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Chair

Mr. Harold Albrecht

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)): I'd like to call our meeting to order.

This is meeting 34 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. We are continuing today with our study of Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge national urban park.

We are pleased to have witnesses from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust Corporation, and the York Region Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly, national executive director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, will speak first for seven minutes, and then we'll follow with Pauline Browes and Kim Empringham.

With the number of witnesses we have today, we'll try to leave some time for questions and answers.

We will proceed with Mr. Hébert-Daly, for the first seven minutes.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly (National Executive Director, National Office, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society): Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to share with the committee our recommendations and thoughts on Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge national urban park.

My name is Éric Hébert-Daly. I'm the national executive director of CPAWS. Since our creation about 50 years ago, CPAWS has played a key role in the establishment of about two-thirds of Canada's protected areas. We have 13 regional chapters across the country in nearly every province and territory, including the CPAWS wildlands league chapter in Toronto, as well as a national office here in Ottawa. We have over 60,000 supporters across the country, and we work collaboratively with governments, industry, first nations, and others to conserve Canada's natural heritage.

Over the last five years we've welcomed the arrival of new federal park initiatives, including the sixfold expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve in 2009, and the creation of Gwaii Haanas national marine conservation area in B.C., in 2010.

We're here to discuss a different kind of park, the creation of Canada's first national urban park in the greater Toronto area. CPAWS has been quite excited about and has supported this idea from its very inception. We see it as a remarkable opportunity for us to protect a very special natural valley in Canada's biggest urban area, and at the same time to engage and connect people with nature.

Let me also be clear that CPAWS has recognized from the very beginning that farming is and will continue to be an important aspect of this park. We believe that farming can contribute to nature conservation at the same time that nature conservation can contribute to farming. We as conservationists actually share a very common interest with farmers, that of keeping urban development and urban sprawl from these lands. We often remark that the opportunity to create this national urban park is in part due to the farmers who themselves have kept urban development at bay, and the local grassroots groups who have been championing the Rouge for decades. In fact, we make no suggested changes to the aspects of agriculture within the bill.

In recent weeks we have listened with great interest to the debates about the appropriate management framework for the Rouge: should it be ecological integrity or ecosystem health? While we think there are valid arguments being made for both, CPAWS believes there is a more fundamental issue that needs to be addressed in the legislation, which is that nature conservation be clearly identified as the overarching priority for managing the park. This gets to the very essence of what a park is. Without it, we don't really have a park; we may have something else. We may have a multi-use zone or we may have other types of reserves.

However, prioritizing nature conservation is both consistent with international standards for protected areas and with existing federal and Ontario provincial legislation for parks and protected areas. It should, and it can, be reflected in the Rouge legislation as well, yet it is absent from the current bill, which only requires that the minister take into consideration nature and wildlife in managing the park.

For several years, Parks Canada has expressed a preference for managing the Rouge national urban park under an ecosystem health framework, rather than an ecological integrity framework, to distinguish national urban parks from other national parks. In the spirit of being solutions oriented, we have developed constructive recommendations over that period of time that focus on maximizing ecosystem health.

We are recommending that the legislation be amended to clearly identify maximizing ecosystem health to the greatest degree possible, which is a very important condition as part of the the overarching management goal for the Rouge. We also recommend that a robust definition for maximizing ecosystem health be embedded in the legislation.

Our recommendations would mean that language in the bill would meet international and Canadian standards for protected areas. They would provide park managers with stronger tools to protect the park's existing natural values and improve the health of its ecosystems as much as possible, particularly given its urban and agricultural context. It would make Parks Canada accountable for improving the health of the ecosystem over time, while not giving the impression that they must achieve an end point of full ecological integrity.

Moreover, our recommendation would provide a clear mandate and incentive for Parks Canada to work collaboratively with farmers to identify strategies that would be good for nature and for farmers in the long run.

We have also identified a few areas where the legislation needs strengthening. On the management planning side, we see requirements for setting ecological objectives and indicators, as well as provisions for ecological monitoring and reporting that are needed in clause 9.

• (1535)

A state of the parks report should be required to be presented to Parliament every five years, as is the case with other national parks, so parliamentarians and the public can track how well Parks Canada is meeting its objectives over time.

Related to public infrastructure, clauses 12 and 16 need to be bolstered with stringent criteria to guide decision-making prior to the clearing of land or disposal of land in the park for infrastructure purposes. For example, we suggest that decision-makers be required to consider reasonable alternatives and to ensure that lowest cost is not the sole justification for infrastructure proposals that might harm the park.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge parts of the bill that we support and would like to see remain in an amended bill. We support the list of prohibitions currently in the bill. We support the fixed limit of a maximum of 200 hectares that can be removed from the park for infrastructure. This is critically important to avoid the park being nibbled away at over time.

CPAWS urges committee members to work together to strengthen the bill to ensure that the Rouge national urban park effectively protects this natural treasure in the long term, while also supporting a healthy and vibrant farming community and encouraging people to connect with nature.

We've prepared several specific amendments that we will provide to all members of the committee in the upcoming days.

I thank you for the opportunity to share our recommendations. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hébert-Daly. We thank you for staying within the time limit as well.

We'll move now to the Honourable Pauline Browes for her opening statement of seven minutes.

Ms. Pauline Browes (Director, Waterfront Regeneration Trust Corporation): Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be back on Parliament Hill.

I'm happy to see colleagues from the Scarborough area. It's a pleasure to be at this particular committee meeting as we discuss the Rouge national urban park.

I'd briefly like to share with you some of the background of the 30 years that I've been involved with the Rouge.

In the early 1980s action was brewing to save the Rouge Valley. The community was restless and enthused, and crowds of people jammed into the municipal council chambers wanting action and official zoning bylaws to preserve the Rouge. Much of the land was in public ownership by the province, since it had been land-banked for a green space between the proposed Pickering airport and the urban area of Toronto; however, there was a great threat of subdivisions, garbage dumps, and high-rise apartments in the Rouge.

I was the federal member of Parliament representing Scarborough Centre at the time, and representatives of the organization to save the Rouge, Glenn De Baeremaeker, Jim Robb, Ron Moeser, Cathy Gregorio, came to my constituency office to seek help on how they could save the Rouge. This is a magnificent wilderness area with breathtaking vistas of the banks of the Rouge and Little Rouge rivers, heritage and cultural areas, significant flora and fauna, and white-tailed deer running free throughout the area. It will be just a short distance from the largest urban area of Canada. Yes, indeed, it needed to be protected and preserved.

The task was to find a way. The Minister of the Environment at the time, in 1987, was the Honourable Tom McMillan, and I was his parliamentary secretary. The minister had commissioned a study concerning Parks Canada, and from that study came a recommendation stating that there may be important geographical areas in Canada that should be preserved that don't necessarily fit into the criteria of the national park designation. Yes, that was all we needed. The Rouge fit perfectly into that criteria.

There was a great need for finances to protect the Rouge. With many meetings and interventions, Minister McMillan in 1988 announced on behalf of the Mulroney government that \$10 million would be provided to protect and preserve the Rouge as a park.

In 1990, as the first item of business in the House of Commons for that calendar year, I had the opportunity to present a private member's motion, seconded by my Liberal colleague Derek Lee, to have the Rouge designated as a park. The motion passed unanimously in the House of Commons. That was another step in the right direction.

At the same time, the Honourable David Crombie published in his royal commission report on the Toronto waterfront that the Rouge should be protected and established as a park. This was a major boost for the initiative. What followed is that the Province of Ontario took action and appointed an advisory group to consider this.

Later, David Crombie formulated the governance structure, which was the Rouge Park Alliance, with representatives from all the municipalities in the Rouge watershed, the Rouge Valley organization, the TRCA, the Toronto Zoo, and the federal and provincial governments. That \$10 million was transferred to the royal commission, and later to the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, of which I am a member. That's where the finances have been for the park.

The interest on that federal financial contribution has been about \$450,000 annually. That's been the main source of funds for the Rouge park during the Rouge Park Alliance's term. I might state that out of that \$450,000, about \$100,000 was given to Jim Robb of Friends of the Rouge Watershed every year.

Significant work has been accomplished. Thousands of trees and wildflowers have been planted, wetlands created, marshes and endangered species protected, and farmland, the trail system, just to name a few things. Meanwhile the province under every political party in a non-partisan way designated more and more land to enlarge the park. David Peterson, Bob Rae, Mike Harris, Dalton McGuinty: they all helped to create what we have as the park.

Over the years the Rouge Park Alliance has discussed how to get different governance and more money, finances, to protect this park. We reviewed all the options. Should it be a provincial park? Should it be a municipal park? Should it be a conservation park? Should it be a national park?

All the criteria...after all the deliberations, looking at all the policies, it was stated that the Rouge should be a national park, which would provide the largest, greatest, and highest protection for the park to stretch from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine.

