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# Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 102**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

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Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke





## Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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• (1100)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 102 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting to discuss a request to undertake a study of the recent comments from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change on the funding for road projects.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders, and members are thus attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

Although this meeting is equipped with a sophisticated audio system, feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause serious injuries. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too closely to a microphone. We therefore ask you all to exercise a high degree of caution when handling the earpieces, especially when your microphone or your neighbour's microphone is turned on. In order to prevent incidents and to safeguard the hearing health of our interpreters, I invite all participants to ensure that they speak into the microphone into which their headset is plugged and to avoid manipulating the earbuds by placing them on the table away from the microphone when they are not in use.

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your microphone should be on mute. Given that the majority of members are joining us virtually today, I will kindly ask that you use the "raise hand" function when you would like to speak. The clerk and I will make note of that, and I will turn over the floor to you accordingly.

To address the request, pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), that was submitted to the committee on February 16, I'll open up the discussion by turning the floor over to Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Strahl, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the committee members and all of the staff for being here to assist us in this important work on behalf of Canadians.

I note that six members have signed the letter calling for this meeting because of the comments of Steven Guilbeault, the Minister of the Environment, last week, which have caused an uproar and uncertainty right across the country. His divisive comments and extreme position have set off alarm bells in provincial capitals, cities, remote communities and indigenous communities right across the country.

It is a radical policy that he announced last week in Montreal. He said, "Our government has made the decision to stop investing in new road infrastructure." Now, if we break down that comment, you'll see quite clearly that this is not an off-the-cuff remark from a radical activist minister—even though he certainly has that background. He said that the Trudeau government "has made the decision to stop investing in new road infrastructure." He went on to say that, "The analysis we have done is that the network is perfectly adequate to respond to the needs we have."

Now, this is, again, an alarming point of view to have. It suggests that he hasn't spent much time travelling the country and speaking to Canadians, who have significant concerns with our road network, in terms of both its current state and its capacity. We know there are supply chain issues. We've heard time and time again about how reliant we are on, for instance, the trucking sector to get our goods to market. You see these trucks sitting in traffic, whether around Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal or elsewhere throughout the country or travelling over roads that are quite frankly in a state of disrepair or unsafe. In some cases they are unable to travel except in the winter because there's only an ice road; there is no permanent link between many of the communities in our country. So the idea that the government has made the decision to stop investing in new road infrastructure and that they've done an analysis showing that the network is perfectly adequate to respond to the needs we have is shocking, as the letter said.

We believe this committee needs to discuss this matter on an urgent basis. Just to give you a heads-up, Mr. Chair, I will be moving a motion at the end of my comments. I believe we do need to hear from the minister and to hear from other ministers who are impacted and who were clearly a part of this decision-making process.

Again, these comments were not made by the minister when he was caught on a street corner by a lucky journalist who happened to find him while he was walking or riding his bike. These were comments given to a conference. These were remarks prepared by the Minister of the Environment and designed to send a message to Canadians. I believe he said there would be no more envelopes, meaning there would be no more money for the road network in this country.

We've seen how these divisive comments have actually united Canadians against them. The Northwest Territories infrastructure minister Caroline Wawzonek said the following:

Documents such as the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework are clear that there is a need to address transportation challenges in remote parts of Canada's north and the Arctic.

Premier Scott Moe of Saskatchewan said, "The Trudeau government gets more out of touch with reality every day".

Doug Ford, a great partner of this Liberal government, said:

I'm gobsmacked. A federal minister said they won't invest in new roads or highways. He doesn't care that you're stuck in bumper to bumper traffic.

Danielle Smith said:

Anyone who thinks that you can stop building roads has obviously not travelled outside of Montreal very much and doesn't understand how big this country is and doesn't understand what it takes to get to some of our resort communities.

● (1105)

Blaine Higgs said:

The Trudeau government is unfairly punishing New Brunswickers for being rural. With our province experiencing historic population growth, this will be a roadblock to building new homes to tackle the housing crisis.

Someone who the minister has tried to quote to justify the carbon tax is The Food Professor on Twitter—that's what he goes by. The Food Professor said:

Minister Guilbeault questioned any future major investment in infrastructure yesterday. Canada's logistics are anemic, at best. Ports are horrible and roads are inefficient. If we want a stronger agri-food sector, logistics is the backbone of the industry.

The Mayor of Calgary said that the policy announced by Minister Guilbeault "would literally be terrible for every municipality in this nation."

Premier David Eby of British Columbia said that the announcement "made a lot of us very nervous."

This is a cross-section of Canadians—of everyone from the left to the right—who have been caught unawares and who are, quite frankly, shocked and in disbelief that this is the first government—at any time, anywhere, I believe—that has indicated that it wouldn't be investing in roads.

Then the minister tried to walk it back, which he failed to do. After the government's policy was revealed and he had the opportunity to try to clarify, he said that, no, he didn't mean they wouldn't. Even though he'd said very clearly, "Our government has made the decision to stop investing in new road infrastructure", he said that what he meant was that they weren't going to invest in any big new road infrastructure—no more big projects. He singled out the Third Link in Quebec City, which I'm sure other colleagues will have something to say about.

I think about projects in my own area. A big project that is going to take multiple years and multiple billions of dollars is the expansion of the Trans-Canada Highway from Langley to Abbotsford to Chilliwack with additional lanes. That's a major road project. It's necessary because every day now there is bumper-to-bumper traffic on that major route, which connects Fraser Valley communities to metro Vancouver communities. It connects workers to their jobs.

As this government's policies have made it less and less affordable to live in cities, people have had to expand out into the suburbs. They've had to live further and further away from where they work in order to afford a home. It used to be the case that Chilliwack was an affordable market, but after eight years of Justin Trudeau, homes here are now over \$750,000 on average, with many 40-year-old homes cresting the million-dollar mark. People are still moving out further from the cities because, even at those inflated prices, it's cheaper than living downtown or in closer proximity to Vancouver. Therefore, people need to drive to work. There is one bus that goes from Chilliwack into a bus route. It would take you about three hours to get downtown if you just used the public transit options available.

The Government of British Columbia has, over successive governments, had an expansion program that it has into the future. It's a phased program that will continue to build out from metro Vancouver to the Fraser Valley. That is all at risk now because this Minister of the Environment, speaking for Justin Trudeau and the cabinet, said that no more major road projects will be allowed to go ahead.

He's announcing, basically, that they are cancelling the expansion of lanes for the Trans-Canada Highway. There are many other examples that I'm sure colleagues will wish to speak to as we go forward today and maybe into tonight—we'll see how it goes.

● (1110)

We certainly believe that there is a necessity to hear from the minister himself, so that he can explain this government's decision to stop investing in new road infrastructure—his words—and so that he can explain to Canadians from small communities and large communities alike why this decision by the Trudeau government has been taken.

I found it very interesting to see, in question period on Thursday, members from multiple parties talking about the significant impact that this will have on indigenous and northern communities, and how there are many communities that have been looking for permanent road access to bring down the cost of goods, to increase public safety, to connect their communities with economic opportunities and to connect to their social networks as well.

Right now, many of them are flying in, and many of them have ice roads. Certainly they would disagree with Minister Guilbeault's comments that "The analysis we have done is that the network is perfectly adequate to respond to the needs we have."

I don't know who is the "we" that he's talking about. Perhaps it's Liberals who live within 500 metres of a subway station. We certainly heard the Minister of Finance, Chrystia Freeland, make similar comments, to the effect that she didn't need a car. She clearly did need a car; she just needed a taxpayer-funded car with a driver because we found out through public accounts that this was something she used, but she bragged about being able to use the subway to get everywhere.

