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# Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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Chair: Mr. Kelly McCauley





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• (1630)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC)):** I call this meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 69 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the mighty OGGO.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, May 1, 2023, the committee is meeting on the study of the subject matter of the 2023-24 main estimates, and pursuant to the order of reference adopted by the House on Monday, May 29, 2023, the committee is also meeting on the supplementary estimates (A), 2023-24.

Before we start, I want to note the absence of our vice-chair, Mr. Jowhari. He is at the university graduation of his son, Meilaud Jowhari. On behalf of OGGO, congratulations, Meilaud. I'm sure you're watching us.

I will quickly go over a few housekeeping items before we turn things over to the minister. We require unanimous consent.

On June 5, we have our nine departments here regarding the McKinsey documents. Do we have unanimous consent to provide them with two and a half minutes each for opening statements?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

I have one last UC motion if the committee agrees. ISED—I'm giving credit to them—have turned over all of their documents unredacted. They were required to appear because they hadn't done it in time, but since they've turned everything over unredacted, I request UC to excuse them from appearing.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Wonderful, colleagues. Thanks very much.

Minister Fortier, when you're done vandalizing our room, we'll turn things over to you for five minutes, please.

Welcome back to OGGO.

[Translation]

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

It feels like the committee has given me VIP treatment. I am pleased to be here today.

To begin, I wish to acknowledge that I am speaking to you on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

I am very pleased to provide an overview of the Main Estimates and Supplementary Estimates (A).

Across government this year, the Main Estimates set out proposed spending of \$443 billion for 129 organizations. That includes \$198 billion in voted appropriations and \$235 billion in statutory expenditures. As the committee members know, statutory expenditures are presented for information purposes only. Most of the expenditures are transfer payments to other orders of government, to other organizations and to individuals. They represent roughly 60% of expenditures, or \$261.4 billion.

Some significant changes to statutory expenditures are planned for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, including increases in transfer payments for such things as seniors' benefits, the Canada Health Transfer and equalization payments, as well as increases for climate action incentive payments. Of the 129 organizations that need funding, 10 are seeking more than \$5 billion in voted expenditures, including Indigenous Services Canada, National Defence and Employment and Social Development Canada.

• (1635)

[English]

For the main estimates this year, in response to feedback from the chair, we added a new online annex on Treasury Board central votes. I would also mention that most of the measures from Budget 2023 will be reflected in future estimates documents.

It's important to distinguish the purpose of each document. The budget allocates money in the fiscal framework for initiatives, and the estimates seek authority from Parliament to spend money. The main estimates are not meant to approve every item announced in the budget, because it takes time to design implementation plans that ensure good value for taxpayers' funds.

Turning to my department, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat is seeking a total of \$8.9 billion in funding. Our central votes make up \$8.6 billion of that, which is broken down as follows: \$750 million for government contingencies; \$71 million for government-wide initiatives; \$3 billion for operating; \$750 million for capital budget carry-forward; and \$600 million for payroll requirements, such as parental or maternity leave and entitlements upon ending service or employment.

There is also approximately \$3.4 billion to make payments under the public service pension, benefit, and insurance plans, including the employer's share of health, income maintenance and life insurance premiums.

The remaining amount—just under \$313 million—supports the operation and activities of the department, such as decision-making support and oversight, greening government, regulatory reviews and digital initiatives.

I will briefly turn to the supplementary estimates (A).

[*Translation*]

The Supplementary Estimates (A) provide information on the \$20.5 billion in planned voted expenditures and highlight the \$1.4 billion in planned statutory expenditures.

That includes the following: \$13 billion for agreements and programs for indigenous groups, including farm benefits claims, the Specific Claims Settlement Fund and out-of-court settlements; \$2.6 billion to support improvements to health care, in particular bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories; and \$997 million for the Housing Acceleration Fund, in order to increase housing supply in Canada.

In closing, I would like to thank the committee for all its work on the estimates. I also want to thank the members of my team who are with me to answer your questions.

I am ready to answer questions, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. You finished with two seconds to spare. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Kusie, you have six minutes, please.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for being here today, Madam Minister.

[*English*]

On April 19 of this year, we had 155,000 public servants go on strike. Of course, this deeply impacted services all across Canada, for everything from passport delivery to, I think most significantly, tax returns. People were very concerned about filing their taxes, and many were concerned about when they would be processed and when they would get their returns back from their tax filings.

Your negotiations started in June 2021. Why could you and the Treasury Board not come to an agreement when you had two full years to do so?

[*Translation*]

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

I would also like to thank Canadians, of course, for being patient and for understanding that the negotiation process is necessary. We started negotiations with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and it can take anywhere from 16 months to two years to reach an agreement. We worked very hard on that with PSAC.

• (1640)

[*English*]

It's important also to know that when we offered our first monetary offer last May 2022, PSAC chose to leave the table, as they no longer wanted to negotiate. We encouraged them to come back to the table, and when that happened last April, we found a way to do mediation. As you know, we continued to make efforts at the table, knowing that PSAC had decided to strike. We respect the strike decision that they made, but we did get to an agreement. I was very proud, and I'm waiting to ratify it.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you very much.

Can you tell me...? We had an almost two-week strike. Very many services came to a standstill, including passports, as I said. Seniors were worried about getting their tax returns. Can you tell Canadians and Canadian taxpayers today how much that two-week strike cost Canadians? How much did 155,000 public servants on strike cost Canadians, please?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you again, and I do want to thank Canadians for their patience.

As we know, we did have some essential services that were possible. Some of those essential services were, for example, EI and veterans supports. As you mentioned, passports were not considered essential, except if it was a humanitarian reason, and as we know, it takes a lot to be able to demonstrate that, so I have to say that we concentrated on getting a good deal.

When the strike was over, I know that Minister Gould ensured all efforts were made to get back on track, and we are back on track with passports.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Did you get a good deal? I think Canadians are wondering whether you got a good deal.

I've read the PSAC summary, and for PSAC members, it's a 12% wage increase over four years, which is 12.6% compounded over four years, and a \$2,500 pensionable lump-sum payment averaging 3.7% of salary. That's an average of \$23,000 per public servant, and this excludes group-specific allowances as well as group-specific wage adjustments.

I think the question on every Canadian's mind right now is this: How much?

I'm very grateful that you reached these negotiations finally, and I look forward to their being ratified, but how much will this cost Canadians, Madam President? How much will this cost Canadians, please?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I believe we have a good deal that is reasonable for Canadians, and also—

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** How much, please?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** —fair for public servants. It's an ongoing cost that is estimated at \$1.3 billion a year.

We now have 10 tentative agreements. As you know, there are 28 agreements altogether with the core public service. Now that we have 10 tentative agreements that cover over 60% of employees, it's an additional cost of \$1.8 billion a year. That represents the current negotiated offer on the table.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** It's \$1.3 billion at a time where Canada is in an inflationary crisis, a cost-of-living crisis. That's quite a price tag, Madam President.

To continue with services, many services were impacted during the strike itself, as I said. Are there any backlogs in services, or are there services that are still not being delivered to Canadians as a result of this strike?

As my final questions that I'll put to you, which I hope you will have time to answer, will these services be delivered, and is there the expectation that we will not have another strike in the future, given the pending ratification of these negotiations and agreements?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** On the three questions you asked, first, the vote is happening right now and I expect that the PSAC will ratify—hopefully—that vote. It's happening as we speak, so let's look forward to a positive vote.

