



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

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# Standing Committee on International Trade

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 026**

Monday, April 26, 2021

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Chair: The Honourable Judy A. Sgro





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• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)):** Welcome to everyone. I'll call to order meeting number 26 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade. Today's meeting is webcast and is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of January 25.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the committee will proceed with its study of the 2021-22 main estimates. As we have Minister Ng with us—which is great—the committee will also resume its study of investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms, pursuant to the motion adopted by the committee on October 23, 2020.

Welcome, Minister Ng, and your officials, back to see us again, as well as all of the officials from the Invest in Canada Hub.

Minister Ng, the floor is yours. Please go ahead.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Good morning to everyone, the vice-chairs and all of the other members of the committee. It is a pleasure to be with you today and to assist the committee in its important work and an honour to speak, through you, to Canadians once again.

[Translation]

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do both.

[English]

Throughout this past year, Canadians have stepped up and made sacrifices to help limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to support their communities.

In particular, business owners and workers have faced incredible hardship and uncertainty. They've persevered, showed historic resilience and adapted at every new turn. We've been supporting Canadians and their businesses from day one of this crisis. Our government's COVID-19 economic response plan has helped protect millions of jobs across the country and supported businesses to pay their bills.

Now, as we face renewed public health measures, many are being asked to sacrifice once again, and I want to reassure them that we are listening and that we continue to have their backs. This includes the emergency wage subsidy, emergency rent subsidy and

the lockdown support, all of which we are extending until September, as we announced in last week's budget. Support also includes the Canada emergency business account, otherwise known as CEBA, and most recently HASCAP, which has further helped some of Canada's hardest hit businesses.

In budget 2021 our plan is to finish the fight against COVID-19 with significant investments in small businesses that will bring Canada's economy roaring back.

[Translation]

These measures are making a significant difference.

[English]

CEBA, for instance, delivered through Export Development Canada, has delivered nearly \$47 billion in emergency credit to nearly 867,000 Canadian businesses since last April, with more than 530,000 businesses receiving the \$20,000 expansion. These emergency supports are one part of our government's larger effort to help businesses bridge to the other side of the pandemic. We're also working hard to create opportunities for businesses to expand at home and abroad. For example, in 2020, EDC facilitated over \$102 billion in business by working with nearly 25,000 companies.

As for Invest in Canada, in 2019 and 2020, they facilitated 18 investments, resulting in over 2,000 jobs and capital expenditures of \$1.25 billion. In addition to EDC and Invest in Canada, other members of what I call "Canada's trade tool box" have been working hard throughout this pandemic to adapt and to create new opportunities for businesses to explore international markets. Take, for example, the Canadian Commercial Corporation, which, in 2019-20, generated \$1.25 billion worth of contracts with foreign buyers for our Canadian exporters.

Also, take the trade commissioner service, which has pivoted to offer virtual tools and services to Canadian businesses, and also provided more than \$33 million in supports through the CanExport program to help our businesses looking to diversify into other export markets.

It goes beyond these direct supports. Our government has been working to protect Canadian businesses as they bring their products and services to the global stage. For example, I've been working closely with the international community to seek investor-state dispute settlement protections for Canadian companies abroad while also maintaining our ability to regulate in the public interest here at home.

Our government has been doing this work since well before the pandemic, amid this pandemic, and we will continue to do so after the pandemic because we know that supporting Canada's businesses is the smartest thing we can do for our workers and our economy.

As we announced in budget 2021, we're taking even more decisive and responsible action to get Canadian businesses ready for long-term growth by investing in innovation, sustainability and inclusivity to get even more of our main streets and the 99% of small and medium-sized businesses that make up all our businesses to start up here at home, to scale up and to access the international markets. Whether it's new supports for digital adoption or to rehire workers, we will ensure that businesses of all sizes, and led by all peoples, can bring their made-in-Canada solutions to the world.

• (1110)

I'll end by saying this: In response to COVID-19, many have turned inward and looked to pursue protectionism, but we can't let the pandemic stop Canada from trading. That's why I've been working closely with my international partners from the G7, the G20, the WTO and APEC, and have led the Ottawa Group on WTO reform with our most recent meeting in March, to ensure that our supply chains remain open, our businesses continue their work and that crucial goods and services continue to flow.

We are shaping the modern future of the multilateral rules-based trading system, one that is increasingly digital and contributes to an inclusive future where everyone can benefit.

It's this kind of active work and meaningful international co-operation that is going to see us recover from COVID-19 and build back better together.

Thank you very much for your time.

I am looking forward to taking your questions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

The departmental officials we have with us, as well, today are, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, John Hannaford, deputy minister, international trade; Steve Verheul, assistant deputy minister, trade policy and negotiations; Anick Ouellette, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer, corporate planning, finance and information technology; Sara Wilshaw, chief trade commissioner, assistant deputy minister, international business development, investment and innovation; Bruce Christie, associate assistant deputy minister, trade policy and negotiations; Annie Boyer, director general and deputy chief financial officer, financial planning and management; Eric Walsh, director general, North America bureau; and Katie Curran, chief administra-

tive officer, and Nathalie Béchamp, chief, investor services, both with Invest in Canada.

Thank you all very much for making the time to be here with the committee today. We very much appreciate it.

We will open up with Ms. Gray, for six minutes, please.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

The Invest in Canada Hub departmental plan lists priorities, including “promote Canada as a top investment destination”, “Strengthen Canada's Brand”, and “Implement Canada's Foreign Direct Investment Attraction Strategy”.

There is the global foreign direct investment country attractiveness index. Minister, do you know where Canada is on this global index?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** We're very proud of the work that Invest in Canada has been doing to attract foreign investment to Canada. Even through this pandemic, we have seen investments, for example, through Mastercard and HCL Technologies from India, all of whom have made investments here in Canada. The work that they do—

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Right. Minister, do you know where we fall on that index?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I'd be happy to return to you with that specifically. I don't have it here in my notes, but suffice it to say that Invest in Canada continues to do its good work.

We have seen Canada continue—

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Well, we're 17th, Minister.

Would you think that we are trending better or worse than other countries?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Canada remains a top investment destination among the G20 countries. Our economy is expected to grow by 5% in 2021.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Right.

Minister, if I may, this is part of the department's plan. In fact, we're 17th. We're the country in the top 25 that has dropped more rankings than any other country since 2014. We were 13th, and now we're 17th.

Minister, considering that you have this new department with this organization that you're responsible for, this Invest in Canada Hub department, would you be happy with these results? It has a very large board of directors receiving remuneration. There's spending on travel and hospitality—a \$34-million budget, 67 staff—yet the foreign direct investment attractiveness results are dropping.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I want to thank the honourable member for this really important question.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Canada remains competitive for foreign investors and that they see Canada as a destination to invest because of our highly skilled, well-educated workforce.

I would also point out that Canada is number two in Kearney's FDI index, so that is an achievement.

Throughout this pandemic, we have consistently seen high-calibre FDI, creating good jobs—

• (1115)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister, with all due respect, this is an actual international index—

**The Chair:** Ms. Gray, please allow the minister to answer the question.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I want to point to a couple of examples where FDI—good FDI—has taken place on the west coast and also here in the greater Toronto area.

For example, in early 2020, Mastercard, amidst this pandemic, announced a \$490-million investment in cybersecurity and technology innovation for a centre in Vancouver that's going to create really good jobs. As well, India-based global company HCL Technologies just last month joined them for an exciting event where they announced further expansion.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister, can we move on? That's not really answering what my question is.

In the last recorded completed target indicators for Invest in Canada, there were three indicators. The first is for “data Partnerships and pan-Canadian collaboration”, and it says “status not available”. For “investor services”, it says the target is “to be determined” and then “target met”. For “marketing”, it says “indicator to be determined” and then “target met”.

Minister, how can you have indicators or targets that are “to be determined” and then grade them as “target met”?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you for that question—

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** This is right on the government website. I guess maybe you're unfamiliar with that.

