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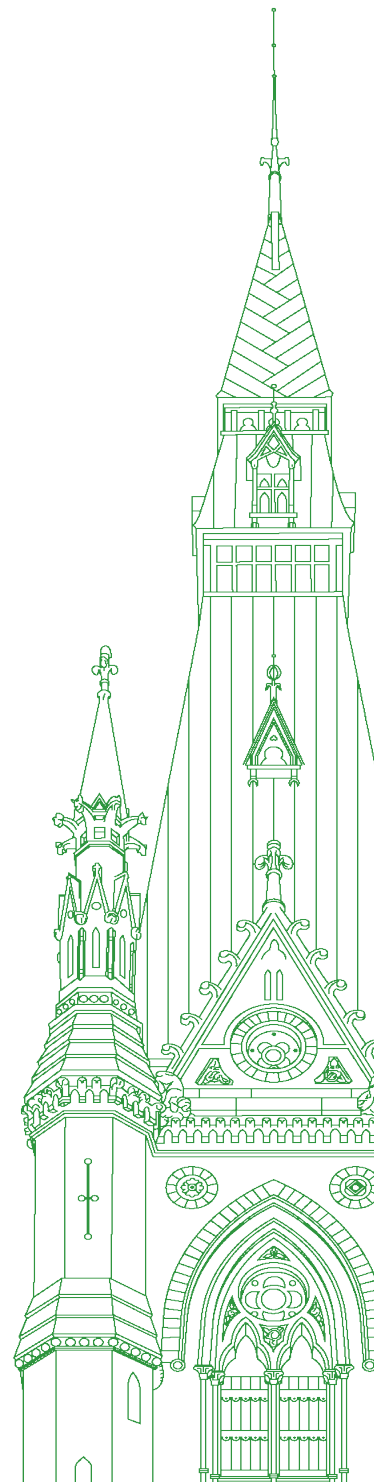
Special Joint Committee on the Exercise of Powers Under the Building Canada Act

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 004

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Co-Chairs: Dean AllisonPatti LaBoucane-Benson



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• (1835)

[English]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC)): Welcome to BCAN. This is meeting number four of the Special Joint Committee on the Exercise of Powers Under the Building Canada Act.

Pursuant to the motion adopted on Tuesday, April 14, the committee is meeting to commence a study on an update of the government's work under the Building Canada Act.

Today's meeting will be taking place in a hybrid format. Before we begin, I would ask all in-person participants to read the guidelines and make sure that they are abiding by those rules to help prevent feedback for our interpreters, who do such a great job.

I'd also like to remind participants of the following points. For those of you on Zoom—we have a couple of witnesses there—at the bottom of your screen, you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece to hear the desired channel.

Before speaking, please wait until the joint chair recognizes you by name. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. For those on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. We'll do our best to maintain a consolidated speaking order, which, by the way, we already have. I know that everyone has submitted their name, so we're good to go there.

I would remind you that all comments should be addressed to the joint chairs.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses who are here from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. We have the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Internal Trade. Welcome, sir.

From the Major Projects Office we have Dawn Farrell, CEO; Louise Baird, VP of strategic policy and coordination; Peter Feldberg, VP of regulatory affairs; and Rob Van Walleghem, general counsel and vice-president.

I understand that Mr. LeBlanc will be freed at eight o'clock, but the rest of you are going to be stuck here with us until 9:30 p.m. We appreciate your spending your Tuesday evening with us.

I now invite Minister LeBlanc to give us his opening statement.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Internal Trade): Thank you.

Mr. Chair, Madam Chair, members of the committee, honourable senators and my colleagues from the House of Commons, thank you for the invitation.

It's a great opportunity for me, Dawn Farrell and her colleagues at the Major Projects Office to talk about the work that the Government of Canada is doing, focused, obviously, in the Major Projects Office, but under legislation that our Parliament adopted in June last year.

[Translation]

In these times of global uncertainty, Canada must focus on what it can control, and we can control what happens here, on our own soil. We want to create an environment conducive to investment, job creation and, ultimately, the success of projects that hold promise for Canada's future. As I mentioned, that is exactly what the Building Canada Act—which we passed together in June—aims to do.

[English]

The Building Canada Act and the accompanying efforts the government has undertaken shift the perspective of federal reviews from whether a project should go ahead to how best to advance the project and, obviously, in consultation with indigenous peoples.

As the Prime Minister said, we used to build big things in this country, and we were confident in our ability to do so, so the government is rekindling that ambition and is giving itself the tools necessary to do so. That's why we created the Major Projects Office, a new agency tasked with advancing the major projects and transformative strategies that we, as a government, have formally referred to them, while looking at what we must do to get a two-year timeline for all project decisions in place as well.

[Translation]

The six strategies and fifteen projects currently being developed by the Major Projects Office—which include ports, mines, roads and hydroelectric power plants—will strengthen our economic resilience.

[English]

On that note, as you said, Mr. Chair, I'm very pleased to be joined today by Dawn. I think it's the first time that Dawn and I are together before a special joint committee of Parliament. She is the chief executive officer of the Major Projects Office; the Prime Minister asked her to assume this function. She will be able to speak about the work that she and her team have done, a remarkable group of women and men I've had the privilege of meeting in Ottawa and in Calgary. She can talk about the work they're doing on approvals and on the financing necessary to get investment decisions done as quickly as possible.

That being said, as we accelerate our decision-making timelines, we continue to uphold, of course, our responsibilities to environmental standards and to the constitutionally protected duty to consult indigenous peoples and indigenous rights holders.

[Translation]

I will conclude by highlighting a few of the Major Project Office's achievements.

Recently, the Prime Minister broke ground on the Contrecoeur container terminal in Montreal, which will increase the capacity of the Port of Montreal by approximately 60%. This is a project that has been under discussion for decades, having been first proposed nearly 40 years ago. Now, less than seven months after it was presented to the Major Projects Office, construction is beginning.

We could also mention the Nouveau Monde Graphite mine in Saint-Michel-des-Saints, north of Montreal. Over the past few months, the company—whose representatives I have met with on several occasions—has secured its financing and is now in an excellent position to move on to the final and crucial stage: the final investment decision.

However, despite these efforts, there is still a great deal of work ahead of us. I look forward to working with the members of your committee over the coming months to move things forward.

Now, you cannot imagine how happy I am to be able to answer your questions and receive suggestions from my colleagues in the House of Commons and the Senate.

• (1840)

[English]

Mr. Chair, you and I have been in the House of Commons together for over a decade. It's a privilege to be with you and our colleagues tonight.

Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you, Minister.

All the parties have agreed that we are going to have one round of five minutes for everybody.

We're going to start with Ms. Stubbs for five minutes.

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here, and thank you, Dawn Farrell, for your presence as well.

Minister, the Major Projects Office has staff who get top-ups from the private sectors that it must oversee, and it must protect Canada's public interest. Is this a conflict?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, through you to Ms. Stubbs, I don't believe so. It's a long-standing practice where the public service has been able to recruit people from the private sector.

Dawn can perhaps speak to the mechanics of it, but certainly, on the advice we receive, no, it's not.

Shannon Stubbs: Do you yourself know which sector the staff have been seconded from while they're receiving pay top-ups for sectors they must regulate?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: "Regulate" is a big word. They're not regulators. I don't want to be lawfully with you, Ms. Stubbs.

Shannon Stubbs: Sir, you have passed along and created an office to help proponents navigate the broken permitting system that you yourself acknowledged.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I wouldn't say "broken". I'm not trying to be....

Ms. Stubbs, I do not know which sectors and which people receive what top-ups.

Shannon Stubbs: Okay. I'll ask more questions about that later. I'm sure we can get that from the MPO for transparency and accountability.

Also, Minister, LNG Canada outsourced fabrication of 35 modules to China. The lead contractor already has proposed fabrication yards in China for LNG Canada's phase two.

I've asked the energy minister this question. He evaded. Will you confirm that projects referred to the MPO will not outsource vital Canadian steel and fabrication jobs to a regime that the Prime Minister and every expert know is Canada's biggest security threat?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That is a very good question, Ms. Stubbs, and I have been in conversations and discussions with some of my cabinet colleagues and Dawn and her colleagues from the Major Projects Office.

Our direction as the government has been clear in terms of federal procurement. I am aware of that specific circumstance and other projects, but to be honest, on the details of what these proponents agreed with the Major Projects Office to do or not in that regard, some investment decisions or procurement decisions have been advanced quite a bit in terms of being able to cancel or change, but I'm sure that Dawn could give you precision with respect to the one example you raised.

Shannon Stubbs: Thank you. We'll talk about that later.

Minister, in terms of your job and the exchanges we had when Conservatives helped fix and pass Bill C-5 because we've been urging you for 11 years to get projects built and to accelerate timelines, Bill C-5 itself said that "the Minister must undertake a national security review for all state-owned or foreign investments from hostile countries in any national interest project".

I know there's confusion over what's actually being designated and how and when that happens, but of course you know that state-owned PetroChina owns 15% of LNG Canada. Have you done that national security review? Or which minister is responsible for it to protect Canadian sovereignty? Bill C-5 says that "the Minister must undertake" the review. Which minister?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Absolutely, and I am briefed regularly by senior officials, both of the Major Projects Office and of Canada's national security agencies, with respect to all of these investments in circumstances in major projects. I'm happy to confirm to you that the work is done in a robust way. It's obviously led by experts, professionals, in security services. I'm given access to that information and I'm confident that those reviews are done.

Shannon Stubbs: You're saying, "Trust us" while the government makes clear actions to get closer to Beijing. Your answer on the security reviews where the legislation says it's the minister's job is, "trust us".

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I know you're short of time and I wouldn't want to.... Obviously I don't accept the premise of that sort of rebuttal, but I'm happy to answer another question.

Shannon Stubbs: Why can't you answer clearly whether or not you as minister—or which minister—have done a security review of the projects that have been referred that have major ownership by a hostile state?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm sorry; perhaps I wasn't clear. I am responsible for that. I am satisfied, after the briefings I received, that the review is done. Check the box. It's done.

Shannon Stubbs: I think we'll follow up a little more on that in future exchanges.

Let's go back to what you said when we worked collaboratively to help fix an impassable bill, Bill C-5, for your objectives. Of course, the entire legislation, the creation of the MPO, is an indictment of the last 11 years of the regulatory and fiscal framework in Canada because, by your own admission, the bill is called Building Canada. The law's been passed to help projects get built. We were talking about what it was that you said earlier. The bill was passed in June. In February you said that your government has "an incoherent permitting system with deadlines that constantly shift."

• (1845)

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you, Ms. Stubbs. That's all the time we have. We will have to pick that up on the next round.

Mr. Beech, I know you're going to join our committee. You haven't officially joined us yet, but we're glad to have you here.

You have five minutes.

Hon. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello to everyone.

I'll let you know, Mr. Chair, that I'm going to be splitting my time with Mr. Dhaliwal since I am a late addition, which gives me time for maybe one or two questions.

Minister, thank you for being here.

Coincidentally, the spring economic update came out today. It showed that Canada has the highest level of direct investment per capita in the G7. That's a pretty significant feat, given the economic climate. My understanding is that it's the highest it's been in just under two decades.

When I talk to proponents who are trying to get big projects through, there's a normal discussion that comes up which is, "Yes is the best answer. No is the second-best answer, but the worst answer is maybe, we'll see, things are continuing", then we see these processes that take a very long time.

If the MPO is successful in getting these projects through, what effect will that have in attracting more investment into Canada, and how will that affect jobs and economic growth?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair and Madam Chair, through you, Mr. Beech, thank you for the question.

I totally share the view in terms of what the best answer is, that the second-best answer is a no, and that the worst answer is a process that goes around and around and doesn't land at a decision within a reasonable time. I know your past work in environmental protection, fisheries and oceans and other work you've done. If you want to get to the "yes", you have to get to the "yes" in the right way with the right consultations and environmental reviews. You and I know. I know you believe that. I just wanted to reiterate that, if we're going to get to "yes", it's in the right way. I know you share that view.

You're right, Mr. Beech. We have an opportunity to attract foreign direct investment, and Ms. Farrell could again speak to the specific percentages of potential foreign direct investment. It's also true of domestic investment. It's true of institutional investors in our country. They want to know that there is a group of people accompanying them through a regulatory process that has to be rigorous and proper but can be expedited. We can do things at the same time. We don't have to wait sequentially for different approvals.

The other thing, Mr. Beech, that I think the Major Projects Office is usually helpful in is working with the Privy Council Office to get provinces to agree to one project, one review. I hope we can talk about that. For us, that's also very much part of—to pick up on Ms. Stubbs' previous question—bringing more coherence to this process, which will attract investment.

I don't want to go on, because I'm dying to hear Sukh Dhaliwal's question.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Mr. Dhaliwal, you have two minutes, sir.

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

Minister, in British Columbia, we got our fair share when it comes to major projects. Given your responsibility for “one Canadian economy”, how are you working with provinces and territories to reduce internal trade labour mobility barriers that would otherwise delay significant projects referred to the MPO?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'll say this to our friend Mr. Dhaliwal through you, Mr. Chair, but with respect to Madam Chair as well, since your colleague opened the conversation.

You're right. Your province, because of its geography, minerals, renewable energy and willingness to build big projects—the Government of British Columbia has been very active in this space for some time—will do very well as we advance a major projects agenda, particularly for some LNG projects and port infrastructures. You know the list as well as I do.

The Government of British Columbia was the first government to sign an agreement for one project, one review. It is very much focused on how we can get to a yes in the right way. The Province of British Columbia, with respect to indigenous nations, has, for some time, also been a leader in having them be full participants in many of these projects.

I'm confident that the Government of British Columbia—as well as, in particular, proponents who want to invest in your province because they see the potential of critical minerals projects and exporting energy resources to Asia—will do very well as this work continues.

• (1850)

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you very much. That's all the time we have.

We're going to move over to Mr. Bonin.

You have five minutes, sir.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

Have you determined whether, if all the major projects—currently there are 15, plus the strategies—are carried out, the country will emit more or fewer greenhouse gases?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That is an excellent question, Mr. Bonin.

I know that my colleague the Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature has had many discussions with the Major Projects Office. I participated in some of them.

I know you are an expert on this. I do not want to venture a percentage. I can assure you that Environment and Climate Change Canada will share its analyses on this matter with you. It is a frequent topic of conversation.

However, I see Senator Carignan, a lawyer himself, looking at me, and I do not want to make up an answer. I want to be very precise.

