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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I call to order the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the Canadian transportation and logistics strategy.

On our panel today, we have Danny Dumaresque. From the Great Northern Port, we have Daniel Villeneuve, President and Chief Executive Officer. From the New Brunswick Business Council, by video conference, we have Adrienne O'Pray, President and Chief Executive Officer. From Maersk Supply Service Canada Ltd., we have Francois-Xavier Morency, Managing Director.

Welcome to all of you.

Mr. Dumaresque, I understand that you have to catch a flight, so we're going to turn the floor over to you, for five minutes.

Mr. Danny Dumaresque (As an Individual): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the members of the committee for the invitation.

My project, that I have been following now for nearly 30 years, is the final spike to link Canada from sea to sea. It would have a subsea road tunnel under the Strait of Belle Isle. For those who have not been to this wonderful part of the world, we have the big land, Labrador, that is nine miles at its shortest point from the northern peninsula. The two points that would be connected are a little place called Yankee Point on the northern peninsula, and Point Amour, which you can see is the place of the second-highest lighthouse in eastern Canada.

My involvement in this project goes back many years. As a matter of fact, I didn't hear it, and neither did you, but in the fall of 1975 there was a big bang. There was a big explosion on the Labrador side near Point Amour when the government of the day made the first blast to start the tunnel and the process of building a subsea link to the island.

At that time it was premeditated by the urge to get power from Churchill Falls and bring it to the island of Newfoundland. As you know, we haven't been so successful at getting that power to Newfoundland, but certainly, that was what premeditated that move at the time. Shortly after a court decision, that project was abandoned.

I started this as a result of being a member of the legislature from that district, and of course, growing up only 10 miles from where the

tunnel would actually join the mainland of Canada. My father actually got nine days of work on that project and told me all about his experiences. Over the last number of years, I have expended a lot of time studying this project. In the first terms that I was in the government, I was preoccupied with getting a link to Canada by road from the Strait of Belle Isle.

Our focus was on the Trans-Labrador Highway, and slowly but surely that took place. As of next year, we will have a fully paved highway from the Quebec border to the Labrador Straits and that part of the equation is done. There was never any need to build a link if you were going nowhere, so for the link to be built, it would have to cross the Strait of Belle Isle and link up to the rest of Canada.

I have spent a lot of time in Norway. There are experts there doing these tunnels. They've done 32, and number 33 is ready to open this fall. It's a tunnel that has quite similar numbers to what we are looking at. It is 14.3 kilometres in length under the sea, from Solbakk to Tau, in Norway. It's 1,000 feet below sea level. We have been there to meet the top people who are supervising this project. It started in 2013 and will be finished this fall.

I went there with two things in mind: to look at the cost and the question of geology, whether that was a prohibiting factor. I'm pleased to tell you the cost is something that I believe will be surprising, but quite realistic. The people of Labrador certainly know the benefits of doing this.

I won't take up any more of the time on the introduction, but I would certainly be happy to answer any questions on what this project may cost, how it might be financed, how it can be constructed and operated, and what benefits it would bring to the economic diversification of our province, but also to build our nation, Canada.

• (1105)

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

Now we'll go on to Mr. Villeneuve.

Mr. Daniel Villeneuve (President and Chief Executive Officer, Great Northern Port Inc.): Change can often be scary. Whether it's considering a new job, a new town, a new relationship or a new adventure, humans are warriors, and we are wanderers. Our children begin exploring their world without fear. As young adults, we leave our homes to pursue our own dreams. As adults, we start our families and discover new challenges. Skilled people leave home, and sometimes they will return. But for those in Newfoundland and Labrador, my home, we bring the challenges to them. We can inspire and reconnect them to their homes in new and powerful ways.

We all long for connection. We connect with our families. We connect with our friends. We also connect with our neighbours. John Donne famously said, "No man is an island". With the strength and courage of the people in this room and amongst many others, we can span the gulf between two provinces with a fixed link and connect our nation.

I want to thank you for your attention and consideration today because this is an exciting time. It is not a new idea, but it is a persistent one. The St. Lawrence Seaway, the Confederation Bridge, the Chunnel, Marconi and wireless radio.... Visionaries of many generations understood our need for connection and strove to join together worlds and societies. With a fixed link and a stable network of roads and rail, we have a powerful way to connect the island portion of Newfoundland with the rest of North America in great and powerful ways. With this project, we may count ourselves among the architects of a new future, of Canada's future.

I and others dream of a new extension to highway 138 on Quebec's north shore, a new rail and a great tunnel built on proven technology. Together they can usher in a new chapter of prosperity for all of us. Through rapid transit of passenger, commercial and tourism traffic, we may forever truly connect the many developing resources from all provinces to their neighbours and beyond, but that is only the beginning. It all starts with us, and it all starts now.

There are no losers in a project of this scope, only winners, only us. There have always been challenges, pitfalls and moments of weakness in the pursuit of greatness. In many cases like ours, the ends will justify the means. We will be the proof. A portal between Quebec and Newfoundland can only bring more prosperity, not less. With our tunnel under the straits, the sky is the limit, and we must remain strong.

Through that strength and with this tunnel, we shall forge a connection between the private and public sectors, between provincial and federal governments. We can literally and figuratively pave the way into the future with fewer barriers to our own joint prosperity, especially in rural areas along the proposed path. The vision for similar changes is what drives this mission to reinvigorate our rural spaces. Like the Trans-Canada Highway, we shall nourish the region with new traffic, new business and new vision for a bright future.

It is always darkest before the dawn. Newfoundland is my home, and the people of the region are ready for the change in this vision. They are tired of weather and sea ice, and of the wind cancelling ferry crossings and air traffic, endangering their food security and mobility to the mainland. With this project, we will link the varied people of Quebec and those of Newfoundland and Labrador with the rest of Canada. United, we can knit together a fabric of national and international trade, our environment, employment, education, housing, health and culture. This link will become an artery feeding lifeblood into an infrastructure with new resources, a strong economy and renewed infrastructure. If we build it, they will come.

Like all great journeys, we have constructed a road map to aid our mission. Among the strategies are included our GNP industrial plan, our external trade development plan and our transportation electrification plan. With projects like this and others, we will create

a driving force for our future, and it all starts with collaboration like this meeting today. Together we are strong.

Unlike traditional investments, our fixed link will pay dividends immediately. We will provide employment. We will develop infrastructure. We'll proclaim proudly that we believe in the future of those on both sides of the tunnel and all along the roadways and railways. We will change lives. Workers will bring families. For the first time in generations, specialists will flock to us and not the other way around. Money spent on workers and jobs will grow our economy. These are the tides of change.

Like Newfoundland's own island-wide highway, the freedom of motion that a fixed link, new road and rail will offer us is profound. It will encourage towns to develop, and the addition of pipelines for more than people, resources and freight will then fan the flames of change. The link will communicate ideas, dreams and visions for revitalizing the region. It will create a new era of co-operation between Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and greater Canada in ways that cannot be imagined. We must be patient, we must be cautious, but above all we must be wise, united and brave. After all, change can often be scary.

• (1110)

Thank you.

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

Ms. O'Pray, by video conference, for five minutes.

Ms. Adrienne O'Pray (President and Chief Executive Officer, New Brunswick Business Council): Good morning. On behalf of the 26 New Brunswick-based CEOs that are members of the business council, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee on an issue that is considered one of the council's top three priorities and one that has significant potential for economic development for Quebec and the Maritime region.

The issue we would like to raise with the committee is the urgency in twinning the 41-kilometre stretch of highway between Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha! and Saint-Antonin in the province of Quebec.

Specifically, along with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the three major trucking associations from Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic, we are advocating to expedite the twinning of Route 185 and to advance the completion date from 2025 to the fall of 2021.

As the only remaining single-lane section of highway between Halifax and Toronto, Route 185 increases costs between the Atlantic region and the larger central Canadian economy for both carriers and consumers. The improvement in the highway would effectively eliminate a tariff of sorts and an interprovincial trade barrier.

Today, long combination vehicles are forced to stop, decouple and recouple after the 41-kilometre stretch, which makes goods from the Maritimes more expensive to export to other parts of Canada and adds cost to Ontario and Quebec carriers. Carriers use a much lower percentage of long combination vehicles as a result, which also impacts driver shortages and increases carbon emissions.