**The Chair:** Please allow the minister to answer the question, Ms. Gray.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** There are three targets that were measured, as I mentioned.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I'm very pleased to report to members of this committee on the really good work that Invest in Canada has been doing as part of the trade tool kit, working together with EDC and with BDC. The trade commissioner service is continually [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and throughout this pandemic to attract the foreign investment into Canada. I've shared a couple of successes and am happy to do more. As I mentioned earlier, Canada is number two on the Kearney foreign direct investment confidence index—

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** With all due respect, that wasn't my question, though.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** —and this continues to bode well.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** There are six other indicators, for a total of nine. What is the status of those? Can you perhaps table the status of those other six indicators to this committee? They're not listed anywhere that we can see on the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] website at this point.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** The honourable member's Zoom feed cut out. I didn't hear the question.

**The Chair:** Do you want to repeat the question? You're breaking up a bit, Ms. Gray, in your transmission.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Everything sort of went blank there. I don't know what happened. I didn't have an Internet issue, it seemed.

My question for the minister was that there are a total of nine indicators, so for the other six, I'm wondering if the status of those could be tabled with this committee.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I'm always happy to be transparent with the committee and will have my officials provide that.

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

We'll go on to Mr. Sarai, please, for six minutes.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister. It's always good to have you here.

Can you please give us an overview of how Canada is maintaining a rules-based international trade and investment opportunity and the role that ISDS plays in balancing foreign investor protection with the ability to regulate the public interest?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** ISDS, as the honourable member rightly points out, does offer protection for Canadian companies operating abroad where Canada has secured those provisions in those free trade agreements. It certainly allows our Canadian investors to confidently access those international markets, while at the same time we carefully balance foreign investor protections to a country's right to regulate in the public interest. This balance is what we seek to do.

Canada is a trading country, and we are very proud that Canada is the only G7 country with a free trade agreement with every other G7 country. Ensuring that there are provisions in place to enable Canadian exporters and companies to grow, and to grow in the international market, is really important, and having that careful balance of ISDS provisions for companies to invest confidently while at the same time ensuring that a country continues to retain the right to regulate in the public interest is what we aim to do.

• (1120)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Thank you, Minister.

President Biden's first bilateral meeting was with Canada, which is definitely a good indicator. The road map for a renewed U.S.-Canada partnership announced after that first meeting established a blueprint for an ambitious and whole-of-government effort against the COVID-19 pandemic. This road map aims to support our countries' mutual prosperity.

Could the minister please tell us more about the road map for a renewed Canada-U.S. partnership and what it means for Canadians?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I think for Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, given how integrated our supply chains are and how important a trading partner the U.S. is, the Canadian-U.S. road map is really important.

It sets the path forward for how our two countries will collaborate. To answer your question, it is to create more jobs and prosperity for Canadian businesses and for our workers and to do so in a way that also allows both of our countries to make progress on the environment. To grow back better or build back better, economic growth must include green growth.

It was very exciting to have the Prime Minister announce just last week, together with the President of the United States, our ambitious targets to fight climate change. As well, as you've seen in the budget, also tabled last week, there are significant investments help get us on this road to economic recovery so that our businesses and our workers can come roaring back when we finish this fight against COVID-19.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Thank you, Minister.

As members of Parliament, we hear a lot of complaints about the bureaucracy in all different departments, but there's one area that I actually have had nothing but praise for in the last five or six years. That is the trade commissioner service.

I've noticed that it's very important that we take advantage of Canada's trade agreements, especially to scale up and to export to new markets.

Can the minister explain how the trade commissioner service assists our forest-sector businesses in their efforts to export to new markets?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Yes, absolutely.

The forestry sector is so important to the Canadian economy. I'm so proud of the work that the Canada trade commissioner service does on behalf of all of our businesses, particularly for this sector.

The trade commissioner service has facilitated a range of business-to-business opportunities for members of the sector, particularly to help them diversify and look beyond the markets they have been in. This also applies to the small and medium-sized businesses that operate in the sector. It is facilitating those market opportunities and enabling those very companies that are looking to explore additional markets and helping them with CanExport funding so that they can indeed take advantage of some of the opportunities by attending trade shows. Frankly, during this pandemic, to do so virtually is something that our trade commissioner service continues to do. I always call them Canada's best business development and sales team all around the world.

Their job is to help our Canadian businesses access those markets, yield the subsequent contracts or businesses, and navigate through some of the issues that might exist in international markets. Ultimately the goal is to help our Canadian businesses grow and diversify into markets where, when they grow, they can create jobs, and they're great jobs for Canada.

• (1125)

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

Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

We'll move along to Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

You have six minutes. Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, Madam Minister. Thank you for being here today.

You said that trade is a priority because our companies must be able to keep their market. Apart from the increased funding for Global Affairs Canada in the budget, there's very little content or substance. Why isn't there any support for exporters that want to diversify their market, for example? There isn't anything on that.

[*English*]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Honourable member, I would respectfully disagree.

This budget is going to support Export Development Canada to do even more work to help Canadian SMEs export. We continue to pursue opportunities for our trade-focused businesses through our work. Canada has access to some 1.5 billion customers in the international marketplace. We are helping them secure businesses through virtual trade missions. I might add that we have done several throughout this pandemic, including to the European Union, where we saw some 1,100 businesses take part in a summit, and to France just a couple of weeks ago where over 300 businesses...and there many businesses are women-owned, youth-owned, indigenous and racialized.

Helping them get access to this market and continuing to support them on this road to recovery is absolutely a priority of this government and we will continue to do this work.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I asked you why there wasn't anything and you told me that we disagreed because there was something. So be it!

We disagree on that, but I want to focus on market diversification for our companies. You said that there's help. I'm asking you how and in what way.

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Let me point to one, honourable member. We're making a \$4 billion investment to help our Canadian companies become more digital. This includes main street businesses, of course, that we've seen access platforms through this pandemic, accessing e-commerce for them and getting them into not only domestic markets to buy local, but also the opportunity to have them bring customers to their businesses.

It's a whole range of businesses, whether it's manufacturing or through service sectors, a \$4 billion investment helping our businesses become competitive and productive and, through the increasingly digital marketplace that is the global marketplace, setting up our Canadian businesses and investing in them to make sure they have all of the tools available to them to access those markets and to operate competitively and, in doing so, create good Canadian jobs. This is the kind of investment in this budget, and it's \$4 billion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I imagine that, in terms of this support for digitization, you're referring to the money invested in the strategic innovation fund. However, you should know that the criteria make it extremely difficult for SMEs to access the fund. It's easier for a multinational corporation to access it.

However, why don't we go further in terms of the research and development tax credit? Why don't we go further in terms of investment tax credits? It would be much easier.

There's an investment tax credit. It's a step in the right direction, but the impact is unclear. The bigger the credit, the greater the impact. Why don't we go further down that path?

I'm telling you this in a very constructive manner.

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I appreciate that very much.

I was talking about the \$4 billion investment for digital adoption. That is in addition to the investment in the strategic innovation fund, which, of course, will invest in many companies that are growing and growing to be global. The investments here include another \$450 million through venture capital, because we know that enabling enable more investment in our most innovative and growth-oriented companies will help them grow.

There is also an immediate \$1.5 million in expenditures that businesses can expense starting right away, and it will be there for three years because this budget is about finishing the fight against COVID-19. It is setting up Canadian businesses to have the tools they need, including investing in themselves but with a really good incentive to be able to expense up to \$1.5 million over the next three years. It's also to create a continued investment environment through venture capital that will invest in some of those most promising companies that are looking for venture capital, but also making changes to the small business financing program so that access to capital of up to half a million dollars is available to them, but in a wider range of categories like working capital, equipment including soft equipment that knowledge-based companies will....

I would venture to say this is the most small business friendly budget in Canadian history. These are investments for our entrepreneurs and for our Canadian businesses that operate domestically, and in doing so grow into those global Canadian companies that will create good jobs anchored in Canada.

• (1130)

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

We'll move on to Mr. Blaikie for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Madam Minister, for being here today.

One of the things that struck me about the departmental plan for 2021-22 was the business-as-usual approach within that plan, in that the emphasis continues to be pretty much uniquely on trade liberalization and a laissez-faire approach to globalized trade in a time when....

At this committee we've heard.... And I don't think it's some sort of retrograde protectionism to talk about regional supply chains, whether these are understood as North American or as some kind of region composed of some of our longest-standing western allies for essential things, whether it's vaccines or personal protective equipment or other types of things that we've come to know in the course of this pandemic that are, first of all, really crucial either to public health or to our economy.

