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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): Good morning, committee.

I would like to welcome Bernadette Jordan to the table. Darren Fisher is introducing a private member's bill today. Thank you for joining us in committee.

I want to get something clear and out of the way because I've had a few discussions on it and I want to ensure we are all clear and all operating under the same guide. We have a routine motion that says:

That a forty-eight (48) hours notice, interpreted as two (2) nights, shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that (1) the notice be filed with the Clerk of the Committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (2) the motion be distributed to members in both official languages by the Clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; and that (3) notices received after the deadline hour be deemed to have been received during the next business day.

The interpretation of the clerk and many other committees is that as long as they pertain directly to the work under consideration at the meeting, they are admissible. I want to ensure that everybody understands that and is comfortable with that. Does anyone have any comments on that? Okay.

My intention at the meeting today, and we talked about this three weeks ago now, is to determine how to proceed. We've had some great information sessions to help us get our minds around what we might want to consider in our work as a committee.

Today was to be a further refinement. We had a blue-sky. We had some good department presentations and commissioner presentations. Today was an opportunity for us to review all that, not necessarily review it, but bring it together and formulate a plan and prioritize it, so that we could start in the committee.

We have motions in front of us and if you go the formal way, it's all about addressing the motions and whoever gets the motion on the table. I would like, if I have the agreement of the committee—and this is what I thought we'd kind of proposed before—to have a one-hour discussion on what the ideas are that the committee should consider.

There were four motions that were brought forward for us to consider. I don't think that has to be exhaustive. I think they are good. People have been very busy thinking about what we should be doing and I very much appreciate that. It does not have to be exhaustive and if anybody has something else, that was the point of

having this meeting, to bring forward ideas that reflect what we've heard and what we might be able to do in committee.

I wanted to know if the committee agrees that we would have that discussion in the first hour. We can discuss the motions that people have brought forward, but we won't table the motions until the second hour. Then we'll have had a chance to flush these out together. Some of these and maybe others can be combined. I don't know, but that might come through in the discussion.

What are the thoughts of the committee. Is there agreement on that?

Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): We have three people who have brought forward a number of motions. Maybe we could give them the opportunity to start off, individually, explaining their motions and the idea behind the thoughts of the motions, and then we could go into a discussion after that. Is that all right?

The Chair: I'm completely fine with that. It gives us a chance to flush out what people were thinking.

I want to ensure that we have an agreement that we won't table the motions officially until....The committee is able to do whatever it wants to do, but I want to get an understanding that we still have the free forum in the first hour of the meeting and then we can get into the serious business of tabling motions in the second hour of the meeting. It gives us a chance to understand what everybody is thinking.

I see nods over there. Is anybody against that?

Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I think what you're trying to avoid is getting into a fierce debate on one motion and then seeking a vote on it, and then moving on in that sort of more traditional process.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's fine to avoid that, but my only concern is that if we're too blue-skyish again, it will just be a repeat of the last conversation we had.

I'm interested in themes. From the last conversation, we went around the table for a couple of hours. We came out of it with some broad themes that I made some awkward attempt to encapsulate before we finished. If we had a conversation that was directed toward broad categories that the committee could spend its time on, that would be helpful to just not end up after 60 minutes having had a more general wandering conversation about life and the environment, if you know what I mean.

We need a bit of direction, picking up on not having wasted the last two hours we spent on that.

The Chair: I do agree. I don't intend for this one hour to be a blue-sky again. It's really about refining what we've heard and coming down to some consensus on how we're going to move forward.

I agree with that ambition.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree with what Mr. Cullen is saying. I think it's time to start narrowing this down.

You mentioned four motions. I know that one came this morning and was distributed by email. I just want to make sure that in the context of the next hour, we can discuss that motion as well.

If I could, I'd suggest, at the request of the clerk, that the motions be distributed in SharePoint as well. I just heard, via the clerk, from a staff person that normally the motions aren't put in SharePoint, but with the consent of the committee, we could do that. For me, it's just easier to keep it all in one place. I like the idea of that. I think it goes to supporting the environmental initiative of using less paper.

With the consent of the committee, I would ask that the clerk share those in SharePoint in the future.

• (1110)

The Chair: I think that's an excellent idea. Does everyone agree that all of this will show up on SharePoint so that we don't have to distribute it at the meeting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

I think Mr. Fast was first.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Thank you. I notice that we've received hard copies of the motions. I think all of us had these motions in digital format or otherwise beforehand. I'm not sure that this is necessary.

The Chair: I think you're absolutely right. We are the environment committee, and we need to try to focus on being environmentally responsible and reducing the paper. I think the support staff are just trying to make sure that we're all in a good place—

Hon. Ed Fast: I appreciate that.

The Chair: —so we will, going forward, have all of the motions in SharePoint, and we'll make sure that we'll have our iPads ready for the meeting.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): I agree with Nathan, Mark, and Jim as far as trying to scope this meeting so that.... We have four motions in front of us, so we could maybe hear from each individual what the thoughts were behind the motions and have a discussion around them. Once that's complete, whether it's an hour or 45 minutes—cut it off at an hour—then at that point, decide that we've had enough discussion to now move to the motions and go through them.

I think that would be an efficient use of our time.

The Chair: That's excellent. I'm going to start the clock. We're going to start at an hour.

Who would like to go first?

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The first motion that I submitted by way of notice focuses on a comprehensive study of clean technology. Having reviewed the minister's mandate letter, I think it's clear that green and clean technology will play a very significant role, not only broadly speaking but in the review of the approval process for resource projects. As proponents of these projects come forward, they're going to be expected to implement the cleanest technology available to them. It would be very helpful for this committee to understand what that looks like, and what the scope is for using clean technology as an economic driver in its own right, the commercialization of clean technology and our trade opportunities around the world.

I have often noted that Canada's future does not lie in assembling widgets. Our future lies in the knowledge economy. The high-paying jobs are going to be more and more in sectors of our economy that very much rely on knowledge. As we deal with clean technology, as the world is obviously embracing clean technology, as the Asia-Pacific region, APEC, has embarked upon an environmental technologies agreement—and now an environmental goods agreement under the WTO—to improve the trade of clean tech around the world, I think it would be appropriate for this committee to do a comprehensive study on what clean technologies are available to improve our environment, and the degree to which that in itself can become an economic driver for our economy.

The Chair: Okay. That's great.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Chair, if I can just close off that thought, we're trying to prioritize. Four motions have been provided by way of notice. I believe that Mr. Amos' motion actually is proposing three different studies, so essentially we have six studies that have already been proposed for consideration.

I would suggest that the clean technology study should be among the very top ones that we consider, simply because it falls smack dab in the middle of the minister's mandate letter.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thanks.

I think there's an opportunity for two birds with one stone here, because I think Mr. Fast's motion on clean tech is the solution part of the challenge. It's the second side of the coin around climate in general.

I'm looking through the minister's mandate letter as well. This is the first and predominant piece that is directed towards her and the new government, which is that if there's a challenge proposed on climate and a recent commitment to the world in Paris, part of the question that follows is, how do you do it? What does it mean and then how do you do it?

The clean tech is the answer. Actually, it's the much more optimistic piece of climate change, rather than the last 20 years, which have been about parts per million and two degrees and all these sorts of things that have often been framed very much in the negative. Many of us have argued that there's not nearly as much attention given to the positive side, or the opportunity side, which is around what that knowledge economy is that Mr. Fast talks about. What are the clean-tech solutions that we need to start generating more of in Canada, not just for the climate reasons but for reasons of a stronger economic outlook?

If there's a way—and I think this is where this eventually comes to—some of these motions or a coupling together of ideas would be very helpful, but for the environment and climate change committee not to take on some type of climate change assessment.... As we heard from officials just last week, how do you bend the curve? The previous government had a target over there, but the line is pointing up over here. The new government has said that target is their floor. That's nice, but the solution piece lies in what Mr. Fast was talking about. How do you bend the curve so that our economy is more efficient and is producing more of those highly paid high-tech jobs? I see that as one category, frankly, I think: meeting our obligations and talking about what Mr. Fast is talking about.

The second broad category, if I look at this—and it's another motion, as Mr. Fast brought in a little bit of what Mr. Amos suggested—is about protected areas and migratory birds. That would be a second broad set of studies around conservation and the migratory birds element, which I think would be very helpful for the committee to get into.

Those are the two pieces that I would raise right now.

The Chair: Okay. I didn't know if we were going to stay on each one just so we stay—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: No, I think we should stay on the broader categories.