Patrick Bonin: You can submit then any assessments regarding increases or decreases to the committee—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I will make sure you get the appropriate technical answer to this very relevant question. Absolutely.

Patrick Bonin: Perfect. Thank you.

The government has decided not to define what constitutes a nation-building project. It could have done so by executive order. How does a nation-building project get designated as such and referred to the Major Projects Office?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That is a good question. I understand the transparency requirements that have been added or are part of the act. I do not disagree or have any hesitations.

For now, as you said, we have decided not to issue an order to define what constitutes a nation-building project. We are relying on section 5 of the Building Canada Act, which sets out five criteria. I can read them to you—

Patrick Bonin: No, that's fine.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: —however, I know we are going to run out of time. I know then that the Major Projects Office, following the government's decision to assign projects to it, reviews them based on these five criteria.

Patrick Bonin: If the government refers projects to the Major Projects Office, you review them based on these five factors.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Absolutely.

Patrick Bonin: For example, do you have an evaluation grid with weightings for each factor, or any other evaluation grid that you could share with us? Additionally, could you provide us with the reviews that were conducted for each of the projects you designated as nation-building projects?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Again, that is a good technical question. To answer your question, the government uses these five criteria from the act to assess a project when deciding to refer it to the Major Projects Office. Then, the office carries out that work.

I do not want to commit to providing information that would reveal trade secrets, but I am more than happy to commit the government to providing whatever it can disclose. The evaluation grids for some of these elements may be subject to litigation or reveal trade secrets. So, you will understand that I am going to—

Patrick Bonin: Yes, I understand there may be some confidentiality issues. We are used to that. However, I would like to get the evaluation grid and the assessments for each of the projects.

Furthermore, these are optional factors, but you are telling me that you assess each of these five factors—including the fight against climate change—when you refer a project to the Major Projects Office. Is that correct, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: “Assess”, “evaluation grid”—again, you are using—

Patrick Bonin: You are talking about factors, Minister. Are you assessing these five factors?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: We certainly assess projects based on those factors. Do we use a grid? Do we use a document? Is a briefing provided?

Patrick Bonin: Minister, the law states that these five factors are optional. Do you take all five factors into account?

• (1855)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: We definitely consider these five factors in every decision.

Patrick Bonin: So you assess each one.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: “Consider”, “assess”, “grid”—

Patrick Bonin: My question is simple: do you assess them?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: We take them into consideration. Absolutely.

Patrick Bonin: You do not want to say you assess them.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: We consider these five factors.

Patrick Bonin: So you do not assess them.

Do you assess them, yes or no? I am not asking you whether—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: My response is that—

Patrick Bonin: You do not want to respond.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: —every time a decision is made, these factors are considered—

Patrick Bonin: Fine. You are unable to say that you assess them. All right.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: —but you are right: the five factors must not—

Patrick Bonin: All right. I do not have much time, Minister. If you don't want to answer, I'll move on to another question.

You mentioned the “one project, one review” principle. In the case of the Alto high-speed rail project, for example, would the

Quebec Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, or BAPE, be the one to assess the project?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I hope we will reach an agreement with the Quebec government. I remain optimistic. I have been involved in these discussions—

[English]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): I'm sorry. That's all the time we have. That's the five minutes.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: [Inaudible—Editor]

[English]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you very much. We'll have to catch you next time around.

Senator Carignan, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan (Senator, Quebec (Mille Isles), C): Thank you.

Minister, I would like to follow up on the previous question: What is the current status of the discussions between Canada and Quebec regarding the potential environmental assessment of the AI-to project?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: As you know, we are working with all the provinces to ensure “one project, one review.”

The BAPE in Quebec has a great deal of expertise in this area. I have participated in meetings. We are trying to make progress with the Quebec government, but I don't want to speak on its behalf. I know we are having discussions with the Quebec government, and I am not pessimistic. I believe we can achieve this joint assessment.

However, we are prepared to assume our responsibilities regarding the federal assessment should the project reach that stage.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Thank you.

When we questioned representatives from the Canadian Impact Assessment Agency this morning at the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, they said that their agency would conduct the assessment, since it is a federal matter.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's because we haven't reached an agreement with the Quebec government yet. If we do reach an agreement, it's entirely possible that we could entrust some—or even most—of the assessments to the provincial agency. It will depend on the project details. Our goal, of course, is to avoid duplication of effort.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Perfect.

Mirabel is my region. I have a lot of concerns and a lot of questions. When people look at the organizational chart, they get a little worried, because they feel you're acting as both judge and jury. I'm looking at the organizational chart for the Major Projects Office. The management team consists of two people: you and Ms. Farrell.

I hear you speak, and I have rarely seen you so hesitant on certain issues. I have heard you speak, seen you and questioned you on several occasions.

There are two of you on the management team. This worries people in the region, who fear that the decision has already been made, regardless of any studies that might be conducted or the cost involved. What do you tell the people of Mirabel?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I understand the question. I will say it is not at all the case.

True, on the organizational chart, it may just be Ms. Farrell and me, but all federal departments are involved. There are about a hundred people working with Ms. Farrell in the Major Projects Office. So, of course, it's not just her and me, sitting on a bench at Harvey's, who are going to do these assessments.

I can assure you that we are very aware of these concerns. My colleague, the Minister of Transport, has spoken about this on several occasions. We support the project. We believe it is important for the country's economy. That said, I am confident that we will carry out the project properly.

Hon. Claude Carignan: You won't be changing your minds then.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: We won't be changing our minds about the importance of carrying out the project, but we have to do it right. We need to proceed with full awareness of all these concerns, and I'm confident we can do that as well.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Thank you.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Ms. Anstey, you have five minutes.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing this evening for this important conversation.

Resource Works, in 2025, documented massive losses in cancelled resource projects across Canada, to the tune of \$670 billion.

With that scale of missed opportunity, why is the government prioritizing a Major Projects Office approach that hasn't yet put anything on the designated list, rather than addressing the systemic regulatory delays and antidevelopment laws affecting our ability to grow our economy in a meaningful way?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, Ms. Anstey mentioned the designation under the law of a project. The good news is that we haven't yet had recourse to that legal instrument. The Major Projects Office has been able to work with proponents, provinces and territories to bring a number of projects further along at a speed we haven't seen in a long time.

I have participated in conversations with the premier of your province about a resource project that is very important to Atlantic Canada. Of course, I'm referring to Bay du Nord as another example.

• (1900)

Carol Anstey: I'm just talking about your approach. You're zeroing in on specific projects, as opposed to removing barriers for a bunch of projects. This would seem to have a more meaningful impact, especially if we're going to grow the economy at speeds not ever seen.

I'm talking about the approach and the perspective of the government.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You're right. We're starting with major projects of national interest, through legislation that Parliament adopted. This will give us the ability to expedite those projects.

At the same time, I know Ms. Farrell and my colleagues in cabinet are working on how we could look at this. The two-year timeline for designated projects should apply—it's a maximum—to all projects. It shouldn't only apply to those designated. It should apply to a small craft harbour's dredging project that takes too long to permit in my riding, as well.

Good news is on its way. We are looking at a series of regulatory and potentially legislative changes, which, I hope, will answer your very real concern.

Carol Anstey: Okay. I'm glad you mentioned Bay du Nord.

I'm curious. Under the current framework, is there anything being discussed about the government placing a project on the list even if the proponent doesn't want to be on that list?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: No.

Again—and this is hypothetical—if a proponent decides that the Major Projects Office and some of the experience they have in bringing together different financing elements.... It's possible that a project may benefit from some support from the Major Projects Office, but we wouldn't refer it or, certainly, designate it over the objections of a proponent, no.

Carol Anstey: Okay.

I'm glad you mentioned the financing component, because I know that one of the functions of the Major Projects Office is to ensure that financing moves forward.

Within that context, is the government thinking about potentially using loan guarantees or any other financing backstops in the event that these projects run into financial risk or trouble?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You started talking about Bay du Nord, and then you ended up with "these projects", so you can understand—

Carol Anstey: I'm referencing projects the government has announced, is eyeing or is interested in—any of the projects you're helping facilitate financing for.

I'm sorry. I probably should have been a bit more specific.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I want to be careful because the Major Projects Office is not a federal infrastructure program. It doesn't have grants and contributions money. It's a coordinating function. Ms. Farrell and her colleagues have a lot of experience in putting together mixes of different financial instruments that can get these projects done. That's the work they're doing very well.

Some projects, at some point.... I'm thinking of public infrastructure projects the government may own or have an equity position in. There is, theoretically, a chance of the Government of Canada being a funder for some of these projects, but the Major Projects Office...and certainly not in the Bay du Nord context, because that's where I thought we started. The Government of Canada is looking at equity positions or loan guarantees. It's not at all in those contexts.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you very much.

Mr. Blois, you have five minutes, sir.

Hon. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for your leadership and your work.

Thank you, Ms. Farrell and Ms. Baird at the MPO.

Minister, in addition to the responsibility you have in terms of work at, and oversight of, the MPO, you're also the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. One project one review was mentioned with respect to being able to work with provinces. I believe there are about seven provinces that have come on with this concept and are working through it.

I'm wondering if you could give this committee a bit of an update on how that's going and on some of the work of provinces where that work is being undertaken right now.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Through you, Mr. Chair, thanks for the question.

Louise will find the exact list of seven. I think there are seven most recently in Manitoba. Your province was an early adopter, Mr. Blois, of one project, one review.

You're right. As the intergovernmental affairs minister, I was with the Prime Minister on a number of occasions, including at the end of January with the premiers at a first ministers meeting. There is a lot of desire, including from the Province of Quebec and others, to figure out how to do this properly.

I'm confident that we're going to get more than seven. You could see the benefit in some jurisdictions where this is the case. Proposals are saying this to provincial governments and to the Government of Canada.

It has been a signature commitment of our government.

The Province of Ontario was one of the most enthusiastic participants. I had spoken to Premier Ford on a number of occasions about this. He was very effective in talking to his other first minister colleagues about the importance of getting this done.

• (1905)

Hon. Kody Blois: That's good.

We appreciate it. I think the more we can continue to support it... I know you're doing that work. You alluded to it with Ms. Anstey.

I was at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce a couple of weeks ago. Folks are very enthused about the work of Ms. Farrell, the MPO and the way the government is talking about major projects in the country.

Minister, you talked about what I would call that mid-tier regulatory reform on projects that may not actually end up being on the MPO list. There is some work that we can do, whether it is one window or otherwise. You referenced it to Ms. Anstey. Stakeholders are certainly talking in this regard. It sounds as though the government understands that this is a priority.

Is there anything else that you'd like to elaborate on that you recognize, or in the conversations you're having with stakeholders? May we see something down the road?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You're right. The Major Projects Office, with Bill C-5, has specific provisions for those major national projects.

There is a growing sense that the short but effective experience of the Major Projects Office with the one project, one review and federal-provincial dynamic gives us an opportunity.

I've had this conversation with my colleague, the Minister of Transport. Many of these projects, if you think of port projects, bridges, roads and other trade infrastructure, would benefit from an expedited regulatory process.

Again, it's not cutting corners or taking shortcuts. It's compressing the timeline so you do things not sequentially but concurrently. You find a way to ensure that the indigenous consultations are done properly, but again, begin at a stage in the process where you can have an outcome that follows our obligations.

That work is under way. In the coming weeks or months we may have something more to say about regulatory and potentially legislative changes.

Mr. Chair, I know that people are on the edge of their seats. Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Ontario have signed one project, one review agreements. A draft agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador has been posted, and we're making progress with the other jurisdictions.

I know that excites you, Mr. Blois.

Hon. Kody Blois: Very much so, Minister.

We have about 40 seconds left.

You're an Atlantic Canadian. We're both Atlantic Canadians.

You have 30 seconds. Is there anything you want to talk about, whether it is Bay du Nord, Wind West or the Sisson mine in your home province?

These are important. It's the work that you're doing with MPO to advance Atlantic Canada's energy and critical mineral future.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I hope in the remainder of the meeting Ms. Farrell and others could give you details on those specific projects, Mr. Blois.

There is always a desire to ensure that every region of the country can benefit from the work of the Major Projects Office, as we look at or receive suggestions.

Proponents come to the Major Projects Office through the government and provincial governments. There's a real effort to ensure that we have a regional balance.

There have been 275 projects submitted to the Major Projects Office. I saw the list. Some are very small and some are huge.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): That's all the time we have. Thank you.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm sure people would like for me to talk about that after, Mr. Chair.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): We'll have to pick it up at the next round. That's perfect.

Senator Hébert, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Martine Hébert (Senator, Québec (Victoria), ISG): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, first of all, I must say that we should welcome one of the measures announced in today's economic update on training for workers. We are talking about a \$6 billion investment to train 100,000 workers over five years. We can talk all we want about major projects, investments and investment funds, but at the end of the day, it takes workers to build things. I believe then that we should welcome this measure announced in today's economic update.

I would now like to discuss investments and funding for major projects.

We know we have the Canada Growth Fund, the Canada Infrastructure Bank and the upcoming Canadian Investment Summit. Today, during the economic update, we also learned of the creation of a sovereign wealth fund, the Canada Strong fund.

Earlier, you said that the Major Projects Office does not administer these funds, but rather plays a coordinating role. Could you tell me if the Canada Strong fund will also be part of the tool kit you have as a coordinating tool within the Major Projects Office?

• (1910)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Senator, thank you for your question.

At the end of your question, you repeated your earlier comments about a tool kit.

I, too, am very pleased with the economic update. I come from a small region in our country called Atlantic Canada. There is a large, highly skilled workforce in western Canada working on other major projects. I completely agree with you that, while promoting this program, we must, of course, ensure, through our provincial and territorial partners, that we have a skilled workforce. So, I fully share your initial enthusiasm.

You mentioned our efforts to attract investment. In Canada and abroad, we have concluded free trade agreements. The Prime Minister has established 20 economic and defence partnerships to try, precisely as you said, to attract investment to Canada.

As for your question about the Canada Strong fund, you will understand that we are in the very early stages. This good news was announced just yesterday. Even without the details on how the fund will ultimately be structured, I imagine it will logically be one of the tools we use. So, without having seen any cabinet documents or decisions from the Minister of Finance or the Prime Minister, I expect this to be a perfect example of another tool we can use for this important work, to ensure that Canadians can benefit from these major projects and participate in them willingly.

So, over the coming weeks and months, the structure and specific definitions of this fund will convince me that, ultimately, it will be one of our essential tools.