Second, as for services, I believe everything is back on track after the strike. As we know, some of the services were in backlog before we started the strike. At this time, I believe we are back in service from the effect of the strike.

With regard to the third question you asked, we did follow the public interest commission, which recommended a certain percentage, and that is the one we offered to public servants. I strongly believe that we also have to recognize that—

• (1645)

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

I'm sorry, Minister, but that is past our time. Perhaps we can get back to it.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I'm sorry about that. I'm very interested in talking about collective bargaining.

**The Chair:** Thanks. Maybe you can answer the question with Mr. Bains.

Go ahead, Mr. Bains, for six minutes.

**Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a great idea.

Madam President, maybe you can finish your answer.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Well, I wanted to say that the most important thing is that we got to a tentative agreement that is reasonable for Canadians and also fair for public servants. I know that Canadians and public servants are the ones we have to concentrate on during this time.

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

Budget 2023 commits to reducing government's reliance on outsourcing, which is largely focused on the IT space. As former PCO clerk Michael Wernick told the committee, we can't just cut spending on outsourcing: We must build capacity with the public service. Can you tell us a little bit about the digital talent strategy and how it will build or attract IT talent?

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

We are transforming many of our services in the digital space right now. Talent is a challenge for both private and public sectors—attracting talent, building capacity—and, of course, working directly with stakeholders is a really important cornerstone of our approach.

We, the Government of Canada, have a digital talent strategy that is focused on designing approaches, tools, and processes to recruit, retain and develop top digital talent in the federal public sector. This strategy includes initiatives like creating an enterprise digital community culture, centralizing and prioritizing recruitment efforts, training and re-skilling existing digital talent, allowing for digital talent to work in modern ways from a technology and process perspective and working with industry on development opportunities like apprenticeships and short-term exchanges.

Another one is on collaborations, like the IT apprenticeship program for indigenous peoples, which helps address employment gaps for first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in the IT field.

I have to also mention that this talent strategy is embedded into a digital ambition that the government has brought forward, which has four pillars. If you'd like to at some point to discuss that digital ambition, it's really important, because we will need to continue to transform our services in the digital space.

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

I'm going to go into housing.

We obviously have heard quite a bit about the pressures of housing for many Canadians. Indeed, in my city of Richmond, British Columbia, we've seen young professionals choosing to leave the city that they grew up in to find products that aren't available in the city. We're always looking to increase the types of homes that are available for the needs of anyone who is in a certain part of their life or their career. Can you please share with this committee what is being done in the supplementary estimates to support affordable housing for Canadians?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I know that the fact that the government needs to tackle not only the cost of housing but the issue of supply has been a really important question for Canadians across the nation, and we know that Canadians are struggling. That's why our government is delivering a bold federal leadership to rapidly increase housing supply, support Canadians struggling with the cost of housing, and of course protect the dream of home ownership. We've been hearing that a lot.

In the main estimates, we have an additional \$1.6 billion for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; this is to create new affordable housing units. You know that the rapid housing initiative is a very important initiative across the country. There's also the affordable housing innovation fund that develops and scales up rent-to-own projects.

Also, we help affordable housing providers to complete deep energy retrofits on existing multi-unit residential buildings. Those programs are the Canada greener affordable housing stream of the Canada greener homes loan program. Also, we have the national housing strategy, which is our 10-year plan to help Canadians access housing that meets their needs and that they can also afford.

I will also mention—because we're doing both today—that in supplementary estimates (A), we provide a further billion dollars for the housing accelerator fund, which works with local governments to remove barriers and also incentivize housing supply growth with the goal of creating at least 100,000 net new homes across Canada. All this works, of course, in tandem with other measures, such as the new registered account to give prospective first-time homebuyers the ability to save \$40,000.

I will stop there, because I've been told that my time is up, Parm.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Bains. Thanks, Minister.

Ms. Vignola, you have six minutes, please.

[Translation]

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

Ms. Fortier, ladies, thank you for being here with us today.

I will go almost immediately to the Supplementary Estimates (A). I was surprised to see that \$463 million was earmarked to purchase an emerging treatment for COVID-19. There are of course still some cases of COVID-19 and the post-COVID-19 syndrome. In terms of deaths, however, there are currently 33 COVID-19 deaths per week. That is still too many, but there are of 114 deaths from influenza every week, on average.

Why are \$463 million being set aside to purchase an emerging treatment?

What is the treatment, who is the supplier and what is the justification for that purchase?

Thank you.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I will have to ask Ms. Boudreau for more details about how that money was used. She can provide some clarifications.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau (Assistant Secretary, Expenditure Management Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat):** That is reprofiled funding. It is money that was not used last year. The department asked us to carry the funding forward to the Supplementary Estimates (A) so it can be used. As to the supplier, we will have to provide additional information later on. It is not new funding though. It is funding that was not used and that was carried forward.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you very much.

In his testimony on April 24, 2023, Michael Wernick said the following about the 2023 budget: "It isn't good enough to just set a target to spend less on consultants. That's a classic half measure. The other half that is missing is a commitment to double the annual investment in training and leadership development within the public service." In my opinion, it is important to develop that internal expertise.

Do you agree with what Mr. Wernick said and what I am saying? Where do you think the greatest need for training is? How much money has the government earmarked for training this year?

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

As to professional services, they have to supplement the services for which we do not have the necessary expertise. In terms of digital expertise, I know there are many projects that include outside experts. We retained their services to help train public service staff. This will enable us to better support the many program that have been implemented. Ms. Laroche could name a few of them.

It is very important that professional services are used to supplement what the public service cannot offer at this time, whether for architecture projects or services provided by nursing staff, for instance.

• (1655)

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** We agree on that.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** We agree that the public service must be able to meet expectations and that the staff must have the necessary training.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** How much has been earmarked for the training of public servants?

**Ms. Mireille Laroche (Assistant Deputy Minister, People and Culture, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board Secretariat):** Thank you for the question.

Training is a decentralized responsibility. Deputy heads determine the amounts allocated for training. For our part, we have not set a general amount. That said, the Canada School of Public Service has a budget to train all public servants.

Certain departments also offer learning activities, such as Service Canada. For our part, we establish leadership programs, specifically to support our people.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** So there is no effort to piece together the total amounts for each department or program. For example, it could be determined that, for Quebec, one or two per cent of the salary budget has to be allocated to training, for an annual centralized total.

That is not the case here.

**Ms. Mireille Laroche:** No, that does not exist. To my knowledge, the funding is allocated for each department, where centres of expertise provide the training.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you.

Why are the opening balances of the central votes highlighted in this budget?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I will ask Ms. Boudreau to answer that question.

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** Thank you.

Actually, it was to increase transparency. We were told several times that it is very important to clearly indicate what is included in Vote 10, that is, government-wide initiatives.

We took the opportunity this year to highlight all central votes. There is a lot of transparency; we know what the opening balance is. Each time the main estimates are tabled in Parliament, we will see an increase in central votes. In short, it is really a question of transparency.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you very much.

Vote 5 is set at \$750 million per fiscal year.