The Chair: That's fine. I'm good with that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Those are the two broad ones.

The Chair: That you're focused on.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Again, based on the blue-sky conversation we had before, with something around conservation efforts and migratory birds, we could even slip in a little marine there if you were really excited about it.

The first one would be climate in general, with the solution piece being baked right in and asking what Canada's efforts are right now on clean tech, what we need, and where the opportunities lie.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I think clean tech is the way to go. I think it's the future. I would agree with everything that Mr. Fast said.

My only question is with respect to trying to visualize how it unfolds in this committee. If the solutions we come up with—assuming that they are solutions—are that we need to invest in clean technology, we need to provide incentives for clean technology, and we need to do A, B and C, is that really within the mandate of the Minister of the Environment or is that more in innovation and industry?

If we were to recommend to deploy funds for those purposes, does the Minister of the Environment have the directive? By default, I'd just assume that it's more in line with innovation and technology. Minister Bains is who I'm thinking of, but I can't remember his exact title off the top of my head, so I—

Pardon me?

The Chair: No, it's okay. I was just going to say that it's industry, innovation, and technology, or something like that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's my only concern, so maybe the idea is that it starts here and then gets passed over to another committee. I'd like to understand that a bit more if Mr. Fast can build on it.

The other thing is that Mr. Cullen talked about changing that curve and starting to see that curve move in a downward direction. I think—and this is what I'm happy to see in Mr. Amos' motion—the third point, my read of it, and my feeding into that third point is about giving the environmental commissioner more teeth in ensuring that what she reports on happens. It's more than just giving an audit of a department and saying that you've failed in this area and you need to fix it. It's going back later and figuring out if they've corrected it. If they haven't then it's about having the proper resources to enforce that they do things right. That in my opinion is taking climate change seriously and putting the teeth into the legislation.

I think that is critical of all six topics. If we're looking at these six or seven different topics, to me, that is probably the most important one.

• (1120)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): I'm interested in clean tech. I would love to dive into it. I think it's probably one of the more interesting conversations to be had anywhere in Canada.

My starting point is that I'm interested and I've articulated this preference. I want to behave as a legislator and I'm hoping the committee will behave as a group of legislators.

It's my understanding that, coming out of the first ministers' meeting that is approaching, there will be an entire intergovernmental process involving clean tech, and I expect there is going to be some extremely interesting developments coming out of that. I think if we were going to discuss clean tech we would be well advised to wait for what happens there and to evaluate whether what comes out of that is worth our going into it.

If the federal government, the 10 provinces, and the three territories are going to put their best experts on this issue, then we might be engaging in a topic that we find interesting and pertinent. I find it interesting and pertinent, but ultimately we're the weaker entity to engage in that conversation. That would be my first thought.

To build on what Mr. Gerretsen was saying, we also have the committee on innovation, as well as natural resources. It's my understanding they're discussing this issue of clean tech, and there may be motions brought in those committee contexts.

The Chair: I have Mr. Cullen and then Mr. Bossio.

I have the mandate letter in front of me, and I want to read it because I think it might help in the discussion.

As Minister of Environment and Climate Change, your overarching goal will be to take the lead in implementing the government's plan for a clean environment and a sustainable economy. Your key priority will be to ensure that our government provides national leadership to reduce emissions, combat climate change and price carbon. I expect you to help restore Canada's reputation for environmental stewardship.

He then says, "In particular", and right at the beginning he does talk about the partnership with provinces and territories to develop a plan to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with our international obligations and our commitment to sustainable economic growth.

What I'm hearing is that there is a direction, and there is work going on within the minister's office that is connecting with the provinces and territories. It may help inform how we could assist, but it is premature right now because these things are just starting up.

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I totally disagree, and here's why. The role of the committee is as an independent arm from the government. The mandate letter is an important and useful tool for the direction the government takes. The provincial and territorial meetings that are going to go on will not produce technical results for seven, eight, or nine months.

In terms of the expectations of the process that we're engaging in now and that the government's going into in Vancouver, you have to look at what the role of the committee is. It is not some adjunct of government or of the minister's office. This is an independent body that is meant to provide leadership. The idea that the minister's mandate letter says such and such, or that the government is engaged in conversations with the territories and the provinces, is all excellent and important and relevant to the committee. But it is not directional to this committee.

The purpose of this committee is to provide leadership on topics that Canadians are interested in. The government is going forth and having conversations, and we encourage those conversations, but the independence of this committee is paramount. Leadership is required

of this committee, and in the past it has played this role. It has acted as a tent peg for the government's actions. Whether it was Liberal or Conservative, that didn't matter. This committee in the past has maintained a fierce independence over what it does.

We are informed by outside forces. We are informed by what the minister's mandate may be and by what comes out of Vancouver. But to say that, on the one hand, this is an interesting topic to all of us and to the Canadians we represent, while saying that, on the other hand, there's this other conversation we don't want to jump in front of, is absolutely the wrong way to approach this matter. If this is something that is important, then the role we get to play can actually be helpful. It can be quite influential on other conversations that are going on.

If we think it's important, if we think this is worthwhile, if we think we can get something out of it, then we ought to sally forth. If the provinces and the territories are meeting with the federal government, good for them. But what I hear from my constituents, what I hear from the people engaged in environmental issues, is that they want more activity on this. They want to see leadership and there's not anyone around this table who can disagree.

I've seen too many processes in the federal government in which you could knit a lot of sweaters waiting for results. I have great hope for the minister. I hope that all of her conversations are productive and come out with meaningful timelines, but we're 120 days into this mandate and we don't even have a sense of when Canada will have a new target, not even a deadline on the mechanisms or the plan to follow. It might happen six or eight months down the road.

This committee is a free actor in this. This is the opportunity for all of us to engage in things we care about deeply, things that are going to be helpful to Canadians. We are informed by other matters. The mandate letter that you just read part of, the minister's plans, the Prime Minister's meetings—those are all great. But we should be very cognizant on both sides of the table about how instructional these matters are, because they're not. They're absolutely not.

Our role and the fierceness with which we take on these issues will after four years determine whether people judge us to have been effective or not.

• (1125)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I agree with what you're saying, but I look at it from a different angle. Yes, I'd love to look at the technology and I'd love to look at climate change. You know how driven I am as an environmentalist to try to deal with these issues. At the same time, I want to make sure that what we accomplish here is carried out with the independence we're supposed to have. That's why we spent the time that we did working with Mr. Amos to try to put forward an ambitious agenda for this committee that is not going to be duplicitous.

We identified areas that Mr. Fast, Mr. Eglinski, and Mr. Shields brought up around water, migratory birds, and conservation. There are issues that you brought up on climate change and we wondered about the best way to address these issues. But climate change legislation will likely be referred to committee, so why would we go down that path right now when it may come back to us later on?

There is an order we need to take in order to try to accomplish and maximize the energy and the efforts of this committee. I think the three motions Mr. Amos has put forward address some key areas that are very important to Canadians and that exercise the independence of this committee, while eliminating the duplication that would result from going after climate change or technology, since there could be other ministries and other committees that would be going after the technology, the clean-tech area.

I'd like to see us focus on areas in which we can have an impact. These are areas that the government and the ministries, the departments, are definitely looking at, but that we can drive forward because it's not as front of mind. It is extremely important to Canadians that we deal with these pressing issues.

CEPA is something that hasn't been reviewed in a decade. The wildlife areas, the national parks, these are areas that are in desperate need of having assessments and amendments. It is the same with the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

Once again, if we are not going to lead on sustainability as a government, then how do we expect others to follow the path of trying to establish sustainability within our society? It starts with us. We have an opportunity to lead and to drive that forward for the rest of Canadians.

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

We have Mr. Eglinski, Mr. Amos, and Mr. Aldag next.

Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have to follow along with Mr. Cullen. I believe it's very important, and some of his statements in his motion, "national and regional trends and projects", "carbon pricing methodologies" that are out there....

You're saying your government wants to look at all of these different things. I think you're focusing more on the CETA, and those are projects I don't think we can get done in this sitting.

I think we can help tremendously through the government of the day by meeting with the different groups that are doing the best practices out there. Whether it's in park conservation, whether it's in the oil and gas sector, what are some of the practices that are happening where they're already making great carbon footprints out there? What is happening out there? We don't know exactly what everybody's doing, and I think this is a golden opportunity.

In some of the recommendations made—your number one, Mr. Amos, and Mr. Cullen's, and Mr. Fast's—and looking at some of this technology, we might be running down the wrong path not knowing that a lot of that good stuff is already being done in very simple terms. Maybe we have failed as a government to not recognize some

of those great greenhouse gas initiatives that have been done by different organizations.