Hon. Martine Hébert: Thank you. That was my question.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I cede my remaining time to my colleagues.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you very much.

We're going to move to Mr. Gunn for five minutes.

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Minister, as of today, it's been one year since the last election. It's been 10 months since the passing of Bill C-5, the Building Canada Act.

How many projects to date have been designated by the Major Projects Office as being in the national interest?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I know the answer you're looking for. As of tonight, we have not designated a project under the law yet.

Aaron Gunn: Are you satisfied with that?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Yes. There has been a lot of good work done. A lot of projects have advanced. We're obviously prepared to use that authority at the appropriate time. Yes, I'm satisfied.

Aaron Gunn: My understanding is that one of the primary purposes of Bill C-5 was to get these projects designated as in the national interest, yet it's been almost a year since the passing of the law and we're sitting at zero. If you're satisfied with that, will you be satisfied, in six more months, if that number is still zero, or in six more months after that?

When are you expecting the first project to be designated by the Major Projects Office as in the national interest, if ever?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You've asked four or five loaded questions there at the end. That's fine.

If ever? I don't share your pessimism.

Not to get technical with you, but it's not the Major Projects Office that does the designation. It's the Governor in Council. It's cabinet, based on my recommendation, having received the advice from Ms. Farrell.

You also said in your question that it's one of the important instruments of Bill C-5. I would agree with that, but it's not the only one. The good news is that the other ones are working very effectively, and so will that one when the government has recourse to it as well.

• (1915)

Aaron Gunn: Okay, but you're satisfied at zero right now, so it's conceivable that in a couple of years, if the answer was still zero, you'd still be satisfied. That is not a metric by which you are gauging the success of that office.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: On the hypothetical scenario of two years, again, I'm not going to respond—

Aaron Gunn: I'm not very satisfied. Is the government—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm satisfied with the work. I'm satisfied with the 15 projects that have been referred to the Major Projects Office.

Aaron Gunn: The referrals.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm satisfied with the six transformative strategies. I'm lucky enough to participate every week in a meeting with Ms. Farrell and a couple of my cabinet colleagues and very senior officials in the Government of Canada, and we're updated on the work they're doing. I remain very satisfied.

Aaron Gunn: Do you feel that the government is currently building at speeds not seen before in Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Absolutely.

Aaron Gunn: Are John A. Macdonald and Wilfrid Laurier looking down on us saying that these guys know how to build things now, this government?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I don't purport to imagine what John A. Macdonald and Wilfrid Laurier are thinking, but—

Aaron Gunn: You said, “at speeds never seen before”. I believe those were the words of your government.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Yes, Mr. Gunn, and in my opening comments, I used the example of the Contrecoeur port in Montreal that was first contemplated and talked about publicly 40 years ago. Construction has begun this spring, in seven months from the referral to the Major Projects Office. That would be one significant example of those speeds that we haven't seen before.

Aaron Gunn: You talk a lot about the MPO supporting and encouraging projects deemed to be in the national interest, which of course begs the obvious question of what the government believes is in Canada's national interest. Do you believe expanding oil and gas production in Canada is in our national interest?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I certainly believe that getting Canadian oil and gas resources, renewable energy resources and other resources to global markets is—

Aaron Gunn: But is it expanding production?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: If we're going to increase our exports, and I'm not an engineer in this space, but if we're looking at infras-

tructure to increase oil and gas exports, I would assume that comes with an increase in production.

Aaron Gunn: Okay, so you would agree that it is in Canada's national interest to increase our oil and gas production?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: It's in Canada's national interest.

Look, I get the clip you're trying to get. I get where you're zeroing in. That's all fine. The answer you're going to get is that it's in Canada's national interest to diversify our trading relationships and to get.... The world wants a great deal of what Canada has, including those oil and gas resources, so we want to work with provinces and territories and indigenous groups to get these projects built properly.

Aaron Gunn: Do you believe it is in the national interest of Canada to make it easier for state-owned companies from other countries to invest in critical resource projects?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Canada is not looking for state-owned companies from—

Aaron Gunn: Are there state-owned companies that have a stake in projects that have been referred to the Major Projects Office?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Again, that's a very good question, a technical question.

Dawn perhaps could give an answer, Mr. Chair.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Yes. Please just a very quick response. We're at time.

Dawn Farrell (Chief Executive Officer, Major Projects Office): If you looked at LNG Canada phase two, you would see some state-owned companies there.

Aaron Gunn: Which states? Which countries?

Dawn Farrell: I'll get back to you with that.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Okay, that's all the time we have.

We're going to move to Mr. Hogan.

You have five minutes, sir.

Corey Hogan (Calgary Confederation, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and through you, welcome to all of our witnesses.

Welcome, Minister, Ms. Farrell, Ms. Baird and all who are joining us online as well.

I am always happy on any committee I'm on when Calgarians are present. I just think it enriches the entire experience, personally.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Do your colleagues on the committee share that view, with your presence here?

Corey Hogan: I heard Kody talk about Calgary earlier, so I think so. I think that's a common view.

Minister LeBlanc, you talked in your opening statement about focusing on what we can control, about what's happening on our own soil and about wanting to create an environment conducive to investment, job creation and projects that hold promise for Canada's future. I think that's fantastic—building big things and getting them done in a pragmatic way while being stewards of land, air, water and resources; and being community-minded. I think that's also very much in Alberta's DNA, in Calgary's DNA.

Many of the questions I wanted to ask about timelines I think have been addressed by others, so I want to jump into some things that I think would be helpful as we write our report to Parliament. You mentioned that there were 275 submissions, some very small and some huge. I'm wondering if you can expand on the nature of those projects, what they tell us about the opportunity that is in front of Canada and where we might be able to lean in as a country.

• (1920)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, through you, Mr. Hogan, thank you for the question.

I share your views about the entrepreneurial spirit of the people of the great city of Calgary. I've seen it myself on many occasions.

Ms. Farrell, with whom I've had the privilege of working these last number of months, is a great example of that. Thank you for saying that. I'll leave it up to colleagues on the committee to decide if you put yourselves in that bucket. I wouldn't propose to do that.

Mr. Chair, at one point I asked Dawn because I was curious and because people self-refer a project to the Major Projects Office. Some would be regional infrastructure or educational institutions and some would be major projects for provinces and big private sector proponents.

I looked at the list of 275 because I was interested in seeing Dawn and her colleagues do the triage and refer a number to the Major Projects Offices. As I say, people thought it was a federal funding agency or thought that, if they could get Dawn and her colleagues to pick up a particular project, it would somehow rise to the top of everybody's priority lists. That's not the way this particular process works.

She and her staff have referred many of these projects to other federal departments such as Infrastructure Canada and Transport Canada. They pick the federal department, in some cases, with funding opportunities or regulatory authorities. Many of them, of course, fall entirely within provincial or territorial jurisdiction, and they have been referred to those provinces.

Mr. Chair, with your indulgence, I'm happy to share with the committee, as much as we can, a list of the 275. I just don't want to commit to every single project, proponent or the amount of money, but perhaps there are categories or examples.

I'll ask Dawn to work with her colleagues to make public the enthusiasm that Canadians have for the Major Projects Office and their enthusiasm to refer things to the Major Projects Office, but I want to do it in the way that respects what might have been people's assumption when they sent Dawn a particular project.

Corey Hogan: I think that's perfect, and it also respects their privacy and considerations. Nobody wants to see their books on the front page of The Globe and Mail.

I have a couple of questions for you.

Can you confirm that, when it comes to foreign acquisition or foreign investment, Canada has a robust regulatory regime, including the Investment Canada Act, to ensure that foreign investment provides net benefits to Canadians?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, through you, Mr. Hogan, absolutely.

My colleague, the Minister of Industry, does that analysis. Obviously, there's a national security review that's done as well, and the net benefit to Canadians under the Investment Canada Act remains part of this work.

The whole principle of having this legislation and having the Major Projects Office is precisely to maximize the net benefits to Canadians. That is at the very core of everything that Dawn and her colleagues do.

Corey Hogan: Thank you.

I have one more quick question for you.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Be very quick; we only have 10 seconds.

Corey Hogan: Ms. Anstey and Mr. Gunn seem to be at cross-purposes. Ms. Anstey wanted to see no projects on the major project list and thought it would be irrelevant. Mr. Gunn wants to see more on the major project list. I think we need to reconcile this.

Would you agree that the ultimate success of the work of the MPO is because of the improvements it brings forward, that the powers of Bill C-5 become irrelevant and that Canada as a whole is building faster?

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Give a quick response, please.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I wouldn't presume, Mr. Chair, to say that legislation that this Parliament adopted at speeds that we rarely see would be irrelevant.

To the designation function and to your point, Mr. Hogan, if we, across the Government of Canada, with the help of the Major Projects Office, with examples from provinces and territories, are able to massively reduce the timelines to get the right outcomes, then perhaps—I know it will be difficult for Mr. Gunn—we won't be designating as many projects as he might have hoped.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to move over to Senator Quinn for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Thank you, Chair.

• (1925)

[Translation]

Minister, thank you for being here tonight.

My first question is a follow-up to one I asked you during question period in the Senate last February.

[English]

The question that I asked was this: How do we deal with projects that may have stranded assets if it's not a completely built-out project? What I mean by that is, if the MPO is working with government and feeding into the preparation of the OIC process, will the MPO consider stranded assets such as the Sisson mine?

If we get the stuff out of the ground, but we can't get it to market because there's no road or no rail, would the MPO make that recommendation to say that the project needs to be expanded to deal with that situation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, through you to Senator Quinn, thank you for that very good question.

You're right. I remember our exchange at the Senate question period in terms of the designation per se is for a proponent and a project, or the designation decision would be specific to that. On your very good question around stranded assets or other infrastructure, the project you referred to in our province is an important example.

Because it's a very good technical question, I might ask Ms. Farrell to answer how they, in fact.... The answer is yes, those evaluations are done, but she could explain in more detail how good that yes is, I think.

Dawn.

Dawn Farrell: I would say that many times when we're looking at a major project—it could be a mine, it could be a port, it could be a pipeline, an LNG project—a lot of the issues are on the surrounding infrastructure that is not there that needs to be there in order for that project to move along.

We package the whole thing up and we start to figure out which pieces can go into which departments and how we can bring together a holistic solution to the resource development.

If you look at the golden triangle, it has our copper and our nickel. In Labrador, we have the Labrador Trough, which is our iron ore. They need ports, roads and electricity, so we do that work as well.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Thank you for that.

My next question is really on the act itself and what I understand our role here is, and that is to evaluate the performance of the minister and cabinet with respect to the requirements of the bill itself. It's not to say yes or no to projects, but to evaluate that.

There seem to be so many steps in the project process, from the inception right through to designation in schedule 1. I'm wondering if we can have a little clarity on those steps and then I'd ask how this committee can do its work in a way that evaluates in a way that helps government achieve what it's trying to achieve.

I'd like to get a little clarity on that because there's been some suggestion that we come in at the end, and yet I know you just said you're being briefed throughout the piece to see how things are going. Is that something that we should be doing in terms of leading up to an evaluation that's going to be in our report? Basically, what are your thoughts on that?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Again it's a very good question. The committee in its own wisdom will decide how and what work it does, and we will always be happy to work with you and provide what information you need and benefit from the advice and the work you do. I think that goes without saying, but I just wanted to reiterate that.

Your point, I think, Senator Quinn, is a good one in the sense that a whole series of projects come to the Major Projects Office in different ways. In response to Mr. Hogan, we talked about potential examples of those projects. Obviously, if we have provincial partners that work with us, that work with the Government of Canada and the Major Projects Office, you can imagine the rigour that would bring to a particular proponent or the particular work that we would want to do collaboratively with them. Some proponents and the kinds of projects that they would bring forward are better equipped and at a different level of preparedness than others. That's a normal thing. The Major Projects Office has the skilled people to work with every one of those proponents to really shrink down what is remaining to get them to a final investment decision with the appropriate environmental and indigenous work done.

I think if this committee wanted to—and again, I'm not a member of this committee, and you'll decide how you want to do your work—

I was just about to make a really incisive suggestion, but I'm out of time. I'm sorry. I want to respect your time.

• (1930)

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you very much

We're going to move on to Mr. Hardy.

You have five minutes.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, Ms. Farrell, thank you for joining us.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced the new initiative: the much-discussed sovereign wealth fund. As we know, these exist in other countries: there are sovereign wealth funds in Norway, Singapore and Kuwait, but they are derived from extracted and sold resources. In fact, they consist of surpluses, and we agree that these are savings, not debt.

Here, it seems we want to use the same name, a very positive term, but ultimately, we are not using the same formula to create it.

Minister, the United Kingdom's national wealth fund was created in 2024. The structure is identical, and it is funded by debt. The British Parliament refused to call it a sovereign wealth fund. Why, here in Canada, have you decided to use a term that does not correspond to the formula being used?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You just taught me something, Mr. Hardy. I wasn't abreast of the British Parliament's decisions, so you'll understand that I'm not going to venture a comment—

Gabriel Hardy: Still, it's a good question. Why use—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: It's a very good question. We called it the Canada strong fund—

Gabriel Hardy: Are you saying that the government hasn't once called it a sovereign fund, that no one thinks it's a sovereign fund and that you haven't used that term?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I've heard the term used often, in private discussions, in public comments and on the news last night. I understand the distinction you're making. The government has made the decision, and the details will become available in the next few weeks and months, following consultations.

Nevertheless, we are seeing that individual Canadians are enthusiastic about the idea of contributing to projects in the national interest. The government decided—

Gabriel Hardy: My question isn't about that. I'm going to stop you there, because my question is really about the term being used. I understand that Canadians are wildly enthusiastic when they see how well it works in other countries that are doing it. However, that's not how it's being done here. Here, it's being funded by debt.

In 2024, Brookfield Access Management raised \$10 billion for its Brookfield Global Transition Fund II, in which the Prime Minister still has a financial interest, as you know.

The sovereign fund has a similar mandate. It targets exactly the same sectors as the Brookfield fund I just mentioned, energy, infrastructure and critical minerals.

Was the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen in effect when this new sovereign fund was created?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I don't administer the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen.

Nevertheless, I was involved in conversations during which one of the screen's administrators, the Clerk of the Privy Council, decided that, because of the screen, a different person would receive certain documents and make certain decisions.

I don't know any more than that. The truth is I wasn't involved in designing the Canada strong fund.