Minister Guilbeault is an avid cyclist, and that's great for him, but that's not the analysis we have done. He said the network is perfectly adequate to respond to the needs we have. Well, many Canadians have different needs than what the Liberals clearly have. They have a need to get their kids to school. They have a need to get their goods to market on a reliable road network. They have a need to get to work in a place that isn't right beside where they live.

The government has started this war on people who need to drive their cars to live their lives, and this is particularly true when it comes to rural communities that don't have access to the same infrastructure as those who live in the downtown of a city like Minister Guilbeault does.

It's an out-of-touch comment. It's an offensive comment. It's an extreme policy, a ridiculous policy from a radical activist who has decided to...after being appointed by the Prime Minister. If you look at this guy's record, it's almost impossible to believe that he was appointed to cabinet. This is a guy who clambered up the CN Tower, who climbed on to the top of the roof of the home of a sitting premier to protest and terrorize his family. This is the guy who has been put in charge of our environment policies. It's no wonder that we have these radical and extreme policies.

We think that we need to hear from him directly, as well as other members of this cabinet, who came to the decision to stop investing in new road infrastructure.

I will read the motion that I will be moving on the record, and then we will get that to the clerk to distribute to everyone, but the motion is as follows:

The committee undertake a study of no less than 6 meetings on infrastructure in Canada, and invite the following witnesses to appear before the committee:

- (a) The Minister of Environment and Climate Change, alone, for 3 hours, within seven days of this motion being adopted;
- (b) The Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, alone, for 3 hours within seven days of this motion being adopted;
- (c) The Minister of Transport, alone, for 3 hours within fourteen days of this motion being adopted;
- (d) The Minister of Finance, alone, for 3 hours within fourteen days of this motion being adopted;
- (e) The CEO of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, Ehren Cory alone for 3 hours within fourteen days of this motion being adopted;
- (f) And any witnesses deemed relevant by committee members,

● (1115)

And, that the committee seek additional resources as required in order to accommodate these meetings, including by adding additional time to the end of meetings scheduled on Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities, and by scheduling meetings during non-sitting days, and that, with the exception of scheduled meetings on Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities, this study take priority order.

Mr. Chair, I'm happy to speak to why we believe that this motion needs to be adopted by this committee. Obviously, we want to hear

from the Minister of Environment, whose comments have created this firestorm across the country. We believe that he deserves to explain to Canadians the decision that was arrived at by the Trudeau government to no longer fund roads.

Obviously, the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities probably took a great interest in that, as the Minister of Environment was sent out to make that announcement on his behalf, so we would like to see how that fits into the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities' plan for infrastructure in this country.

We believe we have a direct interest in hearing from the Minister of Transport to discuss the impact that this new policy of the Trudeau government will have on our ports, road infrastructure and supply chains. We believe that is something that Minister Rodrigue should come before this committee to discuss.

The Minister of Finance, I think, should discuss here how this is going to figure into the fiscal framework. How does the decision to abandon the funding of new roads impact the fiscal framework? How will that impact her budgeting process? We know the budget is generally introduced in the spring. We would expect that they are putting the finishing touches on that, and perhaps she can tell us the impact that this new policy will have on the fiscal framework and the budget process.

Obviously, the CEO of the Canada Infrastructure Bank should be asked to discuss how this will impact the decisions of the bank. This committee has recommended previously in a report to the House that the Canada Infrastructure Bank be disbanded, but the government has maintained the bank, despite its many problems. We would like to hear from the Canada Infrastructure Bank to see how this policy of no new major roads will impact their ability to make investment decisions and whether they have hired any high-priced consultants to advise them on this new decision, as they did previously with other failed projects.

There may be other witnesses deemed relevant by committee members. I can think of provincial and territorial and community and indigenous leaders, who probably would like to weigh in on this as well.

We want to make sure that we continue the work that we are doing with the accessible transportation for persons with disabilities study, which is an important study. We don't want to take away from that, but we believe we can do two things at once—we can have concurrent studies going on, and this important issue of road infrastructure can be discussed outside the normal committee times, either by adding hours to those meetings or by adding additional meetings so that we can have these ministers appear and have them answer questions as soon as possible.

I've moved that motion, and I would be happy to have my committee colleagues weigh in on when they would like to hear from the Minister of Environment and how we should structure those hearings.

I appreciate the time, Mr. Chair, and I look forward to the discussion.

• (1120)

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

This is the speaking list we have so far. We have Mr. Bittle up next, then Ms. Lantsman and Mr. Muys, followed by Mr. Badawey.

[*Translation*]

Finally, we will hear from Mr. Gourde and Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Before we get to the speakers list, however, the clerk has informed me that we do need to suspend temporarily for her to be able to verify that the motion is duly translated in both official languages and that the spirit of the motion and the wording are exactly the same in both languages.

For that, I will suspend for five minutes and we'll resume once all members have received the motion in both official languages.

The meeting stands suspended.

• (1120)

(Pause)

• (1130)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting back to order.

Just to remind colleagues, the speaking order is Mr. Bittle, followed by Ms. Lantsman, Mr. Muys, Mr. Badawey, Mr. Gourde, Mr. Barsalou-Duval, Ms. Murray and Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bittle, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I guess I'm not surprised that the Conservatives have brought this forward. I guess I'm very surprised that the NDP and Bloc have supported this feigned outrage by the Conservative Party. We saw immediately that the Minister of the Environment clarified his statements with respect to this. This is not a change in government policy. This government has provided historic investments in infrastructure, with all the while Conservatives voting against. The main agricultural policy of the Conservative Party is rage farming, so this seems to be along those lines.

I'm happy to take members through what we've been engaged with since 2015 in terms of making investments in communities and making Canada a better place to live, whether it's in rural, urban or northern areas. That includes investments in highways, roads and bridges. Nothing has changed. It's been confirmed by the minister. It's been confirmed, I believe, by the Prime Minister in question period.

I can appreciate the opposition wanting to try to squeeze some news out of nothing during a break week, but here we are. I'll give you the example of the Canada community-building fund. Our government has invested \$3.3 billion in 8,000 highway, road and bridge projects across the country. On top of that, there's \$850 million for nearly 450 road and highway projects across the country for the investing in Canada infrastructure program, ICIP.

It's strange that the Conservatives want to call attention to infrastructure, because the only party leader in this country who is calling for cuts to infrastructure is Pierre Poilievre. He's committed to blocking infrastructure funding to cities, despite the need for greater infrastructure funding to get housing built. We believe in developing infrastructure that's key to not only a lot of what Mr. Strahl talked about but also around the housing crisis. We won't get more houses built unless we build more infrastructure. But what we have seen is the Conservative Party voting against it, time after time.

It's interesting that Monsieur Gourde is here. I believe he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works during his time in government. He can speak first-hand to starving municipalities of money and the consequences that this entails. I'm glad he's here. I'm sure he'll speak to that later.

As I've said, our position on infrastructure has been clear since our election in 2015. There's been no change in government policy. We're making historic investments across the country. Again, I can appreciate trying to drum up some outrage, trying to send out some fundraising emails during a constituency week and trying to get a little bit of media attention. I guess it's what a good opposition does to try to get some attention, but this is much ado about nothing, especially in relation to the minister's comments with respect to the third link in Quebec. This is something he's been saying for over a year in French, but he says it in English and we're all outraged. Maybe we should all take more French lessons and appreciate that this is a country in both official languages. I don't know why the opposition is so outraged only when it is said in English and not in French. That's disappointing.

I can speak a little bit to the road and highway investments in Quebec, now that we're talking about it. Through the new building Canada fund, we've helped fund major highway projects in support of trade and transportation priorities, including phase three of Route 85, which is improving transportation between Quebec and Atlantic Canada; phase three of the extension of Route 35 to the American border; and the extension of Route 138 on the lower north shore.