We should be looking at them and helping to make sure that this information is fed to your government, which is going to be making the regulations to bring our greenhouse gases down and make us a leader in the world. We already know we're leaders in the world. I think we do a damn good job in this country, and industry does a damn good job.

I blame industry, and I'll tell this to their faces every time I meet them. They have not done a good enough job to tell the public what they do. I think it's part of our responsibility. As this committee, we have some great ideas here to bring forward and to take a look and see where we can take some of that technology, that knowledge and expertise out there, and come up with a report to show the government, "Hey, these are some of the things, and maybe you don't want to waste all your time because we're doing really well here. We can use this to benefit and to show the world that we're leaders in these areas."

I feel that is where our mandate is going. I like Mr. Amos' number one there, and I like the other two. I think that we need to study those areas, but if we want to try to change one of the acts, I don't think we have enough time now to honestly get that done. Maybe for next year when we all come back and we start into a new term on it. But I think it's very crucial right now that we give you more tools and knowledge in which to come up with the good regulations that are going to show that Canada is leading in greenhouse gas.

Thank you.

• (1130)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Can I correct one word that I said?

I didn't mean "duplicitous"; I meant "duplicative".

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We get it it. It's okay. It's in the Hansard, yes.

I just want to be mindful that we're 21 minutes in and we do have quite a bit more. This is very important, but we do have some of those other elements that we want to get into.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: I want to directly address Mr. Cullen's plea for us not to be directed by the ministry. There's nothing that could be further from the case.

Our motion proposes issues that are not in the mandate letter, specifically, with the exception of aspects around recovery strategies and species at risk. We listened to each other last week and we heard Mr. Eglinski and Mr. Fast speak about priorities around air and water, speak of priorities, and presented notices of motions on migratory birds, wetlands....Conservation is clearly a priority on your end.

We were really listening. That's my honestly held belief that we were really listening. I seek to behave in a manner, or I wish upon this committee that we behave in a legislative manner. I don't deny the importance of engaging in a conversation of clean tech; I just think that we have to be strategic about when and how we do that, so this is a prioritization exercise that we're going through.

I don't think that we're acceding to some ministerial demand here. We're saying there is a process that's going to happen. It's going to be expert-driven and it's going to be reflective of the entirety of Canada. Let's let that process take its course, and if and when they come up with material that we can benefit from to determine how we could build on that, then we're doing much more strategic work. By contrast, the three aspects that are presented in this motion go to distinct legislative opportunities that we have.

With respect, Mr. Eglinski, I disagree that we don't have time to do them. We have 14 more meetings between now and June. We wouldn't get through all of this, but what I was trying to do with this was encapsulate a series of interests that were shared by all, that reflect Canadians' interests, to address Mr. Cullen's earlier point around what Canadians want us to address.

At the same time we would want to ensure our independence because manifestly addressing the lack of legislative review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the cornerstone of environmental protection laws federally in Canada, and engaging in a review and reporting back to Parliament on that review, is not only squarely in line with Canadians' interests in maintaining clean air and water, but is a top priority, along with climate change.

That is something that isn't being touted by our government as their top agenda item. We would be moving in our own independent direction. I absolutely agree with Mr. Cullen that we need to be mindful of leadership of past committees. I think of people like Charles Caccia, Clifford Lincoln, Karen Kraft Sloan, and we could name others from other parties, tremendous leaders who demonstrated an independence.

This motion seeks to demonstrate an awareness of what all committee members are interested in, while at the same time being independent of what the government is seeking to do.

• (1135)

The Chair: We're now at 25 minutes and I'm trying to see if I can be helpful here. At this point we're not trying to eliminate anybody's good thoughts. What's coming forward in terms of clean tech is a valid thing and of interest. There's no reason why we can't have it as a consideration for our prioritization. Then it's a matter of discussing how we're going to prioritize these and when we're going to do them.

I'm not sure we have to fight it out and say we're not going to have it. What I might be hearing around the table is that there is understanding that this is of relevance, and it's really going to come down to where we prioritize it and try to get it done. I just wanted to try to add that to the conversation.

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): I have two quick points.

First, I think that at one point I had thrown out a quick calculation of 14 sessions. Today, one of my staff sent me a note saying that they've recalculated. We would actually have 22 sessions between now and the end of June, so there's a bit more time. If we're talking about what we can actually accomplish, that would be the number of meetings we would have. Being new to committees I don't know what is realistic to accomplish, but it looks like we would have 22 sessions.

I don't know if the analysts have come up with that. Do you have a different number?

The Chair: Yes. It's less than that. It's about 14.

Remember, we'll have budgets and we'll have the minister coming in before us. It starts eating into some of that time. Just keep that in mind.

Mr. John Aldag: Okay, so there are a number of weeks. How much can we actually accomplish?

Second, I'm not going to tell you how to chair, but I was feeling a bit anxious that we were talking about the clean energy piece and I was hoping we would be able to do a bit of an explanation of the three components, just to give us the information and the thinking behind his motion.

I also wanted to hear from Mr. Fast on the other one we hadn't discussed, the wetlands migratory birds piece, within this first hour that we've set aside, so that when we get into the next one, setting priorities, we've actually set the stage for that discussion.

The Chair: That's why I tried to say what I did, which is that I think we can move the discussion along and not just get stuck on this issue. We do have 14 sessions, and that includes the minister coming to see us and the budget.

A voice: It's seventeen.

• (1140)

The Chair: Sorry. We have 17 for sure and that includes the minister.

Mr. John Aldag: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: In terms of process, Madam Chair, since we're looking to prioritize, I think we should also be giving reasons why certain studies should be conducted, and why some should perhaps be postponed.

Let me first of all address Mr. Cullen's motion. I think I share some of the concerns of the other side. You may recall that one of the first points I made when we met as a committee was that, if we're going to undertake studies, let's make sure they are focused enough so that we can bring in the witnesses who will truly inform an outcome this committee can support by way of consensus. The broader a study is, and the more disparate the witnesses we bring to the table, the less time we have to ask questions. For me, it's always been about focusing as much as possible on exactly what we are looking for as an outcome from the committee and from the study.

With respect to Mr. Cullen's motion, I note that his motion fails in one very significant way. It does not include an economic context within which the study would take place. It simply refers to examining "measures necessary for Canada to contribute its fair share to international efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees". It also sets out three sub-headings.

Quite frankly, this will not likely help us make progress without understanding the positive and the negative impacts of taking steps and implementing measures. I believe that's the significant failing of that particular study. Whether or not we expand it, you know that study is going to consume all of our time over the next 14 weeks and probably beyond, because that is the big issue facing the government right now. I'm reluctant to support that as the highest priority study.

Even though we came forward with a motion on migratory birds, I did want to note Mr. Amos' motion, which actually addresses three different studies. His first recommendation clearly includes a study of migratory birds and wetlands. It's a little bit broader than that. I think we've mentioned the protection of parklands and the conservation of the resources that are required to maintain healthy populations of wildlife and migratory birds. These are things that all of us should take an interest in.

I think we can probably say that we would support the study moving ahead based on what Mr. Amos has proposed. We believe it's still limited enough that we can actually get it done with the time frame we have available up to June.

Those are my comments for the time being.

The Chair: Great, thank you.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: This is just a quick reminder to everyone that we're here past the end of June. Yes, we have 14 sessions to discuss and devise these studies, but let's not get trapped in what we can get accomplished just in that period of time. We're here for the next four years. Let's try to, once again, lay out an agenda that may start in one area, but acknowledge that something else more pressing may come along and interfere in that, and then we come back to it. We want to be able to accomplish something that is going to plant the seeds for a legacy that we can all look back upon and be proud of.

These are areas that are not necessarily going to be all solved in the next 14 sessions, but they are important and need to be moved forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

I heard somebody start to say three and a half years instead of four years yesterday, so the clock is ticking and we have a lot of work to do.

Mr. Amos actually covered a lot of what I was going to say, so I won't bother repeating it. The only thing I'd like to add is in regard to CEPA. I know that Mr. Eglinski mentioned how large that file could be. I think that's why Mr. Amos' motion specifically speaks to a

number of issues—chemical management, air and water quality, and so on—so that we can really narrow the focus into those particular aspects of it. At least that's how the proposal stands.

Thank you.

● (1145)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Jordan.

Oh, wait, it's Mr. Cullen. I'm sorry, I keep getting... I'm not feeling well today and I'm not doing well today. My apologies, I'm sick.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I don't know if it's what I'm saying or how I'm saying it.