While the project of twinning Route 185 has been ongoing for many years and progress has been made, if we do not expedite this project, every year that we delay will cost the Atlantic economy roughly \$1 billion. Taking six years to complete a 41-kilometre stretch of highway will diminish the economic potential for our region.

In 2017, the New Brunswick Business Council partnered with Dr. Herb Emery of the University of New Brunswick, along with Kent Fellows of the University of Calgary, who has experience modelling the GDP impacts of transportation infrastructure as a lead researcher for the national corridor research project.

Our intention was to actually quantify—for what we understand to be the first time—the economic impact that this transportation bottleneck creates for goods travelling to western markets from eastern Canada and from Ontario and Quebec to the Atlantic region. Based on information we provided to Dr. Fellows, he assessed that the impact of twinning Route 185 would reduce the delivered cost of traded goods by 1.5% to 2.5%, representing annual GDP gain of \$1 billion to \$1.78 billion for Canada.

We feel governments and leaders who have so diligently been looking for economic growth opportunities, through the Atlantic growth strategy, would be hard-pressed to find projects and opportunities that could provide this level of return in such a short period of time without any increased funding for this project.

To be clear, we understand that Infrastructure Canada and the Government of Quebec signed an agreement for phase three of this project, the twinning of the final 41 kilometres, in 2018, for over \$389 million. As the New Brunswick Business Council, we are advocating for the federal government to play a role with the province to agree to advance the funding, which has already been allocated, to immediately fast-track this critical infrastructure project.

There are other important impacts of twinning Route 185 that must also be considered. For example, there are significant emission reductions that can result from the increased use of long combination vehicles. The use of long combination vehicles would allow companies to address the significant labour issues that also impact industry in the form of significant driver shortages.

It is important to note that this section of highway is also a concern from a safety perspective. According to the Canadian Trucking Alliance, Route 185 is often cited as one of the most dangerous highways in Canada. As with any single-lane highway that has a high level of passenger and tractor-trailer traffic combined with no alternative routes, there is significant risk to public and driver safety.

In closing, the New Brunswick Business Council believes this is one project that merits focused attention, has high impact, and requires no increase in funding as a means of improving our export performance for the Atlantic region, Quebec and for our nation as a whole.

Thank you.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. O'Pray.

We will move on to Mr. Morency, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency (Managing Director, Maersk Supply Service Canada Ltd.): Maersk, based in Denmark, and having operations in Canada, is the biggest marine transportation company in the world, by volume. One of Maersk's five core values is constant care. We translate constant care into our business by taking care of today, while actively preparing for the future.

Most of our activities involve marine operations and logistics. We are conscious that understanding, influencing and partaking in how this industry will evolve is key to our business survival in the next century, and that it affects deeply the society we live in.

Maersk has taken the ambitious step to reduce its carbon emissions to zero by 2050. We will achieve this goal without buying carbon offsets. This means potentially abandoning carbon-based fuels within 30 years. It is therefore with this view that we present some of our perspectives on the evolution of the transportation industry in Canada and its intimate interconnection with the world.

Moving towards decarbonization does not mean reducing our business ambitions. We believe in sustainable growth. In an era of increased global trade and integrated supply chains, the challenges associated with such goals are tremendous. We believe Canada, through its land mass, oceans access, advanced economy, natural resources and initiatives to modernize its transportation network is in a unique position to become a global leader in a modern logistics network. This can be realized in conjunction with environmental stewardship and economic health.

We are in support of the recommendations highlighted in the work done by the committee on the west coast and in the Niagara areas. We would like to add to this view that there should be a drive to use renewable, low-carbon emission solutions to these challenges, especially where technology is already available.

One example could be the electrification of all new rail transport in the Niagara area. Such electrification would spur vigorous economic activities in several layers of the industrial fabric, such as transmissions, construction, heavy industry, etc.

One of the underestimated and underdeveloped trade corridors lies to the east of Montreal-Windsor. It is imperative that Canada work in parallel, tapping into the potential to develop industrial centres in rural areas along the St. Lawrence Seaway and into the eastern provinces.

This trade corridor is rich in resources and renewable energy. It has direct access to what should be important trade diversification targets that are in the Atlantic Basin, namely, Europe, Africa and South America. The eastern trade corridor is key to economic diversification.

There is a significant effort to develop sustainable access to deepwater ports on the Atlantic Basin. Such ports, existing or not, can serve as additional distribution centres for goods that will trade with Asia through the Arctic. They can be adapted or built with renewable power in mind. The cargo coming on giant ships can be redistributed within North America through the road and rail networks, or through short-sea shipping.

For technical reasons, one could argue that the smaller vessels will first see a change in fuel from carbon-based to renewables. The northern routes will open, and Canada must prepare.

The economics of such major infrastructure projects are challenging and only a long-term, non-partisan infrastructure program that is centred on a vision of an efficient carbon-neutral network will ensure that Canada benefits from a privileged access to three oceans.

We therefore would like to recommend an objective to reduce the transportation sector's carbon footprint to zero by 2050. This can be enabled by ensuring that infrastructure is built in a flexible way, ready to receive ships that might change their propulsion methods in the next decades; rails that can be electrified; and highways that can support alternative vehicles. Ensuring that all port slips have access to renewable shore power could be an immediate first step. Maximizing oil and gas exports with a minimal transportation carbon footprint, such as pipelines, could be another.

We recommend accelerating change in the transport industry by building a network of rails, roads and marine routes with access to a renewable energy grid.

We recommend fostering economic acceleration by funding technology programs in such a way that Canada becomes the world leader in developing and deploying non-carbon emitting transportation methods.

We recommend continuing to invest in the infrastructure with a view that the business cases, especially for zero-carbon projects, might take decades to pay off.

• (1120)

Finally, we recommend prioritizing, as a way to diversify the economy, the development of the eastern trade corridor, including deepwater ports, interconnecting networks and Arctic access.

Thank you.

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

We'll go on to questioning. Mr. Liepert, for six minutes.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here today.

Thank you, Ms. O'Pray, for joining us via video conference. I have a couple of questions for you first.

Would you consider pipelines to be part of a transportation strategy?

Ms. Adrienne O'Pray: Yes. From the New Brunswick Business Council's perspective, we would consider pipelines, of course, to be part of a national transportation strategy as it relates to natural resource development.

Mr. Ron Liepert: What would a west-to-east pipeline do for business in your part of the country?

Ms. Adrienne O'Pray: In Atlantic Canada, I guess if you were to look at the energy east pipeline, of course it would have a significant economic impact. The original plan to have the movement of product to be refined here in New Brunswick would definitely have a significant economic impact. When you look at pipelines from a national strategic point of view, we would certainly view them as part of a nation-building strategy.

Mr. Ron Liepert: First of all, I am from western Canada, so I have to acknowledge that many of the issues you face on a daily basis on the Atlantic coast are ones I'm not really that familiar with, so I will leave it to my colleagues across the way who are from Atlantic Canada to ask you about them.

I would like to get some perspective from someone who has dealt with the situation. We currently have before the Senate Bill C-48, and it's fortunately being stalled, which is good. It is a bill that's going to prohibit tanker traffic off British Columbia's, in the Prime Minister's words, "pristine" west coast.

I want to know if you have any experience with tanker traffic on what I consider to be a pristine east coast and whether that's been an issue relative to spills or any environmental damage.

Could you help us out in the western part of the world and tell us whether that's seen as a problem on your coastline?

• (1125)

Ms. Adrienne O'Pray: I would say that this isn't an issue I have dealt with directly in terms of some of the specifics, but I would say yes, of course, we have significant ports here in Atlantic Canada. To my knowledge, there has not been a major spill.

Of course, as we examine projects like energy east, these are questions that are brought forward by our citizens and by environmental groups, but to my knowledge, to be direct in terms of your question, I'm not aware of any types of spills that have resulted as a result of tanker traffic, to date, in our region.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Thank you.

Maybe I will ask Mr. Morency. I believe your company is probably not involved in tanker traffic, but you are involved in shipping on the east coast. What would your thoughts be on this government imposing on the east coast something similar to the kind of ban we in western Canada are facing?

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: I will support the previous person's comment that we've not seen any major accidents. I think it's about how you mitigate the actions you take in shipping. It's too detrimental to the industry to stop the tanker traffic. I think these are choices we have to make. It's important for New Brunswick. It's important for Newfoundland. It's important for the east in general.

What we have to put in place are the necessary measures to make sure that shipping is safe.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Are you familiar with Bill C-48 at all?