• (1135)

We've also funded major road and bridge projects to help improve public transit and make for greener and more sustainable urban transportation. This includes the expansion of Autoroute 19 in Laval, and the reconstruction of Pont Pie-IX, which supports an efficient, modern bus rapid transit system in a rapidly growing region.

Mr. Strahl talked about the lack of municipal bus services in his part of the world. That's something that we've stood up and funded as well in terms of infrastructure. It's not just a one-size-fits-all solution in terms of "we need to build roads". We need to be focused on many different levels and on many different points of infrastructure, which we've been doing. We will continue to make the necessary investments in road transportation to create jobs, reduce pollution, improve our communities and make our communities more resilient against the risks of climate change.

I appreciate Mr. Strahl bringing out all the Conservative talking points about Steven Guilbeault. I especially liked his bringing up the climbing of the CN Tower. I don't know why that upsets Conservatives so much. Maybe it's because most members of Parliament can barely climb a ladder. To see a minister who is able to climb the CN Tower is rather impressive and something to be jealous of. It's something they always go back to. I don't know if this is all in the place of climate change denialism and this is what it's coming to: trying to gain outrage through that. We see it time and time again.

That being said, there's been no change in policy. I'll keep coming back to that.

I'll move along a bit, if I may, to the GTHA. We've been providing funding directly to municipalities. We've invested \$2.1 billion in 2,900 road and bridge projects.

I know that Mr. Strahl mentioned the north, and that's a significant concern. I believe he was parliamentary secretary to northern affairs. Again, that previous government was starving provinces and municipalities of infrastructure funding, so he's a good one to speak. We understand that the north has very specific needs. Mr. Strahl brought up some of those.

We've invested another \$3 billion in 11,000 projects across the territories since 2019. I can mention a few: \$16 million for 21 road, bridge and highway projects in the Northwest Territories; \$5.5 million for 25 road, bridge and highway projects in the Yukon; and \$3.7 million for 11 road, bridge and highway projects in Nunavut.

We'll keep working with provinces. This is something that we've been doing. Mr. Strahl mentioned working with Premier Ford. We'll work with whoever wants to work with us. This is fundamentally important, whether it's supply chains, whether it's climate adaptability...I know that's not necessarily something the Conservatives want to talk about.

Mr. Strahl did briefly mention buses. I hope he meant it as an important part of getting people around in his community, and the need for greater funding, but again, we've invested historic amounts in buses.

I'll go through more of the highlights, if you will, before I get into more details.

I believe Mr. Strahl mentioned the Trans-Canada Highway. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we invested \$153 million in the enhancement of the Trans-Canada Highway, which includes the twinning of the highway. In Nova Scotia, we invested \$90 million to twin Highway 104.

Mr. Strahl mentioned New Brunswick. In New Brunswick, we invested \$180 million in the Route 11 twinning project. In Prince Edward Island, we invested \$21.4 million to improve roads.

● (1140)

Another highlight was the \$37 million we invested in Ontario to expand Highways 11 and 17 in the township of Dorion. There was \$46 million for the expansion of Highway 404 in the Toronto area by constructing HOV lanes, which again is an important item if you're dealing with traffic in the Greater Toronto Area. I don't live anywhere near a subway, Mr. Strahl, but it's important to help move people through the GTA.

In Alberta, for the southwest Calgary Ring Road project, there was one-third of a billion dollars, \$333.6 million.

In Manitoba, for the National Highway System PTH 1 west Trans-Canada Highway, there was \$40 million.

In British Columbia—and I know Mr. Strahl mentioned his part of the world—there was \$1 million for the 100 Mile House Horse Lake Road Bridge replacement.

I'll go through some of the road and infrastructure projects. In Alberta there have been 863 road and/or bridge infrastructure projects worth \$480 million. In British Columbia—Mr. Strahl worried about British Columbia, but he doesn't have to worry—there have been 736 projects for almost \$223 million. In Manitoba there have been 563 projects for \$170 million. In New Brunswick there have been 143 projects for \$68 million. In Newfoundland and Labrador there have been 391 projects for nearly \$50 million. In Nova Scotia there have been 308 projects for nearly \$91 million. In the Northwest Territories there have been 20 highway or road infrastructure project for \$5.5 million. In Nunavut there have been 11 projects for \$3.7 million. In Ontario, which I've mentioned and I am a proud Ontario member of Parliament, there have been almost 3,900 projects for \$2 billion.

It's very clear that there has been no policy change. This is the government that gets roads, highways and bridges built and that understands the importance of that infrastructure. In Prince Edward Island there have been 82 projects for almost \$41 million. In Saskatchewan there have been 769 projects for \$122 million. In Yukon there have been 25 projects for \$5.4 million. Again, this is where I got the number from before. There have been nearly 8,000 projects for \$3.3 billion. If anyone is suggesting that this government does not care about the needs of municipalities and the concerns regarding infrastructure deficits across the country, there is clearly proof of the opposite, and that's been confirmed. I'll probably have to keep repeating myself, because I don't think the Conservatives will take the answer, but there's been no change in policy.

This is quite the rich record in terms of what's been done and of our partnerships both municipally and provincially in terms of what we're getting done. I'll go down to the city level in terms of what we've been doing.

Again, Mr. Strahl brought up New Brunswick. The City of Dieppe Boulevard extension was a \$21-million investment by the federal government. In Newfoundland and Labrador, at Bishop's Falls, Chance Cove, and Grand Falls-Windsor there have been enhancements to the Trans-Canada Highway, Route 1, in the amount of \$153 million.

• (1145)

Back to Newfoundland and Labrador, Mount Pearl, in the municipality of St. John's, had the completion of Route 3 for \$15 million.

I have a few from Saskatchewan. In the municipality of Torch River, this is the construction of a bridge south of Garrick. It's a federal investment of \$166,000. We have a few from the municipality of Lumsden. One is the Shirley Andrew low level crossing for \$50,000. Another level crossing was the Fish Farm low level crossing, which was another \$55,000. A third project in Lumsden is a cement bridge for \$166,700. In the municipality of Keys, the Red Bin Road bridge was \$83,350.

They're not all million- or billion-dollar projects. We're there with small municipalities, as well, to get these projects done. Again, there's been no change. We have to keep working. We have to keep moving forward on this.

I'm still in Saskatchewan. The town of Preeceville got \$166,000 for the Ebel bridge. The municipality of Porcupine had the Reed bridge for \$166,000. In Caledonia, the McCrystal concrete arch was \$166,000. In Mervin, Saskatchewan, a bridge at Township Road 502 was another \$166,000 and in the municipality of Orkney, Township Road 275 was another \$166,000.

In the municipality of Canwood, the Deep Lake bridge was \$83,350. In the municipality of Hudson Bay, there was a bridge replacement for another \$166,000. In the municipality of Miry Creek, it's the Green bridge replacement for \$134,000. The municipality of Laurier—we're still in Saskatchewan—had \$166,000 for the Martin bridge replacement.

Back to Orkney, the Jedburgh grid bridge was \$57,000 and in the town of Preeceville, the Scheller bridge was \$75,000.

Again, Conservatives are voting against all of these, be it in various budgets across the board or in our vote-a-thon in December. They're voting against infrastructure funding. It's quite ironic to see them vote against it and then be mad at our infrastructure spending, which, again, is historic.

Poplar Valley in Saskatchewan had \$50,000 for the Wolfe bridge replacement. In the municipality of Biggar, the Palo bridge replacement was \$85,000. In Loon Lake, Saskatchewan, another bridge replacement was \$166,000. The municipality of Big Stick had \$161,000 for the Big Stick bridge replacement.

The village of Meota had \$75,000 for the Iffley bridge replacement. In Wellington, Saskatchewan, this is the SW bridge replacement, which had another \$166,000.