Unfortunately, in times of crisis, our trading partners aren't necessarily going to continue offering that free flow of goods as they put their emphasis on their own population. That basic fact of the pandemic, which can be responded to in a number of ways, doesn't really get addressed in the departmental plan, which I found kind of shocking, frankly.

In your opinion what are some of the lessons you've learned for Canada's trade policy in the pandemic? From reading your departmental plan, it seems that there are no lessons; there's just the attitude of, "Let's keep doing what we were doing before the pandemic". We might offer some targeted financial support here and there to try to help people get through, but ultimately where we're going is maintaining the same uncoordinated emphasis on trade liberalization from before the pandemic.

If I'm mistaken in that, this is your opportunity to correct the record. I'd be interested to know how the government sees Canada's trade agenda changing in the next five to 10 years as a result of the pandemic, because the departmental plan sounds like, with the exception of the references to targeted supports for COVID, which tend to be spending, it could have been published in the years preceding the pandemic.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you for that important question. This government's approach to free trade negotiations has been, at its very core, not only to provide market access, of course, but also to ensure that in doing so we are negotiating agreements that have enforceable and progressive elements. That includes labour and the environment, and trade and the work we are doing while growing into international markets. We are doing so in an inclusive way that ensures that everyone can benefit from trading: women, indigenous people, young people, small and medium-sized businesses and micro-businesses. Inherently many of them are those very entrepreneurs whose businesses are under-represented and need to get access to growth, and Canada's trade team is supporting them.

• (1135)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Minister, maybe I could narrow the question a little.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Do I have another 30 seconds to finish my response?

In terms of COVID, to answer your question, we have been working consistently with our multilateral trading partners through the WTO, for example, where we have been advocating not only for continued openness of critical supply chains, but also working on initiatives like trade and health to ensure that the multilateral trading system really will work at its core for people. At times like this during the pandemic it is not a theoretical exercise.

It is what we are doing and have been doing throughout this pandemic, and while it may be reflected in the departmental plan as continuing to work on the multilateral trading system through the leadership of the Ottawa Group, I would also point the member to the consistent communication of the work we have been doing with our partners to ensure that trade really will benefit a broader number of people, including small and medium-sized businesses, women and indigenous people.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Sure. The issue I'm trying to get at, though, is that I think part of—

**The Chair:** You have 35 seconds, Mr. Blaikie.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** —the conversation now is to say that trade agreements are intended to commodify everything. For instance, my father made efforts in the late nineties and early 2000s to try to make the point that water shouldn't be treated as a simple commodity under trade agreements. The NDP has argued in the past for certain things being more important than to be treated as a simple commodity on the market.

The language of the departmental plan, in the time of a pandemic, when we have seen that certain kinds of things are more important than just a commodity on the market, doesn't make any attempt to try to differentiate or single out those products and talk about a different kind of trade strategy for those particular kinds of goods, when we have a lot of experts and a lot of trading partners who are talking in those ways.

It's a very strong ideological position for Canada to adopt, to say we're not going to entertain those kinds of talks, but are just going to continue on as we did before the pandemic.

That's the issue I'm trying to get at.

Is there a list of particular goods or services that the government now thinks maybe shouldn't just be treated under general free trade agreements, but that we need more particular kinds of agreements or understandings or strategies for?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Blaikie, but you're way over your time.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Well, I tried to cut in earlier, but I was being polite, in the way that the chair often recommends that we be.

**The Chair:** Yes, and I appreciate that.

Minister Ng, can you give us a brief answer to that, in fairness to the members, because it was an important question?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Absolutely. I wish I had more than 30 seconds.

The answer is that the approach that was taken well before the pandemic, and certainly during the pandemic, has continued to cause us to make sure we are trading in a way that is inclusive.

We are focused on supply chains that continue to be open, particularly in areas like food and critical medical supplies, working with our international partners to ensure that as we are building back, we are deliberately focused on tackling the environment, tackling a recovery that has to include many more people in our economy.

That is the work we have done before, and it's the work that continues to be extremely important because of this pandemic.

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

We will go on to Ms. Gray, for five minutes, please.

• (1140)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister Ng, last month there was a Toronto Star article reporting that despite the forced labour measures in CUSMA and the integrity declaration on doing business with Xinjiang entities, not a single shipment made with the forced labour of Uighurs in China has been prevented from coming into Canada.

What is the number that has been stopped as of today?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I want to reassure the honourable member that we're always going to advocate and stand up for human rights around the world, and certainly expect that companies who are operating around the world do not knowingly have forced labour in their supply chains.

We have taken a comprehensive approach, in coordination with our international partners—

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** How many have been stopped was my question?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I want to reassure the member that we will continue to work with Canadian companies to ensure that there is no forced labour involved in their supply chains.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** If you're unsure, then I guess we have to assume it's none.

The article also states that it appears that government officials don't seem to have the resources to be able to stop these products.

Is it an issue of resourcing?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I want to assure the member that in this recent budget, we have ensured that our department, in the work we have committed and mandated it to do for Canadians, is indeed resourced.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister Ng, you may be aware that last month I had a motion at this committee to review these measures to make sure they are working properly and to see if there are gaps. Your Liberal colleagues, disappointingly, voted it down.

Now, with this new information, would you be supportive of a study at this committee?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I think decisions around what this committee studies really rests with the committee.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** A motion discussing an important issue in trade, at the trade committee, discussing measures brought in by you, the trade minister, would seem reasonable, wouldn't it, Minister?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I respect the work that committees do and the work you, the chair and all the members in this committee do. In that respect, I am fully confident that the committee will make its determination about your studies.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Minister, Robert Asselin, a former top adviser to former finance minister Bill Morneau, stated with regard to the budget that "it is hard to find a coherent growth plan," and that it's impossible to find in the budget what sectors your government thinks we can be competitive in on the global stage. We don't see this either.

One such sector is agriculture and agri-food, which is still facing severe barriers to exporting its goods. What is in budget 2021 to address and review non-tariff barriers in our existing agreements?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** That's a really important question.

This budget really sets us all up—our Canadian businesses and the Canadian people—to finish this fight against COVID-19. At the same time, it makes targeted investments for those who have been particularly impacted by the COVID recession, be they women, racialized Canadians or young people, and makes significant investments so that we can get our economy not only into recovery, but into growth and competitiveness for years to come.

This is not 2009. We don't want to take 10 years to recover from this COVID recession. We want to make targeted investments, smart investments and strategic investments. That includes helping

Canadian businesses scale up into international markets, including in the wonderful agri-food and agriculture sector, to take advantage of the 63% of the global economy to which Canada's trade agreements give our businesses access.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** I have one more quick question, while I have time.

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** In your mandate letter from December 2019, the Prime Minister asked you to "Lead the implementation and maximization of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership."

I'm curious why we don't see any of that in the budget. Can you comment on that, Minister?

• (1145)

**Hon. Mary Ng:** The budget makes significant historic investments in our growth. The work we have been doing to ensure that businesses are growing in those markets absolutely includes taking 1,100 businesses to a summit to look at opportunities in the European Union, with 300 businesses going to France and women-owned businesses going to Sweden. We've taken women-owned businesses to work in the Asia-Pacific region as well, on a trade mission to Japan.

These are deliverables for businesses, and I'm looking forward to continuing to work on deliverables for Canadian businesses.

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

We will move on to Ms. Bendayan for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the minister for appearing once again at committee. It's always a pleasure to see her here.

I have a question that picks up on the previous conversation. Looking at the statistics over the last year, when we compare February 2020 with February 2021, we see exports have increased by 4%. We've actually seen a 57% increase in exports since April 2020.

Minister, as you pointed out earlier in a conversation, Canada is number two in foreign direct investment attractiveness, according to the most recent index from Kearney's, which was released a few weeks ago.

Perhaps, Minister, you can explain which industries you think are driving this impressive economic result, and if you think we need to continue along this same path. If so, how do you plan to do so in the short and medium term?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Those numbers are right. We are seeing that the work by team trade Canada to support our businesses and the agreements that we have around the globe is really providing the market access and enabling businesses.