Gabriel Hardy: You aren't aware, then, that the fund will target investments in energy, infrastructure and critical minerals, which basically matches the Brookfield portfolio.

Very well. I'll move on to my next question.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Just a moment. You can't rebut by putting words in my mouth.

Gabriel Hardy: You just said that you weren't aware.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You asked me whether the conflict of interest screen, a technical responsibility of the Privy Council, had been triggered when the decision was made. That, I'm not aware of.

Gabriel Hardy: It should be—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You went on to say that the fund had exactly the same investment objectives as the Brookfield fund.

Gabriel Hardy: That's a fact.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's what you say. I don't know the details of what Brookfield invested in. I am, however, very proud of what was announced yesterday. I'm very eager for Parliament to be seized of the matter.

Gabriel Hardy: Thanks to you, Parliament was seized of the matter yesterday.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said this:

[*English*]

“Capital for investment...is not the issue we have”.

[*Translation*]

Here, in Canada, securing private investment is no problem, then. That's what that means.

Why, then, is the government going to borrow \$25 billion or incur \$25 billion in debt to create this fund? If securing private investment is no problem, is the fund being created because the private sector doesn't want to invest?

The Minister of Finance said in the House today that the government was removing the barriers. According to an article in the Financial Post, however, Canada's leading industry groups say that red tape is more harmful than the tariffs.

What's going on? If there isn't a problem with private investment, but it's not forthcoming, why is the government incurring debt to fund a new program?

● (1935)

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): You have 15 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: The connection may not be as direct as you claim.

The idea behind the fund that was announced yesterday is to give Canadians an opportunity to participate financially in these projects. I find it very reassuring that you think the private sector is ready to invest. I do too.

Now, though, we are giving Canadians the opportunity to contribute to the fund. That is the good news that was announced yesterday.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you very much.

We're going to move now to Mr. Louis for five minutes.

Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

I appreciate everyone being here.

Minister LeBlanc, Ms. Farrell and Ms. Baird, it's good to have you here. It's important work that we're doing here, and it's important work that you're doing at the Major Projects Office. We're examining the Major Projects Office and the Building Canada Act. It's important to understand how the government intends to balance speed, transparency, indigenous consultation and accountability at the same time.

Minister, you mentioned a number of times that there have been 15 projects referred to the Major Projects Office, and also six transformative strategies. Mostly, when people think about major projects, they are thinking about those identified proponents and the concrete projects. These are early-stage initiatives or concepts. Often, they're region-based or sector-based. I know from my travels around the country, and yours as well, that these are important precursors to some of the major projects.

I wondered if you could make those distinctions between projects and transformative strategies and expand on why those transformative strategies are equally important.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Louis, that's a very good question.

As you know, the six transformative strategies that Dawn and her colleagues at the Major Projects Office are working on are exactly as you said. The idea is they're early-stage initiatives or concepts specific to a region or a sector. They have the potential to significantly strengthen the Canadian economy but require more work before specific or discrete projects might come out of that work.

I'm sure Dawn can fill in the details, but the Major Projects Office works to develop strategies like critical mineral development and wind energy, which is very important to Mr. Blois' and my province and to Atlantic Canada. Critical infrastructure in the north is a good example, including ports and transportation infrastructure. Those are examples.

A recent example is the Major Projects Office was referred a northern strategy, which turned into some concrete projects very quickly: roads, a port expansion and hydro capacity for communities in the north. These open up commercial and investment opportunities. Some are for dual civilian and potential military use as well.

That's the idea. It gives Dawn and her colleagues a chance to work with provincial, indigenous and territorial governments to put together the component pieces.

You should ask Dawn that question when she's here after I sadly have to excuse myself. I think you will get a very compelling answer.

Tim Louis: It's compelling to me.

I've heard from stakeholders, too, that this can also help resolve policy issues ahead of other projects. It can build the infrastructure needed and also work on the regulatory bottlenecks that might exist before projects are fully proposed. Can you expand on that and explain the signal that would send as a federal commitment to investors and the provinces that projects can move forward?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, it's a very good question, but Dawn, I think, has some precisions she can bring.

Dawn Farrell: I'll give one quick example.

If you look at northwestern British Columbia, we have what's called the golden triangle, which is where our copper, gold and many critical mineral projects are. It's about \$800 billion worth of revenue to Canada to develop that resource, and we currently don't have a way to get electricity there for the miners.

We're working with BC Hydro to see how we would fund stage three of NCTL, which normally would not happen. Normally, a province is responsible for its own transmission infrastructure, but the value of moving those resources at this time in the global economy, where we see a lot of stresses in terms of getting these kinds of minerals to the market, is so high that we're working with BC Hydro to see if there's a way to finance and accelerate that transmission line so it can be built earlier.

Our office works with BC Hydro to see how to do that, and, at the same time, we work with the miners who have stakes in those areas to say, "If we get the transmission line to this stage, will you see that as the signal to start to put your development money into the golden triangle?" The clear answer from them is yes, so that's an opportunity to do infrastructure.

Now there's a lot more complicated stuff going on in that strategy. We are also working with some of the first nations there, and there are issues with roads and houses for them. There are lots of things to do, but the main game is to get that transmission line built and get those investments from the private sector into the mining.

● (1940)

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you very much.

We're going to go now to Senator White.

Welcome. The floor is yours for five minutes.

Hon. Judy A. White (Senator, Newfoundland and Labrador, PSG): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Minister. It's a pleasure to see you and hear your presentation.

I'm here representing Senator Peter Harder tonight.

Minister, given that cabinet can modify or exempt projects from certain federal laws, my concern is around section 35 rights. Will there be explicit limits preventing the use of exemption powers where indigenous rights or treaty obligations may be at risk?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Your question is a very good one.

Nothing the Major Projects Office or the government does under Bill C-5 or a designation circumstance would, of course, affect the constitutional obligations in terms of respecting section 35 treaty rights. Again, it's stating the obvious, but it's important to reassure indigenous rights holders that is the case.

I'm hoping at some point you can ask Dawn or her colleagues on the screen about that. There has been a great deal of work done in terms of the advisory group that works with the Major Projects Office, including regional consultation sessions. I sat in on one in Atlantic Canada. I think Mr. Hogan participated in one as well. I'm confident that important work is being done. We understand that if we're going to successfully get these projects built, it is because indigenous peoples and rights holders are full partners in these projects.

You know, as your colleagues have done a lot of good work on this in the Senate, about the loan guarantee program. We have made money available. In my conversations with indigenous groups, there's been a real interest.

The loan guarantee allows them to take equity positions. We've also made money available so they can participate meaningfully in these consultations. There's such an enthusiasm to do so that the government will look at ways to ensure that we continue to have those necessary resources available.

Hon. Judy A. White: Thank you for that.

I'm also wondering if there is a role for indigenous governments in determining whether a project is designated as being in the national interest.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: The law gives that authority to the Governor in Council. We would exercise that authority having fully discharged our obligations to work with indigenous rights holders and, obviously, indigenous governments as well.

You'll understand that I won't answer the hypothetical question, because I can't imagine a scenario where that would be necessary. We would work in partnership with those indigenous governments.

Dawn is right: Before any designation decision were taken, there would be a consultation. Then, of course, the consultations that would flow during the period to determine the appropriate conditions would form the approval permit.

Hon. Judy A. White: Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Ms. Stubbs, go ahead.

Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to follow up on the senator's line of questioning. I don't think your answer has given any clarity at all. In fact, it's the federal Crown's duty to consult indigenous communities.

You're using the words "in partnership with" indigenous people. Of course, private sector proponents and governments in Canada have a long history of doing that, but the primary job for indigenous consultation falls on the federal Crown. That is your duty, so I would say that you need to provide real clarity on exactly what the federal Crown itself—the decision-makers—is doing, and sooner rather than later, because this was a part of the debate.

Related to that, Minister, I'm curious about something. Has the Prime Minister ever said to you that the pipeline to the Pacific is critical for Canada's national interests, for affordability, for security, for getting beyond the U.S. as the primary market for Canada's most valuable exports and for Canadian national unity? Has the Prime Minister told you directly a pipeline to the Pacific is in Canada's national interest?

• (1945)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, the preface to Ms. Stubbs' question was so good. I want to agree with her preface to the question in terms of the Crown's obligation to consult indigenous people and reassure her—

Shannon Stubbs: I certainly tried to clarify and change that in the legislation with amendments to Bill C-5, but the Liberals defeated them.

Could you just answer the question? Has the Prime Minister told you that a pipeline to the Pacific is in Canada's national interest? Has he told you that directly?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I speak to the Prime Minister about this and a bunch of other issues all the time. I'm not going to talk about private conversations I've had with him. You can't get a yes or no from me on that.

Shannon Stubbs: That's not a private conversation since he's made the promise to all of Canada that your government is going to see—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You asked me if he'd said that to me, yes or no, and if I'd talked to him—

Shannon Stubbs: You're the minister responsible for the national interest designation, as has been established in this meeting. I asked, in an amendment, for your government to clearly define "the national interest" beyond the five principles most Canadians would agree with. Your government refused to do that. I asked again in the fall for your government to define "the national interest" clearly, so that proponents and everybody involved in this process can actually know what will make your government's cut. However, you're not providing any clarity on that.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I would have thought you would find a lot of clarity in that memorandum of understanding we signed with your province of Alberta. That would have been perhaps after your comments in the fall about further defining the national interest, but I think that showed—

Shannon Stubbs: You're not going to answer the question, so let's move on.

As we've all discussed here, in the back of Bill C-5, there are 12 laws and five regulations that you, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy have at various times said need to be fixed or repealed in order for private sector proponents to see clearly through—as you rightly characterized it—this "incoherent" system with shifting deadlines.

I would suggest to you that 275 project proponents of all different jurisdictions and sizes applying to the office for the last year actually shows the utter chaos, uncertainty and lack of clarity around what projects and proponents will actually make your cut because you haven't defined the national interest clearly.

There are three regulators. There are 71 projects in front of those three regulators right now.

Here's the deal. Of the 15 projects you've referred to the MPO, two were already being built and several already had their joint approvals. Then we have this other last batch of five projects. When exactly—because you seem unclear in this meeting—will your government fix the laws and regulations to provide regulatory clarity so that proponents can invest and actually get projects built?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, through you to Ms. Stubbs, again, I thought the premise or the preface of the question was so good. You'll allow me to comment very briefly on that. You characterize the fact that 275 proponents came forward to the Major Projects Office in a way with which I wouldn't agree. I characterize it as a great example of the enthusiasm Canadians have to build these projects.

Shannon Stubbs: I think people are very enthusiastic. What they're looking for is for your government to deliver action on your words and promises. It's a year later. There are these 15 referrals. I have them now. Two were already being built before you announced them and seven were already approved by joint regulators before you announced them. You've admitted zero designations of any projects in the national interest so far. There are 24 projects in front of the Canada Energy Regulator right now. There are 40 at the Impact Assessment Agency, including only one of your announced referrals, and seven are at the nuclear regulator.

What on earth is taking so long to actually fix the laws and regulations at the back of this bill? How can it be that a year in you can't define “the national interest”, two-year timelines aren't in the law anywhere and you're slipping and sliding on it in this meeting? Also, there is no clarity for proponents or investors about how on earth the project can actually make the cut with your government. That's why 275 projects of all scales, scopes, sizes, jurisdictions and kinds have come to the office.

You have to fix the laws and regulations, so Canada can be a place where investors can invest and know they're going to get the green light to build.

• (1950)

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): I'm sorry. We're over time here.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's terrible, because there were so many premises in that question.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Thank you, Ms. Stubbs.

We're going to move on to Ms. Bendayan for five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

I'd like to revisit the Alto project, but first and foremost, I'd like to follow up on some of the things that were said earlier.

I think it's important for everyone to keep in mind that the Governor in Council is responsible for designating projects and will take into account the advice and recommendations of the Major Projects Office. Projects will, of course, be subject to environmental assessment and consultation with indigenous communities. Minister, you don't wake up one morning and decide that a project is in the national interest. There is a process, and it's important to highlight that.

With that said, I'd like to come back to the Alto project. I do want to clearly state that, as a member for Montreal, I'm a big believer in the project. A high-speed train connecting nearly 20 million Canadians is exactly the kind of transformative project our country needs.

Even though I don't usually look at opinion polls, I've seen a few that are quite compelling. The vast majority of Canadians are in favour of the high-speed rail network, by a ratio of three or four to one.

What I'm hearing on the ground, especially in Montreal, is a simple question: Are we really going to be able to build this?

What do you have to say to Canadians wondering whether we can really see this project through?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I want to say that you're absolutely right about the two points you raised. I agree with you.

Ultimately, the decision to designate or not designate a national interest project under the Building Canada Act follows a rigorous process involving indigenous consultation and environmental assessment. You accurately described the rigour of the process.

As I said at the outset, in some cases, the good news is that Ms. Farrell and her colleagues will be able to help proponents carry out or advance their projects fairly quickly. In those cases, a decision to designate the project isn't necessary for the time being.

In your second question, you referred to a project, and I fully share your enthusiasm. New Brunswick won't be on the train's route, but the economic and environmental significance of this national project is crystal clear to me. I very much look forward to riding the train, hopefully many times. I am wholly confident that we can accomplish this project.

In the months ahead, my colleague the Minister of Transport will provide more information on how the project could move forward.

To wrap up my answer to a very good question, I would say that, like you, I am very enthusiastic and confident. I don't think we need to look 50 years into the past for examples of prime ministers who are unfortunately no longer with us, to see the relationship between a high-speed rail network connecting key centres in the country and decisions that were probably made before you were born, Ms. Bendayan.

I understand politics. I too, was an opposition member. It's not a hard job: you get people worked up, you criticize things, you oppose every bad idea, you support every good idea and you don't have to be consistent from one week to the next. I understand that reality, but I completely agree with you. The country is behind the Alto project if it's done right, and that's precisely what we're going to do.

[English]

Hon. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Minister.

I think I have time left for one more question.

It's clearly a moment when Canadians are ready to build and to build big. I know we need projects that will strengthen our economy and strengthen our country for generations to come. If I can for a moment, I would like to be the voice of many of the progressive constituents I represent who are wondering how we can ensure that the nation-building projects that we are foreseeing and that we will move forward with—and with urgency—will fully respect our environmental and climate commitments.

• (1955)

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): I'm sorry. I have to be fair to everybody. That's all the time.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That was a good question.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): It was a great question.

Thank you.

We're going to finish off with Mr. Bonin.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I thought things were going well, but I wasn't as impressed when you talked about what the opposition does and just how easy you think its job is, whereas your job is so demanding.