If I were to ask you the same question again, would you give me the same answer?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** Yes, but I would add that this amount has been not changed in 20 years. It has never increased, not even to allow for inflation.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** How was it determined that the budget was \$750 million per year for 20 years and that it might be the same for the next 75,000 years?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that is our time.

Mr. Johns, please go ahead.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Thank you, Minister, for being here, and to your team for the important work they're doing.

Minister, we know seniors are struggling right now. They can barely make ends meet. With inflation and with the delay in the pharmacare plan that was promised by this government, the costs of everything are suffocating seniors. I'm glad you've moved the retirement age back to 65 from 67, which the Conservatives had decided to move forward, but your plan to increase OAS by 10% for those over 75 and to exclude those from 65 to 75 is costly to those seniors and has created a two-tier system.

The PBO costed out what it would cost if you included those 65 to 75, and it would be \$2.9 billion. Basically, it would cost about half a per cent of a corporate tax increase to cover those 65 to 75.

My concern is this: Why are you choosing corporate welfare, with the lowest corporate tax rate in the G7, over helping seniors who are struggling right now?

I have to say that we put forward proposals to tax the wealthiest of Canadians. Those proposals would have resulted in \$10 billion in taxes, and you defeated them. You chose to support large corporations that are reaping excess profits, instead of giving increases to seniors. Why?

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

It's important to know that we have increased OAS for those 75 and over and we are concentrating on making sure seniors are in a better state. We are continuing to invest in seniors. We just invested in dental care—with your help, MP Johns—to make sure that seniors will have access to dental care.

It will be important for us to continue the conversations on how we will continue to support Canadians.

• (1700)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Will you consider it, though? Will you consider increasing corporate taxes?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I would invite you to also have a conversation with Minister Khera to see how the different plans for seniors are moving along, and also with the Minister of Finance. Of course you know that the Minister of Finance allocates the amounts and the investments—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** And you sign off on those.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** —and I get a chance to monitor and look at the spending.

I do understand that seniors are struggling, and we are addressing many of these challenges. We need to continue, of course. The cost of living is going up, and we know that we need to continue to focus, so conversations are important.

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

Minister, as the President of the Treasury Board, you're the key in terms of unleashing the funds. I brought to your attention the matter of assets that you have, buildings that you're considering selling. I know a local MP here in Ottawa said he's looking at talking to the development community to see what those assets would be worth and turning them into housing.

What we want to be sure of is that they turn into non-market housing and that it's done with full consultation with indigenous people. I just talked to my colleague from Nunavut, who has constituents in her riding whose children are walking to school every day. They live in overcrowded houses. They walk by buildings that have been sitting empty for a decade—a decade—while they're living in absolutely terrible conditions.

What are you going to do to ensure that those assets are going to be developed for housing for Canadians and not through a developer model, a for-profit model?

I know you've talked about some of the \$40,000-program that you offer, but this is really a developer-driven model of delivering housing in this country. It's very similar to what the Conservatives are offering.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Again, I will say that we are working very hard on the national housing strategy. There are many initiatives, I know, being from a very important community in Ottawa—Vanier—where housing is very needed. We are continuing to work with partners, developers, the city and the province to offer affordable housing.

The rapid housing initiative is rolling right now. It's very important. After speaking with Minister Vandal, I know that there are initiatives up north and I know that it is important to continue. As you can see in the main estimates, many of these housing initiatives are being invested in—

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm sorry. I have so little time. I appreciate that, but the rapid housing initiative is breadcrumbs, really, for what's needed right now. There is—

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** It was a \$2.5-billion investment in the last budget.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** It is not showing up in my riding. That's for sure. We need help with that.

Minister, the free market has never solved affordable housing, ever, anywhere in the world. You can't point to a place where that model has worked.

One thing I do know is that every year, on April 28, we recognize the importance of workers who have been injured at work. We know that if you're not back to work within one year and you've been injured in the workplace, then you have about a 1% chance of ever returning to work.

I worked with your colleague Minister Qualtrough to create the first-ever disability management degree program for workplace health sciences at Pacific Coast University in my riding. The university is working with partners around the world. I want to know that you're going to ensure the continuation of that program after 2024 and that you're going to apply it to the whole of government. If you don't accommodate workers when they're injured, then the 99% who don't return within a year never return.

Maybe you can also table to this committee how many workers who are not working have been injured in the public service. It would be good to have that number so that we have an idea of it, and we can work with you to see what we're getting on top of this issue.

Mr. Chair, would that be something that the committee would...?

**The Chair:** I'm going to interrupt. I'm afraid that is our time.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Okay. I'll send a note.

**The Chair:** You can address, in writing, the issues that Mr. Johns has brought up. We have passed, in this committee, a motion requiring it within three weeks, so if you can send that to the committee, we'd appreciate it.

We're now on to our five-minute rounds.

Ms. Kusie, go ahead, please.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you, Chair.

Madam President, the Treasury Board has oversight as to the directive on the management of procurement. With our study on McKinsey, there has been a lot of scrutiny and discussion over how to strengthen the integrity regime. I certainly hope this will include reviewing the ineligibility and suspension policy.

Because of your appearance here, I know you're aware that we recently studied McKinsey. Thank you very much for that. We studied them because of the ethical breaches within their organization.



I've reviewed the regime quite extensively. The exemptions within the part 4 applications seem very extensive, but I'm also particularly shocked that McKinsey passed the integrity regime. Particularly relative is section 6, part (b)(v). That part relates to a supplier that has been convicted of an offence. I recognize that McKinsey was not convicted of an offence in the U.S., but the \$600-million payout to 49 different jurisdictions, I think, warrants a really close evaluation by the Government of Canada before heading into business with McKinsey and Company. I also think paragraph (vi) of the same section 6, part (b), bears consideration—the trafficking of a substance—which I believe is certainly relative to McKinsey and its role in the opioid crisis.

What the integrity regime currently excludes is human rights, the rule of law and reckless disregard for the health and well-being of Canadians.

With that, I am giving a notice of motion to this committee. Chair, again, to be clear, I'm not moving it at this time. I'll read it again for you to hear, Minister:

That the committee report to the House that, in light of the government's announcement that it will join the class action lawsuit against McKinsey & Company for their role in the opioid crisis, the committee calls on the government to reform the integrity regime associated with procurement in order to exclude companies that have shown reckless disregard for the health and well-being of Canadians, and for human rights and the rule of law.

With you being the President of the Treasury Board, who oversees the directive on the management of procurement, what are your thoughts on that motion? Do you think that is a motion you could support, Minister?

• (1705)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for that.

I'll start by saying—and I said it when I was here for the McKinsey study—that I will of course welcome any recommendation that comes out from this important committee on the study of McKinsey. I can also inform everyone that we will have our reports by June 30, as promised, during the appearance.

Under the previous government, as you mentioned, in 2015 an integrity regime was introduced with the aim of fostering ethical business practices. We agree that we need to strengthen our policies. That's why I've been mandated to strengthen federal procurement policies to integrate human rights, social, environment and corporate governance principles and supply chain transparency principles. I will, as I said, take recommendations coming from this committee to support the minister—

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** I'm sure there's a lot of support—

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** —responsible for PSPC, who will be reviewing the integrity regime.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** I'm hearing a lot of support, and I certainly would welcome you at that time to make an appearance as well when we study the integrity regime when I move this motion and, hopefully, after its passing here in this committee.