I'll go on to Prince Edward Island where Warren Grove got \$1.2 million for roads and highways.

In Gambo, Newfoundland and Labrador, Pine Tree Road's upgrade was \$460,000.

• (1150)

In Saskatchewan, the North Bridge replacement in Mount Pleasant was another \$166,000, as was a bridge replacement in Flett's Springs.

I have more, and I'm willing to come back to more.

I would like to even bring up Minister Guilbeault's own portfolio, which is Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The Conservatives starved Parks Canada of funding through their years.

I'll just go through briefly some of the projects that ECCC, or Environment and Climate Change Canada, has brought forward in terms of roads there. It's important in terms of getting people through for the tourism, so they can see these great national parks.

Terra Nova National Park in Newfoundland was \$45.6 million. Gros Morne, which I had the fortune of visiting last year, is great work—\$21.7 million. I highly recommend that everyone visit Gros Morne. It is quite beautiful, probably one of the most beautiful places in the country.

I have more: Fundy National Park; \$19 million; La Mauricie National Park; \$53 million; Riding Mountain National Park; \$36.2 million; Jasper and Banff national parks—I know Mr. Strahl brought up Alberta and getting people to these areas—\$120 million. That's an ongoing project—that's work being done right now as we speak, in the minister's own department. We have Yoho National Park, British Columbia; \$67.5 million for Trans Canada twinning. Again, that's ongoing—workers working right now. There's no change in policy. We have Glacier National Park; \$141 million. Again, that's ongoing work in British Columbia. I know Mr. Strahl is worried, but he doesn't have to be. There's no change in policy; this work will continue. There's Wood Buffalo National Park; \$28.2 million.



These are all projects in Minister Guilbeault's portfolio. This is important work being done. I have a lot more to go through, because these are historic investments in infrastructure across the country, which Conservatives have voted against and promised to cut as they go to war with municipalities.

I'm happy to come back to this. I'd like to hear what others have to say, including those MPs who are there for municipalities starving for road and bridge funding—one of whom has their hand up right now. I would like to hear from them.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I could be put back on the list at the end, I would appreciate it.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bittle. It is indeed noted.

Next, we'll turn it over to Ms. Lantsman.

The floor is yours.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Thanks very much.

I'm sure that the voters of St. Catharines will have better days ahead instead of listening to that diatribe. On the motion, the substance of it seems to be that the Prime Minister's radical environment minister has announced an infrastructure plan of more soul-sucking traffic and more gridlock.

Anyone who has driven through the GTA has come to expect that highways are gridlocked. They'll sit in traffic missing productive time and missing time with their families. It's the Liberals' radical environment minister who only wants to see this get worse. Not only that, we have a Deputy Prime Minister who is just as out of touch. When she isn't being driven around by taxpayer-funded chauffeurs, she lives in a world that is separate from the reality of most Canadians, and frankly, from the reality of almost anybody in this meeting.

She brags that she doesn't own a car—that's a direct quote. I'm like, I don't know, 300 metres from the nearest walkway, I walk, and I take the subway. Here's the problem, though. Not all Canadians live on a subway line, and Canadians already send their tax dollars to Ottawa for road infrastructure.

When we have an environment minister who announces a new policy, it's incumbent on a committee to study that and at least call the environment minister. That's exactly why we're calling the environment minister and his colleagues to appear before this transportation committee and to hold them accountable for the extreme and reckless policy positions that he has put forward.

In case the committee doesn't recall, the member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bittle, was proud to run a victory lap.

We are talking about a history of activism that, in 2001, had the minister arrested and charged with mischief for scaling the CN Tower as part of Greenpeace stunt. I know that 2001 is long ago, but, even in 2019 in an interview, he said, "I'm still the guy who climbed the CN Tower".

After two and a half years of his tenure as Liberal environment minister, there is no doubt that statement was true. He has proven himself to Canadians to be the radical, far left, Greenpeace activist

that he has described himself to be. His actions as environment minister haven't made any constructive change or positive steps towards protecting the environment balanced with the reality that Canadians face to navigate the high interest rates driven by deficits and inflation, and, of course, the carbon tax that this government continues to impose on everyday Canadians. Rather, he has sought to divide, virtue-signal and implement an extremist agenda at each point of his tenure. He has doubled down on the punishing carbon tax that certainly doesn't work, and it floods the government coffers with hundreds of millions of dollars. It makes Canadians poorer, not richer.

He has an effective ban on fossil fuel development at a time when Canadians and, frankly, the world, need our natural resources more than ever. The latest announcement is that the Government of Canada will no longer build any roads. These roads connect our communities, drive economic prosperity for millions across the country, and, frankly, are the only way to get goods, people and everything else from one place to another when they are not 300 metres from a subway or have the transportation networks that are required.

We have broken ports in this country, ports that come up last on any list of the efficiency of getting goods into the country. We have a road system that, if you ask anybody who sits in traffic anywhere in the GTA, greater Vancouver, Montreal or Ottawa why they're sitting in their cars for hours at a time.... If you ask them if our road system is effective, they will surely tell you no.

When this active, radical environment minister tells Canadians from coast to coast, tell premiers and tell mayors that they are no longer funding roads, I think this committee ought to hear directly from him. He needs to answer to Canadians. That's exactly why we brought this motion here today, and that's exactly why we want to hear from him and his colleagues about the direction of this government rather than a laundry list of how government policy hasn't changed despite the fact that the government has announced a change in policy. You heard it directly from the environment minister.

• (1200)

Rather than playing defence for the radical environment minister, I think Canadians ought to hear him at this committee.

Bringing it back to the motion, rather than the diatribe we heard from the member for St. Catharines, Mr. Bittle, I think we should refocus this discussion on bringing the government's environment minister and his colleagues to committee to answer Canadians on why they want to stop construction of roads and why they want to continue with their radical agenda of environment policy that will quadruple the carbon tax and stop people from driving their cars, transferring their goods and seeing one another.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Muys, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to amplify the comments of my colleagues, particularly Ms. Lantsman. We've put forward this motion because in fact these comments from the radical environment minister of this government have caused that uproar and caused that uncertainty. We've heard that from, certainly in my home province of Ontario, the premier and the minister of transportation, but we've heard that from mayors and provincial and municipal counterparts across the country.

The comment that the road network we have now is perfectly adequate to serve the needs we have is absolutely incorrect and alarming. The fact that it was given as prepared remarks at a conference would indicate that is the new policy of the Liberal government. That is cause for concern. That is why we've put forward this motion, so that we can hear directly from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change himself but also the Minister of Housing, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Finance, who obviously are party to the whole funding of infrastructure and road infrastructure across Canada.

I stood yesterday on a Highway 403 bridge overpass near Hamilton, my home here. The 403, of course, is a major artery through the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. In fact, the bridge I stood on was one of the bridges rehabilitated with funds from the infrastructure program under the previous Conservative government. Of course, I also watched the gridlock and the lineup of trucks on the 403.

That particular infrastructure funding for the Highway 403 rehabilitation and the bridges at that time, in the years and following the years of the great recession under the previous Stephen Harper Conservative government, in fact was actually two-thirds funded by the federal government. The Liberal provincial government of the day did not have the funds to actually contribute their share to that particular project.

If we're talking about the 400 series highways in southern Ontario around the GTHA that are critical to the movement of people and the movement of goods, we want to talk about supply chains and we want to talk about ports. It's an area of responsibility of this committee that we spent some time studying. I was at an announcement at the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority in Hamilton in January. They are, of course, doing incredible work. With this announcement with a sugar company, they'll actually build Canada's largest sugar refinery right at the port of Hamilton.