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: No.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Well, it might be a good thing for you to have a look at it and let your members of Parliament in eastern Canada know how bad a bill it is.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Liepert.

Now we'll go on to Ms. Hutchings.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, good morning and thank you to all our witnesses for their preparation and for being here this morning.

As my colleague recognized, things are a little different in the east. I was fortunate to be here on Tuesday past, and as we heard from the witnesses who were here, climate change is having a huge impact, with the ice in the straits and the impact on the Marine Atlantic ferries. That comes into play, too, with the tunnel conversation we're having.

To the three witnesses here, I'm curious as to what you think the first step should be in developing a fixed link.

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: The first step is to know the cost, and the second step is to find out how you're going to pay for it. To me, getting to the first step is not a difficult task. I've been in business now for nearly 23 years, and if I have a project, I define my project, whether it's to build a new building or to buy a new piece of machinery. I define what I want and I go to the people who build it and ask them for a price.

In this case, what should happen is that studies should stop. Don't waste any more time and money on academic dissertations. Define the parameters of this project. It's not difficult. This area of the straits has been studied with seismic testing and boreholes, and we've had divers walk across the Strait of Belle Isle. It has been studied for 50 years, so we don't need any more studies. We don't need to waste any more money.

Define the project. Put the project out as a request for proposals, similar to what happened with the wonderful Confederation Bridge. First, we decided what type of bridge we wanted. Then we went out and asked the Canadian construction and engineering industry to tell us, on the basis of the design, what it would cost. Once we got that cost, then, of course, the people came forward and suggested how we might be able to finance it.

In the case of the Confederation Bridge, it was financed by the private sector and didn't cost the taxpayers of Canada or P.E.I. one extra cent.

• (1130)

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Great. Thank you.

Mr. Villeneuve, what is the link between a fixed link and your Great Northern Port project? How do you see the two linked together?

Mr. Daniel Villeneuve: Well, obviously, with the selection of the port location on the northern peninsula of Newfoundland, it will represent one of the largest privately owned ports in North America. The port will be the receiving and the export area for trans-Arctic

travel in the future, and of course, we're going to be eliminating 5,300 nautical miles from the transport that is currently happening.

Therefore, it's an opportunity, obviously, for Europe and the northeastern United States, and the hinterland of Quebec, Ontario and the western provinces. The whole east coast will definitely benefit from that, and of course, the fixed link itself.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: That's wonderful.

Do you think there's enough population and business opportunity? I might be a little biased because I'm from that area, but I'd love to hear the opinions of all of you on this.

Do we have the population base to do it? Do we have the business opportunities there? Can this be an enticement for people to come home?

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: I can take that question.

There are a lot of people who like to move into the rural areas. There's certainly a place for cities and big industrial centres, but there's also a strong place for our rural economies.

That said, we have to provide a way for these people to earn a living, and then we have to have a network that allows the global trade to continue. Build the network, and I think the economic opportunities will grow with that particular network.

In a sense, I don't think there is right now, but if you build a network, there are several opportunities, just with access to global trade, that will emerge from that.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Wonderful.

Mr. Villeneuve, do you agree with Mr. Dumaresque that it should be an RFP concept or business model?

Mr. Daniel Villeneuve: Yes, I completely agree with what Mr. Dumaresque has said.

There's an opportunity here now. Our port project is a perfect example of that. Canada is a very safe place for investors to invest in. Infrastructure is a very safe place to invest in and I really believe that now there is an opportunity for the private sector to be involved, in co-operation with the provincial governments and the federal government, that actually the private sector could lead.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Mr. Dumaresque, I know you've done research for many years. There have been concepts of putting cars on railbeds to go over, there's a drill and blast, and there's the bore technique. What would your recommendation be from your many years of travelling the world and seeing different tunnelling?

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: There are a couple of things. First of all, there's the question of population. In the 1980s and the early 1990s, they had a referendum in Prince Edward Island and talked about building the Confederation Bridge. P.E.I. has fewer than 150,000 people, but in 1993, the private sector came forward with \$1.3 billion of all-private money and made a simple agreement with the Government of Canada that they would construct, operate and maintain the Confederation Bridge for some 33 years if we gave them just the subsidy that we were spending anyway on the ferry and allow us to keep the \$34 or \$40 for the car.... In 13 or 14 years, that bridge will revert back to the Government of Canada and the people of Canada for \$1, and that has saved us millions of dollars. I see the same concept going forward here.

In terms of getting it built, it is, as my friend in Norway told me, "Danny, this is not rocket science; it's just rock, and as long as you know what kind of rock you're going to intersect every five metres of the way, it doesn't matter if you're 1,000 feet below sea level or 10,000 feet, it's not going to fall down."

I went for my first time in the Solbakk tunnel, which is 1,000 feet below, six years ago, and I really thought that this was where it was going to end for me, when I went down and there was water dripping everywhere, but this is tunnel number 33, and it's now ready to open for traffic.

There's nothing to fear. You just have to know what you're doing and do your proper due diligence, and it will be safe, and it will be real.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We move on to Monsieur Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank all of our guests for being here this morning.

From what I just heard, I get the impression that there are two visions here. It is important to understand that there has been inadequate investment in infrastructure for years. When I see on one hand that there are problems like the one with Autoroute 185, but on the other hand, a tunnel, a fixed link is being built, I wonder what the priority should be in terms of investment knowing that budgets are finite even though we would always like to have more.

The question is for everyone. Each witness could provide a brief answer.

What approach should we be taking? Should we build infrastructure that will generate economic activity or should we take existing economic activity and upgrade the infrastructure to improve current economic development?

The tunnel and Autoroute 185 represent both models. Could you briefly comment on that?

Mr. Dumaresque could go first followed by Ms. O'Pray.

• (1135)

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: Thank you very much.

[English]

I am talking about two things. One is to spend existing money more wisely. Over the next 40 years, we're going to spend some \$2.4 billion on ferries, on icebreakers and on the *Bella Desgagnés* coming from Rimouski down to la Basse-Côte-Nord. That's \$2.4 billion, yet 14.3 kilometres of tunnelling was done in Norway, actually two tubes for 28.6 kilometres, for \$418 million, and that's Canadian dollars. The numbers are real. The business case is there to take existing funds and use them more wisely.

Of course, if you could go and apply some block funding from an infrastructure bank and be able to use it as well to upgrade the 138 along the Basse-Côte-Nord, because that area is also an area of chronic unemployment, it would be good to be able to provide the route to bring the tourists there.

That's one of the things that cannot be dismissed. In 1997 when the bridge was opened to P.E.I., there were 700 tourists—

Mr. Robert Aubin: Can you wrap up please? I want to give time to Ms. O'Pray.

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: Okay. There are hundreds of thousands of people who will come to create the jobs in areas like the lower north shore of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Dumaresque.

Ms. O'Pray, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Adrienne O'Pray: When I think about the options you put forward and look at the 41-kilometre stretch that will not be completed until 2025, it leads me to the option of adapting existing infrastructure so that current economies can be achieved.

In Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, trucking associations, as well as the business council, have corresponded with federal-provincial ministers. Even back in 2017, they said they would be hard-pressed to find a road infrastructure project in eastern Canada that carries as much economic benefit for the region as this. It's really unthinkable that in this day and age, there is a stretch of highway between Halifax and Toronto that limits our ability to move goods between provinces in Canada.

To your pointed question about priorities, I agree. I know that this has been a priority and the funding is in place, but these are the kinds of projects.... A billion dollars' worth of annual impact for Atlantic Canada is significant, given that the funding is already there.

There is no new money required for this. It requires a will to expedite this project so that we can see the economic benefit for Canada, but in particular for Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

I have a question for Mr. Morency.

It was music to my ears to hear you talk about targeting zero carbon emissions in your opening remarks.

Should the environment and reducing greenhouse gases be the top criterion in funding any infrastructure project from now on?

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: Of course the short answer is yes.

However, we have to be pragmatic. We have to make sure we have the technology and then consider where we are in terms of our progress toward zero carbon emissions. We can't prevent business opportunities from moving forward.

Mr. Robert Aubin: When you talked about the electrification of transportation, you mentioned trains.

Do you also think we could look at the electrification of road transportation, trucks and hydrogen buses for example, which hasn't really been developed in Canada? We have some of the most extraordinary leaders in this area, but are one of the countries that develops this the least.