Perhaps I could put another motion forward at this time. I will move that you will agree to make an appearance when we discuss this motion and the content of the integrity regime, what's within it and, more importantly, what's excluded from it—as I said, specifi-

cally human rights, the rule of law and the reckless medical neglect of Canadians.

I'll put that forward.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Just to be fair, I know that PSPC Minister Jaczek is looking into the integrity regime. Therefore, I know that she will—

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** But your role oversees—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt both of you. Is that a formal motion?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** It is, yes, Chair. That one is a formal one. The motion I had on notice is not that....

**The Chair:** Okay. Would you like to repeat it for us?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Sure. It's that the minister appear when the integrity regime is being....

Maybe I'll make it specific to the motion. It's when the motion that was put on notice and that I've read into the record has passed and is put forward for discussion.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Basically, to sum up, there is a motion on notice to study the integrity regime. I think it's just that the minister would agree to attend when we do the study, in her role—

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** That's right, yes, more broadly. Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.):** I'm sorry. Are we setting a date or are we just saying “in the spirit of”...?

**The Chair:** Minister, can we put a simple question for you? Would you agree to appear when the time is appropriate and you're available?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I believe that is Minister Jaczek. If I can contribute to the conversation, of course I want to work with the committee, but I believe that Minister Jaczek will be the one leading this initiative.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

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

I think the way we've traditionally done it as a committee is simply that as the study progresses, and if there is the will of the committee, we vote to send an invitation to the minister. I think the minister at this point obviously has to review her schedule and her meetings. I don't think we should be putting the minister on the spot today.

What I would say is that perhaps the committee could simply continue on its work and at a certain point put forward the motion to send an invitation for the minister to be here when that takes place. That seems to be the way that we've always done things in committee.

**The Chair:** I have Ms. Kusie and then Mr. Johns.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** It seems very succinct and articulate to me. I put together a concise motion, Chair: That the minister agree to appear before the committee during its study on the integrity regime.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Okay. We have a point of order.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Yes. We don't even have a study here. It hasn't been adopted yet and hasn't been voted on, so again, I really do think that we're missing a few steps here before we actually send an invitation to the minister to appear.

I think we first have to vote on the motion to begin a study. Then we should start to conduct the study, and then, at that point, we deliberate and make the determination as a committee that we invite the minister to appear. I think we're putting the entire cart before the horse here.

**The Chair:** On that point of order, we'll go to Mr. Johns, Ms. Dabrusin and then Mr. Housefather.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** My biggest fear right now is that we have the minister here and if we lose the minister and we don't get some important questions to her, then it's really going to be disappointing, because we have some important work to be done. I'm wondering if we can move this conversation to later in the meeting, if that's possible. I don't know.

The other part—and you've heard me say this—is that we have eight studies on the go, or is it nine? We haven't got one done. This could be included in the study on McKinsey. I think it's great, but I think it needs to be fleshed out a bit and there needs to be some discussion. I don't think we're going to get through that discussion in the next 20 minutes before we lose the minister.

**The Chair:** Is that something you can agree with?

We have a speaking order. It's Ms. Dabrusin and then Mr. Housefather.

Ms. Dabrusin, go ahead.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** It's just a procedural question. Is this motion in order?

**The Chair:** There are never any easy motions in this place. Maybe we will get back to that in two seconds, and I will get back to you, Mr. Housefather, in a couple of seconds. We may have a solution here.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** I will withdraw the motion, I think, but I'm sensing a lot of positive interest from the minister. Certainly, as always she's very gracious in recognizing the lead, but I do feel that she has an important role to play as President of the Treasury Board and the person responsible for the directive.

I will leave it there. I will withdraw it, but as I said, I'm sensing some—

• (1715)

**The Chair:** I'm getting to that. Thanks.

Do we have unanimous consent to withdraw the motion? We do. Thank you, colleagues.

You have two minutes and 14 seconds left, Ms. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you, Chair.

I will go back to the budget announcement, which slightly reduces—

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** I have a point of order.

I'm so sorry, Ms. Kusie.

Mr. Chair, I have been timing this, and the discussion on the motion has now gone on for well over her five minutes. She has used her time.

**The Chair:** When motions are introduced, the clock stops.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I would like to ask the clerk that. I don't believe that is accurate.

**The Chair:** I'm happy to refer to the clerk. If I am wrong, I am wrong, but my understanding is that when a motion is introduced, the clock stops.

Ms. Kusie will cede her time, and we will double-check the green book. However, that has been the practice for the seven and a half years I have been on this committee. I believe it has been brought up before.

Ms. Kusie will cede—

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** That's not how we did it on another committee I was on, so thank you.

**The Chair:** It's just to make things difficult.

Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, go ahead for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** It's the mighty OGGO.

Thanks, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate it.

Minister, thank you so much for coming here to the OGGO committee once again and for your excellent testimony.

I also want to thank you so much for the skill and the compassion you applied in resolving the negotiations with our federal public servants. I feel that it was a good deal for federal public servants and a good deal for Canadians as well. Again, I just want to say thank you for your leadership, for your skilful negotiations and for your grace throughout what was obviously a very difficult and challenging time. I just want to say thank you very much for providing that steady leadership.

Minister, I had an opportunity last week to meet with nurses and frontline health care workers and administration at Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare. They are tremendous people, absolutely dedicated professionals.

What they told me was that obviously they have significant concerns about the state of health care in Canada in communities like mine in Windsor—Tecumseh. For example, they talked about staffing shortages. They talked about challenges when it comes to home care. They talked about addiction and mental health issues. They even talked about housing and the role that housing plays as well in their ability to discharge patients back into the community.

Making sure Canadians have access to health care is so essential and so important for this government. Madam President, can you explain to the committee how the increased Canada health transfers will benefit Canadians from coast to coast, including Canadians and residents in my community of Windsor—Tecumseh?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you for that.

I believe you're not the only one who had conversations, especially, I believe, in the last week, when we were all in our constituencies. I also had the possibility to speak with people who are working in the health care system, knowing that we as a government want to strengthen the public health care system because we want to provide safe, high-quality care that Canadians need.

As you know, in the estimates, we're advancing that commitment. The main estimates, as I mentioned earlier, provide a \$4.2-billion increase in the Canada health transfer, and the supplementary estimates (A) provide \$2.6 billion for new bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories to address health system needs. The latter will be used for needs like expanding access to family health services, supporting health workers and reducing backlogs. We are also increasing mental health and substance-use support and modernizing health systems.

We know that we need to continue to work with provinces and territories to make sure we deliver concrete results for Canadians. I believe we all know that we need to strengthen our health care system, especially following the postpandemic reality that we're in now. Therefore, that is, I believe, a path forward.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** That is our time.

We'll go to Ms. Vignola for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Fortier, if Bill C-13 is passed, the Treasury Board Secretariat will become responsible for the implementation of the Official Languages Act. The Commissioner of Official Languages has indicated, however, that things are deteriorating given that unilingual anglophone public servants are in positions that are supposed to be bilingual and that francophones cannot or dare not speak their first language because in some cases they are made fun of or not taken seriously at all.