Talk about multimodal; we have a port that now has a rail link connecting to Montreal, which was announced as well by CN. We also have the fastest-growing cargo airport in the country in Hamilton. We also have that critical piece of infrastructure, which is the road and highway network to get those goods. Ontario is a food and beverage manufacturing centre, so this needs to supply that. That sugar needs to get from the port to the food and beverage manufacturers in Hamilton and across the GTA.

This is good business, but people here are also stuck in traffic. They have that frustration every day. Whether we think about things like Highway 403, whether we think about the proposed

Highway 413 by the Ontario government, or we think about Highway 401, which is critical and noted as the busiest and most congested highway in the world, they are critical to our trade corridors but also to the movement of people.

Again, I would suggest that we get back to the business at hand, which is the motion put forward by my colleague Mr. Strahl. Let's move forward so that we can hear directly from the ministers on what this new policy entails.

Thank you.

• (1205)

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

[*Translation*]

I now yield the floor to Mr. Gourde.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to participate in your committee meeting today and join my voice to others to explain how the Liberal government's new policies launched by the radical Minister of the Environment and Climate Change could harm my area, the greater region of Lévis and Quebec City.

As you know, after the greater Montreal region, the greater Quebec City and Lévis metropolitan area is the second largest economic region in Quebec. This region boasts Highway 20 on the south side, which must be connected to Highway 40 on the north side. There's also Highway 73, on a north-south axis, which runs from the United States all the way to the greater Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region.

The Quebec City region is therefore a hub. When we hear that there will be no more major road projects, it causes great concern, especially about the third link, which would be very important for the future.

The demographics of the greater Quebec City metropolitan region are currently exploding. As the region offers great business opportunities, its population could therefore experience a sharp increase over the next 20 years. We even think it could double. In our region, it's still possible to find affordable land and build at affordable prices too. If the population increases, road traffic will inevitably increase as well.

That said, the Quebec government has asked the infrastructure division of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec to conduct an exhaustive study on the possibility of a third link. The message sent by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Mr. Guilbeault, will no doubt be taken into account in the report that the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec will present to the Quebec government in June on the feasibility of a third link. This is of major importance, because it sends out a signal that the federal government will not support major road infrastructure projects in the future. This could lead the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec's infrastructure division to redefine the entire cast of its report, which would be very harmful for my greater region as well as, indirectly, for the future of Quebec.

Mr. Guilbeault's vision is his own. It's a vision that his government has endorsed, according to the Prime Minister, who told the House that there would be no third link. For an infrastructure project that crosses the river, federal jurisdiction is required. Yet Minister Guilbeault has already said that an environmental study by Environment Canada that would favour a third link would not be accepted as long as he is Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

All of these factors combined could lead the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec to submit an unfavourable report to the Quebec government. This would indefinitely delay a truly important project for the economic development of the greater national capital region, Quebec City, the city of Lévis, and the entire greater Chaudière-Appalaches region, which I so proudly represent along with some of my Conservative colleagues. In the long term, it would be very harmful indeed.

We have two bridges in the region that require very major repairs. Over the next 10 years, these repairs will regularly lead to lane reductions. With the two bridges, the maximum number of cars that can cross the river is currently around 140,000 per day. According to forecasts for 2035-40, we'll need infrastructure capable of handling 250,000 cars a day. It takes between three and seven years to plan and build a bridge. As you can see, delivery of the third link will be eagerly awaited around 2030-32. So it's important to take the right direction today and get the right signal from a responsible government when it comes to major road infrastructure, for the future of our country and the province of Quebec.

• (1210)

That said, I won't delay the work. I would like us to return to the very important motion from my colleague Mr. Strahl, which I will support. It's really important to know where the federal Liberal government is going. It doesn't look like the direction the Conservatives would have liked. We don't necessarily have the same vision. You can't run a country the same way you run a big city. The reality is that our country is a very large territory. As people will continue to move across this vast territory for many decades to come, if not hundreds of years, we have to be realistic and take into account the future of our country when we draw up policies. If we want a better future, we have to allow people to move around our country.

I'll yield the floor to the next person who wishes to speak.

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

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank my colleagues for attending.

It's my turn to speak on why I supported the request that the committee hold a meeting today to discuss the comments of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who claimed that the government would no longer invest a penny in road projects. I was, obviously, very surprised to hear that. It didn't strike me as responsible government policy. It sounded to me more like the militant vision of someone with a certain ideology who wanted to utter a

shock phrase to impress listeners. But when you're in government, you're supposed to be responsible. You're supposed to make decisions that are realistic for the community as a whole, decisions that can be applied concretely.

Why are such comments worrying? It's all well and good to say that we won't invest a penny more in road transport, but the reality is that the road network isn't finished yet. As many have said, Canada is a big place. In Quebec, for example in Nord-du-Québec or eastern Quebec, many towns and villages are still not connected by roads. Hearing that the government won't invest a penny in roads must have made some people's hair stand on end. When you live in a place where there's no road connecting you to another community and you're told that the government won't invest another penny in road projects, you think that your village will never be connected to another by a road.

For example, on the Côte-Nord, there's a project to extend Route 138 to connect villages that still aren't connected. This is one of the top priorities for Côte-Nord residents. If we tell them they'll never get a road, they're going to be disappointed, and understandably so.

Another important project for residents of the Côte-Nord is the construction of a bridge over the Saguenay River, which would mean that people would no longer need to take the ferry to get to their region. In summer, traffic jams can be monstrous. When you want to get to the Côte-Nord, you could be waiting for hours before you can catch the ferry. Since there's no bridge, many people want to take the ferry, but it has limited capacity. So people have to wait.

Here in the Outaouais region, all of Highway 50 isn't even a two-lane highway yet. They say it's a highway, but in fact it's a two-lane road. It can even be dangerous under certain circumstances. For example, in winter, when visibility is poor, you can get into a head-on collision, as vehicles drive very close to oncoming traffic. What's more, if someone slows traffic down, or if there's an accident, all the downstream vehicles are blocked. So there's a safety issue too.

I've talked about two or three road projects, but I'm sure there are others that are relevant or important for Quebec's future.

If, in its vision, the government had announced that road projects were not its priority since the road infrastructure is well developed, and that it felt it should instead relieve congestion on roads and road networks by giving priority to public transit projects, that might have been a responsible policy that we could expect from a government. In any case, I think it's a vision we should have, especially insofar as we want to reduce the effects of climate change and curb urban sprawl. I think urban sprawl is an important issue. We have to make sure we preserve our farmland and wetlands. So it's a vision that could have been intelligent if, based on the same principle or the same values, it had been expressed in a more thoughtful way.

The reason why I think it's important for our committee to receive the minister is that we need to know whether this was simply thoughtless talk from someone who hadn't thought things through and tried a nice formula to impress the gallery, or whether it's the government's real policy, in which case it would be more worrying.

That's why it would be important for other ministers to come and talk to us about it. Generally speaking, it's not just the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change who invests in these projects. There's also the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities. Their appearance would be relevant to explain the government's vision to us, and how it will be implemented by their departments.

• (1215)

It will certainly be interesting to find out where the government is or is not headed, but the good news is that it doesn't really matter, since it's not usually Ottawa that decides on road projects. Municipality roads are funded by the cities. Quebec authorizes most projects throughout Quebec, whether major highway links or major infrastructure projects; it finances them and ultimately decides. Does Ottawa have a role to play? Sometimes, some projects are financed in part by Ottawa, but that's first and foremost the responsibility of Quebec and the municipalities. If Ottawa decided to stop funding these projects, in a pinch we could still survive this, even if it might not be desirable.

Everyone in the regions pays taxes to the federal government. Anyone who lives in a region far from the major centres and who has any hope of seeing a road go to their corner of the world would be a little disappointed to see that the federal government, to whom they pay taxes, intends to let them down and not contribute to improving their connection to the road network.

