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Chair

Mr. Harold Albrecht

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)): I'd like to call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to order. This is meeting number 50. Today we're meeting to continue our study of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada.

Appearing by video conference we have Mr. Mark Boyce, professor, of the department of biological sciences, University of Alberta.

We also have by video conference two of our witnesses whom we were unable to connect with earlier. Thank you for your patience.

From Manitoba Wildlife Federation we have Ron Olson, managing director; and from Delta Waterfowl Foundation Jonathan Scarth, senior vice-president.

Thank you to all of you.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Chair, could you get each one to wave, so that we know who's who?

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Boyce, I think, is on the left screen here.

Oh, I'm sorry; I was wrong.

Then from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation—

I guess Ron Olson is not in the room yet.

A voice: Not quite; it's "Rob".

The Chair: Oh, is it Rob? I'm sorry. I was informed about that error on the sheet and I forgot to make a note of it.

It's Rob Olson—I'm sorry about that—and Jonathan Scarth.

We're going to begin with Mr. Boyce for an opening 10-minute statement, followed by Rob Olson and then by Jonathan Scarth for 10 minutes each. Then our witnesses will have rounds of questions put to them.

Mr. Boyce.

Professor Mark Boyce (Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me to testify.

I am a Canadian citizen and a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. I'm very active in the Wildlife Society, which is the professional organization to which most wildlife biologists belong.

My position at the University of Alberta was endowed by the Alberta Conservation Association, with revenues from the sale of hunting and fishing licences in Alberta. The Alberta Conservation Association was founded in 1997 to ensure that revenues from the sale of hunting and fishing licences were allocated to conservation rather than going into provincial coffers.

My job is to supervise graduate student research in wildlife, and I have one of the largest wildlife research programs in Canada. My particular focus is on large mammals, fur-bearers, and game birds. My research program has been funded by a long list of organizations, including NSERC and Delta Waterfowl. The amount of funding my research program has attracted since I moved to Alberta in 1999 is approximately \$30 million. I've had relatively little funding directly from the Alberta provincial government, but I work very closely with the provincial government in identifying wildlife management needs for Alberta.

Hunters and anglers are the primary stimulus for conservation in North America. We support conservation more than any other interest group, and most conservation programs in North America would not exist without the efforts and investments of hunters and anglers. In addition, the economics of hunting, trapping, angling, and other nature-based forms of recreation are substantial.

In the United States, the economic consequences of hunting and fishing amounted to \$159 billion in 2007. Just by way of comparison, that's two and a half times the total oil exports from Canada in one year. The Canadian tourism council believes that Canada could capture a much greater amount of revenue from hunting and fishing because we have such spectacular hunting and fishing opportunities.

Before moving to Alberta in 1999, I spent most of my life in the United States, so I have some experience with the U.S. system. There are three elements of the United States fishing, hunting, and trapping system that I'd like to highlight.

The first is the cooperative fish and wildlife research unit system that's distributed across the states. There are 40 of these units and they're jointly funded by the federal government, the state government, and universities. They help to meet the research needs of the state, and they train the next generation of fish and wildlife researchers. I was a co-op unit student at the University of Alaska where I did my master's work.

Second, major funding for wildlife education, monitoring, and research is supported by the Pittman-Robertson fund that directs revenues from an 11% excise tax on hunting equipment, firearms, and ammunition, managed by the Department of the Interior, with allocations to the states on a 25%:75% match, 75% coming from federal revenues.

Third, the Dingell-Johnson Act provides the same sort of support for fisheries education, monitoring, and research based on an excise tax on fishing tackle. The Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson programs have been extremely important in ensuring a steady flow of funds for wildlife and fisheries, something that is urgently needed in Canada.

We can actually do it better than the U.S.A. by expanding the base to include camping equipment, binoculars, and other outdoor equipment, and then provide broader support, including for non-game species.

Hunters and anglers are proud of the fact that we are the primary source of funding for conservation in North America. Living in the United States, I never heard anyone complain about the Pittman-Robertson excise tax, partly because most people don't know they're being taxed. The tax is imposed on the price of the item before you purchase it, unlike the GST, which is added on afterwards.

● (0850)

Continuing funding for monitoring and research is crucial to being able to ensure sound management of wildlife resources. Provincial support for fisheries and wildlife is sometimes volatile. As an example, last week 150 staff from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development were cut as a consequence of reduced energy revenues because of the low price of oil.

In addition to my supervision of fish and wildlife research, I'm an avid hunter and angler, and my wife and I maintain a registered trapline in the Rocky Mountains. Canada leads the world in the development, testing, and legal requirements of humane trapping standards. Trapping produces a continuing source of revenues from crown land and if well managed can generate fur value of approximately 25-50% of that obtained by forestry on the same land base. Trapping provides revenue every single year and when the rotation—like in the Rocky Mountains and many places—is 100 years, those 100 years of accumulated fur returns off of the same land base can be a substantial amortized total.

In addition trappers provide an important service by controlling problem wildlife. I've done a fair amount of work on beaver control. Flooding damage to infrastructure and crops costs industry, municipalities, and agriculture across Canada hundreds of millions of dollars each year, sometimes approaching \$1 billion.

A final comment is that hunters and trappers are passionate about our traditional way of life that inspires us.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Boyce. Thank you for staying well within your time.

We'll move now to Mr. Rob Olson, managing director, Manitoba Wildlife Federation

Mr. Olson, welcome.

Mr. Rob Olson (Managing Director, Manitoba Wildlife Federation): Hello and thank you.

Can you all hear me okay from Winnipeg? Is it working?

The Chair: We can hear you very well.

Mr. Rob Olson: I want to thank you all for the opportunity to speak today. I'm really excited to be here to speak about this topic of hunting.

I'll tell you a little bit about myself. I'm a hunter, a trapper. I've dedicated my life to biology and conservation of living things and wild places. It defines who I am. It defines my family. It's really important to me and my community. I can trace my culture back at least seven generations to Norway where we came from originally.

I'm really lucky to be the managing director of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. It's a tremendous group. Hunters, anglers, and trappers are our members. We have 14,000 of them. We're organized in a hundred clubs across Manitoba. We have an amazing network of people who are really committed to conservation. They have done amazing things. In our province alone, we have conserved over 30,000 acres of habitat for wildlife: game species, non-game species, endangered species. Our clubs and members are really passionate and committed to making sure that wild places are here forever.

These people give their time and money on a level that is breathtaking. These are everyday citizens, everyday Canadians. They come from all walks of life and they do incredible stuff at the local level.

We always talk about environmentalism, and I learned in university, and I've learned I guess in life, that you want to think globally and act locally. In that regard, I think our federation members are incredible examples of that. They do endless work in their communities. There are too many fish habitat restoration projects to count. They do it on their own. They raise the money locally. They put in their own money. They're out there with their kids, their wives, their families, building fish-spawning structures, for example. They love doing it. They love putting back. Bird nesting boxes.... There are a variety of habitat treatment projects—trying to improve habitat out there for wildlife.

Right now in Manitoba we have a moose crisis. We have moose crashing in our province currently. Our members are setting up consultations with aboriginal hunters. They're trying to build relationships and alliances to be able to bring the moose back. They're driving hundreds of miles to attend consultation meetings and meetings that are coordinating hunters to try to bring back the moose. They do it simply by being asked. They go. It's not a question if they're going to go; they're going to go for the moose. They care that much.

The comments before me and coming after me, I think will well establish the money, the economic importance and the kinds of contributions that hunters have made as conservationists.

I want to talk very briefly about this notion of hunters as environmentalists. In our view, we do a lot of work at the Manitoba Wildlife Federation to recruit new hunters and fishers. We've always believed that hunters and anglers are the very important people who are going to work to make sure the animals and fish are here forever, and the habitat that they rely on. We've always felt that. A recent study out of Cornell has shown that hunters are four times more likely than an average citizen to participate in conservation work to make sure we have sustainable resources forever.

I started a youth hunting program here in Manitoba that spread across Canada. I did it as an a Delta Waterfowl employee. It's one of my favourite things that I've ever worked on. The most important part of it for me is the first night before the hunt. We talk to the kids before they go out and say, "Listen, you're going to hunt in the morning. You're going to go out and hunt ducks. It's going to be a great experience. We're going to get our own meat. We're going to learn how to cook it and prepare it and get connected to our food. When you do that, you're responsible for them forever. Forever they're entrusted to your care, so you have to make sure you always put back more than you take."

That is our approach and our vision to conservation. Hunters can really drive energy as environmentalists because they're so connected to the resource. They are a big opportunity for us to engage them as environmentalists. Think of them more in that light.

I feel like the old rules don't apply anymore. I mean, who's an environmentalist? When you say environmentalist and you talk to a Canadian, it may conjure up all kinds of images. You may think of Greenpeace trying to stop whalers or something like that.

• (0900)

Maybe that's the old view. I often ask people those questions. I'm very curious about that. I think the old rules don't apply anymore. I think now we see this massive movement of urban people coming back to hunting. We have recruitment programs, as I said, trying to get people reconnected to the land and reconnected to where their food comes from. We can't meet the demand.