I'd like you to give me very short answers, because my job is demanding.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I didn't say that.

Patrick Bonin: You said you were going to provide the documents and the evaluation grid for projects. That's what you said.

You also said that the review—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Please don't put words in my mouth. That's not what I said.

Patrick Bonin: I just want to make sure that the evaluation grid for every project, the greenhouse gas emissions assessments, and the discussions between Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Major Projects Office will be submitted. That was my understanding, and that's what I'm expecting.

Earlier, Minister, my colleague referred to an article in The Globe and Mail indicating that the Major Projects Office has apparently asked private companies to top up employee salaries. The article refers to—I'll say it in English because that's a bit easier—"business leaders and bankers". Doesn't that concern you? Is that common practice?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I understood that, in the first part of your question, you said that I committed to providing evaluation grids, communications—

Patrick Bonin: That's not my question.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I realize that, but you can't say that I committed to doing something, when it's not true.

Patrick Bonin: I'll let the chair be the judge.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm perfectly happy to tell you what I committed to doing. The way you explained it is wrong.

Patrick Bonin: Very well. We'll play it back, because that's what I understood.

I'd like to get back to my question, please. I was asking about a potential conflict of interest. Can you answer my question?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You described an exchange program between people in the private sector, but you used the words "potential conflict of interest".

Patrick Bonin: Are you saying it's common practice to have a private company top up the salaries of government employees? In your eyes, it's a private sector practice, so you're not concerned. Is that right?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Ms. Farrell can answer your question.

Patrick Bonin: Is it common practice, in your view?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: It's not a new practice. I'm sure Ms. Farrell has examples she can give you.

Patrick Bonin: Where in the government does that go on?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Ms. Farrell can give you—

Patrick Bonin: My question is for you. You told me that it's common practice, so where in the government is that happening?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Ms. Farrell can answer you.

Patrick Bonin: All right. You can't answer or you don't want to answer. Which is it? We'll speak to Ms. Farrell afterwards. My question is for you. You said it's common practice. You're the one who said it's common practice.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm going to ask Ms. Farrell to answer your question, Mr. Bonin.

Patrick Bonin: You're saying that it doesn't concern you that—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Do you want an answer?

Patrick Bonin: The question is for you. I'll speak with Ms. Farrell later. Answer my question. Where in the government does this go on?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'd be happy to give you that information through Ms. Farrell.

Patrick Bonin: All right, but Ms. Farrell can answer afterwards. Answer. You are the one who's here.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I would ask you to put the question to Ms. Farrell. She can give you the details.

Patrick Bonin: Unbelievable. Can you give us a list of those people, their salaries and the people who fund them?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Again, I won't comment on their salaries. I'm not an expert on those private sector agreements.

Patrick Bonin: Are you responsible for anything, Minister?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm responsible for a lot of things.

Patrick Bonin: Are you responsible for the Major Projects Office?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Yes, of course.

Patrick Bonin: Then can you please provide the list of people at the office employed by the government but paid by banks and private companies? That is the question. I'm asking you for that list.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: If I can under the law, I will provide you with those examples.

Patrick Bonin: Wonderful.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I said "if". You asked for their salaries. Again, I don't want you to put words in my mouth. I am not committing to giving you their salaries. I am committing to sending you that important information, where possible.

Patrick Bonin: All right. Thank you, Minister.

If a province opposes a designated project and the project does not have social licence, like Marinvest Energy's liquefied natural gas project, what assurances do we have that the project will not go ahead?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's a very good question. The Prime Minister and I have repeatedly said that it's hard to picture a scenario where a major project would be imposed on a province against its will. Again, that is hypothetical. My conversations—

Patrick Bonin: You have trouble picturing it, but it's still possible. You aren't giving me any assurances that the federal government won't be able to impose a project like Marinvest Energy's liquefied natural gas project on Quebec.

• (2000)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I don't share your pessimism. I don't think it will be necessary to impose anything.

Patrick Bonin: Answer me. Imposing a project is one of your options, then.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I have every confidence in our ability to reach an agreement with the provinces.

Patrick Bonin: That means you can impose a pipeline on Quebec. Isn't that right?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: No. Again, you're making things up. That's mind-boggling.

Patrick Bonin: No, the reason is that you're not answering my question, Minister. If you can clearly tell me that you're not going to impose a pipeline on Quebec, it will be clear.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I gave you an answer you didn't like, and you put words in my mouth.

Patrick Bonin: No, I'm asking you a question and you're not answering. Will you commit to not imposing a gas pipeline on Quebec?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I commit to working with the provinces so that circumstance doesn't—

Patrick Bonin: Okay, there it is. Thank you. Sometimes not answering is the answer, Minister.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): I'm sorry. That's all the time we have.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Too bad. That is terrible.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Minister, I want to thank you for taking the time to be here.

We're going to suspend in a second.

For some who maybe don't know what's going on, we chairs both designated our times to other people, but normally the chairs would have a chance to speak. We did that this time just for the sake of harmony and trying to move this thing forward, and to have some great continuity in speaking time.

Minister, thanks once again.

We're going to suspend for five minutes, and then we'll be back.

Shannon Stubbs: Can I say on record thank you to the chairs for that?

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Sure. Why not? That's great.

We will now suspend.

• (2000)

(Pause)

• (2005)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Welcome back, everyone. I ask everyone to take their seats.

We will now proceed with questions for our witnesses from the Major Projects Office.

I have a list. From what I can see, it's exactly the same order as we had for the first panel. That means I'm going to start with Ms. Stubbs.

Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Madam Chair, so much.

Thank you, Dawn, for being here. I just wonder if the Prime Minister has given you any indication of whether the Liberals' promised pipeline to the Pacific is in the national interest.

Dawn Farrell: Again, if he had said something to me privately, I'd be like the minister; I wouldn't be telling you.

If you read the Alberta MOU, you see the intention. You see the intention of the Pathways Plus project. Pathways Plus is a strategy under the MPO. It's the combination of getting the Pathways project done—which, as you know, is the carbon capture and storage pipeline, as well as carbon capture and storage—and then also being able to get the pipeline built. It's a very positive strategy.

Shannon Stubbs: Yes. I think, though, that the question Canadians have is on the federal government's promise on the pipeline to the Pacific, which is critical to get Canada's most valuable exports beyond the U.S. markets. I think Canadians are looking to see what actions the government has actually matched with those words. It seems indecipherable so far.

As you'll know from my interventions on the legislation so far, it is absolutely the federal Crown's duty to consult with indigenous people. I was glad to see that the MPO has an indigenous advisory board, as well as a whole arm responsible for that.

I understand the parameters you've outlined. Are you able to give any sense of whether any arm of the federal government has started any kind of consultation with indigenous communities on potential routes for the pipeline to the Pacific? There have been ones proposed before. That is its job. It's not the MPO's job.

Dawn Farrell: I have Rob Van Wallegghem on the line with me. He heads up our indigenous group and is our general counsel.

Effectively, for us to take any sort of action, we need a proponent, and the proponent has to come forward. There has, so far, not been a proponent of the pipeline.

Shannon Stubbs: Yes.

Dawn Farrell: Once there is a proponent of the pipeline, and if we are asked by the Prime Minister to.... If that project is referred to us and it's asked to be considered for designation, then Rob and his group are set up to be able to start those consultations to determine, based on the five criteria, whether a pipeline is in the national interest. That becomes a very fundamental step to get to that part in the act where—if that, along with all the other work that we at the MPO will do, determines that there is a decision to be made for designation—the minister can take that forward, and a project can be designated. If it is designated, it goes in the act.

Shannon Stubbs: That's right, and it's exactly as you've outlined, which is why we Conservatives keep urging these Liberals to actually fix the laws and the regulations that all the pipeline proponents say must actually be fixed in order for them to take on the risk to try to propose a pipeline and get it built.

Could you just clarify for the committee and for Canadians how many people currently work at the Major Projects Office beyond the 100 listed on the government employee website?

Dawn Farrell: Beyond?

Shannon Stubbs: Yes.

Dawn Farrell: It's just those people working at the Major Projects Office.

Shannon Stubbs: Okay.

Could you tell us from which banks the Major Projects Office staff were seconded, if there are any?

Louise Baird (Vice President, Strategic Policy and Coordination, Major Projects Office): I can give you some information about staffing and the different types of staffing.

• (2010)

Shannon Stubbs: I just want to know which banks.

Louise Baird: I can't give that information. It's not information we're able to disclose—the specific companies people are coming from.

Shannon Stubbs: Private sector proponents may top up the salaries of staff seconded from banks. Is it in their employment agreements with the office that none of this can be made public for Canadians?

Louise Baird: That's correct. We are not able to share.

Shannon Stubbs: Which specific sectors are MPO staff seconded from?

Louise Baird: It's not just secondments. Other types of mechanisms have been used.

They're from a variety of sectors. They bring a level of expertise and experience from those different sectors.

Shannon Stubbs: If you could follow up with the list of sectors I asked for, that would be great.

Do any of them work from home?

Dawn Farrell: Can I give you an example?

Shannon Stubbs: Sure.

Also, do any of them work from home?

Dawn Farrell: We work from everywhere because we're across the country. We have offices in various cities. We work in those offices, and we are often working on the road or from airports, just like you.

Shannon Stubbs: I got it. I think the federal government will just have to answer to the federal public servants about that. Thank you for clarifying that.

Can you outline, for the committee, the safeguards that exist to prevent conflicts of interest among seconded MPO staff?

Dawn Farrell: There are many safeguards for that.

Shannon Stubbs: Thank you.

Oh, that's my time.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Yes. Thank you, Ms. Stubbs.

Next, we move to Mr. Blois for five minutes.

Hon. Kody Blois: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Farrell and team, for stepping up to serve in the public interest. You have a sterling record in the private sector. Don't let this committee deter you from your work, because I can tell you that, from conversations I've had across the country, people appreciate the work you are heading up. It is important work, and I want to say thank you on Parliament's behalf.

I'm a Nova Scotia member of Parliament. We have the transformative strategies and Wind West. Obviously, the concept has merit, but there's a lot of work that has to go on. I believe your work is now to coordinate a lot of different activities. If I look at this, you have Nova Scotia Power, parented by Emera. You have New Brunswick Power. We have to think about an offtake for an industrial proponent and a New England proponent. There's a connection to Hydro-Québec, and whether or not that deal goes through for Newfoundland with the MOU that would have a significant impact in the national interest.

Broadly, and to the extent you can share with this committee, how is that work going and how does the interface happen? I'm curious because there are lots of different proponents. It's not necessarily one private sector proponent. It's a provincial government and lots of other entities.

Also, can we be of assistance? As a Nova Scotia member of Parliament—there are 11 in the province—is there something we can do to help you in that work?

Dawn Farrell: Madam Chair, to Mr. Blois, this particular strategy is work that we do. I work together with Minister Hodgson at NRCan, who has a team of people. We have people. Then, of course, there are the provinces. There are lots of power people who work on this strategy, as you know.

The trick is to formulate enough of a strategy that a project actually falls out. This strategy, as you know, started out with the notion of offshore wind in Nova Scotia. Offshore wind in Nova Scotia is quite expensive and needs a market. It needs to go either to Quebec or to a market in the U.S. As well, there are a lot of different issues with power in the Maritimes, in terms of making sure people there have low-cost and effective power.

As we work on that strategy with all the various teams, we at the MPO provide lots of advice, because a lot of us, including me, have a lot of power sector experience. At the end of the day, what we're really waiting for is that strategy to throw out a proponent and a project. When there's a proponent out of Nova Scotia that is ready, we will take that project and assess it.

Hon. Kody Blois: Quickly, Ms. Farrell, we have a joint offshore energy board to regulate the generation that would happen off Nova Scotia. I presume they're part of that multitude of stakeholders you're dealing with.

Dawn Farrell: Yes, that's correct.

Hon. Kody Blois: Can you speak to your interaction with the government, writ large? The minister, of course, talked about the fact that he has a meeting with you quite regularly, along with senior ministers, and I know that's important. I presume part of your other work is to take some of the feedback from major proponents and engage across the government.

Are there other meetings you're having? Are you the proverbial flashlight in terms of respectfully trying to help push or move along the civil servants in a variety of different capacities?

Dawn Farrell: The reason that I got tagged “you're it” to do this project was that I got the tagged to finish Trans Mountain. I have a lot of experience in terms of what makes a project effective and how you get it to move along.

Fundamentally, in Canada, because of the nature of Canada, because of our Bill C-35 obligations, because of our relationship with indigenous peoples, because of our care for the environment and because of who we are in terms of our values to build projects well in this country and have durable permitting and durable projects that have long-term cash flow, you have to find a better way to do it.

In the Major Projects Office, we found out that everything happens sequentially. First of all, you do an impact assessment, and then you do many engagements with first nations, and you do many different permits. What we've been doing is working across the bureaucracy and running concurrently.

• (2015)

Hon. Kody Blois: I have about 35 seconds left.

You mentioned that there are 275 proponents who have written to the officer. That's what the minister testified before this group. Obviously not all of them are going to make the cut, so to speak. How would your process look to engage with stakeholders that their project may have merit but may not be brought forward to cabinet as a major national project? How is that process defined, to the extent that you could share with us, how you may have to respectfully let down some of the proponents?

Dawn Farrell: We have projects come in through our websites. We have projects come in through governments. We have projects come in with proponents directly to the office. All of that adds to 275.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): That's the time. I'm sorry, Ms. Farrell.

I'm going to move on to Mr. Bonin for five minutes.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here, Ms. Farrell.

Ms. Baird, can you provide us with a list of the 100 people, if I'm not mistaken, who work at the Major Projects Office, their titles, duties and responsibilities, and salaries, and obviously the office's overall budget, expenditures and organizational chart?

Louise Baird: Yes, we can provide almost all the information you're requesting, but I don't know whether we can address every single item on your list. We can certainly give you the list of all the employees who work at the office, though.

Patrick Bonin: I'm looking for as much transparency as possible in the list you provide, so there's a reason I'm asking for this.

Louise Baird: Yes, but information on the specific salaries of employees is personal and protected under the Privacy Act. There are, however, salary scales for people like me who worked—

Patrick Bonin: Ms. Farrell, have you finally completed your declaration of conflict of interest?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: Yes, I have.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Thank you.

Ms. Baird, earlier you mentioned private funding mechanisms to supplement the salaries of public servants. Can you provide us with a list of these various mechanisms?