Is this something that you have looked at in detail?

• (1140)

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: This is something that we have looked at in detail.

Do you mean in Denmark?

Mr. Robert Aubin: No, I'm talking about Canada and hydrogen and fuel cell technologies. Canada develops quite a few zero emissions transport trucks.

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: We can't just focus on technology for the sake of technology. We just have to focus on zero emissions. The technology doesn't matter as much. We have to develop an infrastructure network to ensure that companies have access to this energy. That is the most important thing.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I have another question that is unrelated.

[English]

The Chair: It has to be very short.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I'm out of time, I'm sorry.

[English]

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to our guests.

I have some questions, primarily about the presentation by Mr. Dumaresque and Mr. Villeneuve.

Danny, I know you've had tunnel vision for 30 years now.

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: At least.

Mr. Churence Rogers: When we talk about that new link, as I guess you want to call it, to Canada through the northern peninsula—and I have heard this before—that would complete what we call the circular route, from Quebec City through to Labrador and across the northern peninsula back to Quebec City via Marine Atlantic.

We hear differing views in terms of cost savings and the impact on the Marine Atlantic service in terms of efficiency. I'm thinking about access to the island from mainland Canada in times of difficult weather conditions, when Marine Atlantic is not operating.

In the overall picture for the circular route, how do you see this as being a really good benefit for the province?

Mr. Dumaresque.

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: One of the most dramatic ways to illustrate this is...when the Confederation Bridge was opened in 1997, there were some 700,000 people who had been going to wonderful Prince Edward Island. Last year, there were 1.5 million.

Ten years ago, Marine Atlantic was bringing somewhere around 140,000 non-residents to the island of Newfoundland. Last year, it was fewer than 100,000. What's happening? People are going, of course, and they want to visit Newfoundland, but instead of costing \$44 to go to Prince Edward Island, it's going to cost over \$500 on a seven-hour ferry crossing, and people don't know if that ferry is going to be on time. As somebody in the fish business who has had a container on a dock for 11 days.... That causes all kinds of risk and unpredictability, so 90% of the people will turn around rather than go through the extra cost and extra time.

However, if you add this fixed link—seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year—for the price of the ferry, that gives the guaranteed reliability of being able to get in and out.

I believe that if the people were to be able to come in for this rate, a lot of them—if not the vast majority—would decide to come through Quebec, go down through Labrador, under the Strait of Belle Isle, and, after they visit all the wonderful places on the island of Newfoundland, they will then go out through Port aux Basques. This would bring stable revenue and increasing new revenue to the Marine Atlantic equation, whereas there would be a decrease in commercial traffic at Port aux Basques and that route because they would come by the reliability of the transport truck.

That's how I think it would have a significant benefit.

Mr. Churence Rogers: When you look at the overall scope of this project—the costs associated with building it, the cost recovery that you talked about and so on, and the value for the entire eastern region of Canada including Quebec, the Atlantic provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador—is it a very positive thing, from your perspective?

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: There's no question. When I was in government—and anybody who has looked back over the years—when you looked at the unemployment rate.... Coming across Canada, you start in British Columbia and come across and hit Nova Scotia, but as soon as you hit Prince Edward Island, it went up by 6% or 7%.

Since the Confederation Bridge has been there and most recently, P.E.I. is around 10%, which is similar to the rest of Canada. When you go across to Port aux Basques, all of a sudden we're upwards another 7%.

There is no question that not having the reliability to get in and out with our goods and services is a terrible drag on our economy.

• (1145)

Mr. Churence Rogers: If I'm reading this right in terms of the overall project, the key thing here is that there have to be some solid partnerships between federal and provincial governments—the Province of Quebec and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador—and maybe the private sector to make this project become a reality.

You talked about cost. I've heard some numbers that are exorbitant, like \$4 billion. Where do these kinds of numbers come from, compared to the numbers that you're presenting here today?

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: If you ask an academic, he's going to study it and he's going to have all kinds of methodologies. The answer you get depends on the assumptions. There's nothing like giving the parameters or the blueprint to the guy who builds it.

That's exactly what should happen in this case. Define the parameters of the project. You know the length of it. You can go online and see the way it has been tendered in Norway, where you have unit cost pricing. Then you sit down with the people and say that you are prepared to enter into the financing.

Quebec, Ottawa and Newfoundland and Labrador have public dollars in existing ferries and roads. Why not take those monies, go to the private sector, make an agreement similar to what we did in Prince Edward Island—

Mr. Churence Rogers: Nobody does feasibility studies. Do they just do RFPs?

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: The Prince Edward Island bridge was done through an RFP. Take what we're doing now with the seniors' complexes in Newfoundland. I don't know so much about everywhere else, but we recently signed an agreement for a seniors' complex on a similar private-public partnership. We go out with a request for proposals, design the building and then tell them to give us their price. On the basis of their price, we work out a financing arrangement.

With Prince Edward Island, it hasn't cost a cent. It saved millions of dollars to Canadian taxpayers, created hundreds of thousands of new jobs and opportunities, and everybody is happy.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go on to Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, thank you, folks, for being here this morning and afternoon. I wanted to preface my comments by saying that there's a reason we're doing this study from coast to coast to coast. That reason is to look at you folks being an integral part of establishing objectives to the study, to an overall study, and from those objectives establishing action plans. It is also, of course, to look at you being among the contributors to ensuring we're able to execute those action plans as we move forward in our future transportation logistics distribution corridors.

I do want to ask the first question of Mr. Morency. You're in the business on a daily basis, and within your business plan you talk about providing customers with seamless access to a wider range of logistics and service offerings. That's at the crux of our discussions

today. How can we better establish those objectives and action plans? How can we then execute them on your behalf to give you a wider ability, a broader ability and range to then create more fluidity and seamless access to logistics and service offerings?

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: I think it's fair to say that our business model right now is to have the biggest ship possible and to land it in a port that's as easy to get in and get out as possible. That is the business model. Then the cargo is being redistributed within the current market. I think that is the business model in Vancouver. You guys worked on the de-bottlenecking of the Vancouver area. I think there's no real infrastructure in the east. We can't get the ships that are big enough into the St. Lawrence Seaway, so they have to land on the eastern seaboard and then redistribute.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Right, and let's dive into that. When you look at your business, your core business is obviously on the water. Of course, with that and especially with the trade agreements we've recently established—the CPP and TPP being front of mind when it comes to our discussion—right now with the St. Lawrence and with the Great Lakes, you're relying upon a lot of inland services. You're integrating your shipping with a lot of inland services. In your presentation you mentioned rail, and I'm sure with that are trucking and air.

With that, in all parts of Canada, including all strategic trade corridors—some of which you're participating in now and some of which I'm sure you intend to participate in—how can we better help and streamline that fluidity to help you integrate with the inland services, which is just as important as what we're trying to do with your ocean services?

• (1150)

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: I think it's about the speed at which you can move cargo. If we think about the ISO boxes, then we want to accelerate the movements of these cargo boxes. That is the key to it all. That goes through how you make them flow on the network, whether it's by roads, by ship—short-sea shipping—or by rail, how you move them across the borders, and how you make sure that all the necessary security measures in modern transportation are done? It's really the acceleration of the movement of goods that's important. That's the concept that surrounds landing a Triple E vessel in a big port, unloading it as fast as possible, distributing that cargo across the network and integrating that network with all the different areas. Those are key.

I will also add that you have chances to make it a bit automated and certainly to have low carbon emissions, if you plan properly.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Again, going back to your business plan, you're enabling and facilitating global supply chains and providing opportunities for customers to trade globally. Right now you're in the west. You're somewhat in the east. You're in Montreal, in Sorel. A lot of that is coming to a point where you sometimes have to travel with product in a non-feasible fashion. How do we make it more feasible for you? How do we integrate more, especially when you get to the Sorel-Montreal area and you're offloading the containers? Most of it's going in trucks. Some of it's going on rail. Through this strategy, how do we further integrate that for you to make it more feasible and more friendly to business?

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: The most efficient way to transport goods is through sea shipping. But once you get it off the ship, then it's really about being integrated with the ports and infrastructure. How do you interconnect all the networks? How are the goods transiting?

Mr. Vance Badawey: So in terms of moving forward, the modernization of ports is key to really aligning with what you're doing. As you know, we're doing the ports modernization review. A lot of that's going to come together with this strategy.

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: That's right, the modernization of ports and the interconnecting networks.