Hunters as a constituency and as a community—it's a rainbow now. We have more women coming to it than you might imagine or guess. We can't meet the demand for the number of ladies who want to try this now. One of the fastest-growing areas for interest in hunting, fishing, and trapping for us, especially hunting, is with new Canadians. When you line people up against the wall and say, "Those are hunters", they may not look like it, in your mind's eye.

As well, they think they're environmentalists. It would be news to them that they're not. They wear that on their sleeves. They're really committed to doing that work. I often meet people who will say, "How can you hunt and care about the environment? You're actually killing the animals that you say you care about." But we don't do conservation to have more wildlife to hunt; because we hunt we have to do conservation. We're obligated to do that. We feel like it's our responsibility.

Now with our youth programming, and with the new hunters, we tell them that the thinking we have, to put back more than we take, extends beyond hunting. We all take resources: our homes, our cars. We all need resources to live. Canada is very much a resource-based economy. We take from the land. If we can all apply that same environmental thinking to everything we do as Canadians every day, we'll put back more than we take—all the time. If we can apply that hunters mindset to everything we do in Canada when we're talking about taking resources, taking from the land, we'll be a lot better off environmentally and a lot more connected to protecting the environment.

The last thing I'll say is that I recognize—I just saw it through the media—that there's maybe a bit of controversy around thinking of hunters as environmentalists and considering them in the environment committee. I can understand that. I would encourage all the people involved here today, regardless of what party you're involved in, to think of people like me, my family, and my wife as an opportunity. Think of us as an opportunity. Pull us in deeper. Engage us. Give us a challenge. Hunters love a challenge. There's no challenge we won't try to tackle if it benefits the environment, if it benefits the animals, if it benefits the habitat they rely on. Think of us as environmentalists. Pull us in deeper and see us as the opportunity that we feel we are.

With that, I'll just thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. We really appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Olson. Thank you for that message from your heart.

We'll now go to Delta Waterfowl Foundation, to Mr. Jonathan Scarth, senior vice-president.

Welcome, Mr. Scarth.

Mr. Jonathan Scarth (Senior Vice-President, Delta Waterfowl Foundation): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to offer some observations.

Delta Waterfowl, for your background, is an international charity dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of waterfowl. Our constituency is the duck hunting community in both Canada and the United States but our remarks apply generally to the contributions of hunters, trappers, and anglers.

Our first observation with regard to your study of licensed hunting and trapping is that it's about time. I want to thank the standing committee for demonstrating the initiative to investigate the contributions that the sustainable use community makes to the environment and for making it a priority to enquire into this unique and symbiotic relationship.

The linkage between hunting, fishing, trapping, and environment and sustainable development is a relationship that bears study as a success story in stimulating investments to the environment from those who enjoy it. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are too often an afterthought portrayed as in conflict or as activities that need to be curtailed in some manner to achieve conservation and the environmental goals, and nothing could be further from the truth. That hunters, anglers, and trappers are the first and best conservationists is a statement that is uncontroversial within our community, one that invests more than any other segment of society in conservation. Yet we continue to endure simple-minded criticism from those within the anti-hunting and anti-use community who contribute little to the environment other than their attacks on the main investors in conservation.

There are a variety of ways to describe the relationship between the sustainable use community and the environment. Let's start with a few examples and some raw numbers.

The duck hunting community that supports our organization can lay claim to putting in place and supporting one of the oldest and most successful investments in the environment in North America. The United States federal migratory bird hunting and conservation stamps, commonly known as duck stamps, are pictorial stamps produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service beginning in 1934 and serve as the federal U.S. licence for hunting migratory waterfowl. Since they were established in 1934 sales of federal duck stamps have generated more than \$800 million, which were earmarked and have been used to purchase, or protect with easements, over six million acres of wetland habitat in the United States, including lands protected in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's national wildlife refuge system.

Waterfowl, of course, are not the only wildlife that benefit from the sale of these federal duck stamps. Numerous other bird, mammal, fish, reptile, and amphibian species rely on wetlands. One-third of the United States endangered and threatened species find food or shelter in refuges established using federal duck stamp funds. People have benefited more generally from the federal duck stamp. Hunters have places to enjoy their passion and other outdoor enthusiasts have places to hike, watch birds, photograph, and explore. The wetlands purify water supplies, store flood water, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, sequester carbon, and provide spawning areas for fish important to sport and commercial fisheries.

This model has been replicated time and time again. Almost every jurisdiction in North America now has funding that is generated from hunting, angling, and trapping licence sales and spent on the environment. In the United States, and Mark touched on these statistics, annual state hunting licence sales exceeded \$764 million in 2009 and fishing licence sales were over \$600 million. This model was imported into Canada in 1985 with the establishment of the Canadian wildlife habitat conservation stamp required to duck hunt and invested by Wildlife Habitat Canada in habitat projects.

These licence fees have been followed in the U.S. by the imposition of federal excise taxes on most hunting, angling, and shooting sports equipment. They were introduced in 1937 for wildlife and in 1950 for sport fishing, and now generate almost \$400 million a year for conservation. Moreover, this baseline funding has provided matching funds that leverage even more public and private

investments in conservation. These models have been in place for so long that they are literally taken for granted both by the sustainable use community, by our community, which constantly seeks to build on this investment, and by the non-hunting community who are largely unaware of this bedrock commitment to conservation and the environment.

In terms of investments in conservation, the sustainable use community goes from strength to strength building on these licence-based revenues with private philanthropy and volunteerism, and Rob touched on much of that.

● (0905)

A recent study published in *The Journal of Wildlife Management* and summarized in *Scientific American* found that hunters and bird-watchers were almost five times more likely than non-recreationists to carry out land stewardship. These dual hunter-bird-watchers were almost three times more likely than non-recreationists to donate money to conservation. The paper referred to them as conservation superstars.

Beyond the direct contributions of money and volunteer time, duck hunters contribute directly to the management of overabundant wildlife populations, as we are currently experiencing with Arctic nesting goose populations, snow geese and Ross's geese. I would note that in doing so we are often met with opposition from anti-hunting groups that oppose science-based management while contributing nothing to the environment or conservation. Given the overwhelming importance of predation as a limiting factor for wildlife populations, trappers have a growing role in helping manage both game and endangered wildlife species.

It is also hunting and angling groups that are in the forefront of efforts to help build durable environmental policies and programs that integrate sustainable use, and to work within the resource and agricultural communities to accommodate and sustain wildlife and fish populations. I have presented to your committee before on our alternative land use services program and the national conservation plan, both efforts that are cost-shared with money from the hunting and fishing community.

To those within the sustainable use community, this extraordinary willingness to invest in conservation is second nature. In part, it is enlightened and informed self-interest that drives the hunter to invest in conservation. The experience of hunting is a priority for us, and we give back in order to experience abundance in the field and thus contribute to research and production of wildlife.

Our organization was founded over a hundred years ago, and it became a research organization on the strength of a contribution from a philanthropist who committed to putting two ducks back in the air for every duck that he harvested in the fall.

This willingness to pay for environmental improvements stands in contrast to sectors of society less connected to environmental issues. A recent Nanos poll indicated that while 71% of Canadians said they support or somewhat support imposing new taxes on businesses that emit greenhouse gases, a minority, 37% to 41%, were willing to consider new taxes on gasoline and home heating oil.

The commitment to invest from the hunting, angling, and trapping communities springs from a deep emotional connection between the environment and the hunter, angler, and trapper. The commitment gives us a disproportionate need to give back after we take a duck to enjoy for the table. It is a unique connection, and the evidence suggests that this community is far more willing to contribute in time, money, and engagement in environmental conservation.

Thank you for this recognition. Your committee is well advised to study and reflect on this phenomenon.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

● (0910)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Scarth.

We will now move to our opening round of questions, for seven minutes each, beginning with Mr. Sopuck, please.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you very much to the presenters.

Just as a bit of FYI, Dr. Boyce, my own master's was funded by Dingell-Johnson funds, so I am deeply sympathetic to that particular idea.

My first question is for Mr. Olson, a very direct question. Why is it important for the environment and sustainable development committee to study this topic?

The Chair: Mr. Olson, go ahead.

Mr. Rob Olson: It is important because as a constituency these are people.... If that community is committed to actually doing things for the environment and making the environment better, then this is a constituency that you have to engage. To engage them, you have to know them. To know them, you have to study them.

I would say that is the number one thing. Engage us, use us, pull us in, challenge us, give us the rope, and we'll pull. To me, that is the number one reason why it is essential that you folks bring us in deeper.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Scarth, as is known, both the Liberals and NDP oppose the environment committee conducting this study

Ms. Megan Leslie: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

That is actually incorrect. We certainly held a press conference about other topics that we could study, but it is not correct that we oppose this study. We are in favour of this study.

The Chair: This is not a point of order. It's a point of debate.

We'll move back to Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, the NDP press release says NDP presses the environment committee to refocus its priorities. The other parties obviously didn't think this was a priority.

Mr. Scarth, why do you think that was and why is this study a priority? Why hasn't the hunting and trapping community been given the credit that is due to it for its efforts in conservation?