Let me give you another example. With regard to contracts, McKinsey has been asked to deliver its work in English only. I do

wonder about the number of unilingual francophone public servants who are in positions that would normally be for bilingual employees only, but I guess the commissioner would be the one to answer that question. The number should be close to zero.

What will the Treasury Board Secretariat do to ensure that the bilingualism requirement applies to everyone and not just to francophones?

Ideally, in a bilingual country, when someone who is a francophone, such as myself, speaks to an anglophone in French, that person should understand and, if an anglophone speaks to me in English, I should also understand them. I can in fact understand, but the opposite is not true, and we see this among public servants in particular.

What specifically will you do to address this?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** It is something I am very passionate about, and have been for more than 35 years. The good news is that, once the Senate passes the bill, we will have modernized the Official Languages Act. It was necessary. Among other things, it will give the Treasury Board president and their successors other powers so we can monitor and evaluate. Further, we will find ways to better serve Canadians in both official languages, right across the country.

We know there are already some good results, but there are also some weaknesses that we have to work on. I know there is a lot of second-language training, among other things. My mandate includes increasing the ability of public servants to work in both official languages. I have to ensure that they receive the training to do that.

In addition—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That's great. Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Time is already up?

[*English*]

I'm so passionate about this question, Chair.

[*Translation*]

I could talk more about this later on.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I understand.

Mr. Johns, it's over to you.

Before you start, the PBO published a report today on some of the OAS changes. It may have answered some of the questions.

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

Minister, I've been in contact with the executive director of the Black Class Action Secretariat. I am extremely concerned by what he shared.

First of all, Treasury Board told the secretariat to produce a pilot Black mental health program as a partner. They spent 15 months consulting the best experts on racial trauma and mental health. They came up with a solid evidence-based program. When it was time to present the pilot program to Treasury Board, lawyers cancelled the whole thing. The secretariat never got to present it.

Minister, the secretariat confirms that their pilot program is complete and can be ready in short order. Why did the Treasury Board refuse to receive the pilot program that this Black-led, non-profit organization worked so hard on?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** First of all I will tell you that there have been efforts to work with the networks to co-develop a Black mental health program. We looked at all of the contributions that were made.

In the last budget, I have good news. We have a budget to bring forward a Black mental health fund. We have the Black mental health fund to bring forward the program and we're actually working on the program as we speak.

There was not a presentation of a program. I believe that there was more of a conversation on what could be offered, with consultation and co-development.

The good news I have to tell you is that with the investments we received in budget 2022 to look at how we could offer this program, we were able to get an increased amount in budget 2023. We will be rolling out that Black mental health fund in the next three years.

• (1725)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** When I was talking to the secretariat, they identified that the Treasury Board has received a second tranche of funding, which you identified, of almost \$50 million to implement a program, but they still haven't developed one. That was the first set of funding. That was what you rolled out the first funding for. It still hasn't been done. The secretariat says that there's now no Black involvement in the program development.

Does the Treasury Board intend to begin involving Black employment networks, public service unions and the Black Class Action Secretariat?

**The Chair:** You have about five seconds, please.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Again, I will have to say that this is ongoing work. With the new funding that we just got, we are going to be working in consultation with public servants and with the networks to bring forward and implement this Black public mental health fund.

**The Chair:** That is our time, I'm afraid.

Ms. Block is next, for five minutes, please.

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

Thank you, Minister, for joining us today, and thank you to your departmental officials for joining you in hopes of answering some of the questions we have.

Minister, with hybrid work here to stay, can you please tell the committee how many public servants are still working from home?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** First I'd like to say that every department has identified, under the directive of the hybrid we brought forward, that they can work two to three days from home. Departments identify and develop with their teams how they will abide by this directive.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Do you have a percentage? Can you tell us what percentage of public servants will be working from home at any given time?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Again, as the Treasury Board, we propose, we bring forward the directive, and the departments implement and develop this directive. Therefore, we are not to gather data. It's each department that follows that directive and the principles.

I would like to say, if I may, that during the negotiations, there was a big push by the Public Service Alliance for the directive or the hybrid work to be grievable. I was very clear with the officials who were negotiating that it was a management right.

Therefore, we found a solution to make sure that we have a letter of intent out of this agreement to look at how we can review the directive on telework that exists. It hasn't been reviewed since 1993. That will be something we will be doing in the future.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you. Let's move to a different topic, then.

The Treasury Board website states that "The Secretariat helps ensure tax dollars are spent wisely and effectively for Canadians."

Since this is your responsibility as the President of the Treasury Board, what stats can you provide to the committee today that would demonstrate productivity over the last couple of years while our public servants were working remotely?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** First I'd like to share.... I know the chair loves to talk about departmental results and departmental plans. Those are where we can see how departments are moving along in delivering on the departmental plans they've brought forward. The departmental results show the degree.

I would say that it would be very difficult for the board to identify hybrid productivity. We're looking at how the services or programs are delivered and not necessarily at how people are delivering those programs.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you.

Again, as the President of the Treasury Board, you are responsible for ensuring that tax dollars are spent wisely. You are someone who, I believe, sees all of the departmental reports. Is there nothing provided to you as the president that would demonstrate the productivity of departments and of the public service with respect to whether they're working in the office or remotely?

• (1730)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Again, I can maybe ask Mireille to give examples of how we evaluate the delivery of the programs, but I would not say there's a dataset that identifies who's working from home and who's working in the office to deliver those programs.

**Ms. Mireille Laroche:** Thank you very much.

Very quickly, as you know, there are so many jobs and so many functions within government. Some are very precise in terms that you can quantify—number of calls, amount collected, and so on and so forth. Others are a little bit more, I'll say, intangible in terms of how it's done.

We do have some metrics. Again, it is the responsibility of the departments to set objectives and to be able to monitor those. Every employee within government has a performance agreement in which objectives are actually set, and then they're evaluated and feedback is provided. That's how we do it.

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

Mr. Housefather, go ahead for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, the departmental plans for the Treasury Board Secretariat include new spending to hire 74 full-time equivalents who will provide monitoring of regulations.

Effective monitoring of regulations includes eliminating regulations that are no longer needed, which helps companies thrive.

Can you tell us what you are doing to lighten the regulatory burden and help Canadian companies in that way?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you very much.

There is in fact a bill under consideration, Bill S-6, for the modernization of regulations on an annual basis. It has already been through the Senate and is now being considered by the House. It is a key part of the government's work to increase effectiveness while providing measures to protect the environment, consumers, and health and safety. This bill includes 45 changes that I would call “common sense changes”. Their purpose is to reduce the administrative burden on companies, to facilitate digital interactions and to simplify regulatory processes. I know all parties are very keen to reduce the regulatory burden, and I hope we will be able to vote in favour of those changes.

I have in fact discussed this with members of the farming sector who, like people in other sectors, are very keen to see those regulations changed. It would help cut down on the paperwork to be filled out and thereby facilitate their activities. It would allow them to work more effectively.

In Washington last week, I met with representatives of the Office of Management and Budget, from the White House. A number of years ago, Canada and the United States created the Canada-U.S. Regulatory Cooperation Council. The members of that council had not met for some time. So I went to see if there was any interest in the changes we are proposing in particular.

Regulatory issues are constantly evolving. The joint efforts of Canada and the United States in this regard are very significant. We decided to reactivate the council and to examine together what changes could be made specifically regarding supply chains, the environment and climate change, as well as critical minerals.