• (1540)

Every municipality in the Rouge watershed passed a motion endorsing the proposal, as well as the TRCA, to urge the federal government to establish a national park. The Government of Ontario publicly and enthusiastically supported that recommendation. The community supported the recommendation. The information was forwarded to the federal government, and with the assistance of the Honourable Michael Chong, who was a representative of the Rouge Park Alliance, and under the watch of the Honourable Peter Kent and the late Honourable Jim Flaherty, the Rouge national urban park was included in the Speech from the Throne and subsequently allocated the extensive financial resources and the budget, which was absolutely thrilling. The agreement has been signed with the provincial government to transfer those publicly owned lands to Parks Canada.

This legislation is before you. Parks Canada, a heralded organization of experience and very competent individuals, has been assigned the responsibility of the permanent protection and preservation of the natural, cultural, and agricultural aspects of the Rouge national urban park. In particular I would like you to look at clauses 4 and 6. I have read the debates that each of you have made in the House of Commons and I am impressed by what you have been saying, but the language of these two clauses is clear and self-explanatory. These clauses will allow the minister to make the decisions based on the identified purposes for which the park is being created and the factors which must be taken into consideration.

Pitting the elements against each other by putting one as a priority, as my friend has mentioned, would really create conflict. I would ask you to consider the natural, cultural, and agricultural aspects, and I mean the cultural aspects with the aboriginal issues and the archaeological issues. When I was a member we did some archaeological digs in the park and we found a 17th century French coin. There's a lot of cultural heritage within this park.

I appreciate being here. You are participating in some historical work in the creation of Canada's first national urban park. I invite you to visit the national park and I urge you to proceed with the passage of this legislation.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Ms. Browes, thank you very much.

We're going to move now to Kim Empringham, York Region Federation of Agriculture. My apologies Ms. Empringham, for the misspelling of your name. It should have a g, but we know who you are and we welcome you to our committee today. We'll then follow up with some questions later.

Ms. Kim Empringham (York Region Federation of Agriculture): Thank you.

I'd like to thank you on behalf of the York Region Federation of Agriculture for giving me the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of its 700 farmer members in the region, including those farming in the proposed Rouge national urban park. We represent the farmers in the region on issues affecting their farms, as well as decisions that will affect them in the future.

The York Region Federation of Agriculture supports Parks Canada's consultation process that engaged over 150 stakeholder groups and thousands of individuals to create the Rouge national urban park. We support the integrated approach balancing natural heritage, sustainable farming, cultural heritage, and visitor experience found in both Bill C-40 and the draft management plan. We have confidence that Parks Canada will improve the ecological health of the park while maintaining the farmland in production.

Two of the guiding principles for the Rouge national urban park are to maintain and improve ecological health and scientific integrity, and to respect and support sustainable agriculture and other compatible land uses.

The draft management plan states:

The protection, conservation, and restoration of the park's natural, cultural and agricultural resources are integral to all decision-making related to park management.

The farmland in the Rouge national urban park, approximately 7,500 acres, is class 1 agricultural land, meaning it's the best land for agricultural production. Less than 1% of Canada's farmland is class 1. The farmers in the park have already given up 1,000 acres of productive farmland in the park to reforestation projects, completed by the previous Rouge Park.

With the world population expected to increase from seven billion to nine billion by 2050, there will continue to be a growing need to protect farmland resources and support production to meet local and global food needs.

Farmland should be protected for its highest and best use: for agriculture and food production. Any tree planting and habitat restoration should be encouraged in areas where farming is not feasible, such as slopes, riparian areas, wet areas, etc., or hedgerows between the fields. Farmers support the protection of natural areas, but it is important that natural heritage restoration doesn't unnecessarily encroach on productive farmlands.

The farmers in the park use environmental farm plans incorporating best-management practices as part of their ongoing stewardship of the farmland they have been taking care of for generations.

Farmland produces food production, carbon sequestration, climate regulation, improved air quality, wildlife habitat, hydrological functions, groundwater recharge, and buffering protection to natural heritage features.

Whether we are talking about the 51,000 farms across the province of Ontario, the 800 farms in York region, or the 40 farmers in the Rouge national urban park, we're talking about farm families, not industrial corporations. Some 98% of the farms in Canada are family owned and operated. They're handed down from generation to generation, but we must remember, these farm families are agricultural businesses.

The agrifood sector is the second biggest economic driver in the province. We have an important job to do, feeding our neighbours, whether they are in Markham or Toronto, across the province, or around the world. Our business is agriculture, but our heart lies with our family and our land.

For the farms to be environmentally and economically sustainable in the park, it will be important to ensure that farmers will not have unnecessary regulations or restrictions placed on them. They cannot be put at a competitive disadvantage compared with other farms across the province.

The farming community in the Rouge national urban park are the same farm families who have been caring for the land and growing food for the people of Ontario for the past 200 years.

The future of the farms in the park has been in limbo since the farms were expropriated in the 1970s. The farmers who decided to stay on their family farms after they were expropriated had to farm with one-year leases and no certainty in their future or the ability to make capital improvements on farms which they could be evicted from at any time.

● (1550)

Farmers in the park are not getting rich on the backs of Ontarians. They are paying \$20 to \$30 more an acre to lease farmland compared to farmers outside of the park on private land.

The infrastructure on the farms in the park has had no substantial improvement made to it over the past 40 years because of the one-year leases and uncertain future. The long-term leases outlined in the

draft management plan will allow farmers to invest in their farms for the future in the park.

Farmers in the Rouge national urban park produce 46 different crops. Some of these crops are sold fresh to the consumer while others require some sort of processing before being consumed.

There have been some who question the value of growing corn on public lands, believing that it is not local food and that there's lots of corn being grown across the province. Of the 280 million bushels of corn produced in Ontario this year, 190 million bushels go to human and animal feed, and 135 million bushels go to ethanol production to fulfill the government requirement to substitute 10% ethanol into gasoline. There will be a 62% net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions on a per-litre basis when ethanol is used in gasoline instead of the equivalent petroleum products, but we don't produce enough corn to fulfill our needs. We have to import corn in 2014 and 2015 to supply this important environmental initiative.

I would like to reiterate that the farmland in the park needs to be preserved so that future generations of farmers can produce food, fibre, and fuel for their surrounding neighbours.

I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Empringham.

We'll move now to the opening round of questions with Mr. Woodworth, please.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): My thanks to the witnesses for their attendance here today.

I have a number of questions that I wish to ask that have some legal input. I'd like to inquire if I'm right.

Mr. Hébert-Daly and Ms. Woodley, neither of you is a lawyer. Am I right about that? I am correct, okay.

I have the impression that you may not be familiar with the memorandum of agreement made on January 26, 2013, between Canada and the Province of Ontario. Am I right that you are not familiar with this?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: We're familiar with it.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Have you read it?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: We have read it, yes.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Have you specifically read the provisions that require the Government of Canada to respect certain policies of the Government of Ontario?

● (1555)

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Yes.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: So you are familiar with that.

I have what I'm told is a press release titled "CPAWS and other major environmental groups applaud Ontario's position on Rouge Park lands". Are you familiar with that?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Yes, we are.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Did you approve it when it went out?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Yes, we did.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Specifically, I'm looking at the last sentence in the second paragraph, which says that "the legislation... does not honour a January 2013 Memorandum of Agreement... requiring written park policies that 'meet or exceed provincial policies'."

Did you approve that statement?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: What did you mean by provincial policies in that statement?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: The Rouge Park management plan specifically states that the natural features and the ecosystem will be preserved in perpetuity. The—

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Could I stop you for a moment?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Yes.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: We do have limited time, and I don't really need to know what the Rouge Park management plan says, but I want to know.... I assume that you're saying that there is a policy in the Rouge Park management plan that you feel the legislation does not honour. Is that correct?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Yes. The greenbelt plan that references the management plan, in fact—yes, it does

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Anything else?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Anything else in terms of...?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Other provincial policies or just that one.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: That's certainly the key one that we're referring to. We go back to the fact that there's been quite a bit of discussion about ecological integrity as one of the key pieces within the provincial parks act, and of course, there is no provincial park in this particular landscape. That does in fact refer to provincial legislation.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Would you agree with me, though, that there's nothing in this memorandum of agreement that requires the Government of Canada to comply with the Ontario provincial parks act?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: The Ontario provincial parks act? No, absolutely not.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: In fact, the memorandum of agreement is very specific that it only requires that the Government of Canada comply with policies in the Greenbelt Plan 2005, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2006, and the Big Move. Other provincial policies have nothing to do with it. Is that correct?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: That's correct.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: All right.