Of course, I think this is irresponsible talk on the part of the minister and it's important that he come and explain himself.

Perhaps what explains the minister's comments is that the Liberals don't have many MPs in the regions. When you look at the electoral map, you can see that very quickly. It might be in their interest to visit these people more often to better understand their reality.

Instead of debating for hours on what the minister said or speculating on what he might have meant and what that might suggest about the government's position, I think the best thing to do would be to look at the motion before the committee and come up with something concrete. I understand that the Conservatives' idea is to put on a show. Their motion is justified, in that it's important for the minister to come and speak. However, before convening half the cabinet, it would be a good idea simply to reframe the debate. Then we'll see if we need to go further and do a big in-depth study on the subject.

I'd simply propose amending the member's motion so that we hold a single meeting. Obviously, we would invite the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities and the Minister of Transport.

Madam Clerk, I'm going to state my proposed amendment more clearly. Generally speaking, here's how I would amend Mr. Strahl's motion.

I would keep the beginning of the motion, the words "The committee undertake", but instead of having "a study of no less than six meetings", it would be "one meeting". The sentence would continue by saying "on infrastructure in Canada, and invite the following witnesses to appear before the committee", but I would add "within 30 days of the adoption of this motion".

In point (a), we'd keep the reference to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, but remove the rest of the sentence.

In point (b), again we could keep the mention of the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, but delete the rest of the sentence.

This would be the same in point (c), regarding the Minister of Transport; we'd remove the rest of the sentence.

Then I would remove points (d), (e) and (f), as well as the final paragraph, about time and resources. In fact, if we only have one meeting, we won't need to make any major changes to the committee's schedule or to the resources required of the House.

I hope that the amendment I am proposing is clear and that the members of the committee will accept it. It would allow us to receive the minister and the appropriate government spokespersons to explain their real position to us. That way everyone will be reassured if they happen to have a more reasonable position than what the Conservatives are telling us.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

The clerk will distribute the text of the proposed amendment.

[*English*]

Do members fully understand the amendment that was put forward by Mr. Barsalou-Duval?

I see thumbs up.

Now we will begin the discussion on the amendment proposed by Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleague, Mr. Barsalou-Duval, for the amendment.

I'm going to speak generally to the topic at hand, and I'll circle back to the amendment near the end.

Part of the issue here is that the minister did very clearly say that there's been a policy change. Mr. Bittle, on the other hand, has said at this meeting that there has been no policy change. The committee deserves to know which of those two things is true. Bringing the ministers to committee to elaborate on that apparent contradiction is a useful exercise and certainly in the public interest.

I know there were a lot of people across Canada, including the ministers who my colleagues have highlighted, who were surprised by the words of the environment minister. Here in northwestern B.C., there are a lot of remote communities that have challenges with road infrastructure. They want the federal and provincial governments to work together to ensure that they have safe and reliable road access to their communities, not just for the everyday needs of travel to larger centres but in cases of emergencies. We've seen wildfires and very serious weather events that have required communities to leave suddenly, and having good road infrastructure is vital in that regard. I'm thinking about Highway 51. This is the road to Telegraph Creek. It has suffered serious damage in the wake of the fires of 2018. The provincial government has put extensive money into that road, but it still requires additional work. I note that the provincial government has made commitments to continue that work. The question, of course, is what the role for the federal government may be in that partnership.

I'm here today in Fort St. James, and the road to the community of Takla Landing is an issue of urgent concern for that community. Folks in Takla rely on a forest service road, a resource road, that is mostly maintained by the forest companies that conduct activities in the area. When those activities turn downward, often the maintenance goes with them. There's really no consistent plan to upgrade the road to the standard that is required for the community as its primary access. They've highlighted their needs, and they would very much like for the provincial and federal governments to come up with a plan to upgrade that road so that they can more easily and more safely access nearby communities.

Of course, my colleague in northern Manitoba has highlighted the need for all-weather roads in that region. The Assembly of First Nations has estimated that the infrastructure gap when it comes to all-season roads is around \$35 billion. Now, the loss of ice roads is a direct result of climate change. We need to invest in this all-weather infrastructure as part of our response to adapting to the extreme weather that we're experiencing more and more.

If anything, the minister's comments show a lack of due attention to the needs of rural and remote Canada. They show a sort of urban myopia that ignores many of the real needs of rural communities. When it comes to urban Canada—and, like it or not, Canada is an increasingly urbanized country—it's simply a reality that we need to do things differently from how we have in the past as a country. There are a number of questions that I think are very apt and that would be useful to ask as part of a study. I won't get into great depth, but financial resources are limited. We need to have solid plans for how to get people where they need to go and for how to efficiently use public resources to invest in infrastructure that does that while at the same time driving down greenhouse gas emissions and tackling climate change. I note that in my province of British Columbia, the provincial government has a target to reduce light-vehicle kilometres-travelled by 25% by 2030. A big part of that is the investment in transit, which is something that the environment minister mentioned. However, this government's permanent public transit fund isn't going to start until 2026.

• (1225)

We've heard very clearly from municipalities that not only is the gap between 2024 and 2026 unacceptable, but the size of the per-

manent public transit fund is insufficient given the massive need for infrastructure investment and the escalation in construction costs that communities are facing.

There are pretty important questions that we need to ask, such as, if indeed the government's policy is to invest less in highways and freeways and more in public transit in order to get people where they need to go, whether the magnitude of the investments they are willing to commit to are adequate to achieve that. The reality is that people who live in the suburbs that Mr. Strahl identified do need to get to work, and they can't afford to live in the centres of our big cities where housing is simply unaffordable. These are questions that I think the committee could grapple with as part of a study, as part of a meeting with the ministers, and I think it's in the public interest for us to get to the bottom of this.

Along with that, I mentioned the all-weather roads, but we have a larger question about our highway infrastructure and its resilience in the face of climate change. Just last year, I believe, we saw the atmospheric rivers in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia tear out a huge amount of transportation infrastructure. Understanding whether we're investing enough as a country in the resilience of the existing infrastructure is an issue of urgent concern.

I think the proposal that Mr. Barsalou-Duval has brought forward—that the committee have a meeting with the appearance of several ministers in order for us to scope out what a more comprehensive study might look like—is a worthwhile endeavour.

I have heard at previous meetings my Conservative colleagues insist that this committee's practice in the past has been that we have a fairly orderly approach to how we approach studies, and that each party has the ability to bring forward studies in due course and have those completed. I would note that the committee is currently studying both the issue of high frequency rail and the issue of the accessibility of air travel in Canada. My hope would be that before we embark on a more in-depth study on highway and road infrastructure in Canada we would complete those studies, as has been this committee's practice, but I am willing to support the amendment, which would see a more timely meeting on this particular topic, with the three ministers appearing as Mr. Barsalou-Duval has outlined.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'll turn the floor back to you.

Thank you.

• (1230)

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

Mr. Badawey, the floor is yours.

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

It's a pleasure to be here, albeit virtually.

Mr. Chair, I will be supporting the amendment that Mr. Barsalou-Duval has put on the floor.

I do want to speak a bit, as I have the floor, about the integration of our multimodal networks across the country. What I have to say from the onset is that, as we move forward, it's all in the planning. We have to recognize that we have to have a sound planning process in place to actually embark on the capital investments that we're going to make.

What I mean by that, Mr. Chairman, is that it's no different from a community's strategic plan. From there, the next layer is establishing an official plan for what goes where. Thirdly is establishing the secondary plan to ensure that the capacity that's needed within the official plan is met. Obviously, the last part is who's going to pay for it and where that money is going to come from—whether it comes from development charges, different levels of government or even the private sector in terms, if leveraging would be appropriate. That would be a direction that any local level of government would embark on, with the help of other levels of government and the private sector.