Louise Baird: We've hired employees using these various mechanisms. They're already in place within the public service.

Patrick Bonin: Can you provide us with the list of various mechanisms?

Louise Baird: There's a list of figures on the different types of hiring, such as appointments. Ms. Farrell could speak to you about that.

[English]

They are common assignments, casuals and interchange. We use the interchange program.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: I'll clarify what it is I'm asking.

You said you couldn't discuss salaries, firms, which bank funds which employee, or which private company funds which employee. You also said you couldn't disclose this because, apparently, you've entered into an agreement with the employee. I'd like you to check again whether it's possible to make this information public, as I believe it to be important.

Now, I'd like to ask you the following. You said there are various mechanisms through which private companies fund government employees working at the office. I'd like to know whether you can provide us with a list of those mechanisms. It's simply a matter of letting us know if you can provide that list in writing. How does a private company fund them?

My understanding is that you can do that. Is that correct?

Louise Baird: We can, but that's protected information.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Ms. Farrell, I'd like to come back to the following. We heard the minister mention 275 projects. Of that number, do you know how many are green energy projects compared to hydrocarbon projects?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: I don't have that information at my fingertips, but we have the breakdown by province and by different kinds of projects.

• (2020)

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Among 275 patents—

[English]

Dawn Farrell: We can provide some transparency there.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Any information you can provide us about the project would be welcome. I'm referring specifically to the type of project and the province. We also want to know whether the project was proposed by a province, the federal government, a private company, or another party. There will be limitations, I get it. That said, demonstrating the greatest possible transparency would be the best way to begin for your new office.

About a year ago, the Liberals and Conservatives said they were going to rush through Bill C-5 and that they were even going to impose closure on the opposition. They said that, together, the two parties would pass Bill C-5 under closure, because it was so urgently needed. A year later, there are no projects that have been designated by the government.

Can you explain what you'd be unable to do today if Bill C-5 hadn't been passed? Why does the legislation resulting from Bill C-5 exist today? In everything you're currently doing, is there anything you wouldn't have been able to do if the government hadn't rushed Bill C-5 through?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: First of all, the thread of Bill C-5 has everybody working together in the way, I think, the bill was intended.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: My question is clear. What—

[English]

Dawn Farrell: When I look at the 15 projects we're working on today plus the projects that are coming through the pipeline that we have, I see that we have been able to use this concurrent process with these projects, which is what was intended in Bill C-5, which was a two-year program. We've been able to move projects to the two-year program.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Tell me which clause, for example—

[English]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): That's time.

I'll pass it on to Senator Carignan for five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Thank you.

Ms. Baird, I'll continue along the same lines.

I want to make sure I understand correctly. You're confirming that you've hired staff and that you have employees who come from the banking sector. For those employees, part of their salary would be paid by the private sector or directly by the banks. Is that correct?

Louise Baird: I don't have the details for each employee. As I mentioned earlier, we've used various mechanisms, such as the interchange Canada program. This mechanism already exists within the public service to hire individuals on a temporary basis in order to benefit from expertise and experience that differ from those found in the public service. Under this program, the government reimburses the salary. All criteria comply with the law and Treasury Board guidelines.

[English]

We adhere to all of those guidelines and authorities in terms of any compensation that we're providing.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: So it doesn't fully reimburse all benefits. The bank continues to pay a portion of the employee's salary and benefits.

Louise Baird: I'm not aware of this specific situation you're referring to.

Hon. Claude Carignan: There are employees on secondment from the private sector. The government, through the Major Projects Office, reimburses part of their salary and benefits, but not in full.

Louise Baird: Yes.

Hon. Claude Carignan: I don't know what you were thinking. There are huge risks of conflict of interest. Banks are involved in the office's financing project. You are required to act independently and impartially; you have a fiduciary role. You'll be making decisions that affect hundreds of billions of dollars, if we look at the big picture.

What were you thinking?

Louise Baird: I can add that all employees working at the office become public servants and must comply with all laws, the conflict of interest code and the public service's ethical standards.

• (2025)

[English]

The MPO is a special operating agency of the Privy Council Office. We have to adhere to all the legislative rules and all the guidelines that apply to any public servant, including the Conflict of Interest Act and the Values and Ethics Code. We adhere to all the Treasury Board guidelines when it comes to our staffing and our employment.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Is part of your salary paid by the private sector?

Louise Baird: I don't have that information—

Hon. Claude Carignan: You don't know if part of your salary is paid by the private sector. Is that right?

Louise Baird: I don't have information about my colleagues or individual cases.

Hon. Claude Carignan: You yourself know that you aren't paid by the private sector, don't you?

Louise Baird: Are you talking about me?

Hon. Claude Carignan: Yes.

Louise Baird: I'm a public servant. I've been working in government a long time—

Hon. Claude Carignan: Would you have agreed to the bank paying 10% of your salary?

[English]

Louise Baird: I am not familiar specifically with what you're speaking to, so I don't think I can comment on that.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: What will your connection be to the so-called fund? I don't want to call it a “sovereign wealth fund”, because it's \$25 billion in borrowed money. It's practically a misrepresentation to call it a “sovereign wealth fund”. We'll call it the \$25 billion fund.

What will your role be with respect to investments from the \$25 billion fund? When you see an interesting project that lacks funding, will you recommend that it be directed to the \$25 billion fund? How will that work?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: That fund is one day old in our world. At this point, I'm not privy to what the fund is going to be, how it's going to be set up, what it's going to be for. All of that is yet to come.

Currently, when we're looking at various funding sources for major projects, we're working with all the different funders, people who want to be involved with major projects. The overall work that we try to do is to make sure we can get as much private sector funding into the projects as possible, with as little government funding, either from CIB or—

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Thank you, Madam Farrell. The time is up.

I'm going to pass it now to Ms. Anstey for five minutes.

Carol Anstey: Thank you, and thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Farrell, in 2019 you had a fireside chat with the Public Policy Forum and you were critical about the federal government's inability to actually get projects built. You said, in effect, that they talk about it, talk about it some more, but they don't actually get things built. You talked about countries like Australia, which moves projects forward in as little as 18 months.

It's a year now into the mandate. We don't have a project on the designated list, so I'm just wondering, in terms of your work, how you reconcile those previous criticisms with where we stand right now in terms of getting projects on the designated list.

Dawn Farrell: Yes, I guess I shouldn't have said that, or I wouldn't be doing this job, but stepping up to do this job was to put my money where my mouth was. How can I contribute as a Canadian to changing that outcome?

When I look at the 15 referred projects, many of those projects, as you've talked about earlier, were at various stages of development already. There were a lot of them that had their first nations consultations already done. They had some of their permits ready to go, but they were facing.... Contrecoeur, for example, had no funding. The project was not going to happen. There was no money for it. Then my first month on the job was working with the Contrecoeur team, or the Port of Montreal team, to try to figure out how to get some financing so that they could start doing the waterworks, and then we could keep going on the project and get finished there.

Other projects were waiting for ITCs. There were different things that different projects had, so we just kept working and kept going at them. Fundamentally, you'll see that, in the fullness of time, we were able to accelerate what would have been the timelines at the time, so I'm proud of that work.

There's always more to do, and we're going to continue to work on that.

In terms of designation, I do think there will be some projects that will be designated that will benefit by the act. I think that the act is powerful for a number of reasons. I do believe that projects that are on the come are more likely to require designation than projects that are in the past.

There are a couple of projects that we're working with—that I can't, again, reveal to you as they're private proponents—where proponents have come to me and said, “Because of the act and because of your office, we want to try something, and we think we've got a project of national significance, so will you work with us to determine whether we do?” They want to know if we will work with them to build the regulatory and indigenous programs so they can actually do the project in the two years, and then get into a three-year construction cycle.

I think the act will be useful for sure, but I think it's going to apply more easily to projects that are massive, that really make a difference to our infrastructure, and that are yet to be here.

• (2030)

Carol Anstey: Just to go back to the timelines, when you were on the environment committee previously you stated that you suspected it would take about four to five months to determine whether or not something was going to be on the designated list. That was aspirational.

What are the barriers for you to be able to actually work within those time frames?

Dawn Farrell: I've come a long way since those days. It's been quite a journey.

I would say that the kind of work that you have to do in the consultation, as well as all the other work we need to do with other stakeholders in the process, whether that be departments of the federal government that are the experts on fisheries or on the environment, as well as the provinces and potentially sometimes the municipalities—

Carol Anstey: Is it a matter of too many layers?

Dawn Farrell: It's not too many layers. It is what Canada is. All these people have rights. We live in a country where people have

actual rights to various aspects of these projects. To work with them, I think we can do the first stage of the designation decision in that five to six months, but it's going to take some real care to do it.

Then for some projects—let's say, they're with a single regulator—we're setting up to see if we can then finish the rest of the project in the 18 months left, so that they can be at a construction time frame within the two years. Going back to the key message, you can't cut corners or your permits will not be durable, so you have to do it right.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Your time is up. Thank you very much.

I'm going to go to Mr. Hogan for five minutes.

Corey Hogan: Just to start, because it seems that, from Mr. Bonin's and Mr. Carignan's lines of questioning, perhaps there's some confusion about the interchange program that brings in private sector expertise. My understanding is this program has existed since the 1970s and exists so the public sector can benefit from private sector expertise, but also that public sector employees can gain expertise by working on assignments in the private sector. I also understand that the interchange program is used by many governments, including the Harper government over the years. Is that correct, Ms. Baird?

Louise Baird: Yes, that is correct. The program was first introduced in 1971. It is regularly used across government for exactly the way you described it, to bring in specific expertise.

Corey Hogan: Thank you. I appreciate that. I hope that clarifies some things for my colleagues as well.

It's been discussed a lot tonight that proponents need different things to get shovels in the ground. There's been a lot said about the MPO's role in streamlining permitting and project approvals, but getting to the FID often includes financing. We've touched on this, but I want to dig in a bit, perhaps, where you ended with the senator.

As you and the minister have said, Ms. Farrell, the MPO doesn't provide direct funding, but plays a key role in coordinating with other entities within government to finance a project. Can you expand on this function and inform this committee and our report on the different types of financing mechanisms the MPO leverages?

Dawn Farrell: When you look at the evolution of a large project from zero to operating cash flows, going from that, you have to go through FID. You have to have funds. Then you have to go to LNTP and final notice to proceed. When you're in those various stages, you need various numbers of dollars to be able to do your engineering work, your project work, all the different steps that you want to take so that you have a very durable project.

If you look at Canada in the landscape inside the government, you see that you have the CIB, the Canada Growth Fund and a number of different vehicles in different departments that have seed funding for proponents. Really, what we're trying to do is make sure that it's one-stop shopping. We're really trying to use our own investment expertise and the expertise of some of the people we've brought into the MPO to really understand where their projects are and what the necessary funding is to get them to the next stage. Our overall ambition is to ensure that, at the end of the day, the greatest amount of private sector funding can come into the projects.

Now, there's a lot of private sector funding really trying to get us to put money into these projects. You have money from sovereign wealth funds, from pension funds in Canada and in Australia, and from private investors from the United States. There are lots of people trying to get their money in, which is a good thing, because that's what you need—capital to build these projects.

Going back to the question around the fund that was announced yesterday, I'm not part of that decision-making, and I found out about that at the same time you did. As that gets set up and stood up, I think the intention is that Canadians themselves would also potentially have the opportunity to be equity investors in some of these major projects. From my perspective, if I have to explain to my family why I did this job, and then say to them that I did this job so that everybody in the world could have a piece of it except for them, it doesn't make a lot of sense to me, so I'm hoping that the outcome of this vehicle is that Canadians can also choose to invest in these projects.

• (2035)

Corey Hogan: Thank you.

There is one more question that I don't think has come up. It's the power of Bill C-5 and the MPO as a signal to capital in its own right and a signal that Canada is serious about building. Can you comment on that?

Dawn Farrell: I was pretty surprised at how just the threat of Bill C-5 signalled that something real is going on here. Somebody asked a question earlier about whether you would force somebody to bring their project to you or be designated a project. It's actually the opposite. Everybody wants to get their project referred to the MPO because it sends a signal. Even a referral without a designation sends a signal that Canada is open for business.

Corey Hogan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Thank you very much.

I will go to Senator Hébert for five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Martine Hébert: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Farrell, I'd like to return to the issue of labour. On page 67 of the economic update released today, we see several projects under the purview of the Major Projects Office. These include port projects, hydro projects, security corridors, mining projects and so on. These are very diverse projects that require a highly varied workforce and a wide range of training.

I'd like to return to the much-discussed \$6 billion figure announced today, intended to train 100,000 skilled workers specifically to contribute to major projects. When you analyze these projects, can you tell us whether your office is compiling a list of the workers and qualifications that will be needed? How do you plan to align or synchronize this with the much-discussed \$6 billion for training?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: When I first started in the leadership of this office, certainly a lot of people thought we were going to do that. I have 100 people. I don't have an army. What I've done is work with our labour department, and we have a couple of deputy ministers there. What I have them do is go work directly with the companies to assess what their labour skills are, and then they are working directly with the companies to assess what they need in their regions. Then they work with their provincial counterparts, as well, so that we can map those needs directly to the companies that are on our list. That's the first thing we had to get done because we just couldn't take that on.

Second, because I'm a big fan of that kind of training—my husband was in the Red Seal program, and this is part of our family; all of our people are tradespeople—I've been working with the deputy minister there. I just gave a presentation to all the deputies all across Canada who are in charge of these training programs. It was to give them a sense of where I think we would need the labour needs, what they look like, what kinds of trades we would need, and then how they need to be more innovative in terms of training the trades so that we can get people working and being educated at the same time. It's a bit of a passion of mine, and I was really pleased to see that entry in the address today.

• (2040)

[Translation]

Hon. Martine Hébert: There are countries, like Germany in particular, that have interesting models for training and employment, and so on, similar to what you have just described.

I'd like to return to the issue of the sovereign wealth fund. I understand that different countries take different approaches, and that some have mixed funding models. Here, we've been told that the fund will be financed through debt. I think that's one of the strategies being considered to avoid having to wait for royalty revenues to come in. Things will balance out in time. I understand that there haven't been consultations on this fund yet. The minister touched on it briefly earlier.

In an ideal world, what role would your office play with respect to this fund?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: I'm not really in that sausage-making in terms of how that fund is being set up. Any views that I give you would just be personal views, and I shouldn't do that. If I do get involved in those consultations, I have some very strong views in terms of how I think you could set up that fund to enhance what we're trying to do in the country with large projects.

