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# Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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Chair: Mr. Robert Kitchen



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• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)):** Welcome to meeting number seven of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

Today we will be hearing from the President of the Treasury Board regarding the supplementary estimates and the departmental results reports. We'll also discuss committee business during the last 30 minutes of the meeting.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room, and remotely using the Zoom application. Regarding the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do our best to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether participating virtually or in person. I'd like to take this opportunity to remind all participants in this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations of public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, the following is recommended for all those attending the meeting in person.

Anyone with symptoms should participate by Zoom and not attend the meeting in person. Everyone must maintain two-metre physical distancing, whether seated or standing. Everyone must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is recommended in the strongest possible terms that members wear their masks at all times, including when seated. Non-medical masks, which provide better clarity over cloth masks, are available in the room. Everyone present must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance. Committee rooms are cleaned before and after each meeting. To maintain this, everyone is encouraged to clean surfaces, such as the desk, the chair, and the microphone, with the provided disinfectant wipes when vacating or taking a seat.

As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, and I thank members in advance for their co-operation.

I would like to welcome the President of the Treasury Board and her colleagues. It's so nice to see such a full room for the first time in such a long time. Thank you to everybody who is here, and to

those who are attending via Zoom. Hopefully soon, we'll be able to get you all here as well.

That said, I invite the minister to make her opening statement, please.

• (1535)

[Translation]

**Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a great pleasure, in fact an honour, to appear before the Committee as President of the Treasury Board for the first time to discuss the Supplementary Estimates (C), 2021-22.

With me today, in person and virtually, are various officials from the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Allow me to introduce them, Mr. Chair. They are Annie Boudreau, Assistant Secretary, Expenditure Management Sector; Karen Cahill, Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial Officer; Marie-Chantal Girard, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Employee Relations and Total Compensation; Monia Lahaie, who is participating virtually, Assistant Comptroller General, Financial Management Sector; Samantha Tattersall, Assistant Comptroller General, Acquired Services and Assets Sector; and Paul Wagner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategy and Transformation.

I would like to thank them all for being here with me today.

Supplementary Estimates (C), 2021-22, are the third and final component of the supplementary estimates planned for this fiscal year. Regarding Supplementary Estimates (A) and (B), these estimates set out information about supplementary spending needs that was not ready in time to be added to the main estimates or that was subsequently refined to take recent developments into account.

Canadians are entitled to know how public funds are spent and to ask the government to account for them. That is why we continue to prioritize the manner in which these estimates are presented, accompanying them with detailed explanatory documentation that is readily accessible online for parliamentarians and Canadians. It should also be noted that reporting tools such as the Government of Canada's InfoBase and the Open Government Portal make it easy for Canadians to consult the spending approved by Parliament.

Mr. Chair, allow me to offer an overview of the supplementary estimates for the government as a whole before moving on to the funding requests for my own department, the Treasury Board Secretariat. In these supplementary estimates, the government is asking Parliament to approve voted budgetary expenditures of \$13.2 billion to meet the numerous challenges Canadians are facing at this time. The supplementary estimates provide information about \$3.9 billion in revisions to statutory expenditures, in particular to fund the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit and ventilation improvement projects in schools.

A majority of new investments support Canadians' common priorities, including combatting COVID-19 by acquiring rapid screening tests, vaccines and therapeutic products; addressing the impacts of climate change; supporting housing, education, water treatment, healthcare services, and emergency response activities for Indigenous Canadians and their communities; funding housing and infrastructure projects; and supporting military operations and personnel.

[English]

My own department, the Treasury Board Secretariat, is requesting funding to re-establish a centre of expertise for real property to improve federal real property management. The centre of expertise will implement recommendations from the government's horizontal fixed asset review, which was completed in 2021, and support departments in responding to real property changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Treasury Board is also seeking \$2.8 billion to meet the government's obligations under the court-ordered White class action settlement agreement and to ensure that settlement payments are not interrupted.

TBS is also requesting funding for adjustments due to changes to collective agreements and to reimburse organizations for eligible pay list expenditures such as parental allowances and severance pay.

Before I close, allow me to touch briefly on the department results report for my department.

- (1540)

These reports are an important part of a broad set of reports to Parliament that provide transparency in government spending for Canadians and parliamentarians. Specifically, the department results reports measure progress towards objectives set out in annual department plans, giving parliamentarians and Canadians a clear view of the results achieved by federal organizations and how resources were used to achieve those results.

In the case of the Treasury Board Secretariat, the report details results for 2020-21, including ongoing efforts to improve diversity and inclusion in the public service, transforming service delivery to support Canadians through the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing to provide government-wide leadership towards net-zero green and climate-resilient government operations.

Now I'd like to say a few words about each of these reports.

Treasury Board launched a suite of initiatives in consultation with equity-seeking employee networks to improve diversity and inclusion. These include the release of disaggregated data, pro-

grams to help address barriers to recruitment and promotion at the executive level, and amending the Public Service Employment Act.

In addition, today we tabled legislation to modernize the Official Languages Act to strengthen bilingualism in the public service. We are supporting women in the federal workforce by working with bargaining agents to identify and close any gaps that exist by increasing compensation for employees in predominately female jobs not receiving equal pay for work of equal value.

Our government set ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from federal operations by at least 40% below 2005 levels by 2025, and by 90% by 2050. Our steps to realize these goals include building zero-carbon buildings and maximizing energy efficiency in existing ones, using nature-based solutions to protect assets from natural disasters, and transitioning to a net-zero circular economy through green procurement.

Finally, to make our work sites and communities safer, last fall we required vaccination across the public service. I'm happy to report that over 98% of the core public administration are fully vaccinated.

Before I close, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our hard-working public servants. Over the past two years, they have been tireless in their efforts to protect the health and safety of Canadians while putting in place essential new supports that Canadians depended on.

Mr. Chair, the supplementary estimates (C) demonstrate our government's ongoing commitment to improving Canadians' quality of life and effectively responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also play a vital role in supporting Parliament's review of how public funds are being spent and in holding the government to account.

With that in mind, I would like to thank the committee for its thorough review in its ongoing study of government spending to support Canadians.

My officials and I would now be pleased to answer your questions. Thank you very much.

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

We will now go into our first round of questioning, and we will start with six minutes for Mr. Paul-Hus.

Mr. Paul-Hus, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

Good afternoon, Minister. Thank you for being with us in person, together with a significant portion of your team. I am pleased to see you.

There is nothing in the supplementary estimates relating to cyber security, although we find ourselves in a unique situation at present. At Treasury Board, you have produced the Directive on Service and Digital.

Can you confirm that Government of Canada systems are now well protected in terms of cyber security?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you. I am also very pleased to be here in person and to be able to answer your questions, so that we can have a conversation.

The government makes constant efforts to improve cyber security in Canada. It prepares for all types of cyber incidents in order to protect Canadians and their data.