Mr. Vance Badawey: My last question is to all of you, including

The Chair: Make it very short.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I'm making an assumption here, but I'll frame it as a question.

Once the interim reports come together and we come out with the final report, are you willing to be a part of that process to help us come forward with that final report?

Mr. Francois-Xavier Morency: Of course. It's both a government and industry effort.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Next is Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I echo my colleagues in welcoming you here this morning. I'm really enjoying this study. I'm certainly learning more about our Atlantic region and understanding that our Atlantic trade corridors are important to the economic well-being of the Atlantic provinces and to Canada as a whole.

I think it's important to understand that, as the committee is coming together to discuss a strategy and the development of transportation and infrastructure designed to keep Canada competitive in a globalized market, the current government is introducing legislation and implementing regulations and even federal taxes that I believe have an impact on our competitiveness. We can't separate those things out from a strategy in terms of addressing our transportation needs.

Ms. O'Pray, you've highlighted the impact that the delays in completing the 41 kilometres of Route 138 are having on the economy and the businesses that need that roadway to be completed in order to provide more efficient transportation to the region.

I'm wondering if you could comment as well on the federal carbon tax and whether your organization has any formal position on the carbon tax and the impact that is having on the competitiveness of your region.

• (1155)

Ms. Adrienne O'Pray: Certainly, back in 2017 the business council hosted a forum with many stakeholders: government, academics, the business community and environmental organizations. Our key focus there was in particular addressing the competitiveness issue.

From a business council perspective, we are certainly in support of the need for regulation to address climate change across Canada. However, the federal backstop has been applied in New Brunswick because in the change of government, what was brought forward by the previous government in New Brunswick was not accepted. As a result, New Brunswick defaulted to the federal backstop.

In this case, the position of the business council is that we would strongly urge the Government of Canada to allow New Brunswick to once again have an opportunity much like the other provinces in Atlantic Canada had. Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and P.E.I. were able to negotiate their own pricing mechanisms around carbon and climate change and the transition.

In New Brunswick, because the plan that was brought forward by the previous government was not accepted, it's put us into a federal backstop. We would certainly advocate for New Brunswick to have another opportunity, sooner rather than later, to bring forward an alternative plan for New Brunswick.

At this point, a carbon tax for fuel would be about a 5.5-cent increase for every litre, whereas in the other provinces it would be roughly 1 to 1.3 cents. Even within Atlantic Canada, that puts New Brunswick in the position of being uncompetitive with its neighbouring provinces.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much for that.

I want to speak to another piece of legislation that is currently in front of the Senate. I would welcome comments by any of the witnesses in regard to Bill C-69.

Bill C-69 proposes to tighten regulations involved in building new infrastructure. I had the opportunity to participate in an interview with a journalist who was doing a story on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway celebrating their 60th anniversary. The question was, did we believe that this project would go forward today with the current environment and if Bill C-69 were to pass?

I'm just wondering if any of you have any comments on Bill C-69 and the impact it would have on the projects that you are in fact suggesting as part of a transportation strategy.

Mr. Daniel Villeneuve: I can speak to our recent journey that we've taken. We started in November 2016. The environmental process in Newfoundland and Labrador, of course...and the federal government was also included in different departments.... We submitted in November 2017, and we're expecting a final decision from the provincial minister on June 8 for final approval. It was a very long, complicated and expensive process but it assured.... I'm very confident of this because of our experience. It's much like what this gentleman was referring to a while ago: we have one chance to be able to get it right. The environment should not have to suffer because of the economy; the economy should not have to suffer because of the environment. It's finding a balance between those two, much like the gentleman from Ontario was mentioning about the balance of being able to develop business.

I currently own a divested port from the ports program. The unfortunate part about the diversification of ports in Canada is that they are not privately owned. So you're not getting private investments. You're going to have people looking for opportunity and so on, but it's not done in that way. I think in our particular port project in Newfoundland, it will be private. It will be a good example to do that. On the environmental side, it is long.

As far as the insights of Bill C-69 go, I'm not really on top of that. I believe the process is that we have to find the balance between the economy and the environment.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

We go on to Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): It was intriguing Mr. Dumaresque to see you cite Norway as an example of a country that's getting things done. Good heavens...33 undersea tunnels. It occurs that part of the mystery as to why that is happening there and we have such a difficult time with that happening here has to do with taxes. Taxes are vilified by most people—some more than others.

You'd be interested to know that in Norway taxes are anywhere up to 45% of GDP. In Canada, the number has actually been falling as a per cent of GDP. It's now 32.2%. The price of a litre of gas in Norway today is \$2.94 Canadian, and 63% of that is for taxes. It's very clear that in part the ability of a country to do things and pay for them somehow relies on this notion of the common good. We know that Norway has a more socialistic view of the world.

Do we need to start looking at that?

Obviously, there's a lot more to do in Canada than the federal government or any government has the money to do. How do we square that?

Are there any thoughts on that?

Mr. Danny Dumaresque: As I said earlier, my basis for this project is twofold. One is, we must spend public money more wisely. Right now, we know we are committed to spending some \$2.4 billion over the next 40 years on a ferry or an icebreaker, or a freight vessel from Quebec to service the region.

What we should be doing, and this is what Norway did...Norway looked at the different parts of its country and asked why it was spending \$10 million a year on a ferry when it could spend \$100 million and there'd never be a ferry. After 20 years, there would never be a public cent required to service that much improved transportation link.

I'll give you a couple of broad strokes. In the 1970s and 1980s, we had a railway in Newfoundland. We came into Confederation with a railway, but of course, the railway wasn't the most efficient way of transporting goods from one community to another, so we traded the railway for the Trans-Canada Highway across the island of Newfoundland.

In 1996, when I was in government, we looked at the coastal marine service in Labrador, serving some 45 communities. It was costing a fortune for the Government of Canada, so we made a deal

to take responsibility for the marine service. We took the money and put it into building the Trans-Labrador Highway.

Now it's time to take the straits ferry, the icebreakers and the Quebec freight vessels and make the deal to put in the subsea road tunnel. You will then complete that efficient national transportation system. Proverbially, it will be the last spike in joining Canada from sea to sea to sea.

The Chair: Thank you to our witnesses. It was a very informative session. We really missed the fact that the committee wasn't able to visit St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. It would have been quite an experience, but who knows? No chance this time, but maybe there's a future opportunity.

We will suspend for a few minutes while our other witnesses come to the table.

• (1200)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: I'm calling the meeting back to order.

Welcome to our witnesses.

From Innovation et Développement économique Trois-Rivières, we have Mario De Tilly, Managing Director, and Jean Côté, Deputy Managing Director.

From the Quebec Port Authority, we have Alain Sans Cartier, Vice-President, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships.

From the Trois-Rivières Port Authority, we have Gaëtan Boivin, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Boivin, we're going to start with you for five minutes.

Mr. Gaëtan Boivin (Chief Executive Officer, Trois-Rivières Port Authority): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Madam Chair, members of the committee, Mr. Aubin, MP for Trois-Rivières, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today.

Recognized for the excellence of its terminal operators, its qualified workers and the quality of its infrastructure, the Port de Trois-Rivières welcomes ships year round. The Port has experienced steady growth in traffic while complying with strict environmental standards and working harmoniously with the community.

In 2018, 3.9 million tonnes of merchandise moved through the Port for an estimated value of \$3.3 billion. Trois-Rivières is linked to hundreds of ports in more than 40 countries annually. Its port facilities serve businesses located in Quebec, Ontario, western Canada, and throughout North America. They meet the needs of many key sectors of Canada's economy, such as the manufacturing, agri-food, mining, and energy industries.

In 2007, the future of the Port de Trois-Rivières did not look bright. Its infrastructure was old and outdated, revenues were insufficient, and traffic was declining. It also had a bad environmental record and poor urban integration. That is what led the port authority to undertake strategic planning focused around the participation of all stakeholders, for a contribution to strong and optimal economic and regional development. The guiding vision for the plan was, “Developing modern, productive, community-integrated infrastructure in support of a skilled workforce”. Every stakeholder remained focused on that vision, which is what made it a reality.

On Course for 2020 helped bring in modern infrastructure, which paved the way to greater intermodality, full and complete management of safety and security, a reduced environmental impact while allowing an increase in traffic, a harmonious integration with the urban environment, and a significant boost in socio-economic spinoffs, all against the backdrop of good governance.