Very quickly, I am happy to amend my motion to include the economic context in terms of doing this.

I have to admit, I'm a bit surprised at the.... If climate change is the single dominant topic going on in the environment file right now, the reluctance to take it on in any kind of way, which is what I read here.... I mean, the little, small reference to it in a long list of other things is hardly meeting with the urgency. But it's an interesting moment in that the environment committee, which for many years has been seized with this question, is choosing now to not. It's a choice.

In terms of duplication, the Federal Sustainable Development Act, was something that officials from every department said that they are already engaged in. Heaven forbid we duplicate anything that is already going on and not be duplicitous at the same time.

I'm reflecting on where the committee is headed. I love birds and birdwatchers, in particular. God love them. I would never want to not spend time with them. The conservation ethic in general is very important to a lot of us.

I just give as a reflection, Chair, that this committee, over the 11 years that I've been here, has often been an important urging on of government to take some action on climate and the solutions around climate, which I think would be very important given the economic context that Mr. Fast talked about in which Canadians are wondering how we diversify our economy away from the boom and bust cycles that have been so prevalent these last 70 years or so.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

There is a point of order.

Hon. Ed Fast: Can I just clarify from Mr. Cullen if he is agreeing to amend his motion to include the economic...?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, I did, in collegiality.

The Chair: Yes, he did.

Thank you.

Mrs. Jordan.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is just a point that I think is really important. When we do any study.... The concern that I'm hearing right now is getting it done on time or getting it done in a time frame. I think, to Mr. Bossio's point, we do have three and half years.

I feel that to put something forward and say we can't do it because we don't have the time in 14 weeks is a disservice to the motion because it can carry over, unless this committee—where I'm only here today—has decided that it has to be done in 14 weeks. But we do have more time and it can carry over.

I think that, if you want to look at a bigger picture, sometimes you have to look further down the road than just the time frame that you've put forward.

That's it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I just want to remind the committee that I did bring forward the point that it doesn't all have to be done sequentially. There are things we can do in parallel. You're absolutely right; there are things we can put past the summer break.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'll just follow up on Mr. Cullen's comment about the departments' saying that they acknowledge it, they're doing the work, they're acknowledging what the auditor had to say, and they're following up on that. I mean, my read of what I was hearing was that, yes, they are acknowledging receipt of these reports, but they're not doing anything about them. They are saying that they're going to, but look at the NEB.

I think that the real strength is going to be actually giving teeth to the commissioner to make sure that things get done and that she or her department can follow up on it again. My read on it was a little bit different. I didn't get the impression that things were actually getting taken care of.

The Chair: I have to agree with that point, from the discussions we've had.

Really, we're talking about good governance and accountability. I think that's an important element of what we're trying to do as well in the committees.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: I'll be really brief. I want to get across my perspective on what I was thinking in doing this.

I really believe it's fundamental for the legislature to hold the executive to account, to hold the departments to account. Based on my own personal experience in litigating over many years and also having previously worked within the executive and administration, I'm not convinced that we're at a point right now where we have the confidence of all Canadians that the whole of government is rowing in the direction of sustainable development, and we need to get there.

That's why I think it's our role as an independent committee to evaluate, beyond what the Minister of Environment may be doing to improve the environment for Canadians, what we can do separately as legislators to evaluate the federal government system as a whole

and provide recommendations to change laws and regulations such that we can improve the system.

In looking at the third suggestion here, around the sustainable development act, I think it's fundamental in the broader question of how we're going to tackle climate change that we make sure we have the federal government's own house in order. Sustainable development strategies, which according to the commissioner are being either produced poorly or implemented poorly.... We need to work at that, and we need to make sure that the way they're doing them, pursuant to the law, is appropriate.

With these motions I'm looking to push government, and I'm hoping the committee seizes this opportunity. In a way it's a rejoinder to Mr. Cullen. I really feel that this is the most effective thing we could possibly be doing, looking at how the government is behaving as a result of laws and regulations that previous governments—not just Conservative governments—have put in place, and how we can improve those. That's not something that the minister would be necessarily focusing on.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I don't know if I should be addressing this here, but I just went to the back to get a coffee. There's no recycling bin, and there is a tonne of paper in the garbage.

Here we are, the environment committee. Why do we not have recycling bins in these committee rooms?

Sorry. Stuff like that makes me crazy.

The Chair: We're starting with a reduction in paper generation, and we'll move to recycling.

Honestly, I think it's about getting our own government house in order. I see this third suggestion by Mr. Amos focusing on that, getting our own house in order and looking at where the opportunities are. We see them all around as we move around in government, and we heard about a lot of them as we were hearing from the different departments. That's what I'm hearing.

Who's next up? We've run ourselves aground on the discussion of what's in front of us.

Remember, there was an opportunity for people to put anything else they thought wasn't in these on the table. I know I have some. I'm not bringing them forward because hopefully, we will get these done, we will do them well, we will see results, and we can then move on to more of the agenda that we discussed in our blue-sky.

Go ahead, Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Martin had his hand up a couple of times.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Shields. We missed you completely.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): No problem. If I really feel I'm being left out, I'll stand up and yell.

The Chair: My apologies.

Mr. Martin Shields: I appreciate the discussion and people's bringing the rationalizations for whatever they want to do. It helps when you want to prioritize. We've all been through that—give yourself 10 dots and put them on the sheet, right, and what comes out is the most important. We've done a million of those things.

Hopefully we'll get to the point of what the most important is so that we start doing it, because I hear all sorts of good things being said. I'm just waiting for the starting gun to go. That's where I'm at. There are lots of good things being said. Let's get them up there, and let's find that starting line and start working through the list. We have three and a half years. That's fine. But I want to see what happens in the next week, and the next, and some visualization of where we're going.

The Chair: Okay. It sounds like we're all on the page for that: let's get moving.

We have in essence a few motions in front of us. We still have time—we're at 42 minutes—so if there's nothing else we want to have in front of the committee in terms of discussion for prioritization, I think we need to move into the prioritization phase now. Agreed?

Who would like to kick that off in terms of prioritization? Remember, I do believe there are things we can do in parallel. Let's give that some consideration as we have the discussion.

Mr. Fast.

• (1155)

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to put two priorities on the table. They would be in no specific order, but between the two of them, they would be our top priorities for studies.

First, the motion to do a study on clean tech, because of the fact that it is limited in its scope, will deliver information to this committee that will likely result in recommendations that the new Liberal government will embrace.

The second motion is Mr. Amos' motion. Not that I want to tread on his toes, but we find the motion to be one that will also lead to a study that will give this committee a better idea of what still needs to be done on conservation, what has been done in the past on conservation, and perhaps some ideas on specific measures the new government can implement in making our conservation even more robust.

The Chair: Are you talking about number one? There's one, two, and three.

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes, number one.

In fact I would suggest that those three studies be treated as separate motions.

The Chair: I just heard you mention two studies, clean tech and

Hon. Ed Fast: I'm talking about Mr. Amos' motion, which actually included three studies.

The Chair: Yes.

Hon. Ed Fast: We should probably deal with each of them individually, if we're going to deal with them at all.

The Chair: That's what I was trying to get to.

Which one of the two are you...?

Hon. Ed Fast: It's the first one, which is conservation.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Just as a matter of procedure, what are we doing? Are we putting these in order of precedence?

The Chair: We're having a discussion on the prioritization of the different initiatives that have been put forward and discussed this morning.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I don't want to sound like a broken record, but I'll repeat what I said earlier. I think the most important thing, and something that can be tackled probably relatively easily in terms of getting some information and developing some kind of recommendation, is with respect to strengthening the enforcement areas for the commissioner and her ability to audit and to follow up on that. That's just my own personal opinion.

I don't see how this discussion is any different from the discussion we had in the first hour. I'm trying to understand exactly what it is we're doing now. Are we putting things in different spots? I thought we were going to just vote on each motion individually.

The Chair: The intent was to give everybody a chance to put forward their thoughts behind what they'd tabled, in essence. They haven't really tabled the motions—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: We did that for the first hour.

The Chair: We haven't gone an hour yet, but we're getting there.

Then we were going to get into the motions. I was just running the last little bit of the hour, which is almost over, for some sense of prioritization on what we will tackle first.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes.

I guess to continue, then, I think we've had an opportunity to hear what people think. We've had an opportunity to raise the different ones. I think everybody knows which one I really care about in here.