We're creating the environment so that businesses can be competitive and prosper. We are seeing businesses grow in the knowledge economy and in exporting around the world. We are seeing an incredible number of clean-tech companies. The reason I keep using France is that it's just recent in my mind because that was a virtual trade mission that we just did a couple of weeks ago. It was completely focused on sustainable growth and on the environment. There, we're very proud that a Canadian company like Ballard is providing the first hydrogen buses for a city in France.

In looking at circular economy businesses that are able to grow, take a look at CarbonCure. It's a wonderful business based out of Atlantic Canada that is exporting its technology into the U.S. and into Singapore, for example, where those infrastructure projects are being done, but doing so in a way that is much less carbon intensive.

We have these incredible Canadian companies, and team trade Canada, the trade commissioner service, EDC and BDC, Invest in Canada and the Canadian Commercial Corporation are very focused and are really working to help our Canadian exporters grow, and to grow into those international markets. Canadian business growth means jobs for Canadian companies here at home.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Absolutely, and another colleague in this session mentioned reading the budget and looking for things to support our small and medium-sized businesses as they export. I was particularly thrilled to see the \$4-billion investment in our digital strategy. We know that getting our small businesses online will help them export to the world. Is there anything you wanted to share about that new program that just came out in the budget?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Yes. Thank you.

We talked about what it does for businesses, but the other part of this investment, which is a really important one, is getting almost 30,000 young people trained to give them the job experience of helping Canadian small and medium-sized businesses go digital. We're really looking forward to working with small businesses and with those very young people to give them the opportunity. Not only are we helping businesses grow, but we're also addressing one of the groups of people that we want to see supported coming out of this COVID recession, and that is our dynamic young people.

We're very pleased to have the \$4-billion investment to help our businesses grow, but also to provide those very excellent opportunities to Canada's young people.

• (1150)

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

We will move on to Mr. Savard-Tremblay for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Madam Minister, you said that the strategic innovation fund would help a number of companies in many ways.

Are you satisfied with the current criteria?

[*English*]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Well, I would love to speak to you much more about the details of the strategic innovation fund, but I think Minister Champagne would be best positioned to do that as the minister responsible.

What I would say is that the strategic innovation fund is making those very needed investments to help Canadian companies grow and accelerate during this pandemic. The ability to grow some of the domestic biomanufacturing capabilities, like with Sanofi Pasteur, is one example.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I completely understand. Nevertheless, I'll ask my question again. We know that this fund has mainly benefited multinational corporations, rather than SMEs.

Are you satisfied with the current criteria or could we consider changing the criteria by closely examining this issue?

[*English*]

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I think it's important for our investments to be there for small and medium-size businesses and for a whole range of businesses, and that's what budget 2020-21 does.

As the international trade minister, I will say that when Canadian companies succeed and are supported, no matter their size, that creates jobs and it is good for the Canadian economy. There are a range of investments. Maybe the one thing I would point you to is the \$450-million investment in venture capital that goes into those great businesses. We also want to make sure that a portion of this—I think about \$50 million—will be there for under-represented investors and businesses as well, to make sure that this growth will truly include all people in Canadian business.

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

We move now to Mr. Blaikie for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you.

Madam Minister, in your remarks earlier you mentioned your interest in developing a more progressive trade agenda.

Export Development Canada obviously is an important tool in the Canadian trade policy tool box. There was a legislative review tabled just before the last election, in July 2019, and I'm not alone in looking for evidence of what the government intends to do in response to that legislative review, particularly in regard to calls for more transparency in the way EDC operates.

I'm wondering if you could inform us as to any plans that your department has in order to take action on some of the findings in the EDC legislative review.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Thank you for that.

EDC has certainly been very instrumental in helping small businesses through COVID, particularly in terms of the work that has been done in providing that very necessary liquidity through CE-BA, some \$46 million for over 850,000 businesses.

We've been working with EDC to be sure that it is also setting climate targets, and now I'm very proud to say that it is the largest clean-tech financier in Canada, facilitating over \$4.5 billion in business in 2020. More recently, we instructed EDC to do even more by aligning its portfolio with the Paris Agreement commitments for 2030 as well as for net zero in 2050.

EDC is an important part of Canada's trade tool box, and we will continue to work with it to ensure that it continues to help businesses in this pandemic but certainly on the path to recovery as well, being the important agency that it is for helping Canadian exporters.

• (1155)

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

We go now to Mr. Aboultaif for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks, Minister, for appearing this morning.

Minister, how do you explain the absence of a trade review in the budget? To be specific in this question, there was hardly any significant mention of trade and its percentage of GDP. Why was that?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** This budget sets Canada up to finish this fight against COVID-19. It is making significant investments in our economic recovery, particularly for those who have been hit particularly hard as a result of COVID. It is supporting small and medium-sized businesses. It is supporting green growth. It is supporting strategic investments for businesses in the area of the knowledge economy, where many of our investments are. It is setting up opportunities to help Canadian businesses get access to financing and access to investment capital.

All of these things help Canadian businesses grow, and when you get Canadian businesses on a path to economic growth—this budget is about jobs and growth—our very companies here can take advantage of the 1.5 billion customers in the global marketplace that the free trade agreements provide for, and this work continues.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you, Minister, but how does this line up with the absence of any mention of the target in the budget? If what you're saying is what's happening, the budget must reflect that, but it does not. Nowhere in the budget is there even mention—I'm being specific to make sure we agree on this thing, because this is the reality—of the percentage of GDP from trade. Why is that?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** Canada is a trading country. Supporting Canadian exporters to grow domestically and abroad is exactly what is done by this budget. This budget is about jobs and growth, support-

ing Canadian workers and businesses, so they can get on the road to recovery, which means they will be able to take advantage of the focused work we are doing to help them through the trade commissioner service.

The trade commissioner service continues to do its work, particularly helping scale-up Canadian clean technologies around the world, and it has additional resources. We've modernized the agreement with Israel, and there's investment in this budget for that.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Minister, with all due respect, if what you're saying is what's happening, the budget must reflect that, at least in the numbers, which it doesn't. How come?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** This budget is an ambitious budget for growth and jobs. It is a good budget for Canadians. It's a good budget for small and medium-sized businesses. It's a good budget for those very businesses that are the very exporters that I am so pleased to share.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** But there are no targets to meet. We need to see that. It's very significant to see the numbers reflected in the budget, but they are not there. Why?

**Hon. Mary Ng:** This government is committed to tackling climate change while growing back the economy. There's a sum of \$21.5 million over five years for the trade commissioner service, particularly for the ongoing adoption and growth of clean technologies. That's one area in the budget that is absolutely there to help our Canadian businesses grow.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I'm sorry, Minister, but you're not answering my question. You know that, and I know that.

If there are no targets in the budget, how can you have a road map implementing any of what you're saying? You're telling me you listened. We know we are a trading nation. We know we have many trade agreements. We know all that.

If the budget does not have a target, that means there is no plan, and this is on you, as minister, to explain why this is happening.

**Hon. Mary Ng:** I would disagree with the honourable member that this budget does not have a plan for Canada's economic recovery and job growth. That's exactly what this budget is about.

We are going to work with Canadians and Canadian businesses to help them grow, and to create those very jobs that are going to help our businesses and our economy come roaring back. We are going to bring back the over 100,000 women who have lost jobs during this pandemic, to bring them back into the work force through a \$30 billion investment in early learning and child care.

This budget is there to get people back to work, and to help our small businesses finish the fight against COVID-19. This budget makes the very necessary investments to help our workers get back to work and our businesses to grow. Yes, that growth is going to be both here in Canada and also in the international marketplace.

• (1200)

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

We knew you were here for the first hour. We thank you very much for the information. Certainly, if members have additional questions, they can send those questions to you, and I'm sure you would be pleased to answer them and provide them with additional information.

Thank you, again, Minister. We'll allow you to leave.

Your departmental officials will remain.

We'll now go to Mr. Arya, for five minutes.

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to recognize that the kinds of investments the Government of Canada has made to support businesses through this pandemic have already started paying off, from the Canada emergency business account to many other measures that support Canadian businesses.