Investments totalling \$132 million from both levels of government, the port authority and its users, this plan, which was completed in 2017, increased capacity by 40%, which is currently being fully utilized, all while the port is getting requests from countless other shippers.

In the wake of such tremendous success, we decided to keep going and launched the On Track for 2030 last October.

The Port de Trois-Rivières is an urban port. It is literally surrounded by the city. The urban zone puts a great deal of pressure on the port's activities and those in turn can appear incompatible with the surroundings. Obviously this could be a source of conflict unless the port fully accepts this urban reality and the city accepts its status as a port city.

That is what the port and city of Trois-Rivières did and the strategic planning exercise that led to On Track for 2030 is based on this fundamental premise. In acknowledging its urban nature, the port did not view it as an obstacle to development, but rather saw and seized opportunities that would otherwise go unnoticed. That recognition revealed who mattered most to the port and that motivates all our actions.

A survey conducted in 2018 showed that 95% of our population has a good or very good opinion of the port. A majority is in favour of increasing its activities.

Like many ports around the world, the Port de Trois-Rivières is looking to convert some of its facilities for tourism, and residential and commercial use and is working with Transport Canada on getting approval for that. This will allow the port to collaborate with the city and private partners on developing its properties near the harbourfront park in harmony with the neighbouring area.

As part of the review to modernize ports, it is essential that port authorities have the power to do much more.

In support of their growth, the port and its partners will play an active role in improving the competitiveness of aspects that constitute the supply chain, namely marine, rail and road transportation services. This will make the port more competitive and the region even more attractive to investors.

These initiatives will better position Trois-Rivières on the international scene and that is where there is potential for growth. The port plans to fit-up new storage space and build new docks. A request for funding for that purpose has been submitted to the National Trade Corridors Fund.

Finally, the port has created for its users and clients two funds worth \$2.5 million over five years. The Innovation fund supports solutions for enhancing the Port's competitiveness. The Environment fund complements the financing package for projects to improve the Port's environmental record.

Through all these actions, we are trying to be an innovative urban port that drives growth at the heart of a logistics chain.

•(1215)

Thank you for your attention.

[English]

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

Mr. Côté.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Côté (Deputy Managing Director, Innovation et développement économique Trois-Rivières): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for inviting me here today to talk about the Trois-Rivières airport.

The Trois-Rivières airport is a cornerstone of economic development in Mauricie and Quebec. The technical specifications of the airport, its exceptional geographic location halfway between Montreal and Quebec City, its integration with the modern transportation system, the presence of key aerospace players backed by a structured and skilled value chain, make this airport a key economic driver and indisputable player in Canada's aerospace industry.

The airport has high-quality modern infrastructure and can accommodate all types of planes. It has the added benefit of being near the Port de Trois-Rivières, the Chemins de fer Québec-Gatineau railway, and major arteries the autoroutes 40 and 55. This proximity puts the Trois-Rivières airport on a strong multimodal platform. The airport also accommodates a pool of aerospace companies and suppliers that position the city and the region as a major support hub to the aerospace industry, which is generally concentrated in the greater Montreal area and around the world.

The countless companies operating at the Trois-Rivières airport spent a total of \$90.7 million from 2012-2014. Nearly 75% of the spending on goods and services, for a total of roughly \$67 million, is done in Quebec, with the neighbouring provinces meeting the rest of the needs.

The economic impact analysis of the activities at the Trois-Rivières airport that I will sum up for you was conducted through Quebec's inter-sectoral model, a tool developed by the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

For 2014, the overall economic impact — the direct and indirect benefits, or induced effects — of the companies installed at the airport, was valued at \$92.8 million. This helped to create or maintain roughly 814 jobs. In 2014, 372 of those jobs were on airport property alone, a number that has now reached 460. The total economic impact has produced a payroll of more than \$39 million. The airport's operating revenue and other revenue is valued at \$37 million, while the annual revenue that both levels of government collect in tax and from incidental taxation totalled \$15.8 million.

The Trois-Rivières airport is a hub for commercial flights with a bright future. On July 28, Transport Canada changed its regulations for designating commercial airports. Under this amendment, the Trois-Rivières airport can now apply to Transport Canada for the suite of services provided by the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority. This is a rather difficult and onerous process.

For years, Innovation et Développement économique Trois-Rivières has been developing business relationships with several low-cost air carriers including Sunwing — which has been in the news a lot lately — or Air Transat. These companies operate Boeing 737 or Airbus 319, 320, or 321, which the Trois-Rivières airport can already accommodate with no problem.

This will bring in other revenue streams from parking fees, rent from car rental agencies or restaurant owners, or revenue from air transportation related services such as shuttle services.

Bringing in these services will allow the airport to attract other airlines to connect Trois-Rivières to Canadian or international destinations, fuelling a growing tourism clientele.

For that, the city of Trois-Rivières has already invested \$24 million in airport infrastructure and allocated an additional \$4 million to build a new terminal. The current terminal has reached the end of its useful life. The new terminal project is estimated to cost \$11 million and obviously we are also asking the federal government to contribute to the project.

I will now explain the importance of having an airport in Trois-Rivières. When a new company is scouting a new location, the most important factors influencing the final decision is the availability of skilled workers, followed by financial incentives, and thirdly, the proximity to an airport with services.

•(1220)

Among the key factors that make airports particularly important to businesses, we can point to the growing need for connection and accessibility, the internationalization of activities, the need for flexibility in production systems—including "just-in-time," which is a perfect illustration of this—and the increasing mobility of skilled workers.

In its local action plan on the economy and employment, Innovation et Développement économique Trois-Rivières does identify the aeronautics, logistics and distribution sectors as priorities. Basically, the Trois-Rivières airport plays a major economic role, both as a direct job creator and an incentive for businesses whose main criteria include having an airport nearby.

In regard to the high-frequency train, I will simply mention the environmental impacts. One of the many benefits this train will bring

is a carbon reduction of 10.3 million tonnes of greenhouse gases by 2050.

[*English*]

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

Hopefully you can get the balance of your comments in during response to questions.

We will go on to Mr. Sans Cartier, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier (Vice-President, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnership, Quebec Port Authority): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, members of the committee, for welcoming us this morning.

[*Translation*]

As the last deepwater port closest to the heart of America, the Port of Québec's strategic advantages make it a key player in the continental supply chain. Our market extends all the way to the Great Lakes. We are one of Canada's top five ports and transship 27 million tonnes of cargo, mainly bulk cargo, worth \$20 billion. We do business with some 60 countries and 300 ports.

With a water depth of 15 metres at low tide, the Port of Québec has a fully intermodal terminal and plays a key role as a transshipment port in the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes corridor. According to KPMG, our port has generated 13,250 direct and indirect jobs, as well as \$1.3 billion in economic spin-offs across Canada.

The Port of Québec is also a destination for international cruises. With 230,000 visitors a year, it is the largest port in the St. Lawrence for cruise ships. Fully 20% of our territory is dedicated to urban and recreational tourism activities.

I will now give you an overview of the main issues the Port of Québec has to address to ensure its development. In a country like Canada, whose economic vitality relies on access to international markets, port infrastructure is of course a strategic asset. Unfortunately, the Port of Québec, as many other ports, must deal with aging infrastructure. Our most recent sector was built in the sixties, while our oldest dates back to the nineteenth century. We would need over \$300 million to rebuild our port heritage. Clearly, our port, much like the other ports, does not have the financial capacity to cover these costs on its own.

Fortunately, in 2018 we received a \$15-million contribution from the National Trade Corridors Fund to carry out a \$30-million restoration project. However, with a budget of \$2.2 billion over 11 years, the NTCF is not able to meet all the pressing needs. Therefore, we think that the sheer scale of those needs calls for the creation of an infrastructure restoration program, specifically for ports, to modernize Canada's strategic port heritage.

Moreover, intermodality is essential for Canadian ports to remain competitive. Rail and road access is vital if we want to offer businesses the best solutions for reaching their markets. The growth of international trade requires increased capacity and fluidity. The reality is that Canada's ports are often built right in a city core, as is the case in Quebec City. It is therefore essential to invest in these intermodal links, both to retain access and to improve capacity. It's just as important to invest in infrastructure to mitigate the impact of port activity on the urban landscape.