I think at some point we just have to, as Mr. Shields said, pull the trigger and start to vote on these. Once we know which ones have passed the committee, if you want to then entertain some kind of discussion on how to prioritize them—or they may work concurrently—I think that would be the proper way to proceed.

That's just my opinion.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Jordan.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: I have just a quick question.

Mr. Fast, you suggested that Mr. Amos' motion be three motions. Is that what you said? Or was it three studies?

Hon. Ed Fast: Effectively, I said three studies.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Three studies but it's still one motion, correct?

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: That's all. I just wanted a clarification.

Hon. Ed Fast: I'm not sure dealing with them as motions necessarily serves our purpose here. Remember, each of the motions doesn't address the issue of priority. I would imagine that all of us would agree that most of the studies being proposed in these motions have some merit. I think the real issue is what priority should we place on each of them.

I do agree with the chair that perhaps we could continue the discussion. If we're going to do this on a consensual or collaborative basis we don't necessarily have to bring each motion forward. For example, if I brought forward the clean technology study under the motion that I provided notice for, it's an up or down vote. Your side might vote it down as a study that you would like to do but maybe not as a first priority. Voting up and down on that motion doesn't help us with that process.

I think you're right, Madam Chair, continuing the discussion on an amicable basis, even a show of hands, do we have consensus here that we'd like to do specific studies? Let's figure out which one we would like to do first, second, and third.

• (1200)

The Chair: We have Mr. Eglinski and then Mr. Amos.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to follow up. I'm fully in favour of what Mr. Fast mentioned.

I was listening to Mr. Gerretsen's comments. I like your three recommendations.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Come and sit on this side of the table.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I didn't tell him to say that.

My grandfather would roll over in his grave and then send me a message or maybe call me there. Remember, I'm from Alberta; that's Conservative country.

I like your number one. You heard when I spoke earlier. My passion is there, migratory birds and stuff like that. We need to deal with them.

On your number two and number three—this is just an opinion that I want to throw back to you guys and I'm hoping John might back me up a little on this—I worked in the government for probably 40 years. I worked with audits coming in and was told we had to do things. Some good managers got things done; some bad managers didn't get things done. I always looked at audits as a way of catching the little things that maybe I didn't see as a manager and trying to correct them to the best of my ability.

I would love to see recommendations two and three looked at maybe next year when we start, and I'm going to tell you why. We have new ministers in charge of these departments. Let's give them a chance to take a look at their departments and take a look to see if they're going to get co-operation and agreement with their senior bureaucrats and see if some of the changes are happening before we do a quick study. We have three and a half or four years, and I think it might be very relevant that we go into them. I say let's just give them a little while to let the new leaders take the lead and see how

their senior bureaucrats fall. They've had a recent audit. I think it was a good audit. I think they agreed to a lot of things. Let's give them a chance before we start.

The Chair: Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: I appreciate what Mr. Eglinski is saying. I hope the members opposite appreciate that with this notice of motion, which included several studies, I was trying to encapsulate what I felt were the views of the government members that had been expressed, as well as those of the members opposite. This was my effort at encapsulating the areas of commonality.

In terms of prioritizing, my own sense—and this in part will also address the climate issue—is that we're going to be looking at something to do with environmental assessment at some point if the mandate letter is followed through on, and we're not going to have a choice. Likewise, we may well be faced with legislation around climate change. Who knows? I have no idea, but that could well happen.

Those are two huge issues. They're not mentioned in here, because I expect that we're going to be forced to do that, and that's going to take precedence over our own work.

Now is the time for us to seize upon work where legislation requires it. The CEPA review ought to have been done ages ago. A review was done in 2006-07. None of the recommendations were followed through on. I am informally proposing or mooted the idea that the CEPA work be given priority. I am indifferent as to whether number one or three would go second or third. I think right now we have a substantial piece that is in the public interest and that needs to be done, and we have an opportunity right now before we are sent legislation that we must review on a clause-by-clause basis.

• (1205)

The Chair: Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag: I have a couple of comments.

I think everybody can probably appreciate that with my background and what I've chaired previously, the first one, Will's, is one that I'm most interested in. Is it the highest priority? That's for us to agree.

I would like to see us get to that at some point in the coming weeks. It's not something that has to be done in weeks one, two, and three, but I am hearing some support for that, and I appreciate that.

I do expect that there will be some big files coming to us. When I heard the commissioner talking, and with thirty-plus years in the public service, I was quite supportive of this number three, and it was simply to give closure to the audit process. I hear what you're saying, that the audit happens and then we entrust the departments to enable or to implement what they've heard from the audit. In my experience, I haven't always seen that come full circle, and if there is not a reporting-back piece, then we don't know if it's ever been done until the next audit happens. Given the resources, it may be a decade before the auditor gets back to these ones that have been dealt with, and given what we heard from her, they are very important issues.

My hope was that this would be one we could deal with somewhat quickly just to close the loop on that audit process so that the departments are really obligated to deal with what the auditor said. That's why I was quite happy to see the wording we had all come up with to really bring closure to that audit process. Does it start bending the curve we heard about from Mr. Cullen? No, but I saw this as an achievable one that we could tackle immediately while we're ramping up for these larger discussions that have to happen in society and in government.

To summarize my thoughts, I'd like to see us proceed with number one. It doesn't have to be first, but I'd like to see us get to it. I see merit in two and three. Eventually I do want to deal with the pieces that Mr. Cullen has brought forward. It's just a question of where they fit in, and I think that may be a bit down the road. We're going to have to get to them, but let's just get a couple of fast ones going and get a couple of recommendations out before we get busy with some of the other files that I expect we're going to be dealing with. That's my thinking.

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Fast, I want to make a comment.

We heard quite a bit from the commissioner over the last two meetings, and I think you're right. We could say, let's think about just letting them try to settle into their new realm with the new leadership, but I also think that the commissioner is there and could be very helpful. If we could find ways, by looking at this to see whether we could bring a bit more accountability, I think it sets the stage, when everybody is looking for a new way.

I heard what you had to say, and my thoughts are that it's almost the right time to do it because of the change in direction and the change of leadership.

I just wanted to throw that in before I give the floor to Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you.

There is one study that I feel there is a consensus on, and that is the first study proposed by Mr. Amos. I didn't want to raise it earlier, but Mr. Amos suggested that there was a consensus on the other two and that his motion reflected a consensus. It may have been a Liberal consensus, but I'm not sure it reflected a broader committee consensus.

But on the study of parks and wetlands and conservation and migratory birds, I sense that we do have a consensus. I would think that if in fact we can agree that there is a consensus on it, we should make that our first study. I still have to be convinced of the other two studies that Mr. Amos has proposed, but I'd put forward the clean technology one as well, which obviously I would be in favour of.

Let me add one other point. It has been mentioned a couple of times at committee today that since the minister is bringing legislation forward anyway, let's wait for that legislation to come forward and this committee will be asked to review it.

The problem with this—and I'm sure Mr. Cullen would share this concern—is that the role of this committee is actually to inform the work of government. Isn't that right?

• (1210)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's correct.

Hon. Ed Fast: When legislation comes forward, it's pretty well baked in. There may be a little bit of tinkering around the edge, but there is no real informing of the legislation at that point. I've seen many pieces of legislation come forward in the past, and I feel that if in fact we're going to be effective in allowing government to make the best-informed decisions as it crafts legislation, this committee should be involved well in advance in that process.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Madam Chair stole a little bit of my thunder already.

The study of CEPA is long overdue. It should have been studied before now, but the opportunity didn't present itself previously. As a committee I think we need to be seized with this to get it done and to fulfill our legislative mandate to do so. To me, that would be priority number one.

As to number two, I would think that the Conservative side would agree with it, because accountability is a very strong principle within the philosophy of conservatism, and accountability is essentially what we're trying to bring here to the various departments, to the various agencies, and to the legislation overall. We're trying to get government to be more accountable and hopefully, through that study, promote not just environmental accountability but also fiscal accountability through the process of trying to find the synergies that can exist on both the fiscal and the environmental side. That's why I want to push forward with this. It's because of the conservation piece, because of the environmental piece, and because of the fiscal piece.

I would like to see those two be the first two priorities, and then absolutely my environmental side and my country-boy side wants very much to have a review done on protected areas, on critical habitat and recovery strategies, because we live it in the rural areas every day.

I really want to see us be able to accomplish those goals.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'm just trying to understand what we're doing here, Chair. We're not considering Mr. Amos' motion as one piece, I assume.

The Chair: Okay, so just—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That would be like an omnibus motion.