The Bank of Canada has now revised its GDP growth forecast for the year to 6.5%. That is up from 4% it had forecast in January. We know that trade accounts for the bulk of our GDP. The last numbers I have are from Macrotrends, showing that trade accounted for about 65% of GDP in 2019. So there you go: the Bank of Canada is forecasting increased GDP growth of 6.5% against 4% it had predicted in January.

With regard to the other aspects, the minister mentioned the Canadian Commercial Corporation. In my view, that corporation has much more potential to help Canadian businesses, especially the SMEs.

The minister also mentioned that, unfortunately, this pandemic has increased the demand for protectionism from different countries, and Canada as a trading nation should be wary of this. We should be watchful.

We have already entered into many free trade agreements across the world. Can we move the resources that have been allocated in negotiating the free trade agreements in order to implement, and allow Canadian businesses to avail themselves of the benefits of, all of the free trade agreements we have signed?

**The Chair:** Mr. Verheul, did you want to answer that question or recommend someone else?

**Mr. Steve Verheul (Assistant Deputy Minister, Trade Policy and Negotiations, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I may ask if Sara Wilshaw can respond to that.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw (Chief Trade Commissioner, Assistant Deputy Minister, International Business Development, Investment and Innovation, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Yes, I'm happy to tackle that one, although I wouldn't want to speak to the resources that Steve and his team

would still require for the work they do and will continue to do, which is really important, both at the WTO and on the bilateral regional trade discussions that continue.

In terms of the FTA promotion, though, I think this is where perhaps we can talk about some of the investments that have been made. In the fall economic statement of 2018, there was a significant investment made in FTA promotion that rolled out—

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** I understand that. I'm sorry to interrupt. I have very limited time.

We have made investments. There's no doubt about it. Over many years we have been making investments in FTA and other related things, but it is time for us to get a benefit out of that. I'm not seeing that amongst the SMEs, especially the SMEs in the knowledge-based sector. They need to be helped to make use of all the free trade agreements that we have in place so that they can contribute to the Canadian economy.

• (1205)

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Yes, I understand. Thank you.

Madam Chair, if I may respond, my team has been doing a tremendous amount of training for folks across the board to help people understand how to take advantage of the FTAs. We have new tools—digital tools—available to businesses to look at and find easily the tariffs and also to find opportunities in new markets as a result of the FTAs that are out there.

We also have a lot of other supports that are helping people and SMEs to go digital and to access new channels into these markets as well.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Coming back to the knowledge-based sectors, we know that the global economy is going towards a knowledge-based economy. We had it at one stage in terms of our natural resources—oil, gas, minerals and forestry products—but five to 10 years down the road, it is the knowledge-based sector and the technologies such as artificial intelligence and other robotics and automation that are going to create a massive impact.

They have invested in artificial intelligence, photonics and genomics, etc. What are trying to do to help these specialized sectors take advantage of all of the FTAs we have?

**The Chair:** Give us a brief answer, please, Ms. Wilshaw.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Yes, certainly.

Briefly, we have made major investments in rolling out additional Canadian technology accelerator programs. These have gone digital and, actually, in the virtual space, have been connected up amongst themselves to offer even greater opportunities. That program is working very well.

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

Mr. Hoback, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, witnesses, for being here this afternoon.

My first question will go to you, Mr. Verheul. Have you been directed by this government, or what instructions have been given by this government, in regard to getting a plan in place for getting more procurement of vaccinations, booster shots and personal protective equipment? What role do you serve in regard to that?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, it's not really something that I'm on the front lines of. If we're finding that other countries—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Is it maybe the trade commissioners?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Trade commissioners do have a greater role than I do, so Sara might want to respond to that.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Yes. I'll address it there.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Thank you for the question.

Madam Chair, certainly my team around the world has been deployed in a kind of reverse trade commissioner role, in some sense, in doing the sourcing from the very beginning. They developed a whole book of all the really excellent PPE that's out there, and they have been working diligently to make sure we have it.

They've also been doing a lot of work on the investment side to bring in investments in PPE manufacturing and medical devices manufacturing. Also, you would have seen, of course, the Sanofi win and also the Medicago investment over the last year.

In terms of the vaccine procurement itself, this is really a whole-of-our-network operation, working very closely with PSPC, PHAC and all kinds of others to make sure that we are getting the vaccines here and that the shipments are uninterrupted.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** What is the status of our trade commissioner service at this point in time? Do we have everybody redeployed in the countries where we pulled them back from when COVID first hit? Are we fully staffed? Do we have a full budget in place to support trade commissioners?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Madam Chair, the vast majority of our network is back in place. I think there were a few places where some of the restrictions remained. I believe India is one of those places as well, but most of the folks are back.

I would like to also add that, in fact, the trade commissioner service never skipped a beat. Even in the early days when they were being evacuated, the team was actually serving clients and providing advice even from the airport lounges as they were trying to get back to Canada.

We provided somewhere in the neighbourhood of 45,000 to 50,000 services this year.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm going to stop you there, Sara. I only have five minutes.

My next question is in regard to EDC. How are you finding the insurance rates and the ability to offer insurance into different countries for our Canadian manufacturers? Are you still offering

those services? How expensive is that risk this year compared to other years?

Can you give us an overview on how that's functioning?

• (1210)

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Is the member talking about risk insurance?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Yes. I mean risk insurance particularly. I have heard rates in certain countries have gone through the roof.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Madam Chair, as I understand it, EDC has not offered political risk insurance for some time. If you're talking about the letters of credit and the other kinds of supports, they offer that on a commercial basis. As you know, they are an arm's length organization, so they make those determinations for themselves as to what their rates will be.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I understand that, but I'm curious. There must be some understanding of the rates and how they are functioning, if they are actually becoming very expensive. Part of the process for the Canadian government is to provide services that assist our manufacturers in exporting.

I have seen situations in history where the Americans, for example, went in and subsidized those types of rates or offered special finance programs.

Are we doing anything like that?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Madam Chair, I do know that EDC's services to SMEs have increased significantly over the last little while.

I can get back to the member with some more information about their rates, if that is of interest.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I would appreciate that.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you, Chair.

On Friday one of our witnesses talked about this being the new norm. The situation we have now could be going on for the next five years.

Have you been instructed by this government to put in place plans if that is the scenario? If we should see this type of situation where you have a fourth wave, a fifth wave or a variant wave, how will we react? How are we going to function? What does that look like?

Have you been instructed to provide some insight into how we should operate and conduct ourselves?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Madam Chair, if that is directed to me in terms of how the trade commissioner service operates, I think the answer is that we are increasingly going digital in our service offering. We have seen some really interesting opportunities come out of that, which we will continue to explore.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Sara, have you done the preparation for a possibility of this going on for five years?

I will even direct it to Mr. Verheul, the deputy minister.

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback, I'm sorry, but your time is over. Maybe the witnesses could somehow answer your question through another one of your questioners.

We go on to Mr. Dhaliwal for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the presenters. Even though the minister has gone, she has appeared many times at this committee.

My question for the department is on the mandate of Invest in Canada. We have this department. I would like to know from the department to what extent the funding amount requested in 2021-22 estimates would be sufficient to allow Invest in Canada to fulfill its mandate.

**Ms. Katie Curran (Chief Administrative Officer, Invest in Canada Hub):** Thank you for that question. I believe I will be able to respond.

Invest in Canada has key objectives to achieve its mandates. One is to promote Canada as a premier investment destination. It's also to work on facilitating and accelerating investment decisions into Canada by offering client support and helping to accelerate their decisions. The third key objective of our mandate is really to provide that partner coordination to allow multiple levels of government to work together to facilitate that investment.

Ideally, our funding goes into those three areas.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** We have to compare what Canada is investing or allocating with the amounts of money that other developed countries are putting into their agencies. I would like to know if you have that comparison.

**Ms. Katie Curran:** I don't have the comparison in front of me, but I know that as a new organization starting up, our funding gradually increased until where we are today, at our steady state of \$34 million. We believe this is sufficient to achieve our mandate as it's set out for us right now, with our allocated resources of 67 employees.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** When it comes to trade and diversification, how will Invest in Canada help the government and the minister diversify trade?