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: I think most Canadians are not aware of the contributions that hunters, anglers, and trappers make to conservation, either financially, in a taxation sense as we've covered, or in a philanthropic sense. I think the funding is taken for granted within the sustainable use community and I think it's unknown within the community outside of that sector.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Scarth, I understand that Delta Waterfowl applied for some funding under the national conservation plan, the wetland program for the alternate land use services conservation program that Delta operates. Can you describe that program and why it is important? Why are hunters involved with habitat conservation on the privately owned farmed landscape?

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: The evolution of the alternative land use services program began with our conversations with farmers. It was very much a conversation with the hunting community, who were seeking to conserve more habitat on a landscape that is for the most part privately owned. Waterfowl depend, ducks depend on basically the privately owned part of the Midwest in the U.S. and Canada.

We began having a conversation with farmers and we discovered in that conversation that we had more in common than we had as differences. The design of our ALUS program is to work with incentives, be respectful of property rights, and work with the agricultural community, as opposed to the other models, which involved taking habitat away from the privately owned landowner community or regulating their activity. We found a way in these conversations. We found a kinship between those who are seeking to grow things on the landscape as hunters and as farmers to work together. That was the genesis of the program and we're very excited at the growth of it across the country.

● (0915)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Olson, I'm interested in the phenomenon of urban people taking up hunting. Of course it's a false dichotomy to say that hunting and trapping is a rural issue. It's clearly not. I was born and raised in Winnipeg and got up with my dad early in the morning to go hunting for many weekends in the fall. Why is it, Mr. Olson, that urban people seem to be flocking to hunting and fishing now after many years when many of them didn't do this? Why are they taking this up?

Mr. Rob Olson: We're not sure. In our becoming an outdoorswoman program we have spots for 75 ladies every year in May and it sells out immediately. I was there last year teaching the gals how to fillet fish and stuff like that. I asked them the question, "Why are you here?" These ladies are young professionals from the city. They have no particular connection to the country and didn't come from a farm. What they said was, "You know, we're so disconnected now." It's troubling to them. It's almost like they got so disconnected they now crave getting reconnected. They're craving something authentic. They want an authentic experience. They have concerns about their food. They want to get their own food. They want to feel that pride of getting their own meat, knowing where it came from, processing it themselves, and feeling the pride of that. It's like canning your own vegetables. There's a certain pride in that.

I think that's why it's happening and it's happening a lot. We have a program now with a group called Food Matters Manitoba and none of them look like hunters. You know they don't look like hunters in your mind's eye, what you think of as a hunter. They are hunters now. They have us teaching inner-city kids, primarily aboriginal kids in the core of Winnipeg, how to clean and process Canada geese and ducks in home education class and make fajitas out of them. You wouldn't have thought that would be happening 15 or 20 years ago. Would we have been cleaning geese in downtown Winnipeg in a school and cooking them?

That's how big the demand is. That's how much people are craving to get back to that. For us of course it's an amazing phenomenon because now we can engage them all in conservation. That's the payoff. We can bring them all into being environmentalists. Those people in the city, now they've had that experience, it's more likely I think—and research has shown that now—that we can suck them into this committee's agenda.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: As you know, Mr. Olson, the becoming an outdoorswoman program takes place in my constituency. I too had the pleasure of being an instructor there last year, teaching fly fishing. I very much share your sentiments about these women hunters and anglers, and their deep enthusiasm for what they're doing in a commitment to conservation.

I think my time is up.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: You're right on. That's seven minutes exactly.

We'll move to Ms. Leslie for seven minutes.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks very much for your testimony. I certainly learned a lot. I'm going to respect your time and expertise by actually jumping in with substantive questions and consulting with you about the science you know, the expertise you have, and the on-the-ground experience you have.

Mr. Olson, I read a quote from you in the *Calgary Herald* that really struck me. I'll read it to you. This was back in 2010, when you said:

We've lost 80 per cent of the wetlands that were here at the time of European settlement and we're still losing what's left. That's bad for us duck folks, but it is also flood water retention and water quality for urban people. Endangered species live in those same areas.

I love that quote because you've effectively pulled in all the things that we need to be talking about. It isn't just about hunting and trapping, as the three of you said. It is about conservation. It is about wetlands. It is about habitat loss and endangered species. I want to turn it over to you to expand on how interconnected this all is and on the idea of habitat loss, the idea that this is where our species at risk are.

I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Olson.

● (0920)

Mr. Rob Olson: Yes, I think the sorts of divisions we have in our mind sometimes are that we have cities and then we have rural areas. Sometimes we think of them as divided. In fact, they often are. There are divisions there. Also, we'll think about the divisions where we have hunters and then we have environmentalists. We have a certain kind of person who we think of as a hunter and then there are the urban people who aren't hunters.

It's all connected, right? The older you are and the more you're on this earth, you see that. There are connections everywhere. We need to be aware that it's all connected and use that.

On the wetland idea, in my province, arguably the people who probably might need those wetlands the most live in Winnipeg. We're the flood city, aren't we? We get issued rubber boots at birth and we just make them bigger as we grow. It's a flood city. We're in a flood plain. We're dealing with flooding issues all the time, so you could argue that the city folks here in Winnipeg, where I live, probably need those wetlands more than anybody, but you have to connect them to it somehow. How do you do that?

So many Winnipeggers I talk to are so busy. They're busy. They're working hard, they have kids, and they have all those issues that we all deal with as humans, as you know, such as keeping the relationships going and all those things. How do you get them out there, outside the perimeter of Winnipeg, to go and see those wetlands and care enough to write a cheque?

The magic of connecting to farmers is that they need those wetlands too. They know that. They have the expertise. They own the lands, so they're essential to conserving the wetlands, but bringing in the Winnipeggers, marrying them with the farmers, and having that connection is really where the magic happens. To me, this meeting today and this committee are where the magic happens.

Bob Sopuck has been a hunter for his entire life. We got Bob, but we want you. We want to get you to become an outdoorsman. We want to get the people who are in the room today and aren't currently fishing, trying those things, conserving wetlands, or maybe contributing to wetland conservation. To me, it's all about gaining. We have to gain ground, so we need new humans.

We have to engage women more, and we're doing that. For Winnipeg women, how do we get them caring enough about a little slough out by some little town in western Manitoba where Bob lives? How do we do that? To have them become outdoorswomen is a great way, because once they come there and once they get the bug, we have something like a 90% conversion rate. If we can get women to come to our weekend there, about 90% of them continue to participate in the outdoors. They have never said no to us when we've come back to them and asked them to help us with this conservation thing. They always give.

It's about breaking down those barriers. It's about having more connections. It's about pulling in more people and finding unique new ways to do that. That's the fun bit and the opportunity.

Ms. Megan Leslie: I think you'd be surprised by some of the experiences of the folks around the table. I come from a hunting and trapping family. We didn't hunt and trap because it was fun. We did it because we were poor and that's where we got our meat source. People have all kinds of different backgrounds.

Mr. Scarth and Mr. Boyce, in thinking about that quote, especially when Mr. Olson talked about how much of the wetlands we're losing, I'm thinking about habitat loss generally. Can either of you gentlemen comment on habitat loss and the impact it's having on hunting and trapping?

Prof. Mark Boyce: Certainly habitat loss is the biggest assault that we're having on wildlife and fish populations throughout North America. I think that every conservation group recognizes that. That's the continuing battle to ensure that we have lands managed for wildlife. That doesn't necessarily mean that they're set aside strictly for wildlife. There are various types of use that are compatible. One of the major focuses of our research program is trying to find ways that energy extraction can be compatible with maintaining wildlife populations on the landscape. There are many things that we can do to use best management practices, to coordinate road construction, and to coordinate energy corridors in ways that protect blocks of habitat for wildlife.

Certainly habitat loss is the biggest threat to the future of fish and wildlife resources in North America and the world.

● (0925)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Scarth.

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: I would just add to Mark's comments to say that the influence of habitat and predation are kind of two sides of the same coin. You take the case of ducks that nest, for example. Most of those species nest in the upland areas, the grass areas of the prairies. When there are fewer of those undisturbed grass areas for them to nest in, their nest success is reduced. It's easier for a skunk or a racoon or a fox to find those nests, and those predator populations are much larger because we've basically managed the prairie landscape to their advantage, as opposed to the nesting birds'.

In addition to the comments Mark made, I would add the fact that the support for management of that landscape through use and through conservation is the way to go. We are an agricultural community. We're going to be growing grain. We're going to be growing food, fibre. We can also grow ducks and grow big game on that landscape, but it has to be actively managed. One of the things I think that's unique about the hunting, fishing, and trapping

perspective is that they understand the need to manage. It's not a matter of setting up little parks; that's impractical. You can't sustain an ecosystem on that basis in most cases. That support for active management is a very important core belief that exists within the sustainable use community.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Scarth.

We'll move now to Mr. Toet for seven minutes.

Mr. Toet.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests here today. It has been very helpful and enlightening.

I want to pick up a little bit on the line of questioning from Ms. Leslie, and that's in regard to the habitat conservation and rehabilitation of habitat. I think the two go hand in hand to a large degree.