The Chair: What I think is happening is that we have four themes in front of us, four proposed studies for the committee, and we are discussing some prioritization of those. We had talked about putting those motions forward, but we're discussing the prioritization. I'm watching the clock and I think at half past we should probably focus on getting the motions on the table.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Here's my guess on where things are headed, and tell me if I'm wrong.

I'm going to lose, but maintain, the position that climate change is the most pressing issue this committee should study along with the technical fixes that we can find in the clean energy sector to solve it. That will be defeated.

The Conservatives want to do something on conservation, which the Liberals like, but the Liberals want to do CEPA first. Why don't we get to a vote, look at studying CEPA, get some sort of conservation initiative that will follow it, and wait for climate to happen whenever it becomes a priority for this committee.

The Chair: I'm not entirely sure this is exactly what I heard.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's why I said to correct me if I'm wrong.

The Chair: No, that's fine. I did hear quite a few people on this side talking about accountability and the last Federal Sustainable Development Act.

• (1215)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right, so then—

The Chair: We could—and again I'm cutting into you and I apologize—do things in parallel. I want to be mindful that we did not discuss that yet. It doesn't have to be sequential. We can do some things in parallel because it's going to be a bit of an effort depending on which ones we pick.

We could get started on the Federal Sustainable Development Act, and the accountability, and getting some teeth in to the commissioner. At the same time we could start working on one of these other three buckets as we call forward witnesses and start to gather the data.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What other three buckets?

The Chair: I'm hearing that we have three other ones. There are the two that are from Mr. Amos, and the other one is the clean tech.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Just to get your assessment here, you have the sustainability piece going out first, and you imagine something around CEPA or...?

The Chair: Or the federally protected areas.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Or conservation.

The Chair: I'm still not clear exactly where we're landing with that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Is some notion on clean tech the fourth one you threw in there?

The Chair: Yes. That's what I'm hearing, but again correct me if I'm wrong.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: We could keep talking about it until this proposed time you said to come to the resolution point. What I'm trying to do is cut to the chase.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I am going to move my motion on climate change. I think it's incumbent upon me to do so. Committee members will go the way they wish.

If this is the general path that we're headed to then let's get to it. Let's just have it. Let's have the sequence that you've suggested as a proposal standing in front of the committee right now. I'll move my motion now, if that helps, and then we can get on with making our decisions.

I feel like we're sawing a bit of sawdust here.

The Chair: Does everybody...?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I want to speak to the motion.

The Chair: Okay, hold on.

You're going to bring forward your motion. You will probably want to read it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sure.

The Chair: There was some discussion. You had made some changes and amendments, so—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, Mr. Fast had some helpful language like “given the economic context”. I think it was something to that effect.

Hon. Ed Fast: Consideration of the positive and negative economic impacts—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay...“given consideration of the positive and negative economic impacts”.

Hon. Ed Fast: —of such measures.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay. I'll try to slip that in as ineloquently as I can.

I move:

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development undertake a study and call witnesses, including the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, to examine measures necessary for Canada to contribute its fair share to international efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels as committed by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, including a review of a) national and regional trends and projects; b) carbon pricing methodologies—

I think I'll put the amendment in here, “and (c) opportunities within the clean energy” or perhaps it will go in after (b), then. It would say, “(b) carbon-pricing methodologies, given the positive and negative impacts, and (c) opportunities within the clean energy and clean-technology sectors.”

Does that make sense, or would you rather it go at the end?

Hon. Ed Fast: No, do it—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: At the end?

Hon. Ed Fast: No, as a separate...as (d).

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oh, sorry, and (d), as in, “(d) an assessment of the positive and negative impacts of policies”.

Hon. Ed Fast: Economic....

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's "economic impacts of policies”.

Sorry to your staff, Chair.

The Chair: I think we need to have a bit more clarity on exactly what was just said.

We're stopping after, “carbon price methodologies; and c) opportunities in the clean energy and clean-technology sector”, and adding, “and (d) an assessment of the positive and negative economic impacts”.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you.

The Chair: Is everybody comfortable with that?

Okay. We're open for debate.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't disagree with this motion. I think this is a good motion. I think it's a little bit "pie in the sky". By that, I mean that it attempts to look at things from such a high level that.... I mean, yes, I think everybody in this room, unless you've been living under a rock, to some degree or another believes that climate change is real and that we need to do something about it. I'm not sure how we can effectively come to any real recommendations as a result of this motion as it's laid out here.

My inclination is to try to work on things that are tangible and that can have a real difference. I just don't know if this is something that is tangible. What kinds of recommendations are we going to be able to put forward at the end? But I'm definitely also not interested in voting against this, both from a practical personal level, in that I believe it, and also from a political perspective too.

You're not going to have the opportunity to say that I voted against this, Mr. Cullen.

I will vote in favour of it, but my concern is how it gets prioritized. That's the real issue for me. At the end of the day, I think all of these are good motions. It's about the priority.

I'm inclined to vote in favour of it, but I want to know, if we vote in favour of this one first, does it become number one in the abeyance list, or can we shift the priorities? That's perhaps a procedural question.

• (1220)

The Chair: My understanding is that it does not necessarily preclude the others and put it first just because we vote on it first. Our prioritization is something that we can do.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: After the fact...?

The Chair: After the fact.

Mr. Cullen, do you have a disagreement on that?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Not at all. This simply says that the committee will study this.

If there is some.... It's interesting because much of this is taken from the minister's mandate letter, so if it's too "pie in the sky", we have some work to do.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The second piece is that if there are some more defining characteristics of this, that would always be helpful, as Mr. Fast was able to help.

But this was never meant—and this is my last point, Chair—to be a motion to wedge. This is not a motion to make you uncomfortable. This is a motion to study what our climate change strategy ought to be and what potential we have to create economic opportunities out of that challenge, period. Every member will vote the way they vote.

The Chair: If I could add to that, we do have other committees that may be seized with this as well. I'm not saying that should stop us at all, but I think that if we decide to vote in favour of this we will want to reach out and see what some of the other committees are doing so that we're not duplicating efforts. Let's see how this goes.

Then I'll undertake to reach out to the other committees and see how we may work in concert with what they're doing if they're working on this too.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: Before we get to the point of voting on Mr. Cullen's motion, I would propose that we make an amendment to my notice of motion, such that his motion is included.

The Chair: We can't do that. We now have a motion on the floor so we're going to have to vote on that motion, unless you want to do a friendly amendment that he accepts.

Mr. William Amos: Okay. I—

The Chair: Hold on. I'm being given advice.

You can move an amendment to his motion and then we can vote on that. Okay?

Mr. William Amos: I would move an amendment that Mr. Cullen's motion be amended to include all of the language in my notice of motion.

The Chair: Do you see a reason why we need to do that? I'm just trying to understand why.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I think what Mr. Amos is trying to do is put Mr. Cullen's motion as the fourth order of precedence in his motion.

An hon. member: We're not talking about [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I hear what you're saying, but that's—

Mr. William Amos: That's an accurate characterization of what I'm trying to do. I hear what you're saying, but that's just a characterization of what I'm telling you.

The Chair: I'm trying to get all the motions that speak to what this committee would like to proceed with in its work package and then we have the prioritization.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: We could have prioritization today?

The Chair: I am sure hoping so, because the intent today is to get our work plan and the priorities of that work plan. Are we agreed around the committee, both sides of the room? There's no amendment.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Can I have a clarification of that supplemental?

The Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Bossio: When we go to pass our motion, we could make an amendment to include Nathan's motion in the body of it.

The Chair: I don't know why you want to do that. It's his motion and to.... Can you please explain why you feel there's value in doing that? I'm not sure you can.

• (1225)

Mr. Mike Bossio: You take that.

Mr. William Amos: The value is that it enables us to treat both the prioritization aspect of this discussion as well as the substantive, what we are going to discuss, all in one motion. Going through the process of evaluating Mr. Cullen's substance, without having any prioritization attached, puts us in a situation, which I think would be unfortunate and lead to confusion, that we were somehow voting down his motion and not appreciating the content. We do appreciate the content. We are very interested in climate change. We don't want that confusion to arise.

I think the most collegial way would be to say if the motion were to be retracted, with knowledge that it would be included—

The Chair: I understand now what you're trying to do.

Mr. Cullen, if you see what's going on here, whether you—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I think I do. I was tempted to say the prioritization piece sounds subcommittee-ish to me, but this committee will decide if it wants to do that or not.

I think this simply places this as one of the buffet items that the committee is going to get to. We decide now first what people want to study and what they don't want to study, and then the next step is in what order and how much time, which I don't think we'll get to today. Is it two weeks? Is it four weeks? Maybe. I dare to dream.

