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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): We have quorum, so we're going to get under way. We are still waiting for our Conservative colleagues to get here. I think they're on a bus somewhere making their way over. We're going to get started with introductions, and hopefully they'll arrive shortly.

I want to welcome some special guests at the back of the room. We have our Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee representatives back there. They're from the generation program; they're high school students from all over Canada.

I'm very pleased to see you here today, so thanks for joining us.

I also thought it would be appropriate, based on what happened today in Brussels, that we take a few minutes to contemplate what has happened there and to give our thoughts to those who have been claimed and those who are struggling with very serious injuries. It's a very sad morning and I just want to take a few minutes to have some silence for that.

[A moment of silence observed]

Thank you very much to all of you for showing support to those in Brussels.

Our Conservative colleagues are just joining us, so thank you very much. No worries; we understand. It's always difficult to know what room we're going to, and this one's a little off the beaten path from the normal, so I understand.

I want to welcome our guests, our witnesses today. We have a great group in front of us.

I want to start with Scott Vaughan from the International Institute for Sustainable Development. He's the president and chief executive officer. Welcome.

We also have the Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development back with us. Julie Gelfand is the commissioner. Andrew Hayes is principal. James McKenzie is also principal. Thank you for joining us.

From Environment and Climate Change Canada we have Dan McDougall, assistant deputy minister, strategic policy branch, and Paula Brand, director general, sustainability directorate, strategic policy branch as well. Thank you very much for joining us this morning.

From Public Services and Procurement Canada we have Duncan Retson. He is the director general, portfolio and government affairs sector, policy, planning and communications branch. Thank you very much for joining us.

We have the Honourable John Godfrey here today as well. Thank you very much for joining us today. We're very much looking forward to what you have to share with us.

We will get started with John Godfrey.

• (1110)

Hon. John Godfrey (As an Individual): Madam Chair, I'm delighted to return as a witness to this committee where I happily served as a member when I was in Parliament. I would also like to acknowledge the presence on the committee of my friend and former colleague, Nathan Cullen, with whom I had many adventures, some of them at a COP meeting in Nairobi.

Today I want to talk about how the Federal Sustainable Development Act came into being in the first place, because I think there are valuable lessons to be learned by committee members, particularly for those of you who are new to Parliament. Then I would like to suggest to the committee how they might want to use this occasion to review the act and the federal sustainable development strategy as an opportunity to support and strengthen the new government's actions on climate change.

The first lesson to be learned by my experience in sponsoring the private member's bill that eventually became this act is that an individual backbencher through a private member's bill can create a powerful piece of legislation whose effects can be felt long after he or she leaves Parliament. So don't underestimate the role you can play in bringing forward your own well-crafted piece of timely legislation. This may form an important part of your personal legacy as a parliamentarian, something you can look back to with pride, as I do today.

The second lesson is the importance of collaboration, goodwill, civility, and respect in doing our work here. I came to sponsor this bill partly because of my environmental interests, but more importantly, I have to admit, because I drew an early place in the private member's bill lottery.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John Godfrey: In short, it was more luck than good management or brilliant planning, but then luck is what you make of it. Because I had a private member's bill coming up, in 2007 I was approached by the David Suzuki Foundation and asked if I would sponsor a draft bill they had prepared to create, as it was at the time, a national sustainable development strategy for Canada. I agreed and this long, detailed, and ambitious bill became the template for what eventually emerged as Bill C-474.

My first collaboration was working very closely with the David Suzuki Foundation and its talented representative in Ottawa, Pierre Sadik, to make sure that the extensive amendments and compromises that inevitably emerged in committee were still acceptable to the original sponsors.

The second important collaboration was with the then minister of the environment, John Baird, and his office. This was not an easy time in Parliament, as Nathan Cullen will recall, or in the standing committees of the House of Commons. But by being transparent and co-operative, by appealing to the Conservatives own stated ambition for greater accountability, by avoiding partisanship and political stunts, and by building trust, we eventually arrived at a bill that the government accepted and embraced when it came into force.

The third collaboration was with the other opposition parties on the committee, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois. We listened carefully to suggestions from them and, where possible, incorporated their ideas into the bill. For example, the Bloc objected very strongly to