I just want to get the perspective of each one of our panellists, a very quick perspective, on who you feel will play a key role in that habitat conservation and habitat rehabilitation.

The Chair: I'll start with Mr. Scarth.

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: Mr. Chair, I'm speaking on behalf of a waterfowl organization, and as I mentioned before, there's a disproportionate 80% to 90% of nesting ducks that depend on the privately owned landscape known as the prairie pothole region, which begins in Iowa and stretches up through to Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta—275,000 square miles of habitat that is virtually entirely privately owned. The focus of our organization is to work with the private landowner community within that vast area because they are the fulcrum. They are the people who own the land and manage that land and they are a critical part of the equation, from our perspective.

The Chair: Mr. Olson.

Mr. Rob Olson: I agree with Mr. Scarth. If you think of where much of the habitat loss is occurring now, it's on agricultural lands. Commodity prices have been relatively high for quite a few years now, so it's the private landowners, the farmers, and the cattle producers we have to connect to, for sure. On one side of the equation, we have to connect to them and engage them in conservation more deeply. We can't just be doing it to them. It's got to be from them, and there's a massive difference. It has to be led by them. That's key, and there's a real long conversation there.

The other side, though, is that we have to find a way to connect the urban majority to what that value is out there on that farmland. That's the challenging bit. As for the farm part, I think we're well on our way thanks to organizations like Delta Waterfowl. I think that's happening, and other organizations as well are doing great work there. The challenge is connecting to the urban folks, which I think is going to be the other half of the conversation. I think there's a lot of work to be done there still.

● (0930)

The Chair: Mr. Boyce.

Prof. Mark Boyce: Yes.

I would add to those comments that in addition to agriculture, and especially in Alberta, industrial development is having very substantial consequences for habitat loss.

There are a number of things that can be done. One is a conservation offset program where when land is taken up for mining or for oil sands development, various companies then invest in conservation properties. The Alberta Conservation Association manages a number of those. It has purchased a number of those, for example, for Syncrude and Suncor and other major oil companies, so that those lands are managed and set aside for wildlife to offset the consequences of industrial development.

In addition, industry is expected to reclaim lands that have been disturbed and modified by industrial development. Sometimes that takes many years before it happens, but ultimately lands can be brought back into production and restored to at least their former value in terms of wildlife habitat, if it's done well. So wildlife reclamation is a very important part of the picture.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: It's good to hear from all of you that there seems to be a real sense that there is a directional change happening here, that we are having better engagement from the agricultural community, and having better engagement from the industrial community who are looking at seeing their responsibilities and their needs, and also at their long-term growth in sustainability to be able to be there. So I think we're seeing some good trends in that direction.

I wanted to go back to Mr. Olson. You've made several comments about engaging young urban Canadians. You talked about women, but also about young urban Canadians and new Canadians who are in our urban centres and the engagement of them. We've talked about that quite a bit in our national conservation plan study. We actually did a whole segment on that particular piece.

I'm just wondering if you could speak to some of the work that your organization is doing, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, and some of your member clubs, to help to reach out especially to our urban youth to get them involved in these programs so they become the conservationists we want them to become over time.

Mr. Rob Olson: Yes, I would love to speak to that. It's my passion. My passion personally is getting young people in the outdoors. It's a magical thing to do. You get them out there and it changes them. I remember the first youth hunt that we did, a young lad had got his first duck in the morning and it was a big experience for him, a little emotional as well. We came back to our camp—and we had 16 kids in that first hunt—and we cleaned the duck. We showed him how to do it and he did it. His little sister was there too, although she was not old enough to hunt yet. We then cooked the ducks. He cooked the duck and then he served it to his mother. We called it “Duck, it's what's for dinner”. The parents came back and the kids served the duck to their parents, and he was emotional.

I get emotional even when I think about it. It was an amazing moment. He was emotional. His hands were shaking; he was walking out of the kitchen carrying the plate and his hands were

shaking. And his mom's emotional. I thought, what's going on here? I didn't see that coming. She said he's never cooked anything in his life, never mind not knowing where his food comes from. He has no idea where his food comes from, no sense of that, no connection. After that, he's connected. It's a growth experience as a human being that too many of us as humans don't get anymore.

That hunt now has grown into 16 hunts across Manitoba. We take kids out hunting waterfowl, deer, and turkeys. We mentor them in. We have a tremendous amount of safety training.

There's huge demand for it, Lawrence, and our volunteers are ideally suited to taking them out and showing them how to do that. As I said, we have inner-city programming now where we're trying to get kids eating goose fajitas and we're going to try to pull them out of the perimeter now.

Our challenge is funding. We applaud the national conservation plan, it's outstanding, and working with farmers is essential to securing habitat and then, as Dr. Boyce talked about, the energy sector as well. We could use some funding to recruit young Canadians into the outdoors. Because if we can recruit them into it, they're going to be there to do the conservation work and to drive the conservation plan work.

We could use some help from all of you in the room today. I'm talking about tiny amounts of money, just a little money to facilitate our being able to get these kids out of the perimeter. We're going to be limited. We can work with the farmers and we can work with the energy sector. We've shown there are opportunities there, but we need to engage these young people and their parents in this stuff, the mothers especially, and we could use a little help in doing that.

● (0935)

The Chair: We'll have to come back to that, possibly in response to another question. Mr. Toet has used up his time.

He's a great conservationist except when it comes to time.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Mr. McKay, you have seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you.

I apologize to each of you for missing the main part of your testimony. I have a wicked combination of jet lag and head cold.

Your conversation about Manitobans being born with boots on because of the regularity of the flooding has made me think about what I guess we're anticipating in the next few weeks, which is yet again another flood in either Saskatchewan or Manitoba. It seems to me that it has a great deal to do with habitat management and the inherent conflict between a farmer who wishes to maximize the use of land for the production of commodities—perfectly understandable in this price scenario—and the inevitable reduction in habitat for ducks and whatever else.

It's not clear to me what can be done, other than goodwill, at the municipal, provincial, or even the federal level to direct the minds of Canadians to the cost of those floods, on an annual basis, to all economies, right across the prairie spectrum but indeed the Canadian economy. Farmers get on their land later and they have to get off it earlier.

But you would know better than I. I'd be interested in your thoughts with respect to that issue. It seems to lack some sort of an overall narrative to reduce what happens to the good folks in Manitoba on an annual basis.

Perhaps I'll start with Professor Olson.

Mr. Rob Olson: I think it's entirely possible to engage the agricultural producers. I think the key is how. You're competing against grain prices, that's true, but even in that environment there are opportunities on farms. Often with the marginal land on a farm, even with high commodity prices, they'd rather not farm it. I come from a farm myself, and those areas around the wetlands, the areas around the creek, are often not productive and are risky to farm. So even in that environment there's an opportunity to conserve.

The key thing is how you approach the farmers. They're a lot like hunters, probably, in the sense that if you go into a community with a heavy hand and say, "Thou shalt not drain", you're going to turn that Saskatchewan farmer—that person who will pull over and help you change your tire at two o'clock in the morning, that friendly, lovely person who will give you the shirt off their back—into someone who's fighting for their land and fighting for their personal choice to manage their land. You're attacking their community when you bring pressure down on them with regulations. There does need to be rules and regulations, but you don't start there. If you hit somebody with a stick, now it's contentious. The key is going into those farm communities in a certain way, with a certain approach. If you do that, then you can engage those communities.

It will take money, but it's not just money. I've always felt, with my experience working with farmers in conservation, that money is important but it's not everything. It's more important how you actually work with farmers and how you engage them.

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: I'll just supplement that before I turn it over to Mark.

That's exactly right. I think the respect that you need to have on that privately owned landscape for the situation that a farmer and a rancher is in drives you towards a program that works through incentives as opposed to regulation or purchase of that land for conservation purposes. There are lots of precedents out there. We're actually one of the few industrialized countries that does not have a conservation program with the scope to have an impact on this kind of scale. The U.S. has for a long time integrated incentives into its agricultural policy. The European Economic Community has what they started calling multi-functionality—different ways of producing both environmental goods and services and food and fibre from privately owned farmland.

So the precedents are there. The direction, as Rob says, is very important, but the models are out there. It's about making conservation mainstream. It's about making it important to counties and to farmers and ranchers, not as an afterthought, not as something

that happens after you get the roads and the ditches done, but as something that should be happening around the county table in addition to the other mainstream economic infrastructure issues that they contend with.

• (0940)

Hon. John McKay: Can anybody actually measure success on these matters? Because it would be nice to get the farmers who probably are.... There is a certain percentage of farmers who are quite willing to take land out of production—certainly marginal land—but then there are others who simply won't. The problem if they simply won't means that you folks in Manitoba get flooded. I'm being simplistic, and I get that. However, if you look at it over the generation of time, we can't keep on doing what we're doing.

Where does the softer voluntary approach end and you then do a mix of some sort of incentives, or carrots and stick? You're telling me that the U.S. and the European Union have that. Is that a recommendation to this committee?

Prof. Mark Boyce: I have a comment directly in response to that.