[*English*]

We're moving forward with that.

[*Translation*]

The good news is that the members of this council were very receptive at the meetings. I hope we will reactivate the council. The current administration will be there for two more years, and a lot can be accomplished in those two years. I hope to make progress in other areas, including with our partner and ally, which I would describe as “natural” in business. Things are happening with respect to regulations in Canada. Together with the United States, Canada can continue to work on the regulatory framework.

[*English*]

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Of course, since you were in Washington last week, I imagine you were involved in the negotiations between the President and the Speaker to resolve the budget dispute and the debt ceiling.

• (1735)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Well, actually, I was their good luck charm, because they got a deal done while I was there.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** They were very stressed. You could feel the tension. I have to say, though, that the White House budget office was very welcoming.

In terms of collaboration on digital services for Americans and for Canadians, we chose to also look at how we can better work together. Also, with my responsibility on greening government, we have other opportunities to work together. Therefore, it's good for us and it's good also for the Americans.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** That's amazing.

I also wanted to commend you on the negotiations on the collective agreement. I don't get the sense that anybody thinks this was not a well-negotiated agreement. I've had a lot of positive reaction.

It almost was a bit weird; people were asking why you were taking so long, almost implying that you should just agree to whatever the demands of the union were at the time, because that's the only way you could have just simply settled. I think you handled that really well. I want to give you credit for that, Minister.

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** No, you don't.

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

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Let me also thank all parliamentarians for helping and making sure that we could get through this as quickly as we could.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

I'm glad you brought up the U.S. I have to say that we could learn a lot from them on transparency and openness. I hope to see that improvement in the Canadian system.

We're into our final round.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I made you a gift today, Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Block, you have five minutes.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, many public servants now working remotely, as we were discussing earlier, and they will be eligible for home office deductions on their income tax. Can you tell us what the cost ramifications are to the treasury from all the public servants working from home who are now eligible to claim home office deductions on their income tax?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I want to start by saying how important it is to look at how hybrid can complement and really help in delivering the best services to Canadians. Therefore, that's what we've been concentrating on—making sure that we focus delivering the best services to Canadians. We will continue to transform the hybrid format.

As for your question, it's a CRA question. Therefore, I would maybe offer the possibility to go to the CRA to make sure that I give you the right answer on the question you just asked me.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you. Are you offering to provide that back to us at a later date?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I will send you the answer to your question through CRA.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you.

I'll follow up with something else, because I think you did refer to this in one of your answers to my questions or maybe to someone else's.

During the pandemic, many public servants moved away from major cities to areas where housing was more affordable while they were working virtually for the unforeseeable future. Many of these people moved more than 125 kilometres away from their workplace. They will now be eligible for travel expenses when they are required to be in the office.

Do you know what the projected costs of the interim standard on occasional travel to a designated work site will be?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Again, thank you. As we move forward with this hybrid by design initiative, there are many things we are looking at. Of course, departments need to look at those agreements, if they continue or not, in terms of how the members of the public service will deliver through the department they're in. One

thing we know is that we're still transforming this hybrid. It's not something that is a done deal. It has to be something that is transforming our delivery of services.

Mireille might be able to answer part of your question.

**Ms. Mireille Laroche:** Thank you for your question.

The interim standard is a pilot project that will be in place for approximately two years. We will be gathering information in terms of costs.

There are a couple of things there.

We expect it's going to be used on an exceptional basis. This is not to come to, let's say, Ottawa every week; it's just once or twice a year. There is no money associated with this pilot. That means departments have to fund the pilot within their envelope.

There's more to come on that in terms of the true costs. We'll be able to evaluate and see if this is actually something we want to pursue over the long run.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half.

● (1740)

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** I have another question for you, Minister.

In the listing of statutory authorities under “Budgetary”, you are seeking \$737 million in additional interest. This is coming only two months after the budget.

Is this related to real return bonds?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** It's a legislative amount. I'm not seeking any approval on this. It's for information only.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Okay.

It's listed as part of the supplementary estimates: “Interest on Unmatured Debt (*Financial Administration Act*)”, \$737 million. That's just being provided to us for information?

Can you tell us what this additional interest is for and whether it is related to real return bonds?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** It is related to interest increases. The amount you have in front of you matches what is included in budget 2023. If you have more questions, those will be for the Minister of Finance.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bains, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

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

Minister, with climate change continuing to create more drastic and unpredictable natural disasters across the globe, Canada needs to ensure it has the tools and funding in place to support Canadians affected by events like the ongoing wildfires in Alberta and my home province of British Columbia and the flooding in Quebec.

Can the minister please update the committee on what is being done to support these initiatives in the estimates?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you.

As we know, as the effects of climate change increase, so does the frequency of natural disasters like those you mentioned—flooding and fires. We are, of course, committed to supporting Canadians and keeping them safe. The main estimates include a \$1.6-billion increase in expected disbursements under the disaster financial assistance arrangement for 2023-24, and it is based on forecasts. This supports provinces and territories in terms of the cost of response and recovery that is beyond what they could reasonably bear on their own.

This complements the prevention initiatives that were in budget 2023, such as the creation of an online portal so that Canadians can access information on their own and see their exposure to flooding so they can take measures to protect their home.

We are also working with the provinces and territories to address the gaps in natural disaster protection and help Canadians access affordable insurance.

Those are two examples.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Okay.

Dental care is one of the most important forms of preventive health care, and we know it's expensive. With respect to access to dental care and the well-being of Canadians, what investments is the government making to ensure that Canadians have access to affordable dental care?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** As you already know, dental care is a very important investment in budget 2023. Our government is implementing this new Canadian dental care plan, which will ensure that, honestly, no Canadian has to choose between taking care of their dental health and paying the bills at the end of the month. This budget includes \$13 billion over five years, starting in 2023-24, and \$4.4 billion ongoing. This is to implement the Canadian dental care plan.

I don't know if you're aware, but already nearly 500,000 children under age 12 can access the Canada dental benefit. Of course, it makes them start caring for their smiles.

We're also developing the national dental program with the goal of expanding dental coverage to those who are under 18, seniors, and persons living with disability in 2023, and then full implementation, including the expanded eligibility, by 2025.

That is a very important initiative. We know that it is important to Canadians across the nation.

• (1745)

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

With respect to conducting a study on diversity in procurement, which is being done with our committee here, could you update this committee on what Treasury Board is doing to promote inclusivity and accessibility within the public service?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Yes. Thank you.

We created the centre on diversity and inclusion to accelerate efforts to achieve a representative and inclusive public service. We launched programs to support departments in addressing barriers in recruitment and promotion at the executive levels. We're also releasing disaggregated data on equity-seeking groups. We amended the Public Service Employment Act to strengthen provisions to address potential bias and barriers in staffing processes. The Clerk of the Privy Council issued a call to action for public service, making sure that we fight racism within the public service. One last very important commitment is that we're hiring at least 5,000 new public servants living with disabilities by 2025.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Vignola, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you very much.

I will try to be brief.