The Port of Québec is planning its development from a global perspective. Our development is based on a vision of the St. Lawrence that focuses primarily on the competitiveness of the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes trade corridor, a gateway for eastern Canada. This trade corridor reaches a market of 110 million consumers, but it has to compete with east coast ports in the U.S., which have made massive investments to improve their access to this huge market.

The new Panama Canal opened in 2016 with a new water-depth standard of 15 metres. It can now accommodate a new generation of even larger ships, the New Panamax, which can carry up to 14,000 containers. This depth of 15 metres is now the new industry standard for the American eastern seaboard ports, which, like the the ports of the St. Lawrence, also serve the Midwest market. American ports, which are the St. Lawrence ports' main competitors, have launched major dredging operations and are working to modernize their rail networks to adapt to this new standard.

The Port of New York and New Jersey has invested \$2.1 billion in dredging alone, primarily to adapt the docks to the new water-depth standard of 15 metres. The port also invested \$1.6 billion in works to raise the Bayonne Bridge to allow for the transit of large container ships.

The Port of Québec already has a water depth of 15 metres at low tide. Note that past the Quebec Bridge, the navigation channel is limited to only 11.3 metres as far as Montreal. That is why the Port of Québec is pushing for the construction of a new deepwater container terminal. This would involve a 17-hectare land expansion and a wharf line with water depth of 16 metres. The new terminal will be able to handle 500,000 containers a year and will give the St. Lawrence a viable deepwater option to compete with east coast ports in the U.S. In addition, the terminal will supplement our eastern ports. Ultimately, this project will consolidate our position and regain market share from the U.S. ports. This project is currently under assessment by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

In closing, I would like to share a few thoughts about some of our development issues. It is vital that we maintain a balance between developing infrastructure and protecting the environment. The significant delays and costs associated with current environmental processes must be considered with care to optimize successful project outcomes.

Canada's port authorities have to deal with borrowing capacity limits, which could become a major constraint in ensuring the closing of financing for major projects. There is a need for greater flexibility.

Our business activities are governed by letters patent, which define both our activities and our business relationships. These letters patent can constrain our efforts to adapt to changing business practices. A more flexible amendment process would be a considerable improvement. It would help us adapt more effectively to the current situation.

Lastly, major development projects should always be examined from the perspective of improving our international competitiveness, within an approach focused on regional complementarity.

Thank you for your attention.

• (1225)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you all very much. I realize that five minutes is not a lot of time for such important information, but the committee wants to have time for questions.

Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, everybody, for being here today.

I'll jump to my first question. My colleague Kelly and I met with some port authorities, and they alerted us to something that is apparently in Bill C-69, in terms of the review of environmental assessments. Port authorities can no longer conduct reviews on environmental assessments for smaller projects. Is that the case? Do you know any background on that, perhaps?

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: The Association of Canadian Port Authorities has spoken on Bill C-69. There are of course many concerns about the time limits set out in the bill. The timelines for environmental assessments are already a challenge, even though all Canadian ports are putting considerable effort and resources into minimizing environmental impacts. There are still concerns about this. The question is how to reduce delays without compromising the quality of environmental assessments. Time limits should be more reasonable and more in line with development projects.

Bill C-69 raises concerns around the whole issue of time limits. It could increase delays when the ones we have are already problematic.

[English]

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Boivin, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: I was going to say the same thing. The port authorities' environmental assessment process is currently very well managed. The new bill is not going to improve things, and I would even say it will make them worse. In my view, no port authority wants this bill, and the Association has spoken on it.

I'm with Mr. Sans Cartier, from the Port de Québec. Port authorities are friends of the environment. Sustainable development is extremely important for Canadian port authorities. The problem is more about the time limits.

In 2014, our administration started working with Environment Canada for a project involving wharves 21, 22 and 23, but the project won't be completed for another two years. We're talking about seven years to carry out a medium-size project in a port like Trois-Rivières.

[English]

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Great. As the authority, you also deal with a number of private sector entities within the port. Have you heard from them? Were they able to weigh in on Bill C-69 in particular?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: They rely a lot on us. We are the ones... We've learned, I would say in particular in Trois-Rivières, to work with them. If I compare the situation to that of 10 years ago, when we had to convince them about improving the environment, these days it's a natural for them. Not only do they comply, but they work with us. We're working together, which we weren't doing 10 years ago. Actually, for our customers in Trois-Rivières, it's a done deal. It's really nice to work with them these days, I'll tell you, but in the right direction.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Monsieur Sans Cartier, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: There certainly has been a rather considerable culture change in recent years, or even decades. I can confirm what Mr. Boivin said. We and our private sector partners have made a significant shift ourselves to ensure that we take all environmental impacts into account.

Many Canadian ports are located right in a city. We must ensure we integrate well into the city. The first questions all our private sector partners and even potential partners ask us are always about our environmental policies and programs, because that is important to them.

This brings me back to the time limits issue. As part of our container terminal project, we went on a world tour to meet the globe's leading maritime players, both in Europe and in Asia. One thing that often came up was that these major global operators would like to invest in Canada, but they are worried about the changing situation around the increasingly complicated delays involved in getting environmental approvals. This is a concern they shared with us.

• (1235)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go on to Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I first want to say to Trois-Rivières, congratulations on what you're doing. I've been there myself and seen how you've really taken full advantage of the multi land uses that you're challenged by.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Vance Badawey: In my part of the world, in Port Colborne, right along Lake Erie and the Welland Canal, we have the same challenges.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Yes, that I know well. I've been sailing there for many years.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Being in the business at one time myself, as a ship chandler, I recognize some of the challenges that happen on the water, and having to integrate on shore and how much the industry is reliant on that.

Again, I have to congratulate you. You have done a great job.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Thank you very much.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I wish you all the best in the future.

I understand that this government has provided you with \$132 million to proceed with some work. What was some of the work that you did?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Actually, out of the \$132 million, \$50 million came directly from the port. About \$20 million came from both federal and provincial governments, and about \$50 million from the private sector. It's money well invested for the federal government, and even the Province of Quebec. It really gave us the impulse to go forward with that project.

With that money, we consider that the Port of Trois-Rivières is in good condition. It is productive, and we are well equipped to do the mission that the law requires us to do.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Moving forward, there's a need for some more infrastructure work. You're looking for some work on docks 21, 22, as well as 23.

How much are you looking for to complete some of that work?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: That's a good question.

Last year, the Port of Trois-Rivières grew 47%. With the new docks that we built, we were expecting that kind of cargo in five years' time. We've had it in one year, so we're full again. They go through Trois-Rivières because the productivity is good, the tariff is good. With regard to our course for 2020, we were aiming to do that. Now we're back to the same problem.

What is interesting is that we're not asking for money to rebuild the infrastructure. We're asking for money for a new dock to be able to sustain the growth that we expect we'll have. We're looking at 1.5 million metric tons that we think we could probably proceed with in the next two to three years after the new docks are built.

To answer your question, it's a project of \$65 million plus private investment of about \$40 million, so that's about \$100 million. We're asking the federal government for \$33 million, and the port is putting in \$34 million to \$36 million.

Mr. Vance Badawey: With your leveraging—and I hear from the economic development, the airport.... Are you integrating a lot of that multimodal servicing among road, rail, water and air?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Not only that, but we have integrated our development plan with the city. We did that in 2010. We're sitting with the city, and doing our planning together. You will find what is related to the port in the planning of the city, and what is related to the city in the planning of the port. We're really working closely, particularly with the economic development arm of the city of Trois-Rivières.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Does the port actually run the water activity as well as the land activity? If you have someone, for example, who wants to lease, rent or own land along the port, do you manage that, as well as the docking and land?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Yes.

Mr. Vance Badawey: You manage all of it?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Yes, we manage all of it.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay. Thank you.

Question two is for Québec Port Authority. To you, as well, congratulations. Well done. You are really bringing a lot of product in there. You're bursting at the seams right now, and you're looking at future growth, I'm sure.

You mentioned the fluidity, in terms of moving a lot of products on the seaway system—down the river and, of course, through the Great Lakes. How are you doing that right now?

I'll preface my question by saying this. I understand that a lot of times, it's costing more money to throw it in a truck, which is not environmentally friendly, or on a train, whereas there might be an opportunity to keep it on the water. However, with the Panamax, it's difficult to come to the seaway. How are you doing it now, and how would you prefer to do it?

• (1240)

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: At the port of Quebec, we're a transshipment port, so the classic movement of our intermodality is ship to ship. We're bringing in big ships and then some smaller ships—lakers—that go out of the St. Lawrence Seaway and through the Great Lakes. That's the basic model of the port.

