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Good evening,

Please find below the transcription of the Minister's interview at Power & Politics earlier this evening.

Thank you,
Stefanie

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Program:	Power & Politics with Vassy Kapelos (Hour 1)	DATE:	2020-Oct-26 5:00PM	Time:	5:00PM - 6:00PM
Station:	CBC News Network	Network:	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	City:	Toronto

HEADLINE: Interview with Minister Anita Anand

**DAVID
COCHRANE
(Reporter):**

OK, to federal politics now and after winning a stare down with the opposition last week, the Liberal government was handed a stinging defeat today. A Conservative motion to force the government to hand over pandemic related documents was passed despite loud objections from the feds. The Liberals warned the level of disclosure would jeopardize confidential negotiations with drug companies and medical suppliers, even going so far as to suggest Canada could lose access to vaccine supplies if the opposition got its way. Procurement Minister Anita Anand issued those warnings. She joins me now. Minister, welcome back to the show.

ANITA ANAND (Minister of Public Services and Procurement): Hi David. How you doing?

COCHRANE: I'm good. So you've lost this vote, 176 to 152 despite your dire warnings of the consequences of this motion. If this motion is as bad as you say it is, will you abide by this result? Will you comply with this motion?

ANAND: Most definitely David. It's very important for all parties in the House of Commons to work together and as a government we will do that and I look forward to continuing the work of the committees and abiding by the terms of the motion. I need to now go back and speak with my team as do the other ministers that are mentioned in the motion and as a government we need to make sure we're complying with it.

COCHRANE: This morning when you and Minister Duclos spoke to Canadians you warned that this could potentially threaten Canada's access to vaccine supplies, it could threaten your ability to get badly medical equipment. If the stakes were so high, why wasn't this a confidence vote today?

ANAND: We have heard from Canadians that this is not the time for an election and in fact, we want to work with all members of the House of Commons because we are in a second wave. We need to make sure that it's all hands on deck in the House of Commons and across the country so that we can all come through this pandemic together and out the other side.

COCHRANE: But Canadians may not want an election but I haven't seen much polling of this but I'm pretty sure they want a vaccine. I'm pretty sure they want PPE for essential workers and for themselves. If this motion really threatens access to those, why don't you take that step? I mean you did it last week over a committee. This seems like a more fundamental issue for the country at this point in time.

ANAND: What's really important for me as the Minister of Procurement is to make sure that our contracts are in place with our PPE suppliers, with our vaccine suppliers, with our rapid test kit suppliers. And so now that this motion has passed David, it is very important for us to make sure those suppliers know that we will do our very best to protect their interests. Certainly where legal obligations will prevent us from making disclosure for example that will be something that we need to reinforce.

COCHRANE: So in terms of protecting suppliers and their interests, one of the issues in this was who would do the redactions of the various documents you're going to have to turn over to the health committee. The motion calls for the law clerk of the House of Commons to do it. You wanted the Privy Council Office to do it. Do you trust the law clerk to protect the interest of suppliers?

ANAND: Listen, we are just fresh off the boat and I have every faith in the clerk of the House of Commons and his expertise and the expertise of his team but as I said, we just came out of the House of Commons, just came out of the chamber and really need to take this back and discuss it as government to make sure that we're in compliance.

COCHRANE: We've seen some letters in advance of this vote from companies like Pfizer and manufacturers and other groups warning of the consequences of this. Has anybody flat out told you that they will walk away from doing work with the Government of Canada on any of these procurement issues if this motion were to pass?

ANAND: The reach out that we heard this weekend was across the board from suppliers, from exporters, from manufacturers, from doctors, from the Vaccine Task Force, from the Immunity Task Force and there's no question that there's concern in the market about the implications of this motion. But the most important thing for us now is to continue to protect the health and safety of Canadians, to continue to procure the PPE and the vaccines. And so we are moving in that direction now to make sure that we're able to reassure our suppliers in the interests of Canadians, in the interests of our frontline healthcare workers that we will continue to do the job we need to do for Canadians.

COCHRANE: The Conservatives have suggested that some of the concerns we've heard from suppliers was solicited by your government, that you reached out to them to flag concerns and that amounted to fear mongering. Was there any outreach from your department or any other department of government to get outside groups or third party suppliers to weigh in on this?

ANAND: The term fear mongering' is very unfortunate David. I would say that it is incumbent upon us to maintain positive relationships with our suppliers so that we can be assured of vaccines for Canadians for example. And so in response to questions and concerns, by all means we had to have those conversations and make sure that we were answering questions about the implications of the motion which is exactly what we did.

COCHRANE:	But in any of those conversations did any of these organizations or suppliers say to you that this is a line in the sand, that if this passes and if this is implemented and if this level of disclosure will happen at committee that they're no longer going to work with the government on the pandemic response? Has that explicitly been stated?	
ANAND:	David, these negotiations with our suppliers, including our vaccine suppliers are ongoing and in the interests of protecting those conversations I cannot answer that question point blank. But what I will tell you is that we are making sure that we keep strong relationships with those suppliers. We've got to continue to make sure that we have those seven vaccine agreements in place, that we are able to continue to procure PPE as we are in the middle of this second wave. The negotiations for rapid test kits and for PPE and vaccines, they're still continuing and we are going to keep making sure that we are protecting the health and safety of Canadians.	
COCHRANE:	So what do you do if someone says this is a bridge too far? As you warned this morning, you said you didn't want to be there and tell people you've maybe lost access to vaccines or therapeutics or anything else because of this. What do you do as minister if Pfizer for instance or another company says to you, We're out. This is too much. We're not going to work with you anymore'?	
ANAND:	We are making sure that we will have the conversations with our suppliers to assure them that we will take all precautions necessary to protect their legal interests and their interests in their proprietary commercially sensitive information. Those conversations will need to be had in the coming days and weeks and we will make sure that we do that David because as I said, the only way that we have been successful in our procurements in our 2 billion items of PPE procured for example is because we have continual outreach with our suppliers and we are going to make sure that those relationships stay intact for the benefit of our country.	
COCHRANE:	Just one last question before I let you go. Your warnings today on the consequences of this were pretty stark. Why do you think the opposition didn't buy it?	
ANAND:	I think that the opposition believes that we are not committed to transparency and I would say that is false. Over the course of the last number of months we have made information and details relating to 6 billion dollars' worth of contracts available on our website. I have appeared at committee three times. I have also cooperated and my department has cooperated with requests that have come forward and I want to also indicate that we have provided hundreds of pages of documents to opposition and to the committees because of requests that have come forward. So we are committed to transparency but we're also committed to protecting our supplier relationships and that's a fine balance to strike and it is clear that we have different threshold points at where you strike that balance. But now that motion has passed in the House of Commons, it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that the terms of that motion are upheld.	
COCHRANE:	OK. Minister, thank you so much for your time.	
ANAND:	Thank you so much David. Take care.	
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