Certainly, permanent grassland cover is a very important mechanism to reduce flooding. There are programs, and in fact Ducks Unlimited has a struggling program on carbon investments. Grasslands are extremely effective at storing carbon for almost permanent storage.

I own a farm in Iowa, and there are places on my farm where the black topsoil is almost as deep as I am tall. That's all been accumulated over the last 9,000 years. Tons and tons of carbon is in the soil in native grasslands.

By converting marginal cropland into permanent grassland cover, we achieve the flooding protection but we also squirrel away as much as 30 metric tons of carbon per hectare per year into these soils. Permanent grassland cover is an extremely important change in management for some of those watersheds that are flooded so heavily, and by focusing on a carbon tax, and taxing industry that is producing excess emissions, we can achieve both ends.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Your time is up, Mr. McKay.

Mr. Choquette, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here today.

I am pleased to see all sorts of people speak about hunting, fishing and conservation. I think conservation is a priority for us. The national conservation plan is being studied. Of course, we talk all the time about the importance of investment and research in helping us make the right decisions when we take action, whether financially or in support of science, for instance.

Mr. Boyce, in terms of conservation and maintaining hunting and trapping activities, are the investments and research in science sufficient? Of course, there is always room for improvement, but what could we improve at the federal level?

[English]

Prof. Mark Boyce: As a research biologist, I'm always going to suggest that there is greater need for research. But I think that, on the more practical side, we often don't know how to make the right management decisions. We don't know what is the most strategic way to achieve, for example, reduced flooding in the Winnipeg area. But by conducting research and exploring alternative land use practices in strategic ways, we can adjust how lands are managed in a way that has the maximum benefit for flood protection, as well as the maximum benefit for wildlife conservation.

There are always new tools being developed so that we can do a better job of land use planning, for example, which is a very important research need right now. It's a matter of trying to figure out how to best unroll industrial development on the landscape. In western Canada for example, we have 761,000 oil and gas wells. It's not just the well pad itself that affects the landscape but all of the infrastructure that goes with it. Roads, power lines, pipelines, fragmented habitats, it's all happening willy-nilly across the landscape without any careful planning and without using best management practices to ensure that we still have wildlife on the landscape as well as industrial development.

There's an enormous opportunity and a need to improve land use planning. If there's one area that I think probably has the greatest research need today, that's where I would focus.

• (0945)

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you very much for your comments on land use planning for habitat conservation.

Another issue you have raised in your research is the impact of climate change on caribou populations and other populations. You have done a lot of research on that.

How does climate change really affect caribou hunting and trapping practices in the north, for instance? Could you elaborate on that?

[English]

Prof. Mark Boyce: We've done a survey of caribou herds, and reindeer herds in the old world as well. Almost all of them are in decline, not only the boreal forest herds, the woodland caribou, but also the migratory herds. There are only a couple of herds in North America that are not declining, and one or two in Siberia. Almost all herds around the world are in decline. There are a number of reasons for that.

In the context of the boreal caribou, we understand how disturbance of habitat creates better habitat for moose and for deer. The result is an increase in wolf populations, and an increased wolf population results in greater depredation of caribou. This is called apparent competition, and has been demonstrated in Siberia as well as straight across Canada. So for woodland caribou, the industrial development associated with timber harvest and oil and gas

development is having secondary consequences, not direct, but secondary.

In the north, alteration of climate is affecting the timing of the caribou's arrival on their calving grounds. The vegetation has already matured and gone past its most nutritious stage when the caribou arrive, so the nutritional status of many of the northern migratory herds has been affected as a consequence of climate change. The climate is changing more in the north than anywhere else on the planet.

The Chair: That concludes Mr. Choquette's time.

We'll move now to Mr. Carrie for five minutes.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to correct the record for my colleague from Drummond. He mentioned that we should have a national conservation plan. Well actually, last May, the Prime Minister announced one. It provides a \$252-million investment to conserve and restore Canada's natural environment for present and future generations. As part of the plan, the government provided \$50 million over five years to restore wetlands. I believe the NDP actually voted against it.

Anyway, I was wondering if the organizations in front of us could provide the committee with some examples of the projects funded through this program within your province or within your organization?

• (0950)

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: Thank you.

I think it was mentioned earlier that the national conservation plan is supporting the growth and expansion of the alternative land use services program, ALUS program, which is a program that seeks to engage private landowners and local governments in the delivery of conservation for the first time.

Just to be clear about the way in which ALUS is delivered, the counties are the local entities that actually manage the funds and they enter into the agreements with the landowners to conserve these areas, as Rob mentioned, that are less productive soils integrated with wetlands. The goal overall is to engage both the landowners who own the land and the local governments and make conservation a mainstream activity.

That activity is certainly taking place with the support of the national conservation plan, and we are hoping it will expand across the country over time.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Excellent.

Professor Boyce, you mentioned you have expertise in managing large mammals. I've read about a moose hunter app you helped initiate in 2012. Could you please provide the committee with how this app works, and what kind of data you've been able to collect from the app?

Prof. Mark Boyce: I guess I can't really show you on the screen very well, but it's a little app. When you click on it, a table comes up asking you to input how many bulls, cows, calves, and unidentified animals you saw during a day hunting in the field, and the number of hours you were hunting on that day.

When a moose licence is issued to a hunter, they receive the request from Environment and Sustainable Resource Development asking them to participate in this voluntary program to contribute information on the number of moose they see each day in the field. The idea for this app came from a visit I made to Norway several years ago when I learned about their program, where every day at the end of the day hunters have to report in at a check station and tell how many moose they saw that day. That number of moose seen per day is very highly correlated with the number of moose in the population.

In Alberta we spend \$600,000 a year monitoring moose populations. That's only enough to fly 10 wildlife management units. It costs \$60,000 to do one because it takes helicopter time, it's extremely expensive, and at that rate we're only covering 10% of the moose wildlife management units in Alberta. So every 10 years we get an index of how many moose there are in the population. This way we could do it by engaging the hunters and do it for almost free.

As the moose hunter enters how many moose they have seen into their app, even if they are out in the bush somewhere and they don't have cellphone coverage, as they are driving home the iPhone or Android-based machine will beam the data up to a cellphone tower and it comes right into my computer.

Mr. Colin Carrie: That's one of the magical things about these committees. We all learn. Mr. Olson mentioned that there's a moose crisis in his area, and I was thinking maybe the two of you could connect on that and see if there's something you might be able to utilize and implement.

One last question. Mr. Olson, you did mention that your goal is to have wild places here forever. I think that's exactly what you said. You said, hunters as conservationists, you're looking for recruitment. How does your organization engage with new Canadians—women, kids—and try to get them involved in hunting and trapping? You did mention it. Can you elaborate a little bit more because it would be wonderful if all of our communities could engage in that way?

Do I have time for that?

The Chair: Fairly quickly, Mr. Carrie.

Please give a 30-second response, Mr. Olson.

• (0955)

Mr. Rob Olson: We're starting in the inner-city schools. We're trying to connect with new Canadians there. We're trying to reconnect aboriginal children there with their outdoor heritage. We're also advertising our recruitment programming. We have several levels where they can tap in, based on their experience, throughout Winnipeg, in mainstream media sources. So we're trying to connect to them in a variety of ways.

Also, it's at points of sale in the outdoor retail stores here. Often new Canadians gravitate to fishing first, sometimes, and then when they go into the store we can connect them to hunting as well. We're hitting it on lots of levels, from the youth in schools all the way up to adults in a variety of places in Winnipeg.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now move to Madam Morin for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also thank the witnesses for joining us today. Your testimony was very interesting.

My question, which is quite broad, is for each of you.

Could you tell me whether you have enough information from all the sources and whether informed decisions are being made in terms of wildlife management, with the exception of scientific research, of course?

Perhaps we could start with Mr. Boyce, followed by Mr. Olson and Mr. Scarth.

Go ahead.

[*English*]

Prof. Mark Boyce: I believe that we oftentimes do not have sufficient information. We don't necessarily have the research base to make the right management decisions. It goes right across almost all wildlife management. We usually need more information about how to do things well.

An example that comes to mind recently is that I visited an area that has sage grouse in southern Alberta. The Alberta Conservation Association was trying to work with local farmers to redirect the grazing pressure in places where they thought it would take them out of the lowland areas that had lots of sagebrush and perhaps protect those areas from grazing pressure. However, unfortunately they were moving the livestock directly into the nesting habitat of sage grouse, and the heavy livestock use was reducing the nesting success of sage grouse in these upland areas.

Without the habitat monitoring and modelling research, they were making decisions about wildlife management that were unjustified and counterproductive. There's always a continuing need to improve our understanding of the complexity of nature.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Thank you very much, Mr. Boyce.

We can now move to Mr. Olson or Mr. Scarth.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Olson: Okay. I guess I'll go next.

I agree with Dr. Boyce. I think we rarely have enough information, or of enough quality, to make management decisions. We're always dealing with a lack of information, and I suspect that's not going to change.