Treasury Board works in close collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security and with other partners. We want to make very sure that we are able to investigate cyber events and respond to them when they are reported.

• (1545)

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you, Minister.

I am aware of that. I'm going to ask you a more specific question.

On January 24, the federal agencies confirmed that we had been the target of a cyber attack. Your department confirmed the incident and stated that mitigation measures had been taken. We have not heard any other details since then.

Do you know where the cyber attack came from?

At this time, we know that Russia is engaging in coordinated cyber attacks in Canada. Did that cyber attack come from Russia?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you again for your question.

As you know, the Treasury Board Secretariat is working very hard on this.

I am going to ask Mr. Wagner, who works with me, to try to give you the details you are looking for.

**Mr. Paul Wagner (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategy and Transformation, Treasury Board Secretariat):** Good afternoon.

Thank you very much.

As the minister has said, we work very closely with Shared Services Canada and with our colleagues in the government, internally, to mitigate these threats.

In terms of the threat you are talking about, we are still working to determine the source. We are not in a position to give you more information about this. It is a constantly evolving situation, particu-

larly within the government as a whole. We are currently keeping a close eye on the entire infrastructure.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you.

Normally, there are cyber attacks committed against government systems all the time. The director of the Communications Security Establishment, the CSE, confirmed at the time, when she appeared before the Standing Committee on National Defence, that there had been one million automated attacks per day, if I recall correctly.

However, given the war that has broken out in Ukraine and the Russian threats, are government systems being attacked more directly, more obviously?

What do you know about the situation?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for your question.

Since I have been at the Treasury Board Secretariat, we have experienced a number of cyber attacks of various levels. There are four levels of cyber attack.

We have analyzed these cyber attacks to make sure we are prepared to respond to level 3 and 4 cyber attacks. Level 1 and 2 attacks are also very important, of course.

Because we know we could be threatened, we have coordinated with all the teams in the various departments that have a role to play. As soon as a threat comes in, we are informed and we immediately deal with the situation horizontally, if I can put it that way. We are much better organized than we were before.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you.

I would like to ask you a question dealing with a completely different area.

Regarding government purchases in relation to the construction of 15 frigates, do you think, as Treasury Board President, that it is reasonable or right to pay \$77 billion for 15 frigates?

That figure has been determined by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. National Defence itself says it is \$56 billion to \$60 billion.

What figure do you have? Is it reasonable to pay that much?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** As you know, the Treasury Board Secretariat receives requests from various departments when they are ready to move forward.

We are continuing to examine this issue, of course.

I am going to ask Ms. Tattersall, who works with me, to give you more details regarding your question.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall (Assistant Comptroller General, Acquired Services and Assets Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat):** When we get requests at Treasury Board, they will come in, we will do our due diligence and we will look at the costing that's associated with that project request.

We have a centre of expertise on costing that works with the Department of National Defence to look at the costing range that would be appropriate.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you for your answer.

Do you currently have a more precise idea of the costs?

We are talking about the largest procurement contract in the history of Canada. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, with his team, does what he can to get us figures, but we are unable to get anything more precise from the government.

Do you have more precise figures regarding the 15 frigates?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** At this point, I do not have the precise amount. However, I know that Treasury Board will have to examine the figure when the department submits it.

So I could answer your question better then.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** I would like to come back to the beginning of my question, and I will conclude with that.

As Treasury Board President, do you think this expenditure is acceptable?

• (1550)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I look at whether expenditures are acceptable, are responsible, and whether they meet the various criteria we have in the government. We also examine the level of risk.

So I am going to be looking at all these factors in order to be able to determine whether the figure is correct or not. I will then inform the department accordingly.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we will go to Mr. Kusmierczyk for six minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister. We're absolutely delighted to host you here at OGGO today.

I had the great honour of hosting you in our community in Windsor—Tecumseh during pre-budget consultations when you were the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and associate finance minister. I want to extend our congratulations for your new appointment in this role.

I want to take a step back. For those who may be a little bit unsure or unaware of the role of the Treasury Board, I want to ask if you can start off by explaining to the committee what the role of the Treasury Board is. Is it the Treasury Board that is responsible for approving all federal expenditures? Can you provide us with a bit of a broader view before we begin with some of the other questions?

Thank you.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** It's great to see you, Irek. Hopefully we'll be seeing each other in person very soon, or maybe I'll get a chance to go back to Windsor.

I want to thank you. It's really important that we know that Treasury Board has a role and is responsible for spending authority, and that we provide due diligence and approve program parameters to set out departmental submissions, including any voted amounts to be included in the estimates and related appropriations bills.

We are the biggest employer in Canada and have the privilege of working with almost 300,000 public servants. We have the privilege of really making sure public servants can serve Canadians. We also approve collective agreements.

Also, we establish the rule sets for people, information technology, expenditure management and regulations, and we review spending plans on departmental initiatives and decisions that affect services we deliver to Canadians. Under my mandate, we also have the digital strategy mandate and greening government.

As you can see, the Treasury Board has many responsibilities, and I'm very proud to be the president at this time with a great team.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Thank you, Minister.

As the largest employer, it was remarkable when I saw that over 98% of employees are fully vaccinated, which I think is a remarkable accomplishment. Keeping them safe and healthy and looking after their well-being, obviously, are huge priorities.

On that note, I want to turn our attention to the fact that COVID-19 measures, in general, accounted for well over half of the authorities under these supplementary estimates, totalling, I think, \$9.8 billion. For the year, that actually brings the total COVID-related authorities to just a shade under \$60 billion, if I'm not mistaken.

I just want to ask, Minister, if you can tell us how the money that's been requested by Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada will help us in the fight against COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I think you said it. The health, safety and well-being of all Canadians are of the utmost importance to the government. For the last two years, we have been focusing on and prioritizing the safety of Canadians and focusing on reducing the number of people who have COVID and also on reducing the deaths we have in our country.

For these supplementary estimates, approximately \$6.7 billion of proposed votes spending is for the ongoing response to COVID-19. This amount includes \$4 billion for the procurement of rapid test kits to meet increased demand in provinces and territories, \$1 billion for additional therapeutics to treat COVID-19, and \$1 billion to support emergency measures related to the pandemic.

As you know, we have to continue to make sure we respond to the COVID pandemic, and this is what we are presenting to you today.

• (1555)

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Thank you, Minister.

You mentioned that \$4 billion has been earmarked for rapid tests, which is a huge number. Minister, of that \$4 billion, how much is that costing the provinces, for example Ontario? Is that a cost-share with the provinces and territories, or is that \$4 billion simply the federal government stepping forward and saying it will cover the full cost of the rapid tests?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** It's 100% from the federal government.

As you know, since the beginning of the pandemic, the federal government has invested \$8 out of every \$10 invested to fight COVID-19. Many of these investments have been transferred to the provinces and territories, for example vaccines, rapid test kits, and PPE. Schools also received funding through the provinces.

In this case, MP Kusmierczyk, the \$4 billion is all from the federal government.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kusmierczyk and Minister.