• (1215)

**Ms. Katie Curran:** Definitely a part of Invest in Canada's strategy is to support the government's objective of trade diversification, and that's done through the multiple different investors we work with from different countries for different sectors all across Canada. Definitely part of our area of focus is the trade diversification priority.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Because of the COVID-19 situation, the work has been affected, whether it's overseas or here. Could you tell me if you noticed any negative effects? If so, how are you going to mitigate them and work in the future?

**Ms. Katie Curran:** Yes, definitely.

Like many organizations around the country, we had to do some pivoting last year, and I believe the trade commissioner service said this well. It developed virtual tools, as did we. We saw that in-person live events were no longer happening, so we pivoted to participating in virtual events and developed our own tools for virtual site visits, using drone footage and other digital tools to assist investors who weren't able to come to Canada to see different sites and tour across Canada. These are some of the ways we pivoted in 2020, and we anticipate continuing to pivot in 2021.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** What are some of the challenges and tangible solutions that the department had?

**Ms. Katie Curran:** Do you mean the department itself?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Yes.

**Ms. Katie Curran:** One of our main objectives was to bring the whole of government under one umbrella when we showed up to events. That was part of our creation and part of what we were supposed to deliver on. Showing up to events under the Canada umbrella, as team Canada, was a bit of a challenge in a virtual world, where events were either being cancelled or switching to the virtual platforms. It was definitely a challenge for us as a department or corporation to adjust to that. However, I believe we've been successful over the past year in delivering on virtual events under the team Canada umbrella.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** What are some of the—

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

We'll go on to Mr. Savard-Tremblay, for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Thank you.

We're also looking at investor-state dispute settlement right now. I'll ask my question, and the official who is best able to answer it can do so.

A 2016 article by the C.D. Howe Institute noted that it was time for Canada to take a thorough look at its approach to this issue. On the parliamentary side, our committee conducted a study that isn't quite finished yet. You're part of the last meeting.

I want to know whether you, on your end, have also conducted a study on the impact and consequences of the mechanism.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Who would like to answer that question?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Madam Chair, I think Shendra Melia would be best suited to respond to that.

**Ms. Shendra Melia (Acting Director General, Services, Intellectual Property and Investment, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Over the past number of years, Canada has demonstrated a lot of interest in continuing to examine the implications of investor-state dispute settlement in the context of the work we do with our regional trading partners and bilateral trading partners. I would emphasize in particular, in the context of the work that the government has done to review its foreign investment promotion and protection agreements, that the government last undertook a major review of its FIPA model in 2003, and for the past few years has been undertaking a very intensive study of the benefits and challenges of investor-state dispute settlement in that context.

**The Chair:** It will have to be a very short question, Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

• (1220)

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I just want a confirmation that requires a brief answer.

Internal studies have been conducted on the issue. Is that right?

[English]

**Ms. Shendra Melia:** What I would say to that question, Madam Chair, is that we've undertaken a lot of internal analysis on our foreign investment promotion and protection agreement model, and we've done a lot of external consultations with a broad range of stakeholders. We have discussed the investor-state dispute settlement model under our FIPAs with civil society, labour organizations, indigenous partners, business associations, pension funds, legal practitioners, academics, as well as our provinces and territories. A lot of analysis has been undertaken.

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

Mr. Blaikie, you have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you very much.

Quickly, in follow up to that, would you be prepared to share that analysis with the committee?

**Ms. Shendra Melia:** As I mentioned, the government has been undertaking an extensive review of its foreign investment promotion and protection agreement. We are in the final stages of that analysis. It's my understanding that we are expecting to publish a new agreement in the coming months.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Specifically on the question of the investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms, would you share the department's analysis—not right now—in writing with the committee, in follow-up to today's meeting?

**Ms. Shendra Melia:** As I mentioned a moment ago, it's the government's intention to soon publish a comprehensive, new, inclusive and modern foreign investment promotion and protection agreement. That new model, which will be modern and inclusive, will include some new provisions as they relate to investor-state dispute settlement. The members of the committee will certainly be able to access that new model when it is published.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Will the model include the analysis that led to the different—if they are going to be different—approaches to

ISDS, or is it a template model? We'll be able to witness the change, but we won't have access to the analysis behind the change.

**Ms. Shendra Melia:** We will certainly be publishing a copy of our new model. As I mentioned, the analysis that was undertaken that formed the basis for that new model was analysis that was done in the context of extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders over the course of many years of detailed discussions.

Again, as I mentioned, the new model will include many new innovations when it comes to investor-state dispute settlement, which is something we heard quite frequently from our constituents. For example, the new model—

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** I'm asking that the department share its analysis with the committee and I'm not hearing a yes or a no. I don't want to leave here without being clear on whether we're going to get a copy of that analysis.

If you could answer that question, I would appreciate it.

**Ms. Shendra Melia:** To be clearer, the analysis that was undertaken went into the formulation of our new models. The publication of our new model, as a result, will include the internal analysis that we undertook in order to reach a recommendation on a new model.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** So you won't be—

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

I'm sorry, Mr. Blaikie.

We will move on to Mr. Lobb, please.

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to have most of you folks back here to committee.

I have one question that I will throw out there.

As representatives of international trade and small business, do you have an opportunity to talk to anybody at CBSA or Foreign Affairs in regard to our commerce over the Canada-U.S. border?

Does anybody have any correspondence there?

**Mr. Eric Walsh (Director General, North America Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I can take this for the group.

I'm representing both the foreign affairs and international trade side of Canada-U.S. relations, and we have communications with our colleagues at CBSA.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** I'm from southwestern Ontario, about an hour and a half from the Sarnia-Port Huron border.

One thing I consistently hear from constituents in my area... I'll give you an example. We have a business in my riding, and the parts they sell are almost all in the U.S. They're trying to get a technician across to commission the line, and they can't get this technician to cross. If they do cross, they have to quarantine for 14 days. This technician has both of his Pfizer shots, and a negative test.

I know I'm not the only person dealing with frustrating things like this, but we're trying to promote trade and do trade, and these businesses are trying to promote trade and do trade, and they can't get a technician across the border because the border crossing guy doesn't think they're essential.

What can we do to fix this very simple problem?

● (1225)

**Mr. Eric Walsh:** First of all, I'll sympathize. There have been a lot of these cases and as the minister was talking about, as we try to get COVID in the rearview mirror, there are definitely cases where we are perhaps balancing the interests of the health of the population a little higher than the interests of individual businesses. But there are processes in place that would allow for exemptions. They require a number of different steps. I'd be very happy to follow up with the committee or with the member's office afterwards to indicate what those might be.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** I appreciate the public protection and safety, but in a lot of these cases I've seen in my riding, the technicians are coming across, they are working on a piece of equipment when no one else is around, and when they are done they go back to their hotel. They come back the next day, finish their work and then drive back to Michigan.

There is no public risk when you compare that with something like Pearson Airport or Costco, or what have you. Anything you can do to work with CBSA and Foreign Affairs will help trade, probably more than any of the discussions we've had today, to be quite honest, at least in southwestern Ontario.

Just before Christmas there was a lot of talk about the Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement. I'm just curious. Where are we at with a long-term trade deal? Are there any discussions right now? Is that pretty well silent?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I can respond to that. As you know, the transitional agreement came into effect on April 1. Since then we have been conducting consultations with stakeholders to get a clear sense of what various stakeholders would like to see in a new agreement. That consultation is nearing an end. We'll then start to develop our strategy, get guidance from cabinet and we would be looking to initiate negotiations later in the year.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Going back to the U.S., in my opinion, as someone observing what's going on, I don't know that the U.S. has been our best friend, as they should have been for many years and many presidents. On the buy American provisions, or any of these tough policies on Canada, is there an ongoing working group that discusses them with the United States? What kind of a system is set up to address these long-standing issues we have with the United States? Is there a committee or something you can give us an update on?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** We are having ongoing conversations with the U.S. at this point at various levels, and specifically on the buy American issues in particular. I'm talking to my counterparts in the U.S. at the political level.

The refreshing part of the new administration in the U.S. is that they are very open to this kind of dialogue, and that's what we're working on.

As I think you've heard, we're spending a particular amount of time on talking about supply chains and trying to avoid interruptions to supply chains that will be costly on both sides of the border, including with the U.S.