If you look in Manitoba, we have a moose crisis here as an example, but as Dr. Boyce said, there's not enough funding to do aerial surveys to be able to count the moose. We don't know how many moose we have. We have no idea how many are being shot. We're constantly playing a guessing game. We need to fly Dr. Boyce to Manitoba to bring his app because I think the hope is citizen science; it's the people.

In Manitoba, with health care costs, crime prevention, education, an aging population, all those issues are so expensive and important that moose are never going to rank in the top hundred list for most people here, no matter how hard we work in the city to connect people to the resource. We have to get creative and innovative, but there's never going to be enough money. We're going to have to make decisions, so we're going to have to engage the people in the communities.

The good news is that they know a lot. We've not engaged them, but we should engage them in this committee. The hunters and trappers on the land, aboriginal people, know a lot. The research apparently says that in Norway those observations from hunters actually correlated with aerial survey data. That's fantastic. We can save that money, then, from flying in helicopters and counting moose.

As conservationists and environmentalists, we're going to have to be creative and innovative because there is not going to be the money that we need. There never has been and there's never going to be. That's the key, to engage people in the communities. There's lots of knowledge there that we've not tapped into yet.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Thank you very much.

Do I still have time, Mr. Chair?

Do I have 30 seconds? Okay, thank you.

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: I'm going to answer the first part of your question that related to whether we are bringing all of the elements together. I would urge all of the committee, as policy-makers, to consider the other elements that go into recruiting and retaining hunting and angling and trapping on the landscape.

There are many unintended consequences of policies, whether they be the whole gun registration file, the animal cruelty file, that make it more difficult to hunt and fish and trap on the landscape. As you consider environmental investments, I would urge that you consider the negative effect that those could have on this community.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Morin.

Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

Earlier last year the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—they said they were under pressure from animal groups—wanted to do away with the iconic muskrat hat. The hunting and angling caucus, which I chair for the Conservative caucus, jumped on that immediately. This was admittedly a small issue, but it was highly symbolic and after our government reversed that decision by the RCMP, the emails that flooded into my office from every rural, aboriginal community thanking us for reversing that were truly remarkable.

Mr. Olson, can you perhaps provide us with an explanation as to why this very small issue was so visceral for some communities?

Mr. Rob Olson: I think it's visceral because we as hunters and trappers are so passionate. Very much like Saskatchewan farmers who are passionate about their land, we are passionate about our culture, so we can be your greatest friends, and if you attack us, we can be your greatest enemy. We'd prefer to be your friend. Our capacity to love is greater than to fight. We want to do good.

For some years in the 1980s and 1990s I felt we were under attack a lot more than we are today and little things were big things because we were sensitive about them. It defines who we are. It's who our families are. It's what we do. Whether we're aboriginal or non-aboriginal, it defines our lives, so when you do something that seems to be small to some, you're hitting us in the heart. You're going to get a visceral reaction from us and maybe sometimes an overreaction.

I think we're in a better place now. I don't feel that anymore. Maybe 15 years ago, I was nervous to tell people at a dinner party I was a hunter and trapper. I don't feel that today. People are lining up at my door to get meat now. It's different. I don't know why it's different. I don't know what's changing. I just love it. It's un-Canadian not to respect cultures. We respect each other. We respect our personal choices. That's the other thing. I think when you start trying to take away someone's choice to live their lifestyle, you're going to get an aggressive reaction from them because it's un-Canadian. We don't like that.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I couldn't agree more. As legislators, we tend to hear what's going on in society. People talk to us and our data is telling us that talking about this...and our government is a very strong advocate for hunting, angling, and trapping. We're not afraid to talk about it, so I agree very much with you that things have changed.

Mr. Scarth, I was interested in your comments on the role of regulations versus incentives on privately owned land. We have the Species at Risk Act in place. Can you talk about how it's working on the privately owned agricultural landscape?

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: I can't think of a more negative signal to a private landowner than the one that makes the presence of endangered species a liability for them on their land as opposed to a source of potential incentive or revenues. I often tell people if they want to be up to their knees in burrowing owls, then they should pay landowners per burrowing owl that fledges from their landscape, and that's the appropriate signal. That's the way the policy should be designed when you're dealing with private property rights.

It's a totally different picture on crown land, obviously, but when you're dealing with the privately owned landscape, to make endangered species that we want more of a liability is, in my view, a perverse and negative reaction.

• (1005)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Dr. Boyce, could you respond to the question about SARA as well?

Prof. Mark Boyce: It's a very complicated issue. The one I know best is for sage grouse in southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan. Sage grouse went from about 2,000 birds in Alberta, 5,000 total Canadian population in 1968, to now when we have 15 males in Alberta and fewer than that on one lake in Saskatchewan in Grasslands National Park. That decline was attributable very clearly to oil and gas development in the region and development of oil wells directly in critical habitat for the greater sage grouse on private lands as well as on crown lands in both Alberta and Saskatchewan.

There was strong pushback from the emergency protective order that went out in January 2014 to protect the greater sage grouse, the very few that we have left, and to make sure that critical habitats were being protected. The pushback from private landowners had nothing to do with their agricultural operations but rather the fact that they were receiving payments from the oil sector for having wells on their property and on crown land that they had leased. It's certainly a very complicated issue. In fact that's the first time an emergency protective order has been put in place that has had those kinds of ramifications for private landowners.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move back to Ms. Leslie for five minutes, please.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Boyce, I have a lot of questions for you, so maybe I'll just open it up to you. We are here, as Mr. Sopuck said, as federal legislators. You brought up the issue of land use planning and you were just talking about the Species at Risk Act. A lot of the solutions aren't federal, unfortunately. SARA absolutely is, a lot of the land use planning, provincial or municipal....

As federal legislators, where do we go? What do we do? Is it just the Species at Risk Act? Is that our only avenue here? How do we work with provinces to deal with land use planning and ensure the habitat isn't gobbled up by whichever kind of development? How do we deal with this at a federal level?

Prof. Mark Boyce: It is certainly the case that finding a way to work between the federal government and the provincial government on issues of land use planning needs to be a priority. In fact, it is an international priority because we have exactly the same land use change issues happening in the western United States.

My suggestion would be that we implement an expert panel of the Royal Society of Canada jointly with the NRC, the National Research Council in the United States, to develop a strategy for land use planning in western North America. It is a very complicated problem. In fact, I went to Wikipedia to figure out what you would call it, and it's called a "wicked problem" because no matter what you do, there are going to be consequences for economics, agriculture, forestry, and so on. We have so many different interests on the land base that to balance those in a strategic way, to know how we should be coordinating industrial development in particular, is a very complicated problem.

It is not one for which I am prepared to offer a clear path forward because almost every one of these species is being affected in a big way. For example, the management response to caribou is very different from what it would be for grizzly bears on the same land base, as it would be for sage grouse in southeastern Alberta. Finding

a strategic way forward to wisely engage land use planning is one of the most complicated problems that we have in ecology today.

Again, my suggestion would be support for the Royal Society of Canada to engage in an expert panel to deal with this very difficult issue of land use planning.

In my testimony, I mentioned suggestions on how we can increase support for wildlife and trapping through the Pittman-Robertson fund, for example, as well as Dingell-Johnson on the fishery side. Those would go a long way toward engaging support at the provincial level.

In the United States, those funds are an excise tax on ammunition, firearms, and fishing tackle, which is then distributed by the Department of Interior to each of the states on a matching basis. The state has to come up with funds to match the federal funding. It ensures a continuing flow of money for doing aerial surveys, for supporting research projects, and for education programs in the United States. Something like that would be a tremendous advance in Canada to provide continuing funding.

• (1010)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thank you. That's incredibly important.

What are your thoughts on SARA? Do you have any last-minute thoughts about species at risk and any improvements there?

Prof. Mark Boyce: I think the conservation community is very nervous about SARA because, of course, in 1930 the management of natural resources was allocated to the provinces, and this emergency protective order has us shaking in our boots about a potential challenge to the constitutionality of the Species at Risk Act.

We think the Species at Risk Act is an extremely important one, and we hope that Parliament will continue to maintain support for SARA under the legal challenges that it is undergoing right now. The City of Medicine Hat, which is a major owner in LGX petroleum that is developing in critical sage grouse habitat, is suing the federal government over SARA.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move back to Mr. Toet for five minutes, please.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to start with the SARA and Mr. Sopuck's and Ms. Leslie's comments and questions on that. There's one thing that always strikes me. I remember a few years back on this committee when we were doing a study, and we had some members from the cattlemen's association—I believe it was the Alberta cattlemen's association who were here. A comment they made really struck me, and it has stuck with me. They said, "if a species at risk is found on a rancher's land it must be assumed that the land manager is doing things right". I found that to be a very interesting comment. Quite often an endangered species is found on their land, and they're loath to report it because all of a sudden somebody comes in and says they have to change everything they're doing, yet this species is thriving on that property.

That brings me to another point. I was sharing with some of my colleagues a couple of pictures that I took out my back window yesterday morning before I flew in to Ottawa. A couple of deer were feeding at the bird feeder in my backyard. That was within the perimeter, Rob, so there is a lot of wildlife. I have foxes, skunks, coyotes, and deer in abundance, right inside the city of Winnipeg, on my property.