A perfect example of that is here in my riding, in the city of Welland. We had a historic, traditional roadway that actually connected part of Welland from the east to the west in Dain City. We had a bridge, which was once federally owned along the old canal on the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Welland Canal, go down.

That bridge went down and we then had to, under the official plan with growth happening there—quite a bit of growth, I might add—identify new housing that was being built. The secondary planning obviously identified the water, sewer and road network that would have to be maintained. With the bridge gone, it obviously wasn't going to be maintained.

Therefore, the city embarked on working with me and many others—including the private sector, I might add—to re-establish the bridge. Of course with that, as I said earlier, is the need to finance it. In the private sector, it was the developer that added growth to that part of the city. We were able to bring in \$2.6 million from the federal level of government to leverage the money of the city and the private sector.

That's just an example of how the federal government works to strengthen our transportation networks. I have to say that, one, it was based on good solid planning, and two, it's an approach that, I might add, the Conservatives don't always nurture. It's an approach that actually works with everybody on all levels of government and of course the private sector.

Mr. Muys touched on it a bit. I want to touch on it a bit deeper because I'm very intimately involved in the establishment of a very solid multimodal network here in southern Ontario. Niagara's flagship economy depends on that network and is continuing to work with stakeholders and partners to strengthen that network.

Niagara is Canada's canal corridor region, with the Welland Canal running right down the middle of it. With that canal, we've become somewhat of an anomaly to be a very strategic trade corridor. We are a hub for one of Canada's most robust trade corridors because of the multimodal network that we've established here. The anchor to that—no pun intended—is the Welland Canal.

As we've become stronger and our partnerships have grown, the economy has grown. Many people have now been a part of that

partnership—not just in Niagara, but in all of southern Ontario, including Hamilton. One of our biggest partners is the Hamilton Oswego Port Authority. They've now moved to Niagara because they've maxed out of land availability in Hamilton.

We're working with Munro airport, Rungeling airport, the Niagara District Airport, Pearson, Niagara Falls, New York airport and Buffalo airport, CP and CN Rail—main line and short line—and GIO, which is our short line operator.

Of course, we're working with partners that are water related. We're also working with land-related partners, with the BMI Group, which has become a major investor within the Thorold multimodal hub as part of the Niagara trade corridor, as well as with the Peace Bridge, which is the second largest in North America. It's the second-largest crossing in the town of Fort Erie. We're now including that within the overall trade corridor strategy.

You know, Niagara is where road meets water, rail and air. It's a strategic location within a one-day drive of over 44% of North America's annual income.

● (1235)

My point to all of that is, one, how important it is—as sometimes, most times, if not all times, the Conservatives fail to do—to work together: to ensure that we work together on the establishment of a plan, a strategy. Second is that we work together to implement and execute that strategy. Third, it's to recognize where those happen, where those strategic locations are. We have to recognize the connections between reliable transportation structures and, of course, national supply chain stability, to begin the efforts to formally recognize and integrate how factors such as water, rail and rural linkages affect travel: moving people, like we're embarking on with the planning of high frequency rail dedicated to a track to move people and a track to move commerce—trade.

As well, it's about the way we do business domestically and around the world, not just here in Canada. We also have to take into consideration having those same discussions in partnership with our binational partners on the U.S. side to integrate our supply chains more effectively by utilizing the transportation networks that we have and that, quite frankly, we can strengthen through the process of proper planning. An example of this network in action is the strategically located Asia-Pacific trade corridor, but as well, as I mentioned earlier, we have the Niagara port trade corridor and other strategic locations across the country.

Having worked tirelessly with financial and transportation partners since 2001 in my former life as a mayor, I've recognized and continue to recognize the need to work toward an up-to-date integrated transportation network and networks across the country. Frankly, that's one of the reasons why I ran in 2015: because I ran out of the capacity at the local level to do that. Being at the federal level now has given me the opportunity to expand that network—again, no pun intended—with our partners at the local level, having had experience in working at that level but also at the provincial and the federal levels and, once again, with the private sector.

I think it's incumbent, Mr. Chairman—and, yes, we can embark on the amendment that Mr. Barsalou-Duval brings forward—that we also recognize that there are many efforts being led by this government that will in fact work toward exactly what ultimately we're talking about today. I'll quote David Emerson from the CTA report back in 2015. It's to recognize the need to bring up to date and to strengthen a transportation system to ensure that Canada's overall global performance is strengthened by having that network—working with all of the partners—being brought up to date and being integrated in a multimodal fashion, but that is as well being driven by those regional hubs where manufacturing and production are happening and, quite frankly, which make up our supply chains.

That in fact is the real official plan in comparison to a community being dealt out. Of course, the secondary plan to that is the transportation network that would add capacity to run with fluidity, whether it's moving trade or people, and of course being streamlined within its logistic distribution as well as the data and digitalization that's expected to make it run even more effectively, and more in tune with the needs of those we're actually choosing, which are our residents as well as our business networks.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Murray, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also support this study going forward as amended.

I think what we've heard so far this afternoon is how important road, bridge and highway infrastructure are to community members right across the country. I would ask all members to take the approach to this hearing—on which we agree—that this is a serious matter and that we are aiming to have a constructive outcome of this session.

What I would ask also is that members' comments such as the opening diatribe against our environment minister not be part of the discussion. I ask that we not have the repeated name-calling, using repeated adjectives of our environment minister, and that we not have the feigned outrage that we heard in these opening remarks of Mr. Strahl. I ask that we recognize that the massive investments that our government has put into road, highway and bridge infrastructure—as laid out by Mr. Bittle and Mr. Badawey—are actually very substantive investments in infrastructure across the country in urban, rural, suburban and remote areas alike.

Finally, as someone who was in the chamber for the entire 10 years of Mr. Harper's government, I am very aware that in the last three years of a Conservative government, the budget for infrastructure was cut to a mere \$500 million a year for each of the last three years. Five hundred million may sound like a lot of money to those watching these proceedings, but you have heard about the billions and billions that our government has invested to support Canadians with their road, highway and bridge infrastructure.

I'll just put that \$500 million in the 2012, 2013 and 2014 budgets by the previous Conservative government into perspective. Five hundred million dollars is the total funding for one SkyTrain line extension from Cambie Street to the airport. That one investment, which was made by former prime minister Martin, was a \$500-million investment. Prime Minister Harper allocated \$500 million for all infrastructure, including housing, right across the country, from end to end and top to bottom, for three years in a row.

That huge deficit of infrastructure.... Mind you, it may have been made up for in the public's perception by a Liberal investment and the signage that suggested that the Conservative economic action plan was working "here in your community". That signage was in place of actual investment, leaving a major deficit of infrastructure investment, which our government has been filling since we were elected in 2015.

I just wanted to provide a little bit of that corporate memory, that history, from someone who was elected in 2008 and has watched the various investments of previous Conservative governments shrivel to almost nothing. I've seen the investments in road, bridge and highway infrastructure, as well as housing and other forms of infrastructure, bloom under the current Liberal government and our Prime Minister.

● (1240)

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

Yes, Mr. Strahl.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair

I note that we are 15 minutes from the end of the scheduled time. I just wanted to verify this with you—I understand that there are resources available to extend this meeting until three o'clock eastern time. We don't intend to give our implied consent for an adjournment unless we can come to an agreement on a motion here before the time is scheduled to expire.

I understand we do have additional resources to extend the meeting if we're unable to come to an agreement on a motion here in the next 15 minutes.

● (1245)

**The Chair:** You beat me to it, Mr. Strahl. I was about to inform members that the clerk has secured resources for an additional 30 minutes. We have resources until 1:30 for the time being. We'll let the discussion move forward. If needed, I will make adjustments as required.