[Translation]

Hon. Martine Hébert: We agree that this is important. We are at a crucial time for our economy, and if we want to diversify our exports, among other things, we need to build more ports and develop infrastructure to support that diversification. So I completely agree with you. Thank you very much for your answers.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Thank you, Senator.

I'll pass it to Mr. Gunn for five minutes.

Aaron Gunn: Ms. Baird, I want to follow up on something you said, to clarify something.

Is it possible that there are employees at the MPO who are essentially on loan from the same private sector companies that are also financing or otherwise involved with the projects that are before the MPO?

Louise Baird: No, I'm not aware of any of that.

Aaron Gunn: It would be impossible for an employee to be on loan from TD Bank when it is also financing a project.

Thank you for that clarification.

Ms. Farrell, one of the roles of the MPO is to recommend projects be designated as in the national interest. Is that correct? Does the owner or shareholder of a given project impact the probability of it being designated in the national interest?

Dawn Farrell: I'm not sure what you mean by that. What's an example?

Aaron Gunn: One of the roles of the MPO is to designate projects that are being proposed and have been referred to it as being in the national interest. Does the owner of a given project impact the chance that it will receive the designation from the office?

Dawn Farrell: Not that I know of.

Aaron Gunn: If it's Canadian-owned company or a state-owned American company, does that impact how you evaluate the project and its criteria?

Dawn Farrell: No.

Aaron Gunn: Are you open to designating a project as being in the national interest if it is within federal jurisdiction but does not have the support of the relevant provincial government?

Dawn Farrell: I'm not the one who designates.

Aaron Gunn: You recommend the designation. Is that correct?

Dawn Farrell: Yes. If I'm asked to do the evaluation for designation, there's a lot of work that has to be done to figure out if there's a recommendation that would go forward from our office and provide all the evidence that the designation should be used. I think there would be a lot of evaluation of all of those criteria that you're talking about.

Aaron Gunn: Would you be open to recommending that a project be designated in the national interest if it doesn't have the support of a provincial government where the project is to happen?

Dawn Farrell: Again, I don't get to say, "Here it is. It's designated."

I would certainly point out—

Aaron Gunn: You're just making the recommendation. I understand that.

My only question is, are you open to it?

Dawn Farrell: I'm required to consult the provinces. I'm required to evaluate why the provinces wouldn't be open to it, what they're thinking or what that looks like, but net-net—

Aaron Gunn: Again, the government makes the final decision. From your view, the province doesn't get a veto on your recommendation.

Dawn Farrell: Those decisions are above my pay grade. My work is to provide all of the evidence from all of the stakeholders of all the different elements of—

• (2045)

Aaron Gunn: Do you provide a final recommendation—like a yes or no—or are you just providing bodies of evidence?

Dawn Farrell: The final recommendation is made by the minister.

Aaron Gunn: Isn't that the decision?

Dawn Farrell: The minister decides whether or not he is going to recommend the project to the Prime Minister and cabinet.

Aaron Gunn: You're just providing evidence.

Dawn Farrell: I'm providing him with all the work.

Aaron Gunn: You're taking into consideration the view of a provincial government, but it is up to the minister to decide what is disqualifying or not.

Dawn Farrell: I would say the efficacy of my work is that I accurately provide a very clear assessment of what the issues are, how the issues are balanced, what the issues look like across all the stakeholders and what the issues look like across the various factors under the bill. Then I take that to the minister.

Aaron Gunn: When it comes to Canada's constitutional obligations under section 35, are you undertaking those or are you evaluating what it would take to get a project through better?

Dawn Farrell: I'll ask Rob to answer that question really clearly.

Rob Van Walleghem (General Counsel and Vice President, Indigenous Affairs, Major Projects Office): We undertake consultations under the act, with respect to potential designation. If and when a project is considered for designation, we'll run that consultation process. It's required by the act for us to do that. Actually, there are three times when we would run the consultation. One would be on a designation question. The second would be on conditions that would be developed pursuant to that designation. The third would be if any of those things ever changed over time.

It's our job, as the MPO, to run those consultations.

Aaron Gunn: Okay.

For my last question, Ms. Farrell, you were the CEO of Trans Mountain. Is there anything that you learned from that experience that can be applied to the MPO today?

Dawn Farrell: Yes, there's a lot. I was also the CEO of TransAlta. I built power plants in Canada, Australia, the United States and Mexico. I have 40 years of experience doing this.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Thank you, Ms. Farrell.

The time is up.

Mr. Louis, you have five minutes.

Tim Louis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for sticking around. This is very helpful. We're getting a better picture of what you do and the important work that it is.

What we're hearing is a focus and a coordination among the Major Projects Office, the federal government, its ministries and departments, regulators, other levels of government, stakeholders, indigenous partners and project proponents—that's quite a long list—to work together so that permitting and approval processes can happen more efficiently and with less duplication. With such a long list, can you speak about coordination with that many stakeholders, both the challenges—that may seem more obvious—and the opportunities that also exist?

Dawn Farrell: I thought there would be more challenges in doing this, but to go back to the enthusiasm of Canadians, proponents, civil servants, governments and provinces, everybody is enthusiastic and everybody wants to do their part. I think there's an imperative that Canadians feel today, in the world that we're living in, when we look out into the world and we see what's going on, whether it's in the Middle East, the U.S. or wherever it is. I have not experienced a single moment of resignation, saying that it can't be done, or lack of determination that we can do it. That's been something I didn't expect.

I expected to be pushing a rope uphill, which has been most of my career. Instead, I'm more in a tsunami of projects that people want to get done. Our biggest issue is to pick the projects up where they're at and then help the proponents. Sometimes the proponents aren't ready for us because they are actually in another system, and they're like, "Oh, don't we go in sequence?" I'm like, "Nope, we're doing it all at the same time." Getting proponents ready for that has been a bit of a challenge, but at the same time....

Again, I've had a lot of experience in building projects. I spent five years of my career in British Columbia. I was the generation vice-president, and we were building at that time as well. I worked a lot with first nations then. Today I find that our indigenous communities are like, "Tell me what to do. What do I need to do? I'm ready to go." Therefore, how do we get ready? How do we get positioned?

I'm just finding that it's just a different time. We're just trying to ride the wave of bringing people together, simplifying, staying focused and sticking to a deadline. It's hard work, but it's pretty inspiring work when you see what Canadians are up for.

• (2050)

Tim Louis: It's appreciated.

I think you answered what I was going to ask, which was about this paradigm shift of working concurrently instead of sequentially. It seems to be one of the things that has the biggest impact. Is that the case?

Dawn Farrell: Yes, and it's because the indigenous communities themselves were being consulted by seven or eight different silos in government about the same project. It was draining their resources. To do one consultation, with an impact assessment and the permitting, all together at the same time, one set of information.... It's exhausting for the proponents to recut information 15 different ways for 15 different purposes. To cut at once, all of that, is just bringing some refreshing simplicity to what we have to do.

What I know about Canadians—and I knew this from Trans Mountain—is that nobody wants to kill a bunch of fish or birds, or any of that. They want to do it right, but they do want to be able to do it in a timely way, and they want to do it efficiently and effectively, and they don't want their papers sitting on a desk. It's all of the stuff that we've all dealt with in our lives.

It's pretty exciting. Of course, if we get some of the projects done that we're trying to get done, and we can really get into a world where we can use digitization and automation for some of the information, we'll have a real opportunity here. I think we have an opportunity to catapult ahead of the rest of the world. We are not changing our values; we're just learning how to exercise them by using technology. We're learning how to innovate the way that we do policy. It's interesting.

Tim Louis: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

That's my time.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): It's over to you, Senator Quinn.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Thanks, Chair.

Thank you again for being here this evening.

I want to go back a little bit to the question I had for Minister LeBlanc with respect to the various key steps in the process. I think Minister LeBlanc referred to a couple of other things there that are steps in the process.

Do you have a chart that shows the major points of entry of projects proposed? Can we get a copy of that?

Dawn Farrell: Yes.

Hon. Jim Quinn: That would be great, thank you.

Dawn Farrell: We just didn't have time. It's a good chart for you all and for your committee. We can take some time to walk you through what those steps look like.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Maybe we can have a separate session on the chart.

That leads into my second question that I also alluded to with Minister LeBlanc. Our role is to evaluate the performance of the minister in cabinet with respect to Bill C-5. Where should we play? When we see that chart, should we wait until designation, or should we be learning about the processes that you're involved in so we can have confidence in preparing a report that shows the work that's been done leading to the designation?

Dawn Farrell: When I was presented with this job, I wasn't presented with, "Your job is to come and execute Bill C-5, designate three projects, build a team and follow the designation through." I was presented with, "We are going to build a major projects group in Canada. It's what we're going to do to really start to accelerate our ability to bring together Canadian values with best project management operations, with proponents, with what we need to do in our various levels of government. You have the tool of Bill C-5, if you need to use that, to get into the two-year window. Your job is to figure out how to get everybody into a two-year window or less on the regulatory side and then get people with shovels in the ground. As part of that, we also want you to coordinate the financing so that we use the least amount of government funding and the greatest amount of private sector funding so that we can accelerate".

That's to give you a context of how I was presented with the job that I'm doing. If you want to evaluate me, am I doing that job?

Hon. Jim Quinn: I'm sorry to interrupt. It's not necessarily evaluating you as a person or anything like that. It's us evaluating the performance against the act itself so that we can do a report every 180 days to say that these things are on track, etc.

Again, maybe later we can talk about where we play, because I'm not sure exactly where we play, but I know we have to evaluate.

I want to jump ahead because of lack of time. There was something said about Contrecoeur in the past. I've been around ports for a long time. This has been talked about for decades, as has been stated earlier. The private sector never really wanted to play. They didn't want to invest.

Does your office look at the business case that's presented? Do you bring in experts to look at, for example, in Contrecoeur, what the predicted loads are? I've read the port stuff, and they say that last year they went up 3.4%. They don't talk too much about the previous years.

What exactly is the capacity question that's being addressed with Contrecoeur? Where does Transport play? Where does Infrastructure play? Do the Treasury Board and the Department of Finance also get involved in this process, or is it the MPO that says it's a go, the minister makes the decision, then the money flows? Does it have to go back through central agencies and departments?

• (2055)

Dawn Farrell: How much time do I have?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): You have one minute.

Dawn Farrell: Let me try to boil it down. The Montreal Port Authority has to make those decisions. When that project was referred to us, we had to evaluate whether their business case was proper and if there was a way to finance against their business case.

At the end of the day, it was CIB that financed that business case. It was CIB's due diligence and CIB's decision to put the money in for the water side part of it. Within that, there's another set of financing that comes when DP World comes and evaluates how they're going to finance the land side. Effectively, we facilitated getting CIB in, helped see the business case and helped to get the financing so that they could start their work. That's how that project worked.

Hon. Jim Quinn: My time is up.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Hardy, go ahead for five minutes.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: Thank you.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here.

Ms. Baird, first of all, I'd like to know how much the Major Projects Office costs taxpayers—Canadian citizens. How much is this entire Liberal administration costing?

[English]

Louise Baird: The MPO was provided, in the last budget, a total of \$213.8 million over five years. Our budget for the current fiscal year is \$42 million.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: Forty-two million dollars, okay. How many projects designated as being of national interest have been completed in eight months? How many projects have been completed in a year for \$42 million?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: There are none, so far.

Gabriel Hardy: None.... Okay.

[Translation]

Great.

[English]

Dawn Farrell: There are none designated.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: According to the Financial Times, a group of private industrialists said that the Liberal bureaucracy was more burdensome than U.S. tariffs. Do you think bureaucracy is a barrier to the completion of major projects?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: In terms of the tools we have at the MPO, as we work with the provinces and the federal government, there is still a lot of learning to do in order to get to the level of acceleration that I think we can achieve in this country, and the level of simplicity, for sure.

I would say that, from a year ago, we have definitely gained some speed here.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: So, essentially, what you're telling us is that, as of today—in 2026—we should already have much more efficient processes in place to be able to deliver major projects. The Liberals have been in power for 11 years. It was only a year ago that we realized things need to accelerate.

Projects should be delivered more efficiently, perhaps with a less cumbersome bureaucracy. Ultimately, that would allow us to be more effective in delivering major projects and enriching our society. That's my understanding.

[English]

Dawn Farrell: I started my job on September 1. My job is to pick up from September 1.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: That's fine.

[English]

Dawn Farrell: That's all I'm going to talk about.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: Thank you. I have a question about foreign interference or, perhaps, foreign influences. Among the projects being considered by the office, are there any in which foreign states hold an ownership stake?

I'll give you an example, because I did some research. There's the well-known road to the Izok Lake mine as part of the Grays Bay road and port project, the implementation of which is being accelerated. The mine is owned by MMG's China Minmetals Corporation. This is therefore a road that will be funded 75% by taxpayers, at a cost of \$1.2 billion, but that will ultimately be used to service mines owned by China.

Is this part of your analysis when public funds are being spent? Do considerations like this raise red flags for you?

● (2100)

Louise Baird: I can say that we work closely with our colleagues in other departments, such as public safety. We have an established process with our colleagues. As a result, for every project entrusted to the Major Projects Office, that process involves our colleagues in other departments.

[English]

People who have a responsibility for national security do a national security assessment for us in collaboration with the rest of the security community in the federal government. They're able to provide that to us. We work with them on a regular basis because

there are sometimes changes in projects, with different proponents or people involved.

Those are things that we look out for, and we share that information with our Public Safety colleagues.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: Thank you for your answer.

You're talking about security. You gave an answer earlier that I would like to come back to. In fact, I would like to understand what the procedure is for handling conflicts of interest involving employees who come from large banks, who are partially paid by those banks, and who are ultimately involved in the selection process.

You've said that you can't disclose where they came from or who they worked for. However, if they have an impact on the decision-making process, and it turns out that their bank may have an interest in the project on which they are having an impact, what is the process for ensuring that the situation is clarified, so that Canadians and Quebecers can be reassured that there is no conflict of interest? What is your process?

Louise Baird: All employees have to fill out the conflict of interest forms.

[English]

They must adhere to the conflict of interest rules like any other public servant. There are processes in place to make sure there are no—

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: Isn't there a corresponding process under which you ensure that there is no interaction?

[English]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): I'm sorry; the time is up, Mr. Hardy.

I'm going to move on to Ms. Bendayan for five minutes.