But I don't get any sense that Mr. Amos' motion is done in sequence, because there may be some on the government or opposition side who want to put number two as number one. I don't read his motion as a sequential offer, take it or leave it, because that wouldn't make a lot of sense.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oh, I see, it is. This is sequential.

The Chair: No—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Here's how I'm taking this. You said before that there are four motions, broadly speaking, on the table.

The Chair: Four buckets that were—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There are four buckets, if you will. Okay. Three of them make it, four of them make it, whatever. The next conversation that follows is: what's first, what's second, what's third, and if there's a fourth, what's fourth?

I understand the collegiality aspect, and it's very much appreciated. There's no thinking on my part that if this motion were to pass, that's number one and it's going to dominate the committee's time for the next eight months. That's not written in here. It's not how the committee works.

The Chair: Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: Before we vote, I believe I heard Mr. Amos say he wanted to amend the motion to essentially establish a priority of four studies in the order set out in that amendment that would essentially rank Mr. Cullen's study at the bottom and would rank the assessment of the federal protected areas as the first one on the list, at the top.

Mr. William Amos: I didn't get to that point of identifying how I would reorder them.

Hon. Ed Fast: Okay, then I'm in favour of going ahead with Mr. Cullen's motion as is.

The Chair: Does anybody have a problem with moving forward, as was proposed by Mr. Cullen?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I'm going to move that we suspend the debate for five minutes for the purpose of discussion among ourselves, if that's okay.

The Chair: Okay, we'll suspend the meeting for five minutes and grab some lunch.

• _____ (Pause) _____

•

• (1230)

The Chair: We're going to resume the meeting.

We have a motion on the floor. As it stands, Mr. Cullen's motion has been amended with a friendly amendment by Mr. Fast. We are now resuming the discussion.

Should I call the question?

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Excellent.

I think we're looking for the next motion. Who's bringing that forward?

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: I would like to table the motion as presented, and if we could, just bring it to a vote.

The Chair: Sure. I just want to ask for clarification. There's no prioritization yet in that motion, right? It's just the motion as it stands.

Mr. William Amos: It is.

The Chair: Does everybody have that motion? Do we need to read it quickly?

Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Amos, you are presenting your motion with all three aspects of it together, completed. You're not breaking it down into one, two, and three?

• (1235)

Mr. William Amos: No. My expectation was that the subcommittee would deal with prioritization issues, as per Mr. Cullen's comment.

The Chair: They are all put on the table as a whole motion.

Is there any debate?

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: I was just going to make a suggestion. In the interest of collegiality and being able to come out of here with a clear consensus that is unanimous, we'd be willing to support this motion if, in fact, the conservation study is the first priority. We understand full well that others may actually run parallel with them, but that would enable us to come out of here with consensus.

The Chair: That would be wonderful if we could.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: I think the discussion around prioritization should happen at the subcommittee level. I appreciate Mr. Cullen's earlier suggestion.

The interest today is enabling clarity on what our committee's work agenda is. I fear that further discussion around prioritization will only serve to delay.

On the government committee side, we've indicated a real openness, not only to include themes that were demonstrably of interest to the members opposite but also to support a motion that was brought and supported by both opposition parties. In the interest of collegiality, if anything, we're being so open to everything that's being suggested.

The Chair: Can I make a suggestion?

Mr. Fast, you're next.

The suggestion is that what we're doing here is putting your motion. We're voting on your motion. We are not voting on prioritization at the moment. Mr. Fast asked for prioritization to occur, but you're not supporting the prioritization at this point.

We still have time. We can do the prioritization right after we get all of these approved. With the motions passed, they're all on the table. We have some time while we're chowing down some food to just prioritize.

An hon. member: Agreed.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have no issue with what Mr. Fast has suggested. If this happens at the subcommittee, with which I am not involved, I encourage the members of the subcommittee who are on my side of the table to put that forward as the first one. If we decide to do it after this, I'm more than willing to have that as the first one. I always assumed it was the first one, given that Mr. Amos had put it as the first one on his list.

I'm supportive of that, whether it happens here or at subcommittee.

The Chair: Can I just make a comment, before we call the vote, because I think we're almost at that point?

We have time to do the prioritization, and it is important that we try to do it because if we're going to get moving with this committee, we need to know what we're going to do when we come back. We can't punt that off. If we can get to prioritization, I would like to do that today.

Let's call the vote on the motion. It's been brought forward. Everyone's good with it.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That is unanimous. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Now, on to prioritization, does somebody have a suggestion—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: We have three more motions.

The Chair: I do. You're right. I have another one. You're right. I felt we'd come up with the four, but you're right.

Who's bringing forward the next motion?

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: I'll bring forward my motion for the clean tech study, as written.

The Chair: Okay. Is there any debate?

Go ahead, Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'd ask Mr. Fast to comment on the question I asked earlier about why he thinks it is more important that this be here than in the innovation and technology committee. By default, I think it is better suited there. Although I realize that it has an environmental lens on it right now, I just don't see this as being something driven by the environment committee.

I wonder whether you would comment on that.

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes. I think you're wrong in making the assumption that my comments intended that this be a study dealing with the incentives required, from government and elsewhere, to allow us to implement clean tech more robustly throughout our economy. The focus here is that we have been charged with the environment file and climate change file. One of the most significant opportunities to actually meet our goals and whatever targets will be established will be the use of clean tech. It would be very helpful for this committee to have a broad understanding of the state of technology today that would allow us to address the challenges that the minister has clearly been charged with addressing.

I don't think we're widening this. I know I referred to commercialization, but commercialization doesn't imply that we're going to have a full discussion of how the government should be supporting clean tech. The intention of this study is to inform this committee as to the state of clean and green technology that would help us achieve our environmental objectives.

• (1240)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That clarifies it. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Fast, I'm looking at the motion Mr. Cullen put forward, and it is in there as point (c).

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes.

The Chair: That's why I got a little bit sidetracked, thinking that we have more or less incorporated what you just spoke about in the motion from Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes, I noticed that. But given the fact that Mr. Cullen's study is much broader—

The Chair: It is.

Hon. Ed Fast: —and that this is a subset of it, my fear would be that the clean tech element would get short shrift. Not intentionally, but it just would end up being that way because there are so many other elements that his study would entail.

The Chair: I think it'll be up to us to decide how we want to tackle it. That may not be the case, but we'll see how it goes forward.

Who's next?

Mr. Aldag, go ahead.

Mr. John Aldag: As we were talking on this, I was comparing the one we had just accepted. Mr. Fast just explained what the difference was—that it's a narrower subset of Mr. Cullen's. My inclination, to keep it simple, would be to go with the one we've already voted on and know as a committee that it's on record that there is a concern that we want to get into the clean tech element of it. Perhaps that could be one piece of it.

I favour treating it as part of what we've already dealt with rather than as yet another motion. My sense is that it's covered with the one we just did.

The Chair: Okay.

We're going to try to speed it up now, because we're now running out of time.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: This is just a quick comment to agree with John and with what you said earlier, but also to say that if the industry, science and technology committee does deal with clean tech, then we know that when we get to Mr. Cullen's study, we can treat it as such at that time. If it isn't covered by them, then once again, at that time we can say, it wasn't covered, so let's embed it into the process in a bolder way.

The Chair: That sounds good.

I'm going to call the question.

(Motion negatived [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Does anybody have any other motions to put on the table, before we move too quickly? There was one other one.

Hon. Ed Fast: I believe I made the point earlier that the motion I proposed on migratory birds was actually subsumed in Mr. Amos' number one study.

The Chair: That's great. We have tried to be co-operative and supportive, and everybody is bringing the themes into the motions. I appreciate that work from Mr. Amos.

There was one other motion that was tabled before. Is there anything else that anyone wants to put on the table before we move to prioritization?

Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Could we ensure that the minutes include the comments made by Mr. Aldag and Mr. Bossio about using part of the technology that overlaps into Mr. Cullen's motion.

• (1245)

The Chair: It will be in the blues. There's no doubt about that.

We have a very short bit of time, maybe 10 minutes, to talk about the prioritization because we are trying to organize a subcommittee to call witnesses, so I want to know what we're going to be working on first, maybe in parallel.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: If you're looking for a motion to get this going, I would move that we prioritize the studies dealing with Mr. Amos' motion first and Mr. Cullen's motion second. All three of Mr.

Amos' would be in the order that he's laid them out in his motion followed by Mr. Cullen's.