We'll now go to Mrs. Vignola, for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Good afternoon, Ms. Fortier.

I have a lot of questions to ask you about the budget, which I have dissected, but first I am going to address the question of French.

I know that improving the status of French in the public service is one of your objectives. In recent months, there have been newspaper articles about how francophones are often bilingual but anglophones aren't. Using French on Zoom has been difficult. For example, even plumbers in remote regions like Port-Cartier on the North Shore are being asked to be bilingual, in case there are anglophone prisoners. The same requirement does not exist in Ontario or the Prairies, for example.

In 2016, \$50 million was spent on francization courses for public servants. How can the effect of those courses on anglophones' level of bilingualism be measured, at the end of the day?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you very much for your question.

We have to keep doing more to encourage bilingualism in the public service and offer incentives for public servants to provide services in both official languages. The representatives of the Treasury Board Secretariat, the TBS, can talk more about this, but I know there are a lot of training programs for public servants.

We also do evaluations to see how these programs are received in the regions. This may take the form of an employee satisfaction study that lets us know how they feel.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** First, how much is spent per year on French courses for public servants?

Second, I would like to know the effects of these courses. I am not talking about public servants' degree of satisfaction with the courses. Do you observe a concrete increase in bilingualism and the use of French? Often, there only needs to be one anglophone in a room for ten francophones to start speaking in English, out of courtesy or for other reasons, whatever.

Do you see greater use of French during meetings in the public service, or is it the minority language?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** That's an excellent question, but I don't have the figures with me. We can send them to you later.

What needs to be pointed out is that each department has plans for making sure that official language requirements are followed in its offer of services, depending on the regions that are designated or essential services. You would have to look at what departments have improved and what others still need to improve in this regard. I can't give you all the details right now.

However, I can tell you that the Commissioner of Official Languages is helping us to determine the aspects that need improvement. As you know, the Commissioner is not backward about sending us information on complaints or studies. I had the pleasure of meeting him recently.

• (1600)

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** I am going to continue on the question of French.

You collaborate with Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, on contracts, for one thing. There is still a problem with translating contracts, which were hard to obtain in French.

What concrete measures can your department take so that all departments that do business with PSPC, without exception, make sure that documents are actually translated and not translated with Google?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I would like to be able to answer directly, but I would not want to speak for the minister, Ms. Tassi, who is responsible for that department.

Having said that, I would guess that Ms. Tattersall may have some information that is needed for answering your question.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** You have a policy about this too.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall:** Just to further elaborate, we have updated our Treasury Board policies on procurement. We're very explicit in that policy that communications with contractors and suppliers, including debriefs, need to be undertaken in both official languages, or in the official language requested by the contractor. We have enhanced our policies to that effect.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Yes, but in spite of that update, some departments are having a little more trouble.

What measures do you intend to take, in concrete terms, so that the departments that are having more trouble make sure that the documents are published in both official languages?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** There is high demand for getting documents translated, and we know there are sometimes shortfalls. However, measures are being taken and Ms. Girard could name some of them for you.

**Ms. Marie-Chantal Girard (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Treasury Board Secretariat):** Thank you.

The language profile is determined based on the position and the responsibilities, not based on the individual. That is how we determine whether language training needs to be given, under the authority of the deputy minister of the department. That is how we ensure that services are offered in the desired language.

The Secretariat continues to make efforts and consider the options available to it for modernizing the second language training plan, since the public service is changing. That would make bilingualism accessible to all public servants, in particular members of employment equity groups and Indigenous employees, who might have special language training needs.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Girard.

[*English*]

Madame Girard, if you can provide further information, it would be appreciated.

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

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Thank you, Minister, for being here with your staff.

Minister, in the supplementary estimates, there's \$349.3 million dedicated to funding the P3 Canada fund through public-private partnership projects. How much, and what proportion of that money earmarked here, is going to outsourced contracts to private companies?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** That's a very specific question, and I think Annie will be able to respond.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau (Assistant Secretary, Expenditure Management Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat):** The amount that you see in supplementary estimates (C) is a reprofile that was initially slated for another estimate. This reprofile funding for the P3 Canada fund will support the delivery of remaining approved ongoing projects to which Canada has legally committed.

The need for reprofiling is attributed to different project cost claims and adjustment of construction schedules, as well as ensuring that appropriate funding is available upon the completion of the remaining projects.

• (1605)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm just trying to get an idea of how much is outsourced. What percentage is outsourced?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** I will continue and maybe that will answer your question.

Following the dissolution of PPP Canada, the office of Infrastructure Canada took over the legal responsibility to continue managing existing agreements. The \$349.3 million is specifically for the following three projects: AMT Pointe-St-Charles maintenance project in Montreal, the Edmonton Light Rail Transit system, and another one in the Northwest Territories.

Regarding how much we're going to be outsourcing, that's a question for Infrastructure Canada, which is responsible for the implementation of these projects.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Thank you for that.

Minister, I wrote you a letter in mid-January about outsourcing. I reminded you about your party's commitment in 2015, when your party promised that while in government, they would focus on reducing the use of external consultants. There was an analysis published in *The Globe and Mail* that said that it's not happening; rather, the use of consultants under your party's watch has increased a staggering 41.8% since your government took power. I want to remind you that this spending has totalled over \$12 billion in the 2020-21 year.

Outsourcing and the privatization of public services have time and time again only proven to increase costs, add risk to taxpayers, reduce the quality of services, erode the internal capacity of the public service, create precarious work and undermine initiatives that address pay equity and systemic racism. A report by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada emphasized how your government often initially awards a contract that on the surface offers relatively low cost and value for money, only for the contract costs to be substantially increased once it's been awarded.

There's no greater example of outsourcing failing than the debacle with the Phoenix pay system. It's a scandal that, since its launch five years ago, has still not been successfully resolved by your government. The costs incurred related to the Phoenix pay system were reportedly \$560 million. That is now twice as much as the federal government spent to set the system up. It is a system with a stated purpose of generating long-term savings, but it has only managed to outsource its expensive failings to the Canadian taxpayer.

The consultancy firm McKinsey has been contracted by your government to help fix the Phoenix pay system, originally for the cost of \$4.9 million, but this contract has now been amended three times. The estimated cost of the contract is now \$27.7 million, which is an increase of 565%.

This culture that permeates your government of allowing highly paid consultants to repeatedly change the cost of their work ever upward is not only fiscally irresponsible, but an insult to Canadian taxpayers who work hard and play by the rules. As the President of the Treasury Board, you have the opportunity and ability to stop the government's increasing drive to outsource and privatize public services, which decades of overwhelming evidence has shown will lead to higher costs.

Will you commit to taking an evidence-based approach to public service delivery and ensure that, wherever possible, the government contracts in-house, rather than wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on highly overpaid consultants?



**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for sharing your thoughts on how you perceive the government investing in outsourcing.