For fiscal years 2023-24 and 2025-26, the Treasury Board Secretariat anticipates a 7.7% decrease in full-time equivalents in administrative leadership positions, with the number of those employees dropping from 627 to 579. These figures are from the Treasury Board Secretariat departmental plan for 2023-24. At the same time, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the total number of full-time public servants is expected to reach 428,000 in 2022-23. To my mind, administrative leadership is essential to give new employees in particular the mentoring and support they need to properly learn and perform their duties.

I am wondering if there is a disconnect between hiring more people and, at the same time, within about two years, letting go of administrative leadership specialists.

I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Let me say first that we are working very hard to maintain strong leadership in the public service. We will always want that.

Ms. Cahill, perhaps you can provide some details about attrition.

**Ms. Karen Cahill (Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial Officer, Treasury Board Secretariat):** The information in the departmental plan is taken from the main estimates. In this case, the decrease in full-time equivalents is related to the reduction in programs. Programs are ending, but they will be renewed, and the future budget will reflect that. At that point, the full-time equivalents will also be renewed.

This attrition is primarily the result of programs ending. Once the programs are renewed, the number of full-time equivalents will increase again. It is not real attrition. It is attrition on paper, so to speak.

• (1750)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Johns, for two and a half minutes, please.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Mr. Chair, I want to apologize. I have a hard stop at a quarter to six today. I know Mr. Johns wants.... I want to hear whether we are done after Mr. Johns. Are you expecting me to stay until the...?

**The Chair:** I'm sensing from both sides that we can hear from Mr. Johns and then let you go.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I will hear Mr. Johns, then.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I just need quick answers. We can get through this very fast.

When do we expect anti-scab legislation to be tabled by this government?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I understand from my labour colleague that he's working very hard on it, so I would ask the minister responsible for labour. However, I understand it's by the end of the year.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I talked to you about return-to-work disability management. You didn't get a chance to answer.

The B.C. government has invested \$6 million. To give you a comparison, your government has invested \$2.75 million. It's the first pilot project. I'm glad to see you stepping forward. It's needed with long COVID. We're seeing a lot of people off work in the public service.

I want you to know who is on the board of Pacific Coast University: Ken Neumann, former director of the steelworkers union; Wayne Wouters, former clerk of the Privy Council; Gary Doer, former premier of Manitoba; and Shane Simpson, former minister of poverty reduction in British Columbia.

Will you look at ensuring that this goes across departments and that we can accommodate workers and ensure people are trained on how to do that so that we don't continue with the 1% statistic?

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** First of all, thank you for sharing that. I'm actually in a learning mode. As President of the Treasury Board, I'm always looking for opportunities to strengthen our public service. I will commit to learning more about how our government is currently working on this issue and whether there are opportunities to strengthen the policies we have.

One of the mandate items the Prime Minister gave me when I was named President of the Treasury Board was to employ 5,000 new people living with disabilities. That is something I want to continue to work on. I will do that at the same time.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I appreciate that. I'll work with you on that, Minister, to help bring you up to speed.

I know the subject of leadership was brought up earlier. We've had various experts come to committee and talk about the importance of training in leadership. We want to fix this highly paid consulting outsourcing issue instead of just flinging mud at government. We heard from Michael Wernick that there were cuts under the Conservatives that led to this void in leadership training. It had an impact. We heard from Amanda Clarke. The PBO even cited it.

Can we get assurances that you're going to increase investments, after hearing from public servants, instead of decreasing them? Right now, it shows a decrease.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** First of all, I'd like everybody to know that for professional services, less than 5% is used for managing consultation or consultants. The rest is.... Examples include providing nursing services in the north and health services for veterans. We have to make sure we define "professional services" well. The fact is that it is under 5% is for consultants, as you would define them.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** However, that 5% gone up 400%.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** It's still under 5% of the amount.

One thing we are looking into is making sure it is a complement to the skills and expertise that we need in order to deliver our programs and services. I've committed, in my exercise of refocusing on spending, to looking at how we can make sure we find efficiencies and ways to increase the skills and competencies of public servants who deliver services to Canadians.

**The Chair:** Minister, thank you for allowing a bit of extra time for Mr. Johns. He kept you a bit longer than we thought. Thanks for joining us today.

Colleagues, we'll excuse the minister and then we'll get to talk with with the officials.

Minister, thanks very much.

We'll wait 30 seconds to excuse the minister. Then we'll start with one round with the....

Go ahead, Mrs. Kusie, for five minutes, please.



• (1755)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you very much to the president's team for being here today. It's very much appreciated.

According to the PBO, "Budget 2023 does not identify opportunities to save and reallocate resources 'to adapt government programs and operations to a new post-pandemic reality'" under the strategic policy review launched in last year's budget.

Why do you, as the officials, believe that this was not allocated in your department as well as across government through the estimates and budget 2023?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** Thank you very much for the question.

As referred to by the PBO, the first time that the strategic policy review was announced was in the federal budget for 2022. At that time, it was said that an update would be provided in budget 2023. The update was provided at the end of March.

Basically, what has been included in the budget is a continuation of what was included in budget 2022, with an increase. Budget 2022 was \$6 billion in efficiencies over five years; now we have more than \$15 billion in five years. In budget 2022, the ongoing amount was \$3 billion. This time around, the ongoing amount is \$4.5 billion.

The strategic policy review has not been cancelled; it was just renamed in budget 2023, and we are continuing on that path.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** In that case, do you expect this reallocation to come up in supplementary estimates for the 2023-24 fiscal year?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** As for the budget's financial profile, you will find \$500 million allocated for this year, 2023-24, and we intend to provide more details in one of the supplementary estimates this year. The other amount will be included in next year's main estimates for 2024-25, as per the financial profile in the federal budget.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** The Parliamentary Budget Officer also recommended that Parliament consider adopting a new administrative legislative framework to improve fiscal transparency, and in particular aligning the budget priorities in the main estimates instead of having them show up in the supplementary estimates (A).

Would your department support this change?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** The main estimates were tabled on March 1, as per the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. As you know, the budget was tabled at the end of March.

Having said that, if you look carefully in the supplementary estimates (A), you will see all of the budget 2023 items that have already been included in the supplementary estimates (A). You will see, for those items, a reference to the budget. There is a tagging of what is included in supplementary estimates (A) that relates to budget 2023.

As the PBO stated in his report, which was tabled on Monday morning, more than 40% of the items from the federal budget are already included in supplementary estimates (A).

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Would you be able to expand upon other further measures that the department has taken in terms of providing more transparency for Canadians in regard to the budget?

**Ms. Annie Boudreau:** As I was saying, you will find here all of the new requirements in the supplementary estimates (A). You will find all of the tagging to the federal budget. You will find, as well, all the horizontal items that are for more than one department. You will find an online annex with all essential votes that we have under the Treasury Board Secretariat—the opening balances and everything that has been used over the course of the year.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** That's fine. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Next is Mr. Kusmierczyk. You have five minutes, please.

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

I wanted to talk a little bit about the net-zero government initiative.

We've obviously seen the tremendous impacts of climate change. We saw hurricane Fiona. We've seen the storms out on the east coast. We see the fires in Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canada, Alberta.

The net-zero initiative invites governments from all around the world to work together to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. I want to get an update on how our government is participating and collaborating on the net-zero government initiative.

• (1800)

**Ms. Samantha Tattersall (Assistant Comptroller General, Acquired Services and Assets Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat):** Thank you for the question.