A lot of work is going on there right now.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Can Line 5—

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

Mr. Sheehan, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Thank you very much for your presentation today. It's been very informative in answering these questions on the main estimates.

Recently Sault Ste. Marie, the riding I represent, was declared a foreign trade zone, where there's an ability for the riding to coordinate and talk about a lot of things that would help businesses and the supply chain, or things of that nature, exporting to the United States.

Steve, there are a couple of them now in Ontario. Niagara has one and Windsor does. It's a broad question. How are you guys going to be coordinating the information to places that don't have foreign trade zones? I'm thinking of the economic development corporations, the virtual trade missions, the government initiative to create CORE and all these other initiatives that we're talking about today. What is the communication plan on getting that out to folks?

● (1230)

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I'm afraid that's not really my area. I will look to Sara, maybe, in the first instance.

Sara, are you able to respond to that?

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** Yes. I'd be happy to.

Virtual trade missions and actually a lot of the activities that the trade commissioner service is involved in, including the work that we do on responsible business conduct, are communicated out through a number of different channels. We have regional offices that are all across the country, as a matter of fact. They are engaged with their local partners, with the provinces and municipalities and the territories they're located in, and with a lot of the chambers. That is one channel through which we communicate what we're doing.

I'm in touch with my assistant deputy minister counterparts in the provinces and territories as well. The deputy minister and the minister have been engaged with their counterparts. I would add that we have CanadExport magazine, which goes out to—I'll probably get the number wrong—somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30,000 to 40,000 subscribers on a regular basis. We use that as another channel to make sure that information flows. We also have a lot of digital content on the trade commissioner service website that is constantly updated.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Thank you.

Another thing that comes to mind in this virtual world is PDAC, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. They just had their conference and it was virtual. People from all over the world were connecting here in Canada.

I know that's separate from what you guys are doing, but the minister talked about a virtual trade mission link to Japan. Could you comment on that? What was the success and who was there? She touched on it for only a very brief second. Could you perhaps expand on who was involved and what took place there? It's very interesting.

**Ms. Sara Wilshaw:** I'd be happy to elaborate on this a little bit.

Actually, I should correct the member that on PDAC and on Collision, my team has been very actively engaged. We've had delegations come in, virtually, from all over the world. We have facilitated hundreds of B2B meetings for these delegations to come in and connect with Canadian businesses in those different sectors. PDAC was different this year, but it was about as successful as it could be in a virtual environment. We did a lot of work on that.

On the virtual trade missions, there have been several. The most recent was to France. Before that there was one to South Korea. In both cases, we saw hundreds of participants, as a matter of fact, which is far more than we normally would for an in-person trade mission. We facilitated dozens of business-to-business meetings as well. We're starting to see some success stories coming out. We will continue to track those over time. Probably because of the numbers, it works no less than an in-person trade mission—just different.

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

Mr. Aboultaif, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the department for appearing before us this morning.

Mr. Verheul, in light of protectionism like buy America and others, which is the trend in trade now across the world, would you be able to share with the committee what directions you are getting from the government and from the minister—please be specific—on how we are moving forward to counter and to be able to maintain our trade volumes and our trade position in the world?

• (1235)

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I think I could best characterize it as a bit of a full-court press. We have our embassy in Washington that's very active on this issue. We have various levels, from officials to ministers, engaged in this as well.

One of the things we've been doing is talking a lot to Canadian companies and U.S. companies and business organizations on both sides about how we can best demonstrate to the U.S. that if they impose restrictions against Canadian exports, that will damage not only Canadian interests but also U.S. interests. If they disrupt the supply chain that's currently operating now, as we have an integrated market it will be costly on both sides.

We're also explaining how we provide products and services that are environmentally friendly that could help advance U.S. interests

on the environment, which is another key objective they have. We're drilling down into as much of that detail as we can. We're presenting that case to the U.S. in an effort to convince them that—

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Okay. That is on a diplomatic side, which is the normal thing to do. If you think about it, that's the normal thing to do. On the other side, how are we getting ourselves ready internally in order to be ready, if we have difficulties with one market, to move to other markets? That is going to require a strategy. You can call it a road map.

You are the department. You are delivering. What is the government telling you to do? What kind of direction are you getting from the government? Do you see a plan that is going to help us to overcome this not only for next year but for decades to come? How do you see that happening?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, it operates on a number of different paths. Obviously, for the U.S., as our main market where we export most of our goods, that's a priority. Issues like buy America are something that we're spending a lot of time on, and we have a very comprehensive strategy to address that.

At the same time, we are looking at diversifying our exports. We're looking at the European market. We're looking at Asian markets. We're looking at all the markets where we have free trade agreements, and we're trying to take fuller advantage of those and expand our exports to those markets as well.

Thirdly, we're working a lot with Canadian businesses to ensure they're equipped to be able to access those markets and to compete effectively in those markets.

It's really a multi-tiered kind of strategy that we are pursuing.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Can you give a specific example of which industry we might lead with and that we believe is going to give us that replacement of business losses or market losses? I'm curious about that, because I think we have to start somewhere. We have to be able to say, okay, we're going to take a step back and we're going to have to think or rethink how we're going to achieve those markets again and to gain more markets. Is there any specific example you can give us? I think it would be very important for the study today.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, we're trying to avoid targeting a very small number of specific sectors. Certainly, we are taking full recognition of the important sectors in the economy and putting a lot of emphasis on those sides, but we also want to put a lot of emphasis on small and medium-sized businesses and on ensuring they're equipped either to get into the U.S. market or to diversify their interest into other markets. They cannot be single focus—

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Do you believe that the manufacturing sector in Canada is ready to tackle new markets, and to what extent?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I think there's work to be done on that. I think there is a comfort with the domestic market. There is a comfort with the U.S. market. We have more work to do in Europe. We have more work to do in Asia to ensure that companies are both prepared and ready to take that extra step of trying to test out those kinds of markets.

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

We will go on to Ms. Bendayan for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Picking up on that conversation with Mr. Verheul, we were talking earlier about the current export numbers. With April 2020 as the comparison, we have increased our exports by 50% since that time.

Mr. Verheul, I wonder, from having spoken to some folks in different sectors here in Canada, including the agri-food sector, which has seen an enormous increase in their exports and has huge potential for Canada, if you feel that... As you mentioned, now more work needs to be done on the implementation side in ensuring that Canadian businesses take full advantage of the many agreements that we already have on the international trade side. Do you feel that it would be important to assign a specific team in the department in order to facilitate the implementation and the successful use of our trade agreements?

• (1240)

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** Well, we are putting a lot of resources and effort behind that as we stand now. That is certainly a priority. It takes a number of different forms.

You spoke earlier about the notion of the digital funds that were coming out of budget as well. We're putting a lot of effort into digital agreements and working domestically with companies to enhance their digital capabilities. We're trying to provide as much assistance as we can in ways that will have practical, concrete results in terms of access to those markets. We have all these agreements and we can do better in most of them, and it's a matter of making sure we have the tools to be able to do that.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you.

I'll turn to the conversation on ISDS. As you know, our committee was engaged in a study on this and we wanted to hear from you following some of the testimony. One of the witnesses in particular mentioned that there may be a risk of scaring foreign investors away from Canada should we move away from including ISDS provisions in our trade agreements.

How do you feel about that statement and about those risks?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I don't really see that as much of a risk. What happened with us with respect to the U.S. in the CUSMA negotiations was because of a particular relationship we have with the U.S. on that issue.

Outside of the NAFTA cases we have had, we get very few cases against Canada by foreign investors. We get significant benefits out of having investor-state dispute settlement in economies where we

do have investments in the mining sector and various other sectors. That has certainly allowed us to have a much better record in terms of our offensive interests in investor-state dispute settlement than what we have had to deal with in the domestic market.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** If I understand correctly, each case should be really examined to determine whether, in negotiating a free trade agreement, Canada should be pushing for an ISDS provision or not.

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** That is absolutely right. Every market is a little bit different. In some cases it's going to make perfect sense, particularly if we don't have much confidence in the domestic court system in a particular country. That may be an issue.

Yes, it needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you for clarifying that.

Madam Chair, do I have much longer?