Our government is really committed to providing high-quality services to Canadians. At the same time, we want to ensure the best value for taxpayers. That's why contracts are issued in a fair way in accordance with the Treasury Board policies that we have.

The procurement of professional services is used to complement the work of Canada's professional public service by meeting unexpected fluctuations in workload and to acquire special expertise. The response to health care needs in remote northern communities is a good example.

Another—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm sorry. I only have 15 seconds left.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** May I finish? I have more to tell you, if I can.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Go ahead.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I want you to know that a strong federal public service is the best way to deliver for Canadians. We're developing a long-term, government-wide public service skills strategy, including increasing the number of public servants with modern digital skills, because that is something we are lacking. We are working to make sure that we bring in more public servants who will be able to serve Canadians.

• (1610)

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

We've finished our first round, and we will now go to the second round.

We'll start with five minutes for Mr. McCauley.

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

Minister, welcome.

Very quickly on the vaccine mandates—99% is fantastic—is there a plan to include mandating boosters? Is there a long-term plan for the mandates for public service employees?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for your question.

When we installed the mandate policy, we mentioned that we would revise it after six months. During this revision, we will identify if we will change the definition of “fully vaccinated”. For example, right now—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm sorry. When will this be done?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Six months from October means around April.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Okay. That's good.

Let me move on to the \$4 billion for the rapid testing. There was \$4 billion in Bill C-8 and Bill C-10. I understand that this is a duplicate \$4 billion—or is this \$8 billion altogether for rapid tests?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Mindful to make sure that Canadians have access to rapid tests, we have found—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Is it \$8 billion in total or is it a duplicate?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** No, it's not a duplicate. It's a path to make sure that we have access to rapid tests. We found two ways, and the way that we'll get faster—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** How much is intended to be purchased? Is it \$4 billion in total or \$8 billion in total?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** It's \$2.5 billion in rapid tests.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** But you're asking for \$4 billion in the supplementaries. You already have \$4 billion in Bill C-8 and Bill C-10. Why the \$4 billion more? Supplementaries will die on March 31. Is it your intent to have that lapse or reprofile that for something else?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** You are correct that we have in the supplementary estimates (C) a request for \$4 billion. At the same time, we have a separate track with Bill C-8 and Bill—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'm aware of that. I just said that, twice now, and I'd like an answer to the question. Will \$8 billion in total be spent?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** No. It won't.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** It will be \$4 billion in total, and—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Okay.

So if we approve the supplementary estimates (C) for \$4 billion and Bill C-8 and Bill C-10 receive royal assent, what will happen with that added \$4 billion that you're asking for? Will it lapse or will it be reprofiled?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** It will lapse. It will go back to the fiscal framework.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Why was vote 5 not used, the contingency? There is about \$650 million unspent. Why was that not used? Why Bill C-8 and Bill C-10 and now the supplementaries? It seems very poor planning, or perhaps it's being used as a PR stunt by the government.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** Vote 5 is capped at \$750 million—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Right, and I think only about \$90 million has been spent. I think there's about \$650 million unspent between now and the end of the year. Why not just use that to carry over?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** We already used vote 5. We used the amount that you see in the online annex, which is \$551 million. That amount was used to buy rapid test kits.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Okay. So the \$4 billion will be lapsed. That's good.

Let's go to the departmental results. When you look at GC InfoBase, for government goals overall, 45.6% were achieved. That was the worst in three years. Treasury Board achieved 47.8%. I'm not going to blame that on you, Minister, but it's a poor performance by the department. I've brought up ATIP before: 31% of ATIP responses violated the legislated timeline.

I don't want to say that the results are dismal, but they're certainly not acceptable. What can we see going forward that's going to improve this? Again, overall government is getting poorer, and—

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for asking that question. I think it's very important to say that our guiding principles are openness, transparency and accountability. With that, I have to say that we acted quickly to implement exceptional workplace measures to curb the spread of COVID-19—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Can I interrupt for a second, just quickly? I'm running out of time. You talked about accountability. Ms. Cahill will attest that, over the years, I have been very critical of TBS and other departments for not actually setting proper goals. In the departmental plans, probably one quarter don't have a target, or have no target to be achieved in this year. It's the same with Treasury Board. But here we have the departmental results being delayed by the government, I think three months from when they were actually ready, and the PBO has pointed out....

Treasury Board is asking this committee and parliamentarians to approve money when we don't even have the previous year's results published. We actually have them, but they haven't been published. We saw that with the public accounts, but also with the departmental results delayed.

I understand what you're getting at, but I don't believe there is an attempt at accountability or transparency.

I've used up your time. I'm sorry.

• (1615)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I do have an answer, so maybe in the next round I'll be able to answer.

**The Chair:** Minister, perhaps you can provide that to us in writing.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I did have the privilege of answering that in the House, MP McCauley. Thank you for your question. Maybe I'll send you a letter.

**The Chair:** If you could respond to that question in writing, that would be appreciated, Minister.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Yes. I will respond in a letter.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Housefather—unless he wants to ask the question and get the answer.

Mr. Housefather, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Minister, it is a great pleasure to have you with us today.

I am going to ask you a question about a subject that is dear to your heart.

We both have minority language communities in our ridings. I know that reform of the Official Languages Act is important to you.

The new bill that has been introduced would give you more powers. I am going to read paragraph (k) from the summary of the bill:

Part 1 amends the Official Languages Act to, among other things,

(k) provide that the Treasury Board is required to establish policies to give effect to certain parts of that Act, monitor and audit federal institutions for their compliance with policies, directives and regulations relating to the official languages, evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of policies and programs of federal institutions relating to the official languages and provide certain information to the public and to employees of federal institutions;

You are now going to have a lot of powers.

What are you going to do with them?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for the question, which I am very pleased to answer today.

As you know, the introduction of Bill C-13 to modernize the Official Languages Act is important to me, because the Act has not been modernized in 50 years. We are getting to it today. I am very happy that this bill has been introduced and I hope it will be passed quickly.

As part of this modernization, the role of Treasury Board is going to change; it will take on the role of central agent and will have greater powers to oversee and enforce the Act. That will also enable us at Treasury Board to see how we can improve the service provided to Canadians in terms of official languages.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I am going to come back to Ms. Vignola's question. It seems to me that you will have more powers in relation to departments that are more recalcitrant, or less effective, at making sure their employees are bilingual and ensuring bilingualism in the services offered to the public. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** We were already able to do that, but now we will have to do it. That will give us an important tool for making sure that the departments that are already making efforts in connection with the Official Languages Act but have shortcomings in that regard are able to rectify those shortcomings.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I have another brief question on the same subject. You are undoubtedly aware of the judgment concerning British Columbia that held that services will be given in French in that province in the case of powers delegated to the provinces by the federal government.

Will that give Treasury Board the power to ensure that the agreements signed with the provinces and territories include provisions requiring that they enforce the Official Languages Act within their governments?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** When the federal government signs agreements with the provincial and territorial governments, one of the things it ensures is that services are provided to minority communities. In this case, since it is a court judgment, I am working with Mr. Lametti to see what the government's response to this will be and how we can best play our role in connection with agreements with the provinces and territories.