Getting back to the wetlands conservation aspect, on my property I have a wetlands area. I have a five-acre property and I have left about 2.5 acres of that as a natural wetland area. I actually face a lot of pressure from some of my neighbours and especially from the construction industry, which is always looking for spots to get rid of their fill. They always come to me and say, "You have a wetland back there. We should fill that in. That's a problem".

How do we overcome that kind of attitude within the urban environment and even from these people, who see this wetland right away as a problem rather than as a great solution to a lot of issues?

Mr. Olson.

• (1015)

Mr. Rob Olson: It's a matter of education. Part of the national conservation plan has to be educating Canadians. Someone asked what a federal group, like you, can do to help the environment and deal with things like wetlands.

You're going to pay, guys. You're paying. What was your tab for the Manitoba flood in 2011? Was it hundreds of millions? You're paying. At the end of the day, the buck is going to stop with you to pay for, what, 90% of disasters? Are you going to be reactive and pay at the end of the game when the damage is done or are you going to be proactive? You can fund this proactively.

The energy sector makes it a bit complex in Alberta with the sage grouse. That's a tougher one in a way, but the same principle is going to apply. If you want to stop flooding, there are ways to do that proactively that, I would argue, could be cheaper than paying to fix the damage at the end would be.

Time will tell. We need to test it and measure it to see if that's possible. We believe it is, but it has not been tried aggressively. If you want to change any of this, you have to connect to the people. If you're going to go and threaten that landowner and tell him he can't have cows out there....

My first job was looking for burrowing owls in Saskatchewan. No one would talk to me until I told them I was a farm kid and I wasn't from the federal government and I was just there to work with them. They love the owls, but they're terrified of losing control of their land. It is all going to take funding.

You folks collect taxes, and at the end of the day, you have to pay for damages from floods. Do you want to recover an endangered species? Do you know how expensive doing that is? It's nearly impossible to do. Proactive is what we have to be. You guys are going to be paying the tab at the end of the day. Why don't you pay it at the beginning of the day? It's going to be a smaller tab and there's a way to do it.

I love the panel idea from Dr. Boyce. We need you to invest. If you want this, you can have it. You have to make an investment, and

it should be smart. Panels are a great way to channel investment to smart outcomes, but we know more about how to do this all now. If you're going to pay at the end of the day, you might as well pay at the beginning and pay less.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Scarth, with regard to that, in your introduction you talked a little bit about alternative land use services and national conservation plan cost-shared efforts, which also involved money from the hunting community. I'm very intrigued about the ALUS concept. You've had some experience with that, I believe, in Manitoba. Can you talk about some of your successes with ALUS and how they have worked out and the cooperation required to make that work?

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: Yes, thank you very much.

Our vision for ALUS is as a private-public partnership to do conservation. I draw the analogy with infrastructure, where the federal government has a long history of working with the provinces, with municipalities, and more recently with the private business community to deliver roads, bridges, and needed infrastructure. I don't look at this issue as anything different from that.

We have to make conservation mainstream. We can't have it as something that is marginalized or sort of an afterthought. Dr. Boyce mentioned earlier in his testimony the concept of offsets, that if you build and affect habitat in one area, you should be investing back more than that to replace that habitat, or manage it in a way to replace that ecological footprint. I think with those concepts we can develop a national program that involves federal, provincial, municipal, and private investment for this purpose.

The other element of ALUS, which is critically important, is that it engages the local governments. We do have a project in Manitoba, we have two in Saskatchewan, and we have three and growing in Alberta. In Prince Edward Island, it is a province-wide program that enrolls more than 85% of the island's agricultural producers. It is done in a way that encourages what I call super-buffers around potato fields to prevent runoff into tributaries, which are often salmon and trout streams. It is off-the-charts popular with landowners, as compared to the other approaches we've talked about today, in which as you have heard, we are in battles out there.

We are now in a fight with the City of Medicine Hat. Is that a smart result? I mean, patently, the answer to that is no. Do you really want to be sued by the City of Medicine Hat, which lives closest to the sage grouse? In my view, that is a policy disaster.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Scarth. Mr. Toet is true to form, there again. But that's a great response.

Go ahead, Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to get back to Mr. Olson. He's been giving me some great quotes. One was that it's un-Canadian not to respect different cultures. Here in Canada, hunting and trapping are so important to who we are, and are part of our culture.

You also said that when you hit somebody with a stick, now it's contentious. I think one of the reasons, you know, years ago, that maybe you were feeling a little self-conscious about being a hunter.... I know the government learned its lesson with the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry and how that affected law abiding hunters and farmers.

I was wondering if you could, please, elaborate a little bit more and describe the cultural significance of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada. You mentioned the importance with aboriginal and first nations people, and you know, it's just a way of life. Could you elaborate just a little bit more about that for us?

Mr. Rob Olson: One of the great things about Canada, I think, is all the different cultures we have. There's no cultural group or cluster of humans in this country that doesn't think of themselves as something: Newfoundlanders, sealers; lobster fisherman from Nova Scotia; and British Columbia first nations, hunters of moose. For any group you look at, if it's a cultural thing, then it's in your heart, it's in your soul, and it defines your family. It's the fabric of your life and your community and therefore it's passionate. It's extremely passionate.

The power and, I think, one of the great strengths of our country is all the cultures we have and that we're culturally diverse. All of them are important to each other, you know, to themselves and to their own community.

In Manitoba, I don't have a right to hunt moose; I have a privilege. I don't have constitutional protection of my hunting culture here. My Métis hunting friends do. My first nations friends have constitutional protection for their hunting. When we talk about it, though, what we share is a bond. As hunters we have this cultural deep connection to it. So when we talk about our grandads, dads, mums, or sisters who do it together—and we do that. We live in the bush together for a week. We go and do that—that's where we reconnect. It's where we heal as family sometimes. It's all that stuff. It's deep and it's important. It's in your gut. It makes you emotional. It makes grown men cry, kind of thing. We wear it on our sleeves.

It's incredibly important. To me it's not about the money. Yes, it's economically important. Outfitting's important. We raise lots of money in hunting. If it were a business, it would be a big deal in the economy. But it's not about that. It's not about the economy. It's not about money. It's about culture. It's about how it defines us as people. It's about what it means to us.

At the end of the day, that's all you really have as a person so it's really deeply important. You see that in every community you go into. You feel it. They tell stories about their lives and their community. It's just awesome. It's rich and it's deep and it's valuable.

Mr. Colin Carrie: That's excellent. Thank you very much.

You mentioned some of the things that the federal government can do. It is extremely important that we work together with our partners. We recently had a federal-provincial-territorial meeting on biodiversity, and the thing is that we all realize that animals don't know borders and that we need to work overall for the well-being of our biodiversity.

I was wondering if you could elaborate a little more on what else the federal government could do to improve habitat conservation efforts in Canada.

Mr. Rob Olson: I think that having a panel like the one Dr. Boyce was talking about is important. Get great people to help direct that plan. That's important. Getting the input of locals, hunters, and farmers is really important. You need great research people like Dr. Boyce, but you need great local people as well. Also, at the end of the day, it needs investment. It needs a plan and it needs investment. It has to have both.

I want to re-emphasize the investment side. Again, when there are flood disasters, you guys are paying. You're going to pay that bill, so invest your money proactively. Let's get into flood prevention. Let's get into doing it through the local communities, and let's be smart. I think that's the way.

Let's invest in engaging Canadians in the outdoors. That's the other thing I would say. That doesn't mean just hunting. It means getting them outdoors, and there are a lot of ways to do that. For little groups like ours, with a lot of volunteers, we just need a little bit of gas in the tank. Habitat is expensive. Flood remediation is expensive.

It's about supporting guys like us and gals like those back in the office where I work to connect new Canadians and youth to the outdoors and to the environment and making them environmentalists. That's cheap. That's really cheap, and you get leverage from that. We always invest in habitat. We don't invest much in engaging Canadians in it. The latter is at least as important as the former, and I would say more so.

● (1025)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to Mr. McKay for five minutes.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank each one of you for your contribution.

I agree entirely with your observation, Professor Olson. You pay now or you pay later.

It doesn't seem to have sunk into the consciousness of Canadians, and maybe not even into the consciousness of the government, that if you look at the Calgary flood, at the regular Manitoba floods, or at the Don Valley flood, these are massive government payouts, but they're also massive insurance payouts as well. The massive insurance payouts are almost inevitably passed on to your own premiums. Everyone around this table who has an insurance policy is paying for this. In the current political climate, it's very difficult to land that point.

Here's what my curiosity is about. As you've all rightly described, this is tricky public policy. You do one thing and then it has an offset on that, and then on another thing. I do like the idea of Professor Boyce's panel, but it is an incredibly complicated way to go about having what is in effect a green infrastructure plan. In other words, no infrastructure should be built unless the green implications are sorted out.

The three of you, I presume, have done some thinking about this. Let me start with Professor Olson. If you were to have the ability or the pen, if you will, to design a green infrastructure plan for what you've talked about today, what would it look like? Are there other countries that you think do it right or that at least do it better than we do?