Hon. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

I'd like to thank you in particular, Ms. Farrell, for making the trip in person from Calgary to be with us today. I think it's very important that we have this conversation.

I did hear your response earlier to my Conservative colleague's question when he asked how many projects were designated with the funding that was provided to you. You answered none, but those are just designated projects. You have been working on many projects over the last couple months, reminding Canadians that you've only been at your post for a short time.

I'm a Montreal MP, and you can imagine that the port of Montreal is near and dear to my heart. You have worked to facilitate shovels in the ground at Contrecoeur, if I understand your previous testimony. Perhaps you would like to elaborate on that.

I would like to hear you particularly on the work that you're doing to accelerate timelines for other projects. You mentioned that there are many private proponents working with your office. I'm not asking for their names. I understand that it's important to keep that kind of confidentiality.

Can you give a sense to this committee of how many projects you're working on actively with those private proponents? These are your words. Feel free to correct me if I get them wrong. You mentioned that several private proponents are coming to you because of the act, because of Bill C-5 and because of the existence of your office. They see hope for new projects. You also mentioned earlier that designation would only be for the projects that are on a massive scale. There are many other projects that are coming to you that you're assisting, if I understand you correctly. Perhaps you'd like to comment on that.

Dawn Farrell: Thank you.

You're 100% correct. We are not sitting in our office with our feet up waiting for some project to come by to get designated. Designation is a tool, and it becomes something we think about when we're working with proponents.

Of the 15 projects we're working on right now, some are more active than others, because some are behind us. For example, we worked with Darlington to get the financing for the first Darlington unit. Now they're going to have to finance the next three units, so we'll be working with them on that.

In the north, the Mackenzie Valley Highway was profiled in February as one of the projects of national significance. We have a team today up in the Northwest Territories working with the Northwest Territories government to figure out how to set up a construction organization so we can be ready to build the Mackenzie Valley Highway next spring, which will require all sorts of work to be done right now and will require financing for next spring.

If you look at the project that people said was already under construction, which is the project in Saskatchewan, the McIlvenna Bay Foran copper mine, that project could potentially go to another phase, so we're working with them.

If you look at the north coast transmission line, there are three phases to that project. We helped with the finalizing of the financing for phases one and two, and we're currently working with a proponent for phase three. There are a number of different options there. There are a number of different issues that also have to be sorted out on the indigenous front with that project.

We helped Nouveau Monde finalize the sale of their graphite through the Canadian government, and then we helped them be ready so they could close and go to final financing. I think that was at the end of April. They're getting ready to be shovel-ready at the beginning of May. We're going into phase two to help them get organized for their refinery that will be at Bécancour. In that particular case, it's also making sure they have access to all the different departments and governments in Europe so that we can onsell that graphite to partners in the European Union.

Every single project is different, and every single project has elements of finishing regulatory, doing some financing and making

sure that they have access to everything we can find for them so that they become successful projects with cash flows.

• (2105)

Hon. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

If you have any other examples you would like the committee to be aware of, please feel free to send those in. Thank you for those excellent examples of the work you are doing.

Even referral without a designation sends a signal. I heard you say that earlier in your testimony. Can you tell us what signal it is sending?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): You have 10 seconds.

Dawn Farrell: It's sending the signal that Canada is open for business and we should be bringing our money here to invest, for sure.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Thank you very much.

We go to Senator White for five minutes.

Hon. Judy A. White: Thank you both for your presentation here tonight. To your colleagues online, we really do appreciate your time. It's a long day.

My questions will be from an indigenous perspective. The first one I'm curious about is operationalizing FPIC. More importantly, what specific procedures will departments use to assess free, prior and informed consent? Is there a matrix, a checklist or any documentation threshold?

Dawn Farrell: Rob, I'm going to turn that over to you.

Rob Van Walleggem: Thank you.

Over the summer, we engaged in nine separate regional engagement sessions, and these kinds of questions came up a lot. This conversation is well-travelled. I appreciate the question.

When we look at FPIC, everyone wants to immediately jump to consent. I say, let's start at the beginning, shall we?

What does free mean? That means the community has the capacity to come to a decision, an understanding, and they can't do that if they don't have proper capacity. It has to be prior. It has to be early. There's no such thing as engaging too early. In fact, for too long, communities have not been engaged early enough. That's how you end up with delay and increased costs later when you encounter issues that you could have dealt with early if you'd engaged early. That's the free and the prior part. On informed, you have to give them good information. If a proponent has information, they need to share it. Indigenous groups are entitled to have answers to questions like how can we be sure that we'll take care of the land. They're entitled to ask those questions and they should be getting answers.

When you take seriously the free, prior and informed part, then what you're really doing is moving into real-time, shared decision-making. They're in the discussion. They're in the conversation. Then all of a sudden, consent becomes an easier topic to talk about because you've already demonstrated it. That's how you garner support from communities.

Also, indigenous leaders have their own constituencies they have to report back to, and we need to respect that. As we saw in the regional engagement sessions, the amount of good faith and overwhelming desire to get going is phenomenal.

• (2110)

Hon. Judy A. White: Thank you very much for that excellent answer.

My next question involves dispute resolution mechanisms. We don't want litigation. What non-litigation mechanisms exist if indigenous nations dispute the adequacy of the consultation or their process in it? At what stage can they say they need a process where they can address their concerns and what mechanisms do you actually have for them to address their concerns?

Rob Van Walleghem: Before projects get to us, we would expect that they have a pretty comprehensive engagement record. When you say non-legal recourse, we won't then spend any time on what the legal recourse would be. We all know what those are. Any good litigator knows the best way is to prevent the litigation.

When you ask me what's available, it is early, often and comprehensive engagement and subsequent consultation and realistic accommodation when necessary.

I believe if we do that in a genuine way and have that meaningful two-way dialogue that is required, I think we're going to alleviate those pressures.

Hon. Judy A. White: Excellent. I have one more question.

Public trust depends on transparency, and this is one of the earth-shattering moments where indigenous people are all in. They're saying, we need to be here. We need to be heard.

Will we use a metric or is there a way to develop a metric to measure and show that this act is either strengthening or not—hopefully strengthening—relationships with indigenous people and actually moving the reconciliation dial?

Rob Van Walleghem: You used the word “trust”, which is an extremely powerful and dangerous word to use if people don't understand what that means. I'm not suggesting you don't—you obviously do. That's why you've raised it.

Part of the work we do with proponents is making sure they understand these things, making sure that if you're going to go in and make promises and explain your project, you have to walk the talk. You cannot go in and make promises and not fulfill those promises, because trust is very fragile.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): I'm sorry. The time is up. Thank you for that.

Mr. Bonin, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Farrell, at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, you said that the Trans Mountain oil sands expansion project, which cost \$34 billion, helped fight climate change. I know that you were the CEO of Trans Mountain, but you no longer are.

Do you still believe that pipelines are good for the fight against climate change?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: What I was referring to in that testimony was that a lot of the Canadian heavy oil that is exported to eastern markets is used to make plastic.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Could you answer yes or no? I don't have a lot of time.

[English]

Dawn Farrell: It is used to make plastic for electric cars because they don't have natural gas there to make naphtha.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: I'll repeat my question: Today, as the head of the Major Projects Office, do you still maintain that a pipeline contributes to the fight against climate change, yes or no?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: In the situation with the Canadian oil that goes west, I think it does.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Could you answer yes or no?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: I think I've answered you.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Maybe it's the interpretation, but my question—

Hon. Rachel Bendayan: According to the Standing Orders, the witness is not required to answer your question with a yes or no, Mr. Bonin.

Patrick Bonin: Okay, but I didn't get an answer.

Gabriel Hardy: I have a point of order.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Go ahead on a point of order.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy: I just want to remind my colleagues that we shouldn't address a member directly to tell them they should or shouldn't do, when we all have equal speaking time around this table.

Hon. Rachel Bendayan: I'm sorry. I will be pleased to address the chair.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): It's noted. Please go ahead.

Dawn Farrell: Yes, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: I understand that you still think that—

• (2115)

[English]

Dawn Farrell: Madam Chair, my answer is, in the case of Canadian heavy oil, which is exported into the eastern refineries, much of it is cracked and made into naphtha, which turns into plastic, which becomes part of the supply chain for electric cars.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay. Ms. Farrell, if you can't answer me—

[English]

Dawn Farrell: I think that does help with climate change.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: The minister said that increasing oil and gas exports is in Canada's national interest. Would you agree with that?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: Yes, I do agree.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: He's not an expert, but I imagine you are. Obviously, an increase in exports means an increase in oil and gas production. Do you believe that increasing oil and gas production is in Canada's national interest?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: I think that if projects being built in Canada advance all the factors under the Building Canada Act, they are in the national interest.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay. That's a yes. Thank you.

Do you think that increasing oil and gas production and building new pipelines are compatible with Canada's objectives in the fight against climate change, which is one of the factors in assessing projects?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: When we're looking at all of the projects that will export out of Canada, and if we were looking at a new oil pipeline in particular, we're looking at the projects that go along with that, including Pathways. Pathways would be a project that would reduce greenhouse gases through carbon capture and storage to offset some of the emissions that would go along with producing that oil. I think that package is to our benefit.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Do you have a set of weighted criteria, in other words, an analysis grid, for the more in-depth evaluations you conduct of projects? If so, can you provide us with that grid, as well as the evaluations for the 15 projects under this strategy?

[English]

Dawn Farrell: Rob, I'll give you that question.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): There are four seconds left, so maybe we'll let that one go.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: I'm just asking that you submit that list to us.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Mr. Dhaliwal, it is your turn.

Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be splitting my time with Terry.

Thank you, Madam Farrell, and your team for your leadership.

A core objective is to create a more predictable investment environment. What tools are you using to give proponents and investors confidence from development through to operation?

Dawn Farrell: As I said, you have to employ a number of tools in order to build confidence, especially in major projects. They are often megaprojects that require significant dollars to build and that have to be built over a long period of time. Proponents need to know that if they take on the development expenditures for these projects.... They have to know that they will find out early on if there are any regulatory pitfalls or challenges that would mean they couldn't make the investment, in which case they'd lose a lot of money. Then, once they have regulatory approval, they have to know that they can build and finish a project on time and on budget.

The tools are often, first and foremost, the regulatory tools that give them the certainty of the permitting—the certainty that the impact assessment and the permitting will come together, that those will be durable permits, that they will survive through all the levels of government and that those are bankable. The bankability of those permits allows them to raise the funding. As they're constructing, they have to know that when they're in the field and working on the projects, they won't face unnecessary or long delays because standards may change or people may change their mind about what they want.

All the tools we work with are a combination of policy and regulatory tools to see that we can get the right policy framework, we have the right regulatory framework and we have people working together in parallel as opposed to working in silos. Then we work with investors to really understand from investors what standards they would need to see from the country in order to say, okay, we will finance these projects.

• (2120)

Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Beech.

Hon. Terry Beech: Thank you.

I want to continue with the line of questioning from Senator Quinn, which I found interesting.

The mandate of this committee is to oversee and study the exercise of powers granted to the government under the Building Canada Act. This question is probably unfair for you to answer in the short period of time I have, so I would invite you to provide any comments you like, but also to work in the future, with the 100 other individuals you're currently working with at the MPO, to help us frame how we're actually going to work on our report. We have to put out a report in 180 days, and 180 days after that, and another 180 days after that. You're working on the ground on this every single day. You talked about speed, and about how we could potentially catapult ahead of other countries. But that's not the only metric we should be tracking.

I would really like you to seriously take away what metrics you think this committee could be tracking that would be valuable to ensure your success. If you have any comments in the time that we have, I'd love to hear them.

Dawn Farrell: No. I will take that away. Thank you.

Sukh Dhaliwal: Perhaps I can take the rest of the time.

Ms. Farrell, projects like the north coast transmission line and the Arctic economic and security corridor span multiple jurisdictions and priorities. How does the MPO ensure alignment across federal, provincial, territorial and indigenous governments?

Dawn Farrell: It's just by working with them. I mean, all the projects that are in Canada are in a territory. They're all often in an indigenous community. Some can be in municipalities. Many of them have federal requirements. Part of the work we do is to make sure that everybody knows what each jurisdiction has and that there's kind of one place for one concern. You're not constantly shifting the bar, first of all, and rephrasing the concern, secondly, 10 different ways when there's just one thing you're trying to do.

I think bringing together the impact assessment with the permitting; with what the proponent needs to be able to bring together in terms of a package of information; with what rights holders need, which can be different, because often some of the traditional knowledge that rights holders have and some of the traditional needs can be different from what you might see out of the departments; and putting it all together—one package, one time—that's how you can deliver a project well.

Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Now, at the very end, I have a question. I'll ask my co-chair to make sure I don't go over time.

I was really grateful for the question Senator White asked. She got to the heart of a few things that I would want to know about. For me, it's about first nations often wanting to create new revenue streams so they can build the infrastructure they need and there are meaningful jobs for their community. Families want to buy hockey

equipment, they want to do what every other Canadian family wants to do.

What are the tools that the MPO has to help first nations enter into these projects in meaningful ways, and create these revenue streams that so many first nations leaders would like?

Dawn Farrell: Rob, you go ahead and start, and I can add.

Rob Van Walleghem: I'll just lead with this: There are many ways to address this with indigenous communities. Some are very interested in equity; some are not. Some are interested in revenue sharing; some are not. Some are interested in jobs; some are interested in procurement opportunities. There are a myriad of things.

When we look at each project, and we work with each proponent and with their engagement record, we find out from that community what it is they're looking for. What is it that the proponent can do to address the issues and concerns, the ambitions, the aspirations of the community? Then we go from there. However, there are many, and we would be looking at any or all of them—whatever fits the community.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson): Thanks very much. I'm actually going to finish there.

We thank the witnesses very much for being here today. I think I can speak for all of us: It was really enlightening, and we appreciated your answers.

Also, MP Allison wants to ask a question of the committee, so maybe we'll say farewell to our witnesses and then we can just do that question before we adjourn.

• (2125)

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): Just very quickly, in the routine motions it said that we gave the clerks the ability to order snacks only, but I realize that most of you will be working during your dinner hours. I would just like to have the approval of the committee that we could direct the staff to order meals for us as we're working through dinner.

Give us a motion please, Sukh.

Sukh Dhaliwal: I bring a motion forward to have meals.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Chair (Dean Allison): When it comes our next meeting, we're hoping that we're going to have some additional witnesses. As of today, we don't have them, but they're still working on them. If that does not happen, we will start to work on the report or give directions for the report.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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