[*English*]

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Fantastic. I'll also just say in English that I'm very pleased about that, because I know you'll do a lot with those powers.

Can I just ask one more question? We're all looking for more diversity, more inclusivity in the federal workplaces. Could you talk to us a little bit about what you are doing in that regard?

• (1620)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** As you know, diversity and inclusion are a very important initiative that the Treasury Board is working on, and we're always committed to this effort. We continue to bring forward steps to remove discrimination from our institutions, to improve the experience of public servants, and to ensure that they're able to realize their full potential.

What have we done? We've created the Office of Public Service Accessibility and the first accessibility strategy for the public service of Canada. We also committed to meeting or exceeding the requirements of the new Accessible Canada Act, which sets out the legal requirements for accessibility for all federally regulated businesses.

I'm sure we can continue that conversation on how we're making sure diversity and inclusion are part of our public—

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

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

[*Translation*]

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

Supplementary Estimates (C), 2021-22, contains 46 horizontal items, which is gigantic. That is not necessarily bad news, because it means that the departments are collaborating with one another. I was pleased with some of those government items, but I also found them shocking.

That is the case for the following horizontal item in particular. Out of \$654 million, \$647 million is going to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development for operating expenses relating to climate change mitigation measures in developing countries. So \$647 million is going to that department for operating expenses—that's fine—but also for grants and contributions for international climate finance mechanisms and financial institutions, and projects to promote adaptation to climate change and development of governance capacity.

I have to say that I wondered. I mean, \$647 million out of \$654 million is really a big piece of the pie. I wondered what proportion of that \$647 million was allocated to international financial mechanisms and financial institutions in comparison to the proportion allocated to the projects themselves. I didn't know that international financial institutions needed grants and contributions from Canada. That was a surprise to me.

When we talk about development of governance capacity, whose capacity is that, and for what?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** You have given me an opportunity to reiterate that Canada recognizes that climate change is a global problem that calls for solutions at a planetary scale. This funding will increase support to developing countries, as you have probably seen in the plan...

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** That's what I said.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** ... so they are able to transition to low carbon emission economies...

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** My question is about the financial mechanisms.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** ... and seize opportunities to mitigate those changes, as Canada and all countries of the world must do.

I can ask the officials in my department to give you more precise answers to your questions. If we don't have all the answers, we will send them to you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

If you can provide that information—

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** We will. I don't have it off the top of my head.

**The Chair:** Please provide it to the clerk and we will get that. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Minister, we all heard the alarming report yesterday from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It cited that 40% of the global population is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It urges climate adaptation investments to save lives.

There is \$653 million earmarked for funding to help developing countries address the impacts of climate change. It says that money will be spent on assisting the transition to clean energy in order to support the goals of the climate agreement.

Can you break down how the money within that package is specifically being spent? For example, it says that it will invest in climate-smart agriculture. How much money will be spent on that?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for your question. I think it resembles the questioning of MP Vignola in asking for precision on the submission.

I don't, unfortunately, know it by heart. I just know that we go through a process of receiving the submission, looking into it and making sure that we're responding to the priorities that we have set out.

If you would permit, we would send a written response to give you more details on your question.

• (1625)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'd appreciate that, Minister. Obviously we're all sensing the urgency right now.

In the funding for wildfire and flood preparedness and response capacity, I see that there was funding rightly going to supporting initiatives like flood mapping, as well as scientific studies, in order to improve the capacity to respond to fires in national parks. In my riding, we have volunteer firefighters who've answered the call and helped their communities, especially last summer with the wildfires raging. They've been there for us throughout the whole pandemic. They get a tax credit of up to \$3,000. They get a benefit. I've tabled a bill to raise that to \$10,000. The PBO said it would cost \$40 million.

How much of the funding here went to support these firefighters who risked their lives for their communities as volunteers? Also, are you considering our proposal?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for your question and sharing the fact that we do have to make sure we help communities that go through these very difficult times.

Again, I don't have the specific answer. If you would let me look into it with the officials, we could respond to your question by letter.

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

That's the time right there.

We'll now go to our last two questioners. We'll go to Mr. Lobb for five minutes.

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

Welcome, all.

In the last fiscal year that you looked at, how many hacks has the Government of Canada had on its different departments? Do you track that?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I don't have the specific number, but maybe one of the officials does.

Paul, would you have an idea of how many situations we've had?

**Mr. Paul Wagner:** For individual situations, we do have the number of hacks. The infrastructure and our environment are attacked daily, hourly and every minute. We have systems deployed to mitigate those situations. There are more situations that are miti-

gated than we actually have to deal with as incidents in departments.

In terms of the total number, I don't have that number with me, but I'd be happy to get back to you.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** How many did you have to report to the Privacy Commissioner?

**Mr. Paul Wagner:** Again, I can include that number, but departmental heads and their officials are responsible for reporting those. That's not a Treasury Board Secretariat responsibility; it's a departmental responsibility as those hacks happen.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** In supplementary estimates (C), I read that there was an allocation for therapeutics as well. Do you recall that? It looked like a billion dollars.

What do you classify as a therapeutic?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** As I said earlier, we had rapid tests, therapeutics approved by Health Canada, which will be used to support people who have COVID, and also vaccines, so that's—

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Specifically, though, there is a line item in there that says “therapeutics” at \$1 billion. What is it? What products are you buying for \$1 billion?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** Several potential treatments for COVID-19, including oral antivirals, are undergoing various stages of development and study as global demand is competitive. Access to effective treatments for infected individuals could reduce the severity of COVID-19 for individuals and reduce the strain on the health care system.

As you said, the supplementary estimates (C) include new funding of \$1 billion to serve as a contingency fund that may be used for the purchase of additional treatments. More specifically, procurement of pharmaceutical products in short supply, such as Paxlovid, is done by the Government of Canada under the authority of the Minister of Health, and treatments procured will support provincial and territorial health care systems as well.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Okay.

Now, I know that all the individual health units across this country track shots administered, and they also track the number of shots that were not used and were thrown out. Do you have a number that is reported to you folks? It's part of your due diligence. If you're asked to spend \$4 billion on a number of different things, you've been asked to spend a lot of money, so do you go back to the health department and say, “By the way, how many are you throwing out here?” It's a significant number, I think, in this latest round, so what's that number?

• (1630)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Our role as the federal government was to provide provinces and territories with vaccines and therapeutics, and when they go into the provinces and territories, that's when the provinces and territories have the responsibility of making sure they use what they receive.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Is there a way to report all that back so that, as taxpayers, we know that, okay, we've just thrown out two billion dollars' worth of vaccines? Is that a number that we would be able to get in this committee?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** That number should be provided by the Department of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada. They would be able to provide that number.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** I know. It would be nice if they reported it to you as well, I think.