The Chair: You're looking to have it in order of one, two, three, and nothing working in parallel.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: If there's an opportunity for them to work in parallel then, of course, that's the best thing to do. It might take time to prepare something, in which case we can be working on something else.

It's going to be a consensus around the table. Mr. Fast wanted to deal with the one on parks and protected areas. We deal with that one first, then CEPA, then the commissioner's responsibilities in the Federal Sustainable Development Act, and then Mr. Cullen's on climate change.

The Chair: Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I hate to differ with my fellow Liberal, but what has been expressed through the conversations by a number of us is that we'd like to see CEPA first, the assessment of Federal Sustainable Development Act second, and third, the assessment of the federally protected areas as the priority in the sequence in the motion.

The Chair: I heard number two as one.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Three as two, and one as three.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is that a motion to amend my motion?

The Chair: Why don't we just have the discussion at the moment, if you don't mind, and then we'll move the motion in about five minutes.

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: I very much appreciate Mr. Gerretsen's magnanimity. To perhaps further that even forward and hopefully invite consensus in committee, why don't we have the chair begin to contact witnesses and map out a plan going forward for two studies: the one that is listed number one and the one that is listed number two on Mr. Amos' list.

That way, if there is a week when we don't have witnesses on the one, we don't lose any time, and we move forward with the other. That's a reasonable approach to take and allows us to do this by full consensus. I'm assuming there would be full consensus here at the table.

The Chair: I am looking for consensus, but we'll see how this goes.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: I would concur with Mr. Bossio. I would support a shift of priorities with what is number two on the motion as passed, then number three and one, and subsequently the earlier motion.

At the end of the day, we've agreed on our main priorities. There's a discussion around prioritization, but we're not exiting the realm of collegiality in disagreeing on the best order.

The Chair: As a chair, I'm taking your suggestion, Mr. Fast. There is no question that we will be able to move forward on one of these two studies, and I think there are some we could do simultaneously. I was personally thinking we could move forward on number three in tandem with one of those other top two priorities, because one is within the House here and we could start working with the commissioner and getting some advice internally. It would be easier to get going. Then we would start working on one of the other two.

I'm listening to your suggestion and I don't know if that's really fair to me, because now it comes down to which way I am going to push first. I think we're going to have success at getting people in for either of those two tasks. I hear your thoughts, but I'm just not sure if that's really very focused for me. I think I need a bit more guidance from the committee. I'm struggling here because we have no consistency there.

Mr. Cullen is first.

• (1250)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It would help if Mr. Amos or someone from that side would explain why. My sense is that Mr. Fast was keen on getting onto the protected areas piece first and was tempted to make his vote somewhat contingent on it. That didn't happen, but I've seen the reordering. I assumed that the first ordering was according to priority but maybe it wasn't or it's been reconsidered. I just don't know why. If there were an explanation, that would certainly help me out with regard to voting one way or another.

The Chair: I think that's fair.

Mr. Eglinski was next, and then we'll go over to get some clarity.

Why don't we go to Mrs. Jordan if you want to hear the answer to the question, or do you want to talk first?

Mr. Eglinski, go ahead and then we'll go over to the other side.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: All I was going to say is that I think everybody in this room has a consensus on number one, and we're all quite comfortable with number one. I believe we all understand that you have the power on that side of the room. We've had a pretty good meeting and a pretty good relationship, and I think we want a good relationship throughout our committee. But I think there has to be a little give and take. I'm seeing here that you want to deal with your three and put whatever else there is into the background. Make a little give and let us move one of our motions up a little bit. That's all I'm saying, guys. We're all working on the same page, and I think a lot of our topics are very similar.

Hon. Ed Fast: You have your other two studies.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: The way you came across, we're going to put everything to the back, and your three are going to be out front. I think if we're trying to work together as a group, as a team, let's give and take a little bit.

The Chair: Mrs. Jordan.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Just for clarification, my understanding is that there is time to get to all of these. Why does it matter which one goes first? I'm just asking.

Hon. Ed Fast: Well, you're the government—or you represent the party that is in government.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: If we weren't the government, we wouldn't be sitting at this table.

The Chair: Sorry, but I have to have control.

Hon. Ed Fast: That's true. That's why I said it.

The Chair: You're finished, Mrs. Jordan?

Hon. Ed Fast: It was a question to me, I believe.

The Chair: I just want to make sure she's finished before we give up the floor.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: It's okay.

The Chair: Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: I would throw the question back to you. Clearly some instructions were given regarding the order that should be put forward at this meeting, so I'm wondering about the order that Mr. Amos is now suggesting. He originally came forward with a motion that showed what appeared to be priorities starting with the conservation piece. We feel that is something everyone in this committee could really get their teeth into at a running start. If you are doing things by consensus, I think you're going to have an opposition here that is willing to really dig deep and do it in a respectful way. I share Mr. Eglinski's view that this is an opportunity for us to prove that these committees really can work by consensus rather than through conflict or political agendas.

Mr. John Aldag: I'd like to speak in favour of what Mr. Fast has thrown out. I think my group is leaning that way. I'd like to suggest that the order of priority from our side is to take Mr. Amos' number two as our number one, the CEPA. We could work concurrently or as closely as possible on what was our number one, so we could get those two out of the gate. We would put our number three third, and then have Mr. Cullen's climate change piece as the fourth, knowing that we want to get to that as quickly as we can move these other ones through.

Essentially it's doing CEPA first, but recognizing, as Mr. Fast suggested, that there will be times when we won't be able to get witnesses, so we will be able to get that one started right away. We'll get number two out of the gate right away, followed by the protected areas piece.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. John Aldag: That's what I'm throwing out as my preference.

The Chair: It's one and two going concurrently, then three, and then four.

Mr. John Aldag: Yes, that's what I'm suggesting.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen is next.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I believe that's what Mr. Fast was saying earlier, which is that those two should go concurrently. He is absolutely right. You might not be able to get the witnesses on a certain day, so that day you can move forward with the other one.

•(1255)

The Chair: It's being suggested that we could have Tuesday for one and Thursday for the other. We can try to structure it and see how it works out. It may or may not work out depending on witnesses, but we could try to work on that kind of format.

Hon. Ed Fast: Sure.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I don't have a problem with the concurrency, but I would like the priority to be on the CEPA side. I'd rather not say one day is one and one day is the other. I'd like the CEPA witnesses to be contacted first and then move concurrently with the other one. When we did this, that was just the first one that was written. It wasn't a priority when we were writing this out. It just happened when we got to sitting down and writing out the motion. I apologize for that misunderstanding. If we park the third one, that's fine. I can live with that. But I really want CEPA to be the one that is prioritized in that concurrency.

The Chair: We'll work out the details of witnesses and moving them forward at the subcommittee meeting, but I think I'm hearing a consensus on concurrence on one and two, then three, and then four. That's what I'm hearing around the table. Does anybody else want to say anything before we call the vote?

The motion is that we're going to have concurrent studies on items one and two, which are the federally protected areas and CEPA. We will then do the Federal Sustainable Development Act as a third priority item for the committee, and then clean tech and innovation as the fourth priority.

Mr. Mike Bossio: No, climate change is the fourth.

The Chair: Well, climate change, clean tech, and innovation, yes.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Sorry.

The Chair: Of course, that's the overarching issue.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Well done, everybody, and we did it in time. Good work.

Oh, wait, I have some issues. On Tuesday, do we have any proposals for the witness list, or are we going to try to do that at the subcommittee meeting we're trying to organize on the Monday?

Mr. Mike Bossio: [*Inaudible—Editor*] everybody here for Tuesday?

The Chair: We're doing the subcommittee call as a conference call. We already put the meeting notice out to everybody. I think the clerk is getting nervous because we want to make sure we have things to do at our meeting on Tuesday. But we'll work on that in the subcommittee, if that's okay with everybody, unless you have something right now that you want to suggest.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have a point of order. Will it be recorded in the minutes that our prioritization was carried unanimously?

The Chair: Yes, it will be in the record.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: I was going to suggest that the first thing, if you're going to do a CEPA review, should be to have the department come in and give an overview.

The Chair: Okay, how does everybody feel about that? On the Tuesday we do an overview of CEPA?

Mr. William Amos: We'll have the departmental officials coming in and talking about it.

The Chair: Is that a good start? Then we'll work on it in our subcommittee meeting, what we do for the next two weeks, not next week but the next two weeks after that.

Hon. Ed Fast: I like the idea of alternating.

The Chair: We can talk about that at the subcommittee. We've agreed, right?

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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