Mr. Vance Badawey: You mentioned that you needed new money to renovate. Instead of holding product on your dock and warehousing—I'll use the Dell example—is there an opportunity to actually put that product on a ship and get it en route, while it's being delivered to its final port?

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: Could you repeat your question?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Instead of warehousing a lot of the product that comes in from overseas, and then putting it on a ship—a laker—to go through the system, is there an opportunity for that product to go directly onto a ship? The ship is actually a warehouse, and then it goes en route, and can actually get to its final destination.

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: The time on the wharf is very short. It depends on the industry, though. Let's say nickel came from up north in Quebec, to Quebec City, and then is put on a railway heading for Sudbury. It goes back, and this material stays a very short time. It goes back to Quebec City, and then to Norway. It depends on the type of product.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

We will move on to Mr. Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to each and every one of you for being here with us this morning. This is really informative.

Mr. Côté, I'll start by talking about this fourth cornerstone of transportation, the airport.

Trois-Rivières showed leadership and built the infrastructure it needed to attract the industry. We are now at a crossroads. There was of course the nearly \$4 million that the City announced for a new terminal building. There is a very clear vision here, namely to ensure continuing development and to expand, from Trois-Rivières, into not only Canadian airports, but also international flights.

What kind of support are you getting from Transport Canada, which has not designated an airport in years, when the ultimate goal is precisely to have a designated airport, an airport with screening services?

The Conservatives and the Liberals said that if we wanted them, all we had to do was pay for them and there would be no problem. However, we know that that business model is not profitable. Do we have any assurance that once the new terminal is built, it will be in line with Transport Canada's wishes?

Mr. Jean Côté: No. We must first build the new terminal and then Transport Canada will inspect it and make recommendations, or it will designate the airport for CATSA services.

Mr. Robert Aubin: You are telling me that once the terminal has been built, Transport Canada could tell us that we did not build it properly and that we will not be given the certificate.

Mr. Jean Côté: Yes, exactly.

We have already had preliminary plans drawn up, which I wanted to submit to Transport Canada before starting on the plans and specifications, just so we could verify if the area was large enough and so forth. It refused. Transport Canada waits until the terminal has been built and then inspects it.

Mr. Robert Aubin: So, we could provide security services at our own expense, but we do not have the specifications to know what should be built.

Mr. Jean Côté: No.

Mr. Robert Aubin: That is unbelievable. Thank you.

Mr. Boivin, I have a question for you about something the two port authorities mentioned.

What is in the letters patent that established your organization that is now hindering your development?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Our letters patent were good for 20 years. They are still good. We must not touch them.

With the On Course for 2020 project, we collaborated with our city, our community and our residents on many things. The biggest problem we now have is that we lack the authority to develop the shoreline which, as you know, is in the heart of the Trois-Rivières downtown area. We do not have this authority. However, let me reassure you: we have been working with Transport Canada on this for almost two years.

The global trend is that port authorities can do this. There are positive signs as officials are telling us that this could be a good thing and we are even hearing this from the Minister's office. You will know that François-Philippe Champagne has publicly supported this type of project, the port wants it, the city wants it and the people want it.

It goes without saying that we need this authorization. I hope to get it in the next few weeks. It is not months away.

•(1245)

Mr. Robert Aubin: It will happen before the election is called. That is good news.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Exactly.

Mr. Robert Aubin: My colleagues are probably surprised that I am not talking about the HFR, but I know that people are in favour of it and that the economic actors in the Trois-Rivières area unanimously support it.

I will come back to the airport. As a result of the steps taken by the municipality and its economic development agency, IDE Trois-Rivières, there is some hope of getting a designated airport. I asked the Minister about it last week, when he appeared before the committee. He told me that there would not be any new designations before June, but that he was not necessarily closing the door.

Mr. Jean Côté: It is the chicken and the egg dilemma.

One of the first questions on the Transport Canada questionnaire for airport designation is how many passengers per year will we have. That is the problem. We have no passengers because we do not have an adequate terminal for passengers. It is the chicken and the egg dilemma.

Yes, Transport Canada will want to finance the project provided that we have a certain number of passengers. However, we cannot have any passengers until we have an adequate terminal. Ours dates back to 1963.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I imagine that the studies done previously by low-cost private companies provided an estimate of the potential traffic.

Could that answer Transport Canada's question?

Mr. Jean Côté: A few years ago, when Sunwing wanted to offer flights out of Trois-Rivières, the company had planned a flight to Cuba once a week and a flight to Mexico once a week. When it conducted its market study, it immediately decided to double the number of flights.

Trois-Rivières is unique in that it has an incredible number of travel agencies, including Voyages à rabais, which is now one of the largest travel agencies. There are many travel agencies, thus many possibilities. We are regularly approached by carriers that want to know when we are going to have a terminal. They are knocking at our door to offer flights from our city.

Mr. Robert Aubin: All right, but I will ask my question again.

Would the numbers provided by these studies satisfy Transport Canada's requirements, or will it not accept them because they want to see real passengers?

Mr. Jean Côté: We can trust the studies because they were done by Sunwing. These studies belong to them and so we do not have this data. When Sunwing decided to double the number of flights, I think that was pretty telling.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Boivin, do you want to add something.

If not, I have another question for you.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: I would like to add something.

I will turn to the Chair, who I met recently.

When the government asks us, the port authorities, to get closer to our communities, we want to do so, and so do the communities. I would ask that, if possible, the committee look at the request for authorization from Transport Canada, and that it make a recommendation soon. This is a global trend and Canada must adapt and modernize. In terms of the modernization of the act, it is a fundamental element, and we can do it right away, Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you. Point taken.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go on to Mr. Hardie for three minutes.

Mr. Ken Hardie: First of all, Mr. Badawey complimented the Port of Trois-Rivières on your relationship with the community, but I have to tell you that this isn't shared out on the west coast. I think there are some difficulties in both public confidence and municipal relationships, which I think is part of the reason many on the west coast supported removing environmental assessments from the port. They really didn't trust them. It's difficult to apply different policies in different parts of the country when you're the federal government.

An issue on the west coast is the integrated planning between ports and what should be the complementary road and rail network. If you expand what you're doing in Trois-Rivières, will the railway be able to keep up with you?

•(1250)

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: That's an excellent question.

We have special difficulties in the region. It's the big network of CN and CP. So, we're having all sorts of problems. There are paper barriers that I should tell you about. There are infrastructure problems. I'll give you an example. There is a bridge. It's 30 kilometres from the port, and it cannot sustain the load of the new railroad cars. So, for the grain coming out from the west, we can only fill them 75% or 80%. However, you're still paying for the full cargo. There are little issues like that, paper barrier problems with infrastructure and all that. We're not in the loop at all with the programs with the government and all that.

You can have the best, the most efficient port in the world, but if it's not working before or after the port—the rail, the road or in the St. Lawrence—you're doing it for nothing. You have to look at the whole chain of transportation, and we're doing that. Most of the ports now are doing it—certainly on the west coast in Vancouver and Prince Rupert. They're doing a wonderful job, I think, of doing that.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Well, they're trying to, but it is difficult.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: It's a challenge, yes.

Mr. Ken Hardie: This is a question for either port. Do you handle petroleum products?

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: No.

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: Yes, at the Port of Québec, more than half of the tonnage, I would say, is petroleum products.

Mr. Ken Hardie: What kind of petroleum products?

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: It's maybe 12 million tonnes of crude oil and about two million tonnes of refined products, mainly jet fuel.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Got it.

Jet fuel and refined products are, in fact, the sort of thing that can be shipped out of Prince Rupert, but things like crude oil and unrefined products like bitumen can't, according to the oil moratorium. You're doing a balance of...

Mr. Alain Sans Cartier: You have to know that also at the Port of Québec we have a big refinery, Valero. That's the biggest one in Quebec, and it's handling 265,000 barrels a day. It's located on the south shore of the port.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you to the witnesses for their great stories.

It's amazing to see what you're doing. Good luck, and we'll certainly be watching your growth issue proceed.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: Not only that, but remember our invitation to come to Trois-Rivières.

The Chair: Yes, we're all invited.

Mr. Gaétan Boivin: I really think that it's important that you come and see it.

The Chair: Absolutely. I agree with you very much.

I will suspend for a moment. We have to go in camera to discuss our report.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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