Another question I have—I know my time is running out here—is in regard to this climate support for agriculture. It has been mentioned a couple of times. It's approximately \$650 million. I'll admit that I raised a bit of a Spockian eyebrow when I saw that number, because I see that and I say to myself, in Bill C-12 they allocate \$100 million to Canadian farmers in rebates for climate change, not knowing how much it is, and then I see this in here, with \$650 million to go to farmers and other people around the world.

Tell me a little more about this situation. It doesn't seem right to me.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Again, the—

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** That's a lot of money for farmers around the world.

**The Chair:** The time is up.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Would you like me to send you a letter with the information, MP Lobb? I'll work also with GAC, of course, which has the submission that comes with understanding what they do with the amount.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. I'd appreciate it if you can provide that to us.

Just to be clear, when I mentioned earlier that there were two more questioners, that was out of respect for the minister's time. We will still have the officials here after that for further questions, for another half-hour, but the minister said she would stay for the hour.

We have Ms. Thompson, our last questioner, for five minutes.

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

Welcome, Minister.

Could you explain how the supplementaries and Bill C-10 both fund rapid tests?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Well, as we explained earlier, our priority is to make sure that Canadians have access to rapid tests. In this case, we had to find paths to get there, and we found two paths: one through a supplementary estimates (C) request, and the other one through legislation. Now, as we said earlier, the path that goes

faster will give us the opportunity to move faster on this, and afterwards the other path will lapse.

That is what we're doing to make sure Canadians have access to rapid tests.

**Ms. Joanne Thompson:** Thank you.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*] in my riding, small craft harbours are incredibly significant.

I'm wondering if you could speak generally on the importance of small craft harbours to the government and if this is something that you see would be funded through the supplementary estimates.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** First, as you know, small craft harbours are very important, and they have been something for which many have advocated for a long time. In budget 2021, our government announced \$300 million over the next two years to repair, renew or replace small craft harbours. In these supplementary estimates, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard is requesting the authority to access \$148 million for this funding, and that will enable the department to move forward.

You should also know that since 2016 our government has invested almost \$1 billion in new funding for the small craft harbours program. As you know, livelihoods in fishing, aquaculture, tourism, the environment, recreation, marine engineering and the construction industry really strengthen the resilience of our rural and coastal communities. We will continue to look at that as giving to the prosperity of our communities.

• (1635)

**Ms. Joanne Thompson:** Thank you.

My final question is this: How does Treasury Board ensure that government follows through on our commitment to reduce emissions?

If there's time left, you can complete the answers to questions from other colleagues here.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** As I said earlier, we are committed to reducing emissions. We are making sure that, when departments send their submissions, they show their plans and how they will move ahead, not only to set targets, but to get results. That's how we make sure, when we receive those submissions, that we look at the risks, and we look at whether they have really pushed hard to show us the actions that will be taken, making sure we're using taxpayers' money the right way.

**Ms. Joanne Thompson:** You get free time to complete any answers from previous questions.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I just want to thank everybody for giving me the opportunity to share that Treasury Board has a very important role. I believe that the conversation we had today helps us to also make sure we are able to respond to your different questions.

Chair, I've mentioned that I will be sending out some letters to you to share with your members containing answers to questions that I didn't get a chance to answer.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be with you this afternoon.

[*English*]

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

With that, the minister is going to leave us. I'd like to thank the President of the Treasury Board for being here today.

Our senior officials are staying, so we will now go into questions for the officials.

We will start with Mr. Paul-Hus for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Girard, I will address my question about public servants going back to the office to you.

In Quebec and other provinces, there are precise plans for public servants returning. Here in Ottawa, according to the union, many public servants would prefer to stay home. According to the figures, 50% of employees would prefer to work remotely 100% of the time, 45% of employees would like to have a hybrid model, and only 5% of employees would like to come back to the office full-time.

What are your plans?

**Ms. Marie-Chantal Girard:** Thank you for your question.

You may have seen that we published the most recent health and safety guidelines yesterday, in partnership with Health Canada. This means we can consider a gradual return, after Omicron and what has happened in recent weeks. According to what was very clearly announced yesterday in our communications, the return must be cautious and gradual, and must adhere to certain health and safety rules that our Health Canada colleagues have provided to us. Each deputy minister, as the person in charge of their organization, must ensure that gradual return to work plans are implemented with this in mind.

In addition, we see this as an opportunity to rethink how we do things and review the plans. In light of the experience of the last two years, we understand that there will not be a uniform approach throughout the public service.

The public service is decentralized and its operations are complex and diverse. Each department, with the support of the team working with the head of human resources, who provides the guidelines, is now preparing its plan and how it will be implemented.

It will be done gradually, to have what we can call a hybrid return, but most importantly a flexible one. We have learned from experience, and the plan will be based on experimentation. We are not the only ones who are going through this.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Indeed, you are not the only ones.

Personally, I am wondering about efficiency at work.

As we know, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has an enormous backlog of cases to be processed. In my opinion, working remotely, on a virtual or hybrid model, can create problems in terms of efficiency. In some sectors, remote working can be done easily, while in others, the teams have to be on site.

Is this something you have observed?

**Ms. Marie-Chantal Girard:** Very much so.

Once again, it comes down to adopting a uniform approach. It is impossible for the Government of Canada, the largest employer in Canada, to adopt that kind of approach, because it is too complex and too diversified.

Each position has to be analyzed, and the system for organizing the work really has to be established based on that analysis. That is why we are working with our union partners. We are making sure that we hold broad consultations. In the public service, human resources are actively working on it.

One of the five major principles that we have adopted as broad parameters is obviously excellence, so that we continue to offer the services that are expected, and to offer them consistently. When things are not the same, but are consistent, it works.

The other principles are flexibility, transparency, and equity. We have learned lessons from the pandemic.

Regarding employment equity, we always base our decisions on gender-based analysis, diversity and inclusion.

• (1640)

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you, Ms. Girard.

I would now like to come back to the subject of the ships, but I don't know who will be able to answer my question concerning costs.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** I think that Samantha Tattersall will be able to answer it.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** My question is about the costs associated with the shipbuilding, with the 15 frigates.

Of course, the minister may not yet have the information in hand, but I imagine that the Parliamentary Budget Officer will be able to evaluate the costs. You must have got that valuation yourself already. The project is going ahead, but there are enormous costs associated with it.

Can you tell me any more about this?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall:** I would defer to my colleague, Moina Lahaie, who is responsible for the costing centre.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monia Lahaie (Assistant Comptroller General, Financial Management Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat):** We are working closely with the departments to establish and evaluate the cost of the initiatives. The most recent information I have received in this regard is that the cost will be between \$56 and \$60 billion.

We are working closely with the Department of National Defence to develop our organizations' capacity to establish good practices, based on international best practices, when it comes to developing costs.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you, Ms. Lahaie.

Before concluding, I would like to mention that the committee will shortly be doing a study on shipbuilding. I suggest that you take your own look at that subject, because it is certainly going to come up again before long.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we'll go to Mr. Bains for five minutes.

**Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for joining us today.

I'm going to go on the theme of zero-emission vehicles—being from British Columbia, the first jurisdiction in Canada to introduce the carbon tax.

I want to find out a little bit more about the transition towards hybrid and zero-emission vehicles that the federal government is doing. It aims to reduce emissions from its real property and fleet by 40% below the 2005 levels by March 2026. By 2019-20, it had achieved 34.6% reductions below the 2005 levels. The president's mandate letter calls for the electrification of all light-duty vehicles by 2030.

What proportion of the federal fleet do light-duty vehicles comprise? This is for anybody who has the answer.

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall:** I'll be happy to answer that.

About 60% of the government's vehicle operation is for light-duty, and 60% of the 30,000 vehicles, 18,000, are for conventional light-duty versus, say, security vehicles. That's where the focus is in terms of electrifying our light-duty vehicles.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Okay.

In order to achieve some of these goals, how many light-duty vehicles procured by 2030 will be manufactured in whole or in part by Canadian companies?

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall:** That's a great question.

Whenever we go out for procurement, we try to follow the open, fair, competitive process, so we would competitively tender those.

It's difficult to say or predict how the market is shifting or changing and who would compete for those procurements, but the approach to that would be open and competitive.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Do we have an idea of how many companies in Canada would be capable?

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall:** That is a good question.

We know that in the past few years Canada's automotive industry has become one of the leaders—the top 12 producers—of light-duty vehicles, and Canadian companies are leading the way in developing some of these technologies. In the past few years, manufacturers like Ford, GM and Lion Electric have committed billions to transforming their Canadian facilities to produce electric vehicles.

• (1645)

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Thank you.

I'm going to just shift a little bit into procurement.

The president's mandate letter instructs her to “[s]trengthen federal procurement policies to integrate human rights, environment, social and corporate governance principles and supply chain transparency principles”.

What lessons about ethical purchasing has the federal government learned from its COVID-19 procurement initiatives?

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall:** The procurement during COVID-19 would have followed the framework and processes that we have in place—existing legislation and regulations.

PSPC, which I know will be at this committee later this week, is the contracting authority that would have led those big procurements, so they may be better placed to provide that information to this committee.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Just on that theme, what is your department doing to ensure a more accessible workplace for those with disabilities, under the theme of human rights, environment, and social and corporate governance principles?

**Mrs. Samantha Tattersall:** In terms of what we as a department are doing for accessibility, I might turn to my colleague Karen Cahill.

With respect to the mandate commitments, we are currently looking at how we could update our procurement policies to better embed principles around human trafficking and ethical procurement.

Maybe Karen has something to add in terms of accessibility and what we're doing at TBS.

**Ms. Marie-Chantal Girard:** Actually, I can answer this. Thank you, Samantha.

I will supplement by saying that the TBS office for accessibility was mandated to help the public service get ready to implement the Accessible Canada Act. Its “Nothing without us: An accessibility strategy for the Public Service of Canada” was co-developed with persons with disabilities to be a road map. If we want to make the public service a leader and a model in this field, one key element of the strategy is to improve recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities. As the country's largest employer, as I said before, we can certainly make a major difference in that regard.

The Government of Canada has identified a target of 5,000 new employees with disabilities to be hired by 2025.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Do I have any more time?

**The Chair:** No, your time is up. The bell is going.

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

[*Translation*]

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

My question is about the Phoenix system, given that some people in my riding are still being affected by these problems. People in Vancouver and some towns in Quebec have been writing to me about this.

We have been dealing with the Phoenix system for six years. The number of cases with arrears owing has grown to 141,000. During the pandemic, we were constantly being told that in the current month, 400,000 actions had been taken in cases. That told us absolutely nothing, however, about how many cases had been resolved.

The department has also negotiated to get compensation agreements signed, but are there still people to be compensated?

For the 141,000 cases in the Phoenix system in which there are arrears, what can people expect, in concrete terms?

Some people are waiting for \$756, but others are waiting for \$40,000. After six years, this makes no sense. I would not wish this on anyone.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marie-Chantal Girard:** I can begin, and perhaps my colleague, Madame Cahill, will want to supplement.

[*Translation*]

Our colleagues at Shared Services Canada, or SSC, are working hard on this. Since we started trying to solve this problem collectively, several thousands of rules and updates have been added to the system, and we know that it is stabilizing. That doesn't mean that the queue is getting shorter, because there are movements every day, at a large employer like the public service. However, there are updates, and the system is more stable than it was.

Among the series of things we have done, we have imposed a moratorium that allowed us to freeze or postpone vacations and overtime. We have also postponed repayment of overpayments. We are doing a series of things to make sure, at Treasury Board, that the pay environment is stable and allows us to manage the queued

transactions. We know that an employee may have more than one transaction in the queue.

• (1650)

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Can you complete your answer...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm sorry for interrupting, but unfortunately our time is up.

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

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm going to follow up on that. It's been six years since the start of the debacle with Phoenix. One in three workers is still having problems getting paid.

Why has the government been unable, or unwilling, to fix this problem over the last six years? It's pretty sad when government is spending money on consultants to fix the problems created by consultants.

**Ms. Marie-Chantal Girard:** As we see another anniversary of this situation, I know this is an issue that the government and all of us have committed to address and take on very seriously and diligently. We have taken action on many fronts to provide flexibility and to minimize the financial impacts on employees who have experienced these issues.

I gave a couple of examples. We also have repayment options. We have the moratorium, and we also have training that is being provided to our employees—not consultants—to address those situations that—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I only have time for one more question.

These employees are under a lot of pressure. They've done incredible work during COVID, like yourselves, and I appreciate it. We know public sector employees are feeling the pinch. There is also the rising cost of living and rising prices. PSAC has put forward a wage proposal for more than 110,000 public service workers who are seeing a reflection of those skyrocketing prices. We know there's a labour market shortage, increasing salaries to compete with, and recruitment is a big deal.

Will Treasury Board commit to raising salaries in the public sector that at least match inflation?



**Ms. Marie-Chantal Girard:** Almost 99% of agreements have been settled within the 2018 round. We are just beginning the 2021 round of collective bargaining. Indeed, we have a number of unions that have tabled notice to bargain. Usually, it happens in the short term after the collective agreement expires.

PSAC, which represents over 120,000 employees, has tabled a notice to bargain, as has the Professional Institute. We are starting discussions with them. We are actively at the table, and we are discussing both monetary and non-monetary provisions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now go Mr. McCauley, for five minutes.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Very quickly, of the \$8 billion, how much is actually going to be spent on rapid testing? I thought it was \$4 billion, but I thought I heard someone say \$2.5 billion.

How much will be spent on rapid tests between supplementary estimates (C), Bill C-10, and Bill C-8?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** In total, \$4 billion will be spent.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Perfect.