Mr. Rob Olson: I'll keep my comments very short, because I think Mr. Scarth and Dr. Boyce should take that more than I should. I'm just going to speak to the local side. There are mechanisms out there.

There's this program called ALUS. The magic of it is that it engages the local people at the local level. That's the key. Most approaches in the past have been more from the top down, coming from the federal government as a regulation or from a big NGO buying land. Neither approach engaged people. It didn't engage the farmers.

You can. They have amazing local capacity. They can raise their own money locally for some of these things. They have amazing capabilities at the county level. They're smart people, way smarter than we often think. We think about scientists and think that this needs to be driven by Ph.D.s. It doesn't always, no. The local people have an amazing capacity to do this.

As a federal government, the way it has to go is that it has to be decentralized a bit. Now, there are governance issues there, but there's a business model being.... There are models out there that we could look at, but you have to somehow get the money to the local level and have them engage in delivering at the local level. Have them buying in, putting in their own time and energy, and putting their own money in there too.

Hon. John McKay: Dr. Boyce and Mr. Scarth.

Prof. Mark Boyce: I might point to a particular example. I would disagree that being green doesn't necessarily mean no development and no economy. I would offer as an example the proposed triage system for caribou habitat in Alberta.

We have maps showing the net present value of hydrocarbon resources below the surface across Alberta. We can identify those places where the value of the energy resource is so extremely high that those are probably not places where we're going to achieve caribou conservation. There are other places—in the Caribou Mountains, for example, in the north and in the Bistcho Lake area in the northwest—where the net present value of hydrocarbon resources is extremely low. Focusing our attention in places where we can still maintain caribou habitat, but recognizing that other areas are going to be sacrificed for development, seems to me to be good strategy and good planning.

Right now we don't do that in Alberta. We're trying to save all of the herds. There's no protection of any of those areas from industrial development. It's happening willy-nilly across the entire province.

• (1030)

The Chair: A short response, you have about 20 seconds.

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: As a supplemental then, I would urge the committee to think differently about the private land strategy versus the crown land strategy. I think the models with regard to the private land strategy are there in the infrastructure file. I think you've been

there before. I heartily agree with Dr. Boyce's comments about the sort of land use planning and the crown land.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Back to Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

Mr. Scarth, I heard you describe yourself once as a recovering lawyer so I'm going to talk about legislation here.

On November 24 of last year every member of Parliament received a letter signed by a number of groups, including Delta Waterfowl and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation regarding Bill C-592, which is a private member's bill by the NDP member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. It's an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding cruelty to animals.

In the letter we received...I will quote from it:

Bill C-592 seeks to re-introduce the same wording that has caused all of these previous bills to be defeated.

There they're referring to other animal rights bills.

If passed, the bill could unintentionally criminalize all sorts of accepted, necessary and traditional practices. Everything from food production, hunting, fishing, and trapping, research using animals, sports and entertainment, and private ownership would be impacted.

Mr. Scarth, could you talk about the legal implications of a bill like this, especially if a judge chooses to interpret it in a very extreme manner? How could this affect hunting and trapping?

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: I'll answer the second part of the question first. It could be devastating. It's an example of some of the legislation I referred to earlier where the unintended consequences or intended consequences on the hunting, fishing, and trapping community would be devastating from the perspective of the activity carrying on and in a more superficial sense the signal that sends to that community, which is investing in environmental conservation, that the activity is not going to be respected or tolerated.

I think the specific legal threshold that you cross is from the area of property rights into criminal activity, as was the case with the gun registry where the prospect was that a law-abiding hunter could be accused of criminal activity. I would urge the committee to think in all of the policies they see how they would impact the hunting, trapping, and angling community because these types of initiatives can have unintended and negative consequences on a sector that is investing heavily in environmental conservation.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, it's interesting; in my own research on this particular bill, because it deals with the issue...and the NDP have a couple more bills in place, plus the Liberals have two along these lines. Of course the Liberals had Bill C-15B back in the early 2000s.

The one thing that all these bills have in common is that they deal with the issue of animals feeling pain. Obviously mammals can feel pain, but when one goes down to invertebrates—this particular bill deals with invertebrates—if one does any research on whether a lobster feels pain, or a fish that's on the end of a hook feels pain, the jury, quite frankly, is still out on much of that.

Again, if a judge interprets this bill...and thankfully it will never pass, I'm sure. It could really put in legal jeopardy all of these activities that we cherish.

Could you expand, Mr. Scarth, on what you discussed in terms of unintended consequences of such bills as Bill C-592 and the long-gun registry in particular in terms of its effect on hunters and trappers and their very important conservation activities?

• (1035)

Mr. Jonathan Scarth: We talked earlier about the symbolism of the RCMP issue and the gun registry. The long-gun registry in particular was a rallying cry for our hunting community, not only because of the sort of regulatory red tape, if you like, that it set before hunters but also because it sent a much more negative emotional signal that this activity was not something that was either valued or appropriate.

I believe that is why the reaction to the introduction of the long-gun registry was so passionate and so visceral in most parts of rural Manitoba and amongst the aboriginal community. The signal it sent was that this activity was distasteful and to be regulated. There was really very little sensitivity to the investments and the desire to recruit more hunters, more anglers, and more people to enjoy the wildlife resources of our country. I think the passion that evoked is the passion that we've spoken about this morning.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll move to our last questioner.

Mr. Toet, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor Boyce, you talked a little bit about all the gas and oil wells in Alberta and their effects. As a committee, we actually did some travel on one of our studies a couple of years back. In the Alberta foothills we had a great opportunity to see—through the Nature Conservancy of Canada, with which we have partnered with a fair amount of funding to continue the growth of these type of projects—the ability in a cattle region for them to actually integrate along with industry and work side by side. We saw some of the wells and some of the pipelines and the ability to work together with the cattle industry to make sure that this was done in a way that would conserve these areas for future wildlife, for future habitat.

I'm assuming you're aware of these types of projects going on. Have you seen the success of some of these?

Prof. Mark Boyce: Absolutely. In fact, one of my research projects that has been a focus for several years has been on access management. This has been happening in the foothills of the east slopes of Alberta. We've worked with Shell and various timber companies to gate roads—in particular, new roads that are going into new wells and new clear-cuts—to reduce the amount of recreational traffic on those roads. The gates are amazingly effective at preserving wildlife values. We have elk and we have grizzly bears using those areas as though there were no roads there. The matter of traffic on the roads is the major displacement.

Access management is a very powerful way to ensure, on crown lands, that we are able to have development as well as wildlife on the

same land base. But certainly there is not necessarily a negative consequence if development is done smart.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you.

Mr. Olson, I had the pleasure a couple of weeks ago of bringing greetings to your Manitoba Wildlife Federation annual dinner and was very pleasantly surprised—maybe I should have known this—to find out that the president of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation is a constituent of mine, living in urban Winnipeg. I think that speaks volumes to the engagement that we're having in the urban community. How important do you think it is having president Brian Strauman being an urban resident and understanding both the connection between...?

You would think that would be helpful in bringing our urban residents to a deeper understanding of the need for conservation, what hunting and trapping is all about, and the positive aspects it has for us as urbanites.

• (1040)

Mr. Rob Olson: I would agree. I think it's a measurable value that our president comes from Winnipeg; it's huge. What's so strong about our board of 10 Canadian citizens is that they're everyday Canadians like me, and half come from the city and half from the country. It's really interesting because you get their views. You'll see the rural people who are farmers and they're talking about those things. You see the city guy asking why those guys are draining the wetlands out there, and then the farmers talk about their thing and you see that back and forth.

So it's awesome our president is from the city. That helps us with understanding our recruitment focus in Winnipeg, but the real magic is that we have rural and urban Manitobans on our board. It's a chance for them to connect and have a conversation and understand each other and come out of there with an understanding that we need farmers to conserve. They have a role in this, and they have some duties as Canadians to do good on their land. But then the Winnipeg guys like Brian are understanding too though, that's their land and it's not going to be free. It has to be a cost share. It has to be 50:50.

So the real magic is the fact that we have a mix.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: In your introductory remarks you commented a couple of times to pull us in deeper and engage us. I hope you walk away today having a sense that there has been a deeper engagement and that engagement will continue and grow and foster over time because I think you're right. It's critically important to environmental protection that the hunting, trapping, angling community is integral to it. Everyone of you spoke about the work that the people in hunting and trapping and angling do on the ground for environmental conservation. As was alluded to in the article mentioned by Mr. Scarth, they are the environmental superstars. They are the ones doing the work on the ground, and I think we have to continue to engage them at a deeper level.

Thank you for your time today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Toet.

I would just like to comment as well that I think in all the testimony we've heard over these last number of weeks, today was the first time for me that it came so clearly as in page 3 of your comments in the English, Mr. Scarth, where you commented about the angling, hunting, and the alternate land use services with the farm community coming together. I think that's one thing that was probably most clearly articulated today, and it seemed like a really important point to make.

On that note we want to thank each of you for the passion you bring to your field of endeavour, and thank you for taking the time today. Again, our apologies especially to our Winnipeg witnesses today for our lack of ability to connect at our last meeting.

This meeting is adjourned.

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