Mr. Bittle, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** I'm good.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

We'll go to Mr. Strahl followed by Mr. Muys.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate Mr. Barsalou-Duval's comments. As the mover of the original motion, I understand that I probably can't amend his amendment; however, I will speak to his amendment, and perhaps another member can formalize some of my remarks.

Having a Standing Order 106(4) meeting means that we've agreed. Certainly the signatories of the letter, including all of the Conservative members, the Bloc member and the NDP member on this committee have agreed that this was a matter that deserved an emergency meeting outside of our normal meeting time.

In keeping with that, I can agree with Mr. Barsalou-Duval that we can remove the Minister of Finance and the CEO of the Infrastructure Bank and other witnesses. We can drop that second half of the motion and keep it to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities and the Minister of Transport. These three ministers, I think, would have the most relevant testimony to give to us.

I do, however, think that a 30-day period no longer considers it an emergent issue. We're going to have provincial budgets, etc. coming forward very soon, and it's the same with the federal budget. We have only one sitting week in March. I suspect that we would all have that as a target date for a potential budget. I think that 30 days is too long to allow for this to be scheduled. Two weeks, 14 days, would be much more reasonable for something that the majority of us agree is an emergent issue.

I also think that we should give each of these ministers some time on their own to answer. Perhaps it would be a three-hour meeting with the ministers each appearing for one hour.

That would be my suggestion in response to Mr. Barsalou-Duval. We want to work together here to come up with this.

Again, this is not designed to take the place of our regular Tuesday and Thursday meetings, which occur between 11:00 and 1:00. Those will continue. We should be able to find a three-hour time slot to at least discuss this matter in the next two weeks. I think that's a reasonable compromise that allows us to continue with our current work, which I know Mr. Barsalou-Duval and Mr. Bachrach have indicated is a priority. It shouldn't be that hard to find another time slot to have a meeting with those ministers.

I know that I can't amend his amendment to my motion, but those are my comments on his amendment.

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

Mr. Muys, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Dan Muys:** Thank you.

To pick up on the comments by my colleague Mr. Strahl as well as the comments by Mr. Bachrach and Mr. Barsalou-Duval, certain-

ly there are contradictions and questions that have arisen as a result of the Minister of Environment's comments. I think that there is a consensus that there is a need for the minister and other ministers to come and speak before this committee, so I would suggest a subamendment.

As Mr. Strahl has indicated, this is an urgent issue. That's why we're having an emergency meeting. Within 14 days is quite reasonable, given the fact that this has already festered for eight or nine days since the comments were made. We're already approaching the 30-day mark when you add that in.

Let me suggest a subamendment to Mr. Barsalou-Duval's amendment, that we change "30 days" to "14 days" and that we add "for one hour each separately". The amendment is:

That the motion be amended (a) by replacing the words "within 30 days" with the words "within 14 days"; (b) by adding after the words "of this motion being adopted" the words "; for one hour each, separately"; and by adding after paragraph (c) the following paragraph: "And that the committee seek additional resources, if necessary, to accommodate these appearances."

I'll propose that and turn over the floor.

• (1250)

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I look forward to seeing what my colleagues think of it. I'm not necessarily closed to the subamendment proposed by Mr. Muys. We need to determine whether, in fact, in practice, it's something that's feasible. I'll listen carefully to my colleagues' comments.

My intention was mainly that we hold a meeting and invite the three ministers involved in the case, namely the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who made the remarks in question, and the other two ministers whose departments are involved in funding road projects.

Of course, holding this meeting outside the committee's normal schedule would be a good idea, as we wouldn't be upsetting the committee's current work schedule.

So, I don't see any problem with holding the meeting within 14 days rather than 30 days. The question is mainly whether it's feasible, from a practical point of view. I don't know the ministers' schedules or the state of the House's resources, so I don't know what the dates would be. The urgency of the matter would still be emphasized if this meeting were held within 30 days, but it would be emphasized even more if it were held within 14 days. I'm open to that too.

As to whether the meeting would be two hours or three, I'm very open to discussion. I'm willing to work with whatever the consensus is among the members of this committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.



I have no one left on the list. We can therefore put Mr. Muys' subamendment to the vote.

[*English*]

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We will now go to the vote on the amendment, as amended, by Mr. Muys.

I'm seeing some confusion.

• (1255)

**Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.):** That was confusing, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Yes, I thought we were actually voting on the main motion.

**The Chair:** We'll start over.

Can you reread the amendment as amended by Mr. Muys so that everybody knows what we're voting on, Madam Clerk?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Carine Grand-Jean):** You are voting on the amendment as amended by Mr. Muys. The amendment is the one proposed by Mr. Barsalou-Duval. Instead of having "30 days", you have "14 days".

**The Chair:** Are there any questions from the members joining us online?

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Chair, I think there is a process, when a vote is called, to not stop it halfway through because some members are confused. You were very clear on what was happening. I realize that there might have been some confusion of members, but when this happens in the House or at committee, members are required to get unanimous consent to change their votes.

I would hate to get into a precedent here. I think that it likely is out of order to start a vote again halfway through. We, on our side, knew what we were voting on.

I just want to make it clear that it is highly irregular to stop a vote halfway through to allow members to start again.

**The Chair:** I agree, Mr. Strahl. I just received messages from people asking that we please read out what we were voting on, which I will take full responsibility for not doing. There was some confusion there, which is why I stopped it.

I've asked the clerk to read it out for everybody so that everybody's on the same page, including the person who proposed the amendment itself, to make sure that we know exactly what we're voting on. I want to make sure—

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I'm not going to fight you on it, Mr. Chair. I just think it is highly irregular to stop a vote halfway through and start over, but go for it.

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Now we will go a vote on the motion as amended.

Please read the motion as amended.

**The Clerk:** The motion reads:

That the committee undertake a meeting on infrastructure in Canada, and invite the following witnesses to appear before the committee within 14 days of this motion being adopted...:

- (a) The Minister of Environment and Climate Change;
- (b) The Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities;
- (c) The Minister of Transport....

• (1300)

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I believe Mr. Muys' subamendment made it clear that there was "one hour each, separately" for those ministers.

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

We're going to suspend for two minutes as the clerk compiles all of the information to make sure that she has everything 100%.

• (1300)

(Pause)

• (1300)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting back to order.

I'll now turn it over to the clerk to once again read the final motion as amended.

**The Clerk:** The amended motion reads as follows:

That the committee undertake a meeting on infrastructure in Canada, and invite the following witnesses to appear before the committee within 14 days of this motion being adopted, for one hour each, separately:

- (a) The Minister of Environment and Climate Change;
- (b) The Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities;
- (c) The Minister of Transport;

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I believe the subamendment did talk about additional resources as well to ensure that this was able to happen outside the normal hours of sitting. I'm not sure if Mr. Muys needs to send that or if we can just add that right now, but that was part of the subamendment.

**The Chair:** I see the clerk nodding in agreement.

I'll turn it over to the clerk on this one.

**The Clerk:** Yes. A second part was added and adopted, as follows:

And that the committee seek additional resources, if necessary, to accommodate these appearances.

• (1305)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Clerk.

Mr. Badawey, I see your hand up.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a quick question with respect to resources. This will now go outside our regular time slot. The House will be asked if the resources are available. What if they come back and say that resources are not available? Will we then proceed to have this jump the queue with respect to the studies that we currently have in the queue?

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** I think that's debate, Mr. Chair. We're in the voting stage.

**The Chair:** We'll answer that question following the vote, Mr. Badawey.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Well, frankly, my vote would be determined by that. That's why I'm asking the question. I need clarification on that.

● (1310)

**The Chair:** The response to your question, Mr. Badawey, is that normally these requests are accepted, the vast majority of the time. However, a formal request would have to be made.

**The Chair:** With that, colleagues, this meeting stands adjourned.

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