This memorandum of agreement also says it's the Parks Canada written policies regarding the creation, management, and administration of the park that must meet or exceed provincial policies in those four or five items that I've mentioned. Is that correct?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: That is our understanding.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: The Parks Canada policies are contained in this management plan. Am I right about that?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: That has not yet been adopted; that's correct.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: All right. It hasn't yet been adopted?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: It's under discussion and public consultation.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I guess we can't say that Parks Canada has any written policies at all yet, which might contravene the provincial ones. Is that right?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: We're speaking only of the legislation at this point.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Okay, but would you agree with me that the memorandum of understanding is directed toward the written policies of Parks Canada for the creation, management, and administration of the park and it doesn't address the legislation?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: That's correct, although obviously our comments are related to the legislation as proposed.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Correct, and I don't quarrel with that. What I do have some difficulty with is saying that somehow the Government of Canada has not honoured the memorandum of agreement. In point of fact, if I were to ask you, even in these draft policies, are there any of these draft policies that contravene anything in those five land-use management plans that are referenced in the agreement, could you tell me which one you'd point me to?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: I'll ask Alison to respond.

Ms. Alison Woodley (National Director, Parks Program, National Office, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society): We were looking at the overarching framework for the park and whether or not it met the test of, for example, the definition of a protected area under the international standard, and that requires that conservation be identified as the first priority or as prioritized. In reviewing both the management plan, which we have done closely, and also the legislation, neither in our view makes that point clear, and the Rouge management plan vision makes it very clear that there is a priority on conservation. Those are the comparisons.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Regrettably, what you've told people is that the Government of Canada has violated its memorandum of agreement with the province, when in fact the written policies to which that memorandum of agreement applies are still only in draft form, and at least up until this point, you haven't told me of any of these policies that violate any provincial policy in those five land-use plans that the memorandum of agreement refers to.

All the rest is fine and dandy, but I want to understand if there is some evidence that somehow there is a written policy of Parks Canada that does not meet or exceed the policies in these five items. By the way, I've looked at these five items and nowhere is there a policy about ecological integrity. There are only objectives and visions for ecological integrity with specific policies to implement them.

•(1600)

Ms. Alison Woodley: The greenbelt plan clearly references that the management of the area in which Rouge park is going to be established south of Steeles should be guided by the Rouge management plan and the area north of Steeles should be guided by the Rouge north management plan. That is embedded in the greenbelt plan and incorporated by reference. When we look at the Rouge management plan, that is the document that we see on the Ontario policy front that applies directly to these lands.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Woodworth. Sorry, but we're out of time.

We move to Ms. Leslie, for seven minutes.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Thank you all not only for appearing here today but for the years and years of work you've put into this. It's not an easy bill, and it's not an easy park to create, so I applaud the work you've been doing behind the scenes for years. Hopefully, we'll get a good piece of legislation out of this and a fantastic urban park.

I know you've all followed the speeches that were made in the House, so you know where everybody stands and you know what the major concerns are.

Ms. Empringham, I want to ask CPAWS a question, but then come back to you for comment. It's around this idea of farmland.

Mr. Calandra has rightly brought up the example of Bob Hunter Memorial Park, where the restoration was seen as renaturalization. There is a fear about what restoration is. I can believe that it doesn't include renaturalization, but just because I believe it...it's not spelled out in the legislation.

Mr. Hébert-Daly, you said something about having a clearer mandate in the legislation to work with the farmers. I've been thinking a lot about how we could spell that piece out. I've written down some ideas saying something along the lines of acknowledging to the greatest degree possible the park's agricultural and urban context, or where possible acknowledging that you need to work with farmers and acknowledging that there is a highway and there are farms.

I want to pass it to CPAWS first, and then get a response about where we can go with that. I like this idea.

I'll hand it over to you.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: You bring up a very valid point. I think we're in a situation where there is, for better or for worse, a general sense of anxiety about the possibility that farms would be further expropriated.

•(1605)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Yes.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: I think that's a very unfortunate framework for us to be in.

I continue to say that farmers have done a very good job of protecting against the biggest threat, which has been urban sprawl. That has been a key part of how this park is able to be protected today.

Ms. Megan Leslie: That's a great point.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: In my view, that's a big piece.

The legislation should not and does not speak to a change of land use. We're not suggesting by any stretch that farms be reduced or changed. What we're really looking for is an ability for farmers, and Parks Canada, and local players to be able to sit down and figure out how to manage the landscape in a way that's going to ensure that nature conservation and healthy farms are able to live and co-exist next to each other.

When you talk about restoration, I think that tends to be a trigger word.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Right.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: It tends to be a trigger word, because people think it means planting trees and renaturalizing farms, which we have said from the very beginning is not our view of that. Especially in a landscape that has so many pressures from all around it on infrastructure, as we've mentioned, the highway, the sewers, and everything else that this park is going to be in the middle of, we need to be able to make sure that the restoration from that perspective is what's going to keep nature healthy in the park.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Right.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: By giving a mandate to make sure that we're not overcoming some of those challenges by simply saying that we'll ignore those concerns, we're actually asking for there to be a space at the table for that.

The management plan, even as it's proposed today, has a very good clause around actually having a proper committee that will work to collaboratively find solutions to these things, but at no point are we suggesting a change of land use as it stands from a farming perspective.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thank you.

Ms. Empringham, if the legislation were to include a prioritization of conservation, such as you've heard from some of the language here and in debate, if there were some way to do that, where it's clearly laid out where possible—even that, I think, may not be the best language—but as much as possible considering the agricultural and urban context, if it were explicit for farmers that... You said that farmland needs to be preserved. That's part of what we're doing here. Do you think farmers would be comfortable with that?

Ms. Kim Empringham: The need to preserve the farmland is so it stays in production. Adopting conservation projects that would take land out of production would be one thing, but as far as having farmers using best management practices or methods that would still guarantee production at the same level is concerned, I don't think there would be an issue with that.

The concern with having a higher standard for conservation as opposed to agriculture is that we're worried there will be a slippery slope.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Absolutely.

Ms. Kim Empringham: We're worried that we will gradually over time lose the land we have. When equal priority isn't given, it's hard for farmers and for agriculture to hold its ground and to maintain that level field.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thank you. I have only about a minute and I want to ask another question.

Ms. Browes, are there any red flags for you?

Ms. Pauline Browes: Having been brought up on a farm, I think it's very important so close to an urban area that we have this quality farmland. Many market gardeners are there. We go to pick strawberries, raspberries, and tomatoes. It's a key aspect of the Rouge.

Think of the number of children who live in cities who never get to a farm. This is a wonderful opportunity and experience for the children to actually go to a barn or see what a cucumber actually looks like on a vine. This is a very exciting aspect of this park.

Ms. Megan Leslie: To get to go to a farm and a park.

Ms. Pauline Browes: That's right.

The Chair: All right. Time's up.

Thank you, Ms. Leslie.

We'll move to Mr. Calandra, please.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Thank you to all the witnesses.

Ms. Empringham, I'm going to start with you. The September 2 letter from Minister Duguid to Minister Aglukkaq reads:

I have heard from...stakeholders...including Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Environmental Defence, and Ontario Nature regarding...Bill C-40 and the draft...management plan...the federal government has released for public consultation.

It goes on to say that with respect to the position they came to, not to transfer the land. "This is a position that I"—Minister Duguid—"arrived at after discussions with stakeholders, local citizen groups, and staff."

What input did you provide to Minister Duguid in advance of this letter?

Ms. Kim Empringham: I gave none.

Mr. Paul Calandra: You gave none whatsoever, so the farmers—

Ms. Kim Empringham: He didn't consult with us at all, the federation or the farmers in the park, that I'm aware of.

Mr. Paul Calandra: You're with the York Region Federation of Agriculture. Approximately how many farm businesses do you represent?

Ms. Kim Empringham: In the region it's 700.

Mr. Paul Calandra: That's 700 farm businesses.

I do have a copy of a letter that the federation sent to Minister Duguid after that, on September 5, which says, "We urge you not to hold up the transfer of...Provincial lands to Parks Canada".

Is that correct?

•(1610)

Ms. Kim Empringham: That's correct.

Mr. Paul Calandra: So members are on the same page.

There has been a lot of talk about how often people come back and say that farmers have nothing to worry about: you'll never have

anything to worry about; everything will be perfectly fine, and the sins of the past will not happen again.

In the letter I have, Minister Duguid referenced these three organizations: Environmental Defence, Ontario Nature, and Friends of the Rouge Watershed. Point number one says' "incorporate, strengthen and implement the vision, goal and objectives of approved Rouge Park Plans 1994 and 2001".

I'm going to read something.

The 1994 Rouge park plan says, "Part of protecting cultural heritage values in the park involves the continuation of active farming". That sounds good so far. It goes on to say, "since all activities must dwell within the framework of park goal and objectives, with the highest priority being the protection and restoration of the park's natural heritage, some reduction of farm land base is recommended to permit natural restoration goals to be met".

That's in the 1994 plan, which is referenced by these three groups, which are constantly being talked about. It's referenced by Minister Duguid.

Is this part of the fear that farmers might have with respect to reduction in farmland? Am I correct?