I can talk generally about what we've been doing on greening government in the operations. There are some key highlights I would mention.

First of all, we've been making efforts to green our fleet. All executive vehicles are to be green or hybrid. We're now at 95%. All of our regular fleet is to be green by 2030, and we are at 11% of reaching that target.

In terms of procurement, for example, it's embedded in our policy that best value doesn't mean the lowest cost for what we buy; it also means there are green initiatives as part of that.

Among the things we're doing, one is procuring 100% clean electricity for our federal operations. We're also working with PSPC to green our standing offers and our supply arrangements, so of the 7,000 standing offers we have, 40% now have environmental considerations in them. We are also incentivizing our suppliers on large contracts to disclose their GHG emissions and have a Paris-based target.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** That's terrific news.

When I first got elected, I actually wrote a letter to all the ministers, asking them to consider purchasing Chrysler hybrid Pacificas as their executive vehicles. I made sure to send that to every minister, even if they had a fleet of two under their portfolios. I'm pleased to see.... I've been keeping track on the Hill of every time I see a Chrysler Pacifica hybrid on the Hill. I get excited and I take a photograph too, with a thumbs-up.

Can you tell me a bit, again, about the impact of using the green-ing initiative not only to achieve our net-zero emission targets but to support communities like mine, with Canadian workers who are building Canadian vehicles and helping us reach net-zero emis-sions? Is that part of the calculation?

**Ms. Samantha Tattersall:** In terms of the Government of Canada's fleet, as I said, there are the executive vehicles and then there are our conventional light-duty vehicles. On the executive side, it's either net-zero or hybrid. As I said, 95% are. I see the list of those and can tell you that there are Pacificas on that list.

In terms of our conventional fleet, it's obviously an open, fair and transparent procurement that we put out in terms of whoever puts in bids for those fleet. As I said, of the 17,000 vehicles we have, 11% now meet our green targets, and we are on track to meet the 2030 target.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** On that, I wanted to ask you as well about charging infrastructure on federal property and here in the national capital region. Are you able to comment a bit on that? Is that something we're looking to boost?

**Ms. Samantha Tattersall:** I'll give you a general answer. I don't have all the specifics, but the infrastructure goes hand in glove with it, so we are working with departments on how to implement the in-frastructure.

I don't have any more specific details.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** That's perfect.

I feel generous today, Mr. Chair, so I will yield my time to Mr. Johns, if he would like a little extra time.

**The Chair:** It's only 25 seconds. Why don't we add it to the end of his time?

We'll go to Ms. Vignola first, and maybe she can ask.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm very excited.

Going back to—

**The Chair:** No, Mr. Johns. We'll add it to the end of your time after Ms. Vignola, rather than interrupt your time.

Maybe Ms. Vignola can ask about the Chrysler Pacifica as well.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** No, but it's not that I don't like it.

[Translation]

According to its 2023-24 departmental plan, the Treasury Board Secretariat expects that at least 80% of high-volume government services will meet the service standards by March 31, 2024. In 2021, however, the rate for that particular indicator was 46%, a drop from 69% in the previous year.

Does the Treasury Board Secretariat expect the results for service standards to increase in 2022-23 and 2023-24, and indeed to reach the objective of 80%? How will it do that?

• (1805)

**Ms. Karen Cahill:** As stated, each department is responsible for its departmental plan. We certainly do expect to meet the targets from year to year. Various initiatives will move forward, and we hope to achieve the results every year.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** So there is an indicator along with an objec-tive, which varies from department to department. There is no real control over each department, but you are responsible for that. That is what I understand.

**Ms. Karen Cahill:** We are not responsible for every program in a given department. It is up to the department to meet their program objectives and to report on them.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Since service standards are included in Treasury Board's departmental plan, what specifically is Treasury Board doing to ensure that those objectives are met and to rally the troops?

**Ms. Karen Cahill:** We work very closely with each department to ensure that they take concrete and realistic measures. In many cases, when programs are developed, people are a bit ambitious about the measures to be taken.

Our objective is to work with each department to help them es-tablish concrete measures for their programs and to monitor them closely. We also provide the tools they need to achieve their results and report on them.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** How many seconds do I have left, Mr. Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** You have negative 20 seconds. You've taken Mr. Johns' time.

Go ahead, Mr. Johns.

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

I just want to share with my colleagues what I heard from the secretariat, which is that Black public servants continue to experience significant racial trauma in the public service. What we have right now is a lot of workers on long-term leave, or they're coming in to work and suffering, but nothing is happening to help them right now. Black workers still can't access the mental health supports they've been promised. We need transparency and accountability on this issue. We need to know whether this program has been led by Black workers.

Here's what I'd like to do. The minister came before OGGO. She wasn't able to provide a concrete answer to any of my questions last time or, really, today. I didn't feel it was sufficient.

I'd like to ask for that information now, if I can ask for the will of the committee to support me. I'll ask that the government provide in writing the current status of the Black mental health program; what Black involvement has been and is currently part of the process, and exactly who is involved and how they contributed; how much of the funding has been spent and what it has been spent on; the plan for the next program phase and how much funding will be needed; and when the program development will be complete and whether the program will be released publicly.

Through you, Mr. Chair, if I can get the will of the committee, I would ask them to table those documents within three weeks.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, it seems pretty straightforward.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Mr. Chair, I have a question.

I didn't catch the last part. I'm sorry, Gord.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** The last question that I'd like answered is on when the program development will be complete and whether the program will be released publicly. It has been requested by the Black Mental Health Secretariat.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Mr. Chair, I'm just wondering...

Gord, again, as I said, in the interest of understanding that it might take a little time to get that information here, is it a hard three weeks, or is there a bit of leeway here to make sure that we can get that information?

**The Chair:** Three weeks was what our motion said.

Ms. Laroche, you have your hand up. Do you want to address anything?

**Ms. Mireille Laroche:** Yes. I was wondering if you would like me to address some of these answers right now.

• (1810)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Sure. I just don't know how much time we're going to have, because we have 15 seconds left.

**The Chair:** We don't have the time. I think that's why Mr. Johns is asking for it in writing.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'm hoping to get the answers back in writing. That's what I'd be looking for.

**The Chair:** What if we say "three weeks", as is required in the motion, and then if there are difficulties on one or two of the items, that you contact the clerk in advance and advise us in advance if there will be any delays?

Is that fair, colleagues?

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I'd be fine with that.

**The Chair:** That's wonderful.

Mr. Johns, you have about an extra 15 seconds left over from Mr. Kusmierczyk.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** I just want to say thanks to the public servants for the important work they do and to the many thousands of people who work in their departments. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Wonderful.

I just have a couple of quick items, if you don't mind.

Would you be able to provide us with the GBA+ analysis that was conducted for the supplementary estimates (A), as well the GBA+ analysis done on the new work-from-home travel policy that Ms. Block has brought up? Would you be able to provide that to the committee in writing, please?

Wonderful.

I'm sorry. Before you go, to go back to Mr. Housefather's commentary, it is up to the chair and the committee, but it has been the tradition in OGGO since I've been here—2015—and also in public accounts that the clock stops at the introduction of a motion. In the past, colleagues have given up the balance up their time, so it is allowed.

Thanks for bringing that up and clarifying it, Mr. Housefather.

Colleagues, we are now adjourned.





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