Whose decision was it to delay the publication of the public accounts and then reopen them, add in the money, and then further delay them and not publish them until later?

Was that a minister decision, or a deputy minister decision? Whose decision was it?

• (1655)

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Monia, to answer that question.

**Ms. Monia Lahaie:** Thank you.

It's our responsibility to ensure that the public accounts are representing the true value—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Right, but they were signed off on in September.

Whose decision was it to delay publishing them, and then whose decision was it to reopen them? It had to be one person. Or was it a group decision? Who decided, please?

**Ms. Monia Lahaie:** The officials decided—

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Which officials, please?

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

With all due respect to my very good friend, Mr. McCauley, please allow the witness to respond, because the translation is going to be very hard.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I have a limited amount of time, Mr. Jowhari. I appreciate that, but I would also appreciate a straight answer.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** At least be considerate of our translators.

Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

**The Chair:** Thank you for showing respect for our translators. I know they appreciate that.

Mr. McCauley, I also appreciate your thoughts. I have put you on pause at this point in time, so you are not losing your time.

Just for everybody, points of order.... Let's stay on track and answer the questions as quickly as we can, please. Thank you.

Mr. McCauley, go ahead.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Who was it exactly, please? Whose decision was it?

**Ms. Monia Lahaie:** It was a collective decision that the officials would look at the situation, given the latest information we received from the court's decision.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Let me ask a follow-up question.

Whose decision was it to delay the release of the departmental results? I have a call letter from Glenn Purves requiring that they be done by October 3, and the follow-up call letter says, after October 3, after they were finished, to delay them.

Whose decision was it to delay the release of the departmental results?

**Ms. Monia Lahaie:** I'll turn to my colleague, Annie, for this question.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** Because a new minister was appointed, we wanted to give them time to review their portfolio and be comfortable with the information included. That's why the DRRs were postponed by about two months: to give them time to review and get comfortable with the content.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] Treasury Board minister to sign off on individual department DRRs, then.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** As you know, DRRs don't have any legislative date. They have to be tabled after the public accounts of Canada.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** I'll answer for you. The answer is no. The departments do it, not the Treasury Board.

I would submit that it was a political decision to interfere with the release of the public documents. It gets back to my question about accountability and transparency, where you have...well, you just told me. The government has interfered with the release of these completed documents. I think the call letter, originally, said to release them before the minister was appointed, so I find it difficult to understand why, before the minister was even appointed, they were not released.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, in the supplementary report, stated that it's difficult for parliamentarians to vote and do their job when this information is not released. I'm looking for a commitment from the department to be accountable to Parliament, to be transparent to taxpayers and to allow us to do our job, which I would say your department has perhaps interfered with.

I quote the Parliamentary Budget Officer: "I am recommending that Parliament consider legislative amendments to require tabling of the Government's financial statements no later than September 30".

Do you believe it's possible to have legislation? Is it doable, from your point of view? Can we have these documents mandated to be released by September 30—the public accounts and the DRRs?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** I think it will have to be a collective decision. I cannot speak on behalf of the Auditor General of Canada, who has to audit the public accounts every year, as well as—

• (1700)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Thanks.

The departmental plans are coming out soon. The main estimates just came out, so the DP should be out any day now. Will you commit that at least the Treasury Board will not have fake goals set, such as goals to be decided or results to be decided?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** Do you want me to answer, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** What was included in the PBO report in terms of some of the information not being available.... Some indicators are new, and expected data was not available at the time of reporting. That's an example.

Some programs may have suspended data collection in 2021 because of COVID-19. That's another example.

It is also possible that some indicators are unavailable if they are collected every two years or if they are census-dependent, every five years.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Why would you set a goal, then, for one year if it's a five-year program?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now go to the last questioner.

Mr. Jowhari, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

I'm not sure who in Treasury Board or in the department can answer this question. In the minister's opening remarks, she talked about significant achievements on the road to a more digital government. She highlighted some of the work that was part of budget 2021 and the commitment to digital government.

Can anyone talk about what work is currently being done to implement the most urgent priorities related to digital government and

the delivery of digital services to Canadians? Perhaps you could expand on those priorities.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** My colleague Paul will take this.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you.

**Mr. Paul Wagner:** Thank you for the question.

With COVID and what we've seen around a push to digital, an incredible amount of work is being done to support both the public service and public servants in terms of moving them to remote work and supporting the infrastructure to allow that to happen, and to look at digital service delivery for Canadians and Canadian businesses.

Work is being done under a number of different areas, including support for the IRCC in terms of the work they're doing on immigration, work around social service and benefits delivery with ESDC and their benefits delivery modernization, and a number of other significant transformations that are under way within government departments, not only to support the infrastructure we have today to deliver services in a way that is consistent to Canadians but also to improve those services leveraging digital.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Can you talk about the top three priorities for digital government in the upcoming year?

**Mr. Paul Wagner:** Certainly there are the ones that I mentioned, which are being most closely watched and have the biggest impact from both a technology perspective and a service delivery perspective. There is the benefits delivery modernization within ESDC. Work is under way, as I mentioned, within IRCC, and there are a number of other areas in terms of the CBSA and the RCMP.

It would be hard to come down to the top three, but I would say the digital government.... The CIO of Canada will actually be publishing a digital ambition in the coming weeks and months that will set out the expectations of the Government of Canada and specifically some of the areas. Digital ID, which you've seen in the minister's mandate, is a critical cornerstone not only to digital government but also to supporting the digital economy across the country. As we continue to evolve our digital footprint as citizens, initiatives like these are going to help not only the government but also the broader communities.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you.

I was hoping to hear about single digital ID, and I'm glad you touched on that.

I believe I have about a minute left. Quickly, on the question of departmental results reports, the minister indicated that we have achieved a score of 63 out of 100, compared with a target of 60. From your perspective, which initiatives and overarching efforts have led to this high score of satisfaction, and how can we continue expanding on that?

• (1705)

**Mr. Paul Wagner:** Each department head in those organizations is responsible for their service delivery. We're working with each of the departments to evolve, through their service delivery models, their service delivery mechanisms. We're looking at ways we can leverage enterprise services, so that we're not building systems or services multiple times, but are able to deliver them consistently and coherently across programs.

Again, each department is responsible for its own service delivery targets, and we're working across those organizations to develop those plans and priorities and ensure that the policy framework we have in place enables those service evolutions.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you. I think my time is up.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jowhari.

With that, I would like to thank the officials for being here not only in person, but also onscreen. It's a bit of a challenge to know who is supposed to answer the question when we have so many of them and we can't see each other.

I appreciate you all being here today, and I look forward to the day when we're all able to be here together again. Again, thank you very much for attending.

With that, the public portion of our meeting is now complete. We will now proceed to the in camera portion. When I suspend this meeting, the technical staff will end this part of the meeting in Zoom, which means that members cannot remain logged in. To access the in camera portion of the meeting, members will need to use the passcode and the link that was sent to them by clerk.

We will temporarily suspend.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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