Ms. Kim Empringham: That's correct.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you.

Now I want to read another quote. I want to help my colleagues understand why farmers in the area might be somewhat concerned.

Here's another quote, and this is from Friends of the Rouge Watershed general manager Jim Robb, in a *Toronto Star* column from November 25, 2012:

Parts of the Rouge Valley have been occupied by farmers since the 19th century. But Robb says many farm operations are becoming bigger and more intensive, and therefore stand in the way of restoring the Rouge to a more natural state.

"It's not a park; it's an industrial farm," Robb said. "The interests of a few...are being put above the interest of the public and the interest of the environment."

What do your farmers think when they hear a quote like that, saying that you're nothing but a bunch of industrial farmers and that your interests are somehow being put above the interests of millions of other people? How do farmers react to such a quote?

Ms. Kim Empringham: It bothers us.

Those millions of other people eat just about every day. But as for the industrial comments, some people believe that because the tractors are bigger, because the equipment is bigger, because of economies of scale, this has meant that we farm...as in a lot of other things in the world today, it's bigger. We need to farm, for some crops, larger acreage to be able to pay for the crop inputs and the equipment to be able to make a profit.

Looking at the equipment for instance, bigger is actually better in many cases, because, as far as conservation goes especially, one of the issues with the smaller tractors, the smaller wheels, the weight of that tractor is placed in a very small area. If it's bigger, tires spread out more and there's less compaction, which is a lot healthier for the soil.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Not to single out anybody, but the member for Scarborough—Guildwood said this when speaking about me: “I think, frankly, the hon. member”—me— “mischaracterizes the fear of the farmers. A lot of the people who are keenly interested in this park south of Steeles are, in fact, big farmer fans north of Steeles.”

Am I mischaracterizing the fear of the farmers when I say that you're worried about losing land?

Ms. Kim Empringham: No.

Mr. Paul Calandra: No.

I want to ask you another thing if I can.

The Liberal member of Parliament for Trinity—Spadina, Adam Vaughan, said:

Could the member explain to me if he knows of any plan by anybody to evict any farmer on the land in question?

I read the Rouge Park 1994 management plan which clearly says that they want to reduce farming land. You probably knew people who were impacted by the Bob Hunter decision.

Ms. Kim Empringham: Yes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: In that decision, farmers were told a Rouge Park would have no impact. They later came back to you and said, “Nothing stays the same”, and that's why farmers were being evicted.

Are you not somehow afraid that nothing will stay the same, yet again, unless you're specifically protected as this legislation does?

• (1615)

Ms. Kim Empringham: We watched the farmland south of Steeles disappear, so that only that 10% of heritage farms were left. We became much more involved once the farmers started getting notices to cancel their lease in creating the Bob Hunter park. There is definitely the fear that there will be other reasons for going forward, that the farmers will lose their leases.

The Chair: We'll move to Mr. McKay, for seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you to each one of you for your contribution here.

I want to tone down the false food fight a bit and see whether we can arrive at some sort of reasonable understanding among both sides of what I consider to be essentially a false debate. I think the farmers by and large need to stand up and say that they are some of the world's foremost ecologists. I think what I heard the ecologists say and the environmentalists say is they actually recognize that farmers are among the world's foremost ecologists. This is my judgment of a largely false food fight, which is getting us nowhere.

The big issue as I see it is in clause 6. The big issue here is that the minister is saying in effect that all she needs to do is “take into consideration”, and there are a couple of other things, “protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes”, etc. There's the contrast between that and what a normal park bill looks like in the ecological integrity clause, which would say that the minister shall establish within five years a set of ecological integrity objectives and indicators, provision for resource protection and restoration, zoning, visitor use, public awareness, and performance evaluation, which will be tabled in the House.

I would have thought that a clause such as that would be of as much interest to the farmers as it would be to the ecologists. If I'm a farmer and I want some stability of land tenure, some guidance on how I manage watercourses, land, etc., all of the things that you outline, Ms. Empringham, it seems to me that I would want to know that no minister could unilaterally deal with zoning, could make visitor use wide open, or public awareness, have any impact on my use and enjoyment of the land. If we're not going to get that clause, and the government has made it abundantly clear we're not going to get that clause, what is it that would give some comfort to the ecologists and some comfort to the farmers that they're both on the same page so that they know and everybody knows what the framework is as this management plan is worked out?

I would direct this first to Mr. Hébert-Daly, and then to you, Ms. Empringham.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: I think I laid it out a little bit in our presentation. Fundamentally we're looking at two key elements. One of them is, how do we define maximizing ecosystem health? I think there's a question of what that looks like. I think we all agree that we all want to do it, so the question is, what does that look like? In our view, it's largely about how to maintain.... If you could imagine that ecological integrity is kind of the—

Hon. John McKay: The gold standard, yes.

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: —the end line, if you will, where everyone wants to be, we see maximizing ecosystem health as the push towards that without necessarily saying that we have to be at the goal line at any particular point. It's incentive-based. It's trying to drive to that area without saying that it has to get to the end point of ecological integrity. To us, the definition is a key question, and the prioritization is also a key question. It's a filter through which we look at management decisions. I think that it's not intended to be, and certainly I don't think it can be interpreted to be, some kind of a barrier to the continued enjoyment of farm land or cultural heritage sites or—

• (1620)

Hon. John McKay: Let me stop you there and get Ms. Empringham's reaction to his two points, which are maximizing ecological health and the prioritization.

What's your response to that?

Ms. Kim Empringham: The prioritization we would like to be equal with the environmental concerns and natural heritage protection.

I'm sorry, what was the other point?

Hon. John McKay: The other point is about maximizing ecological health.

Ms. Kim Empringham: The farmers already are using environmental farm plans. They're already using best management practices. From our initial consultations with Parks Canada, we have suggested that those would be what we would be looking for as a standard so that the farmers know what's expected of them.

Hon. John McKay: If the government came forward with some sort of definition which prioritizes your concerns, prioritizes his concerns, so that they are relatively similar standards, it seems to me that once that happens, you're both going towards maximizing the ecological health of the asset. Am I missing something here?

Ms. Browes.

Ms. Pauline Browes: You make them equal. There's no need to prioritize them if we are looking at all of these as one ecosystem health standard.

In reviewing the debates, one of the things is ecological integrity. When you think of the amount of intervention of humans in the Rouge, the ecological integrity is simply not possible. I was talking the other day about...well, maybe the Rouge marsh right down at Lake Ontario is an ecological integrity area, but it isn't.

Hon. John McKay: It's not, no.

Ms. Pauline Browes: It isn't because in the 1800s the railroads put a big berm across and the whole Rouge marsh is just a lot of silt. If we wanted to have ecological integrity of the Rouge marsh, we'd have to get rid of the railroad.

Hon. John McKay: But we're not talking about ecology integrity. Even the CPAWS people know that's not happening and that's not possible nor practical.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

We're going to move on to the—

Ms. Pauline Browes: I'm just responding to some of the debates that have been taking place in the House.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move to Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Thank you to all of you for being here. I have five minutes and a lot of questions.

Ms. Empringham, you were mentioning that the farmers are already using best management practices. Currently, you said that farmers are using environmental farm plans. What does that mean?

Ms. Kim Empringham: An environmental farm plan is a plan that was created by farmers. It is a plan that comes with a workshop. You sit down with a binder that shows what.... It's basically around water health and environmental health. You look at your farm based on the criteria that are in the book. It will help you decide if there are areas on your farm that you can improve. It's a plan going forward.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Is there somewhere that it's available, maybe online, and people can see it?

Ms. Kim Empringham: Yes, the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association helps to run the program, and it's available there.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: All right, maybe we'll have a look. Clearly, it's a big thing and—

Ms. Kim Empringham: For best management practices, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has a whole set of best management practice books that you can look at.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay.

I know that sustainability is an issue. Buying local and eating local is an important piece for me personally, and I know it is for the NDP. I have two questions that I'll roll into one.

I don't want to see the farmers kicked out, but I do want to see more sustainable farming practices. If you say they're already being done, then that's great. My question is, to what extent are pesticides and fertilizers being used on the farmlands that are going to be within the park? How can we make sure that there is more community farming or local farming that might be a way, as Ms. Browes said, to have children interact or people who live in the urban jungle actually interact with the farms and maybe have some sort of community farming initiative happen somewhere?

• (1625)

Ms. Kim Empringham: As far as the pesticides and fertilizers that are being used are concerned, they are being used according to the regulations. To be able to buy pesticides, farmers need to take a course to understand how to use them properly. Using integrated pest management means that you look at the pests that might be there on a regular basis and decide at the proper time to only use them when necessary and the amount.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Pesticides and fertilizers are being used according to the rules—

Ms. Kim Empringham: —and regulations, yes.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay.

