax Fund (Community-Building Fund), the Community-Building Fund, the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund and the 2014 New Building Canada Fund; (vii) the final and administrative versions of amendments signed by Quebec, the provinces and territories; (viii) relevant notes, documents and memos; and That these documents be provided to the committee in unredacted form within 30 calendar days of the adoption of this order.

Mr. Chair, I don't know if I need to read the entire text of the amendment, since everyone has received a copy. I could go on, but I think everyone understood what I was talking about. The intent of this motion is indeed that the documents be provided to the committee in unredacted form within 30 calendar days of the adoption of this order.

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

Ms. Koutrakis, you have the floor.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Colleagues, I will not be supporting this motion. I really do not think it's necessary.

When Minister LeBlanc appeared before the committee during the meeting on main estimates on Monday, May 30, the minister was asked this question by my colleague, Mr. Barsalou-Duval, to which the minister answered very clearly:

[T]he Minister of Finance has already decided that the provinces that received funding through programs created under federal-provincial agreements, such as a Canada-Quebec or Canada-New Brunswick agreement, must commit the funds to projects by March 31. The funds do not necessarily have to be spent, but the federal government, and...the Quebec government must agree on a list of projects to receive federal funding.

The projects can be spread out over a number of years, and the funds can be disbursed over a period of 10 years after the deadline. If the federal government cannot agree with the Quebec government or New Brunswick government on the list of projects, however, the funds will be recovered by the receiver general of Canada...

[W]e have the same agreement with 10 provincial governments and three territorial governments. A number of them have chosen projects and allocated funding more quickly than Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and New Brunswick.

The Minister of Finance decided...that it would be in the interest of Canada's economy and environment to allocate those funds to projects as quickly as possi-

ble.... [T]hat does not mean that the projects will be completed, but a choice has to be made.

Minister LeBlanc also said:

The Minister of Finance is anxious to see these funds allocated to projects. Some premiers, however, including the Ontario premier, are asking me for a 2.0 version of these programs.

My job is to work with all the provinces to determine what a second version of these programs might be.

The minister continues to collaborate with provinces and territories “to determine more specifically how this second version can offer a solution that is in the interests of both Quebec and the federal government.”

In conclusion, again, I will not be supporting this motion, but I would be curious to hear how other members feel about it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Koutrakis.

Ms. Lantsman, go ahead.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We'd be inclined to support the motion on the basis that we can have a couple of changes. If we all agreed to have it as “all federal-provincial agreements on infrastructure” and then change the date to “January 1, 2016”, we would be prepared to support my colleague's motion.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lantsman.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I will respond to Ms. Lantsman first.

As I understand it, her proposal has already been incorporated into the new version of the motion that I put forward. The proposal is included in the motion that is before committee members. I had already made the adjustment, unless other adjustments are in order. However, I feel that it's consistent with Ms. Lantsman's wishes.

With respect to the points Ms. Koutrakis made, I would like to say that we had passed a motion to invite the minister to appear before the committee by June 20. Today is June 20 and the minister has yet to appear. I think we need to get that information so that we know how decisions are made. I hope that the minister will eventually appear before the committee to explain to us how decisions are made and how bilateral agreements with the provinces can be unilaterally changed.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Angus, go ahead.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you so much, Chair.

It's an honour to be at the committee with my colleagues.

As a member of the opposition, I love documents. I can't get enough documents.

My concern with this is that it seems to be a huge expedition to turn over a whole whack of documents that may or may not be related in any way to the work of this committee, and within 30 calendar days. I just don't think it's reasonable. I think we could be more focused in our work, so I would just suggest that we put it to a vote.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Seeing no other hands up, I will ask the clerk to go to a recorded division.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: The motion does not carry.

Mr. Chahal, you had your hand up.

Mr. George Chahal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move to adjourn.

The Chair: Is there any objection?

Seeing none, this meeting is now adjourned.

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