**The Chair:** You have 50 seconds remaining.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you.

Turning to a subject that was raised earlier, a colleague of mine asked about some of the non-tariff barriers that are causing some concern for our exporters. To my mind, the budget is not the right place to be addressing non-tariff barriers, but I'm sure you and your team, Mr. Verheul, are working on those issues at the moment.

Can you give us an update on where those discussions stand?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** It is something we're spending an increasing amount of time on because one of the results we often see after we have a free trade agreement in place is that we have dealt with most of the obvious barriers, but non-tariff barriers can crop up. They can be harder to get to.

When it comes to our CETA agreement with the Europeans, there is a lot of focus on non-tariff barriers.

Similarly, when we're talking about the ongoing implementation of the CPTPP, we're focused on barriers that we're experiencing there, as well as with other countries that we don't have formal trade agreements with. We have issues in India. We have issues in China. We're spending a lot of time on those issues as well.

• (1245)

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

We will move on to Monsieur Savard-Tremblay for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Thank you.

Mr. Verheul, you said earlier that, in some cases, investor-state dispute settlement, or ISDS, is necessary when the justice system can't be trusted.

Are you also willing to say the opposite, in other words, that it isn't necessary and that it should be avoided when we trust the justice system of our partners, as is the case with the United States, for example?

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I think there are a couple of issues related to that.

The circumstances of our ending up with a result where we don't have an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism with the U.S. under the new agreement comes out of the history we've had under NAFTA. We didn't think that was a particularly good path to follow, going forward.

It doesn't mean that investors may not have concerns in the U.S. It's quite possible they will. Similarly, U.S. investors may have continuing concerns in Canada. I think there was a unique circumstance there.

Going back to discussions we've had in the past, ideally we do like to have investor-state dispute settlement so that we don't just have it in markets where we have concerns about domestic courts or about the ability to enforce investor rights, but also look at a model that could apply more broadly. That is what we tried to do in the CETA negotiations.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, for a very short question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Okay.

Nevertheless, are you willing to say that this won't necessarily be required when we have agreements with western countries and countries governed by the rule of law, for example?

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** It also ties into the kinds of changes we're making to our model—the foreign investment protection agreement—going forward. We have been including more inclusive trade provisions. We're trying to strengthen the government's right to regulate in relation to that. We're trying to ensure that the process is going to be ethical and predictable. If you were to have the right kind of model, and we think we are getting there, that could apply in virtually all markets.

**The Chair:** Mr. Blaikie, you have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you very much.

I want to return to the original question I posed to the minister. I don't think we got much by way of a political response.

At the administrative level, has there been any direction, or are you looking at trying to assess, as you continue to have preliminary talks about possible trade agreements, whether there's a list of goods and services, or certain sectors where you think a different kind of approach is needed? Has there been any thought on how to structure those things into a trade agreement, or to ensure they're kept out of trade agreements?

One of the things we've heard recently at this committee for another study is the suggestion of trying to develop some kind of more regional supply chain for vaccine production and PPE, for instance.

How does that inform your work? Is your work effectively unchanged by the pandemic? Does the nature of the trade discussions you're having foresee exempting anything from a trade agreement, or treating it differently from just another commodity on the market?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I would suggest that the COVID experience has certainly changed the world of trade, to some degree, and has caused us to look somewhat differently at some of the approaches that are being used.

I wouldn't say that's across the board, because existing free trade agreements, and any of our free trade agreements going forward do contain inherent flexibilities to protect human life and health that provide us with scope to do what we may need to do in many of these areas.

• (1250)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Are you satisfied that those flexibilities have been adequate for the pandemic and that there is no need to rethink any core aspects of the Canadian trade agenda?

**Mr. Steve Verheul:** I wouldn't say there's no need to rethink elements of it. There are still paths we want to pursue. We're going to be looking at what kinds of adjustments, what kinds of changes, should be made to position ourselves to respond as well as we can to a situation like this, and that will be a common view.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Is there any preliminary—

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

We will move to Mrs. Gray, for five minutes.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all of the government officials for being here today.

I have a couple of questions for the Invest in Canada Hub department. The disclosure of large contracts alone for 2020-21 add up to \$4.2 million in advertising, including over \$850,000 on advertising services to Google LLC.

My question is for Ms. Curran. Can you table with the committee the total amount of the Invest in Canada Hub spending on advertising for the 2020-21 fiscal year, including a breakdown of advertising dollars spent in each country?

**Ms. Katie Curran:** That's definitely something we can forward to you.

Part of our mandate is to promote Canada as a premier investment destination, so marketing and advertising is a key and fundamental part of what we do, and where a portion of our budget goes.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** What are the specific metrics for measuring success to see whether this taxpayer-financed marketing and advertising is producing results for investment in Canada?

**Ms. Katie Curran:** Our formal metrics are part of our departmental results framework, which is included in our departmental plans. One of them is to brand Canada as a premier investment destination, and we want to see an increase on the confidence index that investors have of Canada as an investment destination year over year. We also want to see opinions of potential and current investors of Canada as that premier investment destination. Those are our main ways that we're looking to see growth in the areas of marketing and advertising.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** So investor confidence, in terms of some of those metrics of attractiveness, should lead ultimately to jobs. Can you table with the committee the number of new jobs that have been created and how you're defining that number as an outcome of the creation of the Invest in Canada Hub?

**Ms. Katie Curran:** Yes, we can definitely provide some additional figures. One thing that I can provide right now, which minister alluded to in her opening statement, is that in 2019 and 2020 we helped facilitate 18 investment deals coming into Canada, which have the potential to create 2,000 jobs and represent \$1.25 billion in capital expenditures. Those are the types of investments that we're focused on bringing into Canada.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** When you table that with this committee, would you also be able to break that down by country? That will also tie in to my earlier question of the advertising spent. Would that be something you could provide?

**Ms. Katie Curran:** Yes, we'll look at providing a breakdown of those numbers when possible.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** That's great. Thank you very much.

Can state-owned enterprises or companies affiliated with state-owned enterprises invest through the Invest in Canada Hub?

**Ms. Katie Curran:** The investments that come through the Invest in Canada Hub are like any investments that would be facilitated for the Government of Canada. They're all required to follow the same rules and guidelines as any investment that comes through Canada.

I also have my colleague Nathalie Béchamp, who can speak more about those investments.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Just to clarify, is the answer to my question, yes, that state-owned enterprises and affiliated state-owned enterprises can invest through the Invest in Canada Hub?

• (1255)

**Ms. Katie Curran:** I'll let my colleague Nathalie Béchamp take that question.

**Ms. Nathalie Béchamp (Chief, Investor Services, Invest in Canada Hub):** Invest in Canada works with global companies that

are publicly held, privately held and, in some cases, have different ownership structures, including state-owned enterprises. We work within the framework of the Government of Canada's rules and programs, including the Investment Canada Act. Within the ICA, the Investment Canada Act, there are provisions for publicly held companies and any foreign-held investor that's looking to make an investment in a majority way, including state-owned enterprises.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** That's great. Thank you.

The answer is yes. Would you be able to table to the committee a list of all state-owned enterprises or affiliated companies that have access to the Invest in Canada Hub, whether it be programs or support or anything else, and the value of the foreign direct investment that resulted from it?

**Ms. Nathalie Béchamp:** As you may appreciate, the companies that we work with are given a form of confidentiality from us in terms of the types of services and what we can do to help them make those decisions. In terms of state-owned enterprises that deal with us, we could provide a list of those that have made public statements, that have—

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** My time is running out.

Would you be able to at least provide countries, as well, where those state-owned enterprises are based?

**Ms. Nathalie Béchamp:** Yes, I believe we can provide that.

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

It was wonderful to see so many women as witnesses today. We are making progress. Even if it seems slow, we are making progress. Congratulations to all of you and thank you so much.

I will now read the following motion: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the committee will now dispose of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, minus the interim supply the House agreed to on March 25, 2021.

INVEST IN CANADA HUB

Vote 1—Program Expenditures.....\$34,271,556

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** Shall I report the vote under Invest in Canada Hub to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

I think it was an informative meeting. We appreciated having all of our great witnesses and the minister. Thank you very much.

I move adjournment of our meeting.







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