Ms. Kim Empringham: As for people being able to come out to experience farms, there are some farms in the park now that have pick your own. If you're thinking more along the lines of agricultural education type farms, that was one of the suggestions that Parks Canada put forward in the management plan, a demonstration-type farm. Over time, especially because the average age of farmers in York region is 58, we're going to have some retire, and so there will easily be a spot that—

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Pardon me, Ms. Empringham, I'm going to cut you off, because I have less than two minutes right now.

Mr. Hébert-Daly, you mentioned international obligations that we have to conservation and you said that conservation should be a priority and that without conservation, we wouldn't have this park.

What does that mean? What are the international standards that we need to be looking at for this park? Why is this important?

Mr. Éric Hébert-Daly: Well the IUCN, which is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, is essentially the body that sets international standards for what is considered to be a protected area. The IUCN definition says that it's:

a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

That's their definition. They particularly say and clarify in their guidance that only those areas for which the main objective is conserving nature can be considered protected areas. There is a prioritization laid out in the IUCN definition, which in our view is one of the key reasons that having it as a primary lens for management decisions is so important and so vital to the park.

This does not need to come into conflict with other uses. In fact, the legislation has the visitorship, the agricultural pieces, and all those other goals. In fact, it says that it can include many areas with other goals as well at the same level, but that in case of conflict, nature conservation is the priority. It's about using it as a filter through which you look at all those decisions.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Our time is up.

I want to thank each of our witnesses for being here today.

Our first hour is up. We are going to have a three-minute recess before we reconvene to hear our next witnesses.

Thanks to each of you for your time and for your opening statements, which are very helpful.

•(1625) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1635)

The Chair: There has been a little confusion in terms of witnesses. We were expecting three; we have two.

Tim Gray, from Environmental Defence, was supposed to be here. He's going to be represented by Caroline Schultz, from Ontario Nature. Welcome. We also have Mike Whittamore, from Whittamore's Farm.

We'll proceed in the order they're listed.

We'll proceed with Caroline Schultz for her opening seven-minute statement.

Welcome.

Ms. Caroline Schultz (Executive Director, Ontario Nature): Good afternoon, members of the committee. I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to share with you our recommendations on Bill C-40.

As mentioned, I'm speaking on behalf of Ontario Nature and Environmental Defence. My name is Caroline Schultz and I'm the executive director of Ontario Nature.

Ontario Nature is a charitable organization that works to protect wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education, and public engagement. We represent over 30,000 members and supporters, and 154 member groups across the province of Ontario.

Since our organization was founded as the Federation of Ontario Naturalists in 1931, Ontario Nature has been the voice for nature throughout the province, protecting and restoring natural habitats while connecting thousands of individuals and communities with nature. Over our 84-year history, Ontario Nature has played an instrumental role in establishing most of the province's protected areas.

Ontario Nature and Environmental Defence supports the creation of Rouge national urban park. The park has great potential to protect

biodiversity while protecting healthy local food production and connecting urban dwellers in the most heavily populated region of Canada to the national park system.

However, if Rouge national urban park is to realize its full potential, we believe that Bill C-40 must be amended to clearly prioritize ecological integrity.

Here are specific recommendations:

First, we are asking that there be a requirement that ecological integrity be the first priority of the minister in park management. Bill C-40 affords significantly weaker protection to the natural environment than either the Canada National Parks Act or Ontario's Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. In both of these statutes, ecological integrity must be the first priority of the minister in making management decisions about the park.

In contrast, Bill C-40 omits any mention of ecological integrity, a concept that is integral to the very purpose of the other two laws, nor does it require the park to be managed to protect wildlife and natural ecosystems. Rather, it leaves this critical element of park management up to the discretion of the minister. In other words, the minister need only take protection of natural ecosystems into consideration in managing the park.

Clause 6 should be amended to require and ensure that the protection of the natural environment is prioritized in park management.

On a second point, we believe that the schedule needs to be revised to include in the park approximately 48 square kilometres of publicly owned lands that are under federal jurisdiction. The Rouge Valley connects Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine. The lands described in the schedule, however, will not protect this important ecological corridor. There is a wall of urban development around the town of Stouffville that effectively cuts off the Oak Ridges Moraine from Lake Ontario.

The schedule excludes about 48 kilometres of publicly owned federal lands that are currently available immediately adjacent to the proposed park. By including these adjacent lands in the park, the critically important ecological corridor between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine would be secured once provincial lands are transferred. The park would almost double in size, making it far more likely that biodiversity and ecosystem services will be conserved.

On a third point, we believe that the management plan requirements need to be strengthened by explicitly including details about ecological objectives, indicators, monitoring, and reporting. Clause 9 of Bill C-40 sets out details about what must be included in a park management plan, but it lacks in particulars regarding ecological elements to be included. We recommend that subclause 9 (1) be amended to require that the management plan include ecological integrity objectives and indicators, provisions for ecological monitoring and reporting, and performance evaluation.

With respect to evaluation, we also recommend that a state of the park report be tabled in the House of Parliament every five years.

From a science perspective, size and landscape connectivity are vital considerations in designing protected areas. We therefore recommend that these adjacent federal lands be included in the schedule.

As point four, we recommend that there be provisions added to ensure that potential adverse ecological impacts are duly considered when decisions are made regarding infrastructure installation or maintenance.

Clause 12 sets out the powers of the park superintendent regarding clearing of land for infrastructure installation or maintenance, and clause 16 sets out the right to dispose of lands within the park for the purpose of installing or maintaining infrastructure. Such activities have the potential to adversely affect wildlife, ecosystems, and ecological integrity. To ensure that these issues are adequately considered and addressed, we propose that each of these clauses be revised to include requirements to consider reasonable alternatives and to minimize and where possible avoid environmental impacts.

Also, please note that we support the 200 hectare limit for transfers, as currently stated in the bill.

Our point number five is to strengthen the preamble. We recommend amending the preamble of the bill so that it first of all, explicitly includes the restoration of natural heritage, and second, avoids the vague and undefined term “diverse landscapes”. We believe that Rouge urban national park offers an exceptional opportunity to protect and celebrate nature and our agricultural heritage. Both nature and farming are specifically mentioned in clause 4, and “diverse landscapes” detracts from this clarity of purpose.

I'd like to thank you for your time and the opportunity to share Ontario Nature's and Environmental Defence Canada's recommendations with you. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Schultz.

We'll move to Mike Whittamore for his statement and then we'll come back to questions.

Mr. Mike Whittamore (Whittamore's Farm): Members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today about the importance of agriculture in the Rouge national urban park.

“The farmers in the Rouge operate industrial factory farms intensively producing monoculture corn and they pollute the Rouge River with runoff containing pesticides and phosphorus.” There is absolutely no validity behind these statements. They do, however, characterize the adjectives, thoughts, and ideas about agriculture in the Rouge park that were exchanged in this Parliament during debate at second reading of Bill C-40.

I read all the transcripts. The agricultural community, my agricultural community, is disgusted, angry, but mostly sad that some people think so little of us.

This has been 20 years in the making. It started after the creation of the park in 1994. Through all the consultation over 20 years, the

thoughts and the concerns of the agriculture community were ignored. We were told that we were just tenants with a conflict of interest. This characterization of agriculture took on a life of its own and some environmentalists fanned the flames.

There have been countless reports and editorials in the Toronto media over the last 20 years using the same adjectives, thoughts, and ideas. This was done to justify the reforestation of large tracts of productive agricultural land to create a sustainable Carolinian and mixed forest habitat which links Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Jim Robb, executive director of Friends of the Rouge Watershed, confirmed at a meeting in September with the provincial minister of infrastructure that it would take another 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland to be reforested to meet the goals and objectives of the Rouge north management plan. This is in addition to the thousand acres of prime farmland that have already been reforested in the past several years.

That's twenty-seven hundred acres, enough land to feed over 75,000 people in perpetuity, and this is just the beginning. Planting trees on productive agricultural land is wrong. It uses up a scarce resource that helps to provide the food, fibre, and security, particularly food security, for the seven million people that live within one hour of the park.

Reaching the ecosystem health objectives of the Rouge national urban park can be achieved in many ways, not just by planting trees. Agriculture can and should be part of the integrated solution to reaching that goal.

I produce fruits and vegetables on my farm. In the 30 years that I've been farming, we have adopted many new and innovative methods for producing crops while reducing our ecological footprint. These management tools include drip irrigation, minimum tillage, integrated pest management, no till planting, plant zone fertilization, and many others. We also continue to use management tools that have existed over the millennia, including tile drainage, windbreaks, and extensive crop rotation.

Today's agriculture not only provides the food and fibre for a growing urban population, it also provides a host of other benefits. Some examples are carbon sequestering, improved hydrologic function, improved air quality, pollinator species habitat, and finally, food and habitat for many forms of wildlife.

Bill C-40 and the Rouge national urban park draft management plan clearly acknowledge the importance of agriculture in the Rouge. This plan demonstrates that agriculture, culture, and nature are all equally important contributors to a vibrant education-centric urban park. Agriculture can and will play an important role in reaching the goals and objectives of the Rouge national urban park.

The farmers in the Rouge operate family farms and efficiently produce food and fibre using best management practices that protect and enhance the Rouge ecosystem.

These statements are the truth about who we are, what we do, and what we have done for generations. We are proud of our industry and we ask that all members of Parliament seek the truth and stop depending on others to formulate their opinions about agriculture in the Rouge national urban park.

●(1645)

I leave you with this closing thought: whether you build a house, pave a parking lot, or plant a tree, the results will be the same on class 1 agricultural land.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Whittamore.

We will move to the questions. The first questioner will be Mr. Chisu, for seven minutes.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much to the witnesses for their presentations. I listened with great care to their issues.

I live 100 metres from the lower Rouge Park. My family and I have enjoyed the park for the last 25 years. I was delighted that I was able to participate actively in a historic event that finally will make the park a national treasure close to the largest city of Canada, which is Toronto.

I can tell you I was not impressed with the letter from Minister Duguid of the Ontario Liberal government that was addressed to Minister Aglukkaq in which he reneged on the memorandum of understanding signed before the last provincial election. This action clearly is without any reasonable justification.

On this preamble, and looking at the presentation of farming in the Rouge Park, I would like to ask Mr. Whittamore to tell me how long his family has been farming in the Rouge Valley.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: My mom's family came in 1804, so we've been there for 200 years. She was a Lapp. My father came in the 1950s.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: What types of benefits do you foresee with longer term leases? You were mentioning that they were very short-term leases.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: With a longer term lease, what you will see happen is investment in agricultural infrastructure. Probably the first one will be tile drainage. Because we've been effectively on one-month overhold leases for the last 30 years, farmers are hesitant to sink a minimum \$1,000 per acre into the ground. Tile drainage has been around... Well, I was in China and saw it in a museum, so they were doing it 4,000 years ago. Tile drainage is one of the single most important things for agriculture to increase efficiency and yield and for hydrologic function, because when the water, instead of running off the land when it's not tile drained is able to go through the land, the water is much cleaner and it's much better for the environment.

If you think about your plants at home, if you put too much water in, they quickly die. I'm good at growing plants outside; I can't do that inside. That's why there's a hole in the bottom of the container, because plants want lots of moisture in well-drained soil. That's the single biggest thing.

Then you'll see farmers start to invest in outdoor buildings, buildings for providing housing for animals or for equipment. With long-term leases you will see investment in these farms.

●(1650)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: On the environment side specifically, what are the benefits, for example, of crop rotation? I am an engineer; I'm not a lawyer, but I'm asking. I know the benefits of crop rotation.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: The number one thing that crop rotations do is they break the life cycles of insects, disease, and weeds, which helps us to reduce our pesticide use. Good crop rotation has been around for, as I said, millennia. It's good for the soil. It helps to create the flora in the soil providing more bacterial activity, more worms. It's a benefit for the surrounding environment and cover crops, because we use a lot of cover crops that prevent the runoff.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: This is my last question for you. Will longer term leases reduce the amount of fertilizer you will need to use on your land?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Will a long-term lease reduce the fertilizer? I guess potentially it could if the farmer decided to start farming some different type of crop other than what he is doing right now. Currently, the farmers are using best management practices. Some of the application technology... As I said, we're using drip irrigation. Thirty years ago we were spreading the fertilizer across the whole field. Now every single strawberry row, every raspberry row, any crop that we grow has a drip tube underneath. It's plant zone fertilization, so it has reduced our fertilizer usage significantly.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

I have a couple of questions for Ms. Schultz. You spoke about the ecological integrity a lot and I appreciated your comments on the ecological integrity.

How do you define the ecological integrity in the context of the Rouge national urban park? What is the level of protection you see?

We are creating a new park. It is different from the national parks. What is your vision of this one?

What is your definition of this ecological integrity in this particular situation?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: My definition is similar to that in the National Parks Act and in the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. What I will say is that I don't think there's any requirement to be perfect right at the beginning.

The notion of ecological integrity being this gold standard—and you have to be there and if you're not there, then it isn't relevant to this park—that's what we dispute. There are numerous examples of provincial parks and national parks in the system that have not the same but equivalent disturbance to what we see in the Rouge. Those parks are managed still with that standard.

The concern is the bill does not maintain that standard in terms of how the park would be managed to have the management procedures and processes in place to move towards achieving that standard.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I'm asking you what protection at this time is the Ontario government providing for the Rouge Park? Which standard is applied at this point? Should we accept the lands from the Ontario government if it is not living up to the standards?

The Chair: The time is up, but I'll give you 15 or 20 seconds to respond to that.

Ms. Caroline Schultz: What I would say is the existing Rouge Park.... What we want it to be is something that is protected and has greater ecological protection than it has had with the various interactions of different management regimes in the past.

This is the big opportunity to move towards a park that celebrates sustainable agriculture, and ecological protection with ecological integrity, as the standard we're working towards in terms of the natural ecosystem.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chisu.

We'll move now to Mr. Harris, for seven minutes.

•(1655)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Thank you to the witnesses for both being here.

Mr. Whittamore, you made a statement right at the end of your opening remarks that regardless of these different other things that would happen, it would impact farming of that farmland.

Of course you are very familiar with the short-term leases that have been going on for a long time. Of course right next to the Rouge there's still this big plot of land that's zoned for a potential Pickering airport. Would it not make sense to you for that to be zoned back to farmland?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Is this the land at the north that's currently not in the study plan?

Mr. Dan Harris: Yes.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Yes. I have no problem with that. I have 30 years of experience with the people who have been....

Let me qualify. I'm going to talk about Jim Robb. He has done a tremendous amount of work. I have respect for the work he has done, but he is very focused on reforestation.

I sat at that meeting in September with the minister of infrastructure and they were talking about that piece of land. I have no faith at all that the land that he wants to be studied and ultimately put in the park will be left for agriculture, because that statement about the mixed Carolinian forest was one of the five things that was in the addendum that went to the minister. It's a blank canvas for many of those people. It's a blank canvas to try to reach the goal of ecological integrity, and it will exclude agriculture.

I've watched my neighbours lose a thousand acres of land.

Mr. Dan Harris: I was actually asking the question not in terms of should it be added to the park, but should it be taken back as farmland versus potentially zoning for the airport, where they could be kicked off and an airport would appear. That was why I was asking the question, because we don't already have enough local farmland to feed our cities and certainly making sure more land was protected for farming would help to satisfy those future needs.

I want to move on to Ms. Schultz. The debates often get heated at different times; different folks say things. My colleague Mr. Calandra said Ontario Nature wanted to evict farmers from the Rouge.

I wanted to ask, as part of that, does Ontario Nature want to push farmers out of the Rouge? What is your actual position? Let's hear it directly from you.

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Whoever said that we or many of the other organizations that we work with are opposed to farming in the park is mistaken; it's absolutely wrong. I'm not sure where Mr. Calandra got that impression. We feel that farming is an integral part of Rouge urban national park, and it's a huge opportunity for local food production to be integrated into the park. I think, as Mr. Whittamore has pointed out, there are a lot of practices that are ecologically friendly that provide important habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, etc.

So that is fundamentally not true.

Mr. Dan Harris: Excellent. Thank you for clearing that up from the debates.

You mentioned that you support the 200 hectares for potential future infrastructure growth, and that's an upper limit, so hopefully we don't get to that. Would you agree that for the region to be able to support further development and intensification, so that we can avoid sprawl, some of the headways, the waterways, need to get better protection than they're getting now to mitigate future growth?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I think my answer is yes, if I understand your question correctly.

Mr. Dan Harris: It's just that when you look at, for instance, how the Little Rouge travels through the park area, but then the Rouge River actually travels out of the protected area, and the headwaters, certainly....

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Protecting the headwaters is fundamentally important. That's where that whole connecting of the ecological corridor from Lake Ontario to the moraine that I referred to is fundamentally important, because in a lot of instances we're protecting the headwaters on the moraine, but if we're not actually protecting that whole corridor, then it doesn't bode well for the whole system.

•(1700)

Mr. Dan Harris: That's great. Thank you very much.

Also, the minister, who was here a couple of days ago, was fairly adamant about the legislation's meeting, or in some ways exceeding, what's currently there. She used several examples, such as mining and hunting, to demonstrate that there would be additional protections.

I wanted to ask where the places are in the bill that you feel fail in enhancing the local protections or the ones that are there. We're all interested in putting forward a great bill and making sure we have a fantastic park that takes into consideration all of the nuances and differences, because this isn't a national park in the way we're used to.

Where do you think the bill needs to be brought up because of its failings?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Well, as I mentioned in my presentation, there is the lack of mention of ecological integrity and protection of ecosystems. That is not in the bill currently. Without reiterating all of those points, I have highlighted those specifically where the bill needs to be strengthened to ensure true ecological protection in the park.

I think what we're all aspiring to is a park that has better ecological function than it has today, and that can be achieved without compromising other activities, such as farming in the park. The big thing that we're lacking in southern Ontario, particularly in this part of southern Ontario, is whole natural ecosystems and prime farmland, because we've lost a great deal of both to urban sprawl, particularly in the GTA.

Mr. Dan Harris: No, I mean—

The Chair: We're just at the seven-minute point, so thank you, Mr. Harris.

We'll move now to Mr. Calandra, for seven minutes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Ms. Schultz, if I'm correct, then you agree that farming should be retained over the entire length of the Rouge Park, where it is right now, unobstructed in any way, shape, or form.

Ms. Caroline Schultz: We believe that farming should exist in the park—

Mr. Paul Calandra: So in its entirety, where it's currently being farmed, all of the farm leases that are currently there, those farmers, 100% of the land that is being farmed should continue to be farmed. Yes or no?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: We would need to make sure the farming that is occurring in the park is compatible with the natural systems, and we believe that can be accommodated.

Mr. Paul Calandra: You don't want to answer yes or no. That's fine.

You recognize this letter, because you co-signed it, right?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: In that letter you reference the 1994 management plan, right? It says that right here. In that 1994 management plan—and I'll read it for you again—it says:

...the highest priority being the protection and restoration of the park's natural heritage, some reduction of farm land base is recommended to permit natural restoration goals to be met.

Do you agree with that statement?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I'd agree with it. In terms of the specifics of where that would occur, that would need to come out through management planning.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Do you also agree that there should be an ecological corridor?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Now, an ecological corridor... Jim Robb himself, with whom you co-signed this letter, has estimated 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland would be taken out of production. Parks Canada estimates that about 2,000 acres of class 1 farmland would be taken out of production. How do you consider that farmers would

not have to be evicted from the land if you're basically kicking them off half of their land?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: We believe that agricultural production can be part of an ecological corridor, depending on the type of agricultural production that's taking place. There are certain types of farming that would not be compatible.

Mr. Paul Calandra: You've hit the nail on the head. What you're saying is that it's certain types of farming, farming that you believe to be the right type of farming for them.

Ms. Caroline Schultz: From an ecological integrity perspective there are certain types of farming that are compatible.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Whittamore, Ms. Schultz doesn't want to evict you, but she wants to tell you how to farm on your land.

If I'm getting this straight, they want to create an ecological corridor which would take 2,000 acres of land out of production. They want to follow the 1994 guidelines and tell you how to farm, where you should farm, and how you should do it. How many farmers do you think would stay on the land and how profitable do you think that would be?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Before I answer the question, I want to be clear that Caroline agreed that the ecological corridor should be created.

• (1705)

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Everybody understands it's 600 metres. There's no agriculture inside that corridor. It was developed to support interior dwelling species, birds. That's where that came from. It's a 600 metre corridor; it's going to use up to 2,000 acres of land.

In the draft management plan, and we've already been working with the Parks Canada people and talking about how agriculture will work, I'm against the corridor. I don't believe that we need to have that. There are other ways to reach the ecosystem's health.

Your question, Mr. Calandra, is how many farmers would want to stay. If the corridor is gone and if we have people like Jim Robb and other people dictating how we will farm, it will be death by a thousand cuts. I say that because Jim has already said publicly that the next thing he will go after is pesticides and fertilizers in the park.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Let me stop you there, because in a statement that Jim Robb made, which is quoted in InsideToronto.com, he said you're "a political constituency that's being catered to", one that takes up 70% of the parkland in Markham and uses pesticides and genetically modified crops that can harm the environment.

How true is that statement?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Over the years, Jim has said a lot of things, that farmers pollute the rivers. I've asked him repeatedly, "Jim, if we are polluting the rivers, please provide the evidence. Please tell us where the point source emission is."

We were accused of polluting the river with E. coli. TRCA, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, did a study. It was the Canada geese.

Time and time again we get these false accusations, and that's what my talk was about. The farmers didn't do a good job of talking about who we are and what we did, and shame on us for that, but these accusations are false. If there are problems, we want to know because we want to change our management styles. There has been no evidence whatsoever, so when we hear this repeatedly in the media and in public places, it angers us.

Mr. Paul Calandra: My good friend from Scarborough Southwest said the following. He's talking about me:

The member incorrectly stated that most of the land in the Pickering airport lands is being farmed right now. I would recommend that he take a drive around the area again, because most of the land is lying fallow.

To the best of your knowledge, is most of the Pickering lands lying fallow right now and just growing weeds?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: No. The land in Pickering...and you know we've had successive governments with short-term leases. There's lots of land out there that's being farmed. Yes, there is land that's sitting idle, but it's sitting idle because of the short-term lease issue.

As I said earlier, if there are long-term leases, you'll see the farmers invest in tile drainage that will pick up the water out of the wet spots. You're mostly talking about the wet spots in this land, where it comes to the point where you simply can't farm it. Without these long-term leases, farmers are not going to invest the money into the infrastructure.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Okay.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: It's good farmland, by the way. It's very good farmland, but it has had 40 years of neglect.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, I don't disagree with you.

Here's another quote. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood suggested that in the last round of questions we're making this up; everybody supports farmers, and we shouldn't worry. The member of Scarborough Southwest said this in his speech:

Nothing will ever be accomplished in Rouge Park without buy-in from the Friends of the Rouge Watershed. They are the ones who have been there on the ground. They are the volunteers who have cared for and loved that park for 40 years. They are not going to let it be torn apart... They are the people who are invested in that park already and have been for generations.

You hear that it's essential that we have the Friends of the Rouge Watershed. The Markham committee...I have a tape here, and I'm not going to play it because it'll take too much time.

When you hear those kinds of statements and when you see members of Parliament presenting petitions on behalf of Jim Robb to save the Rouge watershed, talking about this ecological corridor, are you filled with confidence that you're going to be allowed to continue farming in perpetuity unless this legislation is passed?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: The answer is no, I do not feel any confidence.

The Chair: We will move to Mr. McKay for seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you both for coming.

I'm looking forward to asking Jim Robb where he stores his horns.

I've known Jim for years, and there's a certain resplendent irony here, Mr. Whittamore, because without Mr. Robb and all his

colleagues over the last 30 years—including Ms. Browes, Mr. Lee, and so on; a huge panoply of people and none of us are here—the pressure on any government to sell your land and everybody else's would be enormous. You are locked in this dance of the dialectic, which is somewhat interesting to observe from afar.

To my mind, the issue is how to address the concerns of the farmers inside a park because operating a farm inside a park is, by definition, going to be different. Ms. Schultz, can you see any objection to longer-term leases for the farmers?

● (1710)

Ms. Caroline Schultz: No.

Hon. John McKay: No, of course not.

Anything that's really said: water management and tile drainage; when we had a farm we drained our place, and it's a costly exercise and you'd better know that you own it and you want to get it back over a number of years. I don't see any objection to that. Pest management; sometimes there is a contradiction between renaturalization pest management and what farmers need. Again, I don't know if that's a huge reason not to address it.

I guess where I'm going here is to address the concerns of both of you, so both of you get the protection you think you need

I was just reading clause 6, and if I'm a farmer I'm thinking that maybe that's not as sufficient protection as I would think I would like. It says, "The Minister must, in the management of the Park, take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems"—that may or may not be farms—"cultural landscapes"—I don't know; is a cultural landscape that standard auto wrecker down the street from you? I don't think that would qualify—"maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems". Other than clause 4, which talks about "vibrant farming community", I don't see that the minister has to take into consideration the issue of operating farms.

The question becomes how to draft a clause that addresses both of your concerns. Are there any thoughts from either one of you?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: My immediate comment is that there are many good examples where those of us who are on my side of the equation, which is environmental protection, conservation, and the farming community, have worked very effectively and collaboratively together to come up with solutions. In our own organization, we work very closely with the farming community on a number of initiatives in Ontario. We work with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers, the National Farmers Union, the cattlemen, the cattle producers, and others, particularly around species at risk conservation, but also on other issues.

I do not believe this is an issue that cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both entities and achieve what we believe, from my perspective, that this park should be achieving in terms of ecological integrity. I don't think the two are mutually exclusive.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Whittamore, what's your reaction?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: I didn't spend a lot of time on Bill C-40. Where I spent my time was in that draft management plan, and I compared it to what Jim and other people would like added, which is the 1994 plan and the 2001 plan. What I see in this new draft management plan is an equal weighting of agriculture, culture, and nature that did not exist in the other documents for the last 20 years. Agriculture in the other documents was an afterthought, and I watched it south of Steeles Avenue. I had a neighbour, Bert Patterson. He gave up his lease. That farm was supposed to go to a young farmer, somebody who wanted to start out. That farm was reforested in two years, just like that.

Hon. John McKay: I know exactly where you're talking about, the farm that you're talking about. The issue though is that at this point, all the minister needs to do is take it into consideration. Taking something into consideration is not a plan. It's sort of like a hope or a wish. You could readily imagine aggressive environmental ministers, or ministers who are less aggressive, driving a bulldozer through that clause. That would be the only thing left, because management plans come and go. My concern is as much for the folks, for want of a better term, south of Steeles Avenue, as it is for the folks north of Steeles Avenue.

To me, there seems to be a mutual interest to draft a clause which gives some measure of ecological and farming integrity to the point where both parties seem to be reasonably satisfied.

Are there comments? Mr. Whittamore.

• (1715)

Mr. Mike Whittamore: I acknowledge your point about driving the bulldozer through it; however, I've read the recommendations of what Friends of the Rouge Watershed want in amendments, and the amendments they want go back to what was there before. You can probably put a bulldozer through it, but let's just suppose in the future we have a minister who wants to take it the other way. Do you honestly believe that once they've reforested seven, eight, or ten thousand acres of land that he's going to say, "Well, now we're going to pull out all those trees back and go back?"

We can only go one way, right?

Hon. John McKay: Well, not necessarily; we could go either way.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Well, we can save the farmland and keep farming it, but once you've planted trees, for somebody to actually stand up and say, let's rip all those trees out, and we'll go back to farming, that is just not going to happen.

Hon. John McKay: I don't disagree.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Ms. Sitsabaiesan please, for five minutes.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: I want to echo a little bit of what Mr. McKay said, that over the last 35 years there have been a lot of activists and volunteers, including Friends of the Rouge, who have protected a lot of that land from development. I'm grateful to them, but now we're at a different stage.

My question is for Mr. Whittamore. What do you think is the biggest threat to the class 1 farmland that is in Markham and has been farmed over the years? What is the biggest threat?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: In the park study area...?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Yes.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: The biggest threat would be if we endorsed and followed the Rouge north management plan, and then we apply that same type of thinking about ecological integrity to the whole thing, because...

Listen, we're the feedstock. We're the feedstock to reach ecological integrity. It's raw farmland. That's what gets reforested. That's what has the wetlands.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Reforestation or ecological restoration is what you think is the biggest threat to farmland.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: Yes.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay.

Ms. Schultz, I'm going to ask you a similar question that follows from his answer. Do you believe that ecological restoration is the real threat to farmers in the Rouge park?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I don't think it should be a threat to farmers in the park. I think that there is ecological—it depends what you mean by ecological restoration, because that's a pretty broad term.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Reforestation of the existing farmland...

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Well, planting trees is one element of ecological restoration. It all depends on what ecosystem you're restoring. I think it's really important that we're looking at increasing ecological functionality, including farmlands, which can be accommodated, because it happens all the time. Farmers are some of the best stewards of the land and provide some of the best habitats.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: I'm reading through pieces of this and I'm learning that farmers are environmental activists. I used to be a mediator before I became an MP, so this was my mediator hat saying, "That's your position, and that's your position; now let's look at interspace and what we can do." Do both of you see a way that farmers and conservationists can work together to ultimately achieve a goal of protecting all of the land? Ideally we don't want to see further urban jungles. We want it to be productive farmland or we want it to be forests or whatever, protected, natural land.

The question is for both of you, Mr. Whittamore and Ms. Schultz. Do you see it as a possibility to move forward and work together to achieve this?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: We want to work with the groups. We've been working with Parks Canada. Parks Canada is the best mediator, negotiator, conduit, call it whatever you want. They will be the best hope we have for bringing all the parties together to find a reasonable solution. I still go back to the draft management plan where they have put agriculture, culture, and nature on equal footing. That's what we need to do, and move forward.

• (1720)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you.

Ms. Schultz.

Ms. Caroline Schultz: My answer is simple. Absolutely, it can be done. There's no doubt about it. There are so many examples, maybe not in the context of a park, but there are other examples in Ontario happening today where environmentalists and conservationists are working with farmers to protect natural ecosystems, to protect linkage areas between core habitats, and to promote sustainable farming. The alternative land use services program is an example of that, which our organization has been instrumental in—

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Pardon me; I probably have about one minute, so I want to cut you off quickly.

Environmental Defence Canada and Ontario Nature, both organizations you're representing today, are part of the organizations that urge the government of Ontario to withhold the transfer of land. Is that correct?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Correct.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Can you quickly elaborate why you suggested that?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Why? Because we don't believe that the bill as it stands does what it ought to do in terms of protecting ecosystems, having that ecological integrity standard in there. It seems to be a sort of secondary component in the bill, and we think that it's absolutely of paramount importance in the bill. Without that, why would the Province of Ontario transfer lands when the intent is, we believe, to protect the ecosystems of the Rouge?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: I have 20 seconds, so I'll just say thank you to both of you.

The Chair: We'll move to our last questioner. Mr. Carrie, please.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Ms. Schultz, we had the minister and Parks Canada in front of us a couple of days ago, and they were incredibly surprised when Ontario broke the MOU with them at the eleventh hour. This was a legally binding MOU, and they found out through the *Toronto Star*. I'm just curious, when did you find out that Ontario was going to do this?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I think the same time as everybody else did.

Mr. Colin Carrie: On the same date, September 3, through the *Toronto Star*.

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: You did. Because you guys did sign on to a CPAWS statement that was published on September 3, 2014, which basically said, "We call on the federal government to uphold its commitment in the Memorandum of Agreement". Did you or your organization actually read the legally binding MOU prior to sending out this press release?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I didn't, but yes, our director who's responsible for that did.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Do you understand the MOU?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: You do. Did you note that in the MOU the term "ecological integrity" was never mentioned?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: You did. Good. Do you understand the difference between policy and legislation?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: You do. Do you think it's fair to say that policy should be compared to policy, and legislation should be compared to legislation?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I'm sorry, could you repeat that?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Do you think legislation should be compared to legislation, and policy should be compared to policy, or do you think they should be compared to each other, legislation and policies and picking and choosing?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I wouldn't call it picking and choosing, but I think you have to look at all components.

Mr. Colin Carrie: You said in your statement that the draft federal legislation, Bill C-40, fails to offer the protection Rouge park deserves, contrary to existing provincial Rouge park policies. Then you compare that with the draft federal legislation and say that it does not prioritize ecological integrity in park management. You're comparing policies with legislation. Does that make sense to you? Is that a fair comparison?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I think it's a fair comparison, because it's about the intent.

Mr. Colin Carrie: The intent of what?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Of the wording.

Mr. Colin Carrie: In other words, you're stating that the Ontario government policies give greater protection to the park as it stands versus the federal. Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes, it does.

Mr. Colin Carrie: The minister was here and she basically highlighted at length how the bill will not only meet but exceed in many cases the environmental protection that is currently being applied on these lands. Can you give us specific examples of how this bill will not meet or exceed the current environmental protection?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: I can't give you the specific wording because I don't have the provincial policies.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Do you know if the Ontario government is providing within their own legislation the level of protection for this land that they have specified?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Meaning which legislation?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Their current legislation of protection of the Rouge. Are they meeting their own standards? Can I put that to you?

● (1725)

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Are you talking about...? I'm sorry, can you clarify what you're asking?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Basically, the Ontario government has a certain level of protection they say they will meet within their own protective lands. Are they doing that in regard to the Rouge?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Well, there is a number of different layers of protection on the Rouge, so I'm not sure what we're talking about specifically, because there's.... I need more specificity, I think.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Basically, the land as it is today is protected by the Ontario government. You're saying it's protected more than it would be under this bill. Is that what you're saying from a legislative standpoint?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes, I believe so.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Is that what you believe?

Ms. Caroline Schultz: Yes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Well, I don't agree with you.

I have a quick question for Mr. Whittamore.

We had CPAWS in front of us. I believe they said, as far as ecological health is concerned, that they want to maximize the amount possible. They said they support farmers, but you've been in a situation, and I believe Mr. McKay brought it forward. You can have an aggressive environment minister driving a bulldozer that may be affecting the ability to protect the land. You properly stated it

could go exactly the other way. If we have in this legislation, in the legislative part of it, in regards to ecological health, to maximize the amount possible, does that give you comfort?

The Chair: We need more than a headshake, just for the record.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: I'm sorry, could you repeat that?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Yes. CPAWS would like to see ecological health protected to the maximum amount possible in this legislation.

Mr. Mike Whittamore: They want that added to the legislation.

Mr. Colin Carrie: They would like to make sure that's in there. Would that comfort you to see that?

Mr. Mike Whittamore: No, because it's a slippery slope. I know where that leads to.

The Chair: Okay, our time is up.

Thank you, Mr. Carrie.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Thanks to our committee members as we are moving forward on our study of Bill C-40. I appreciate your input.

The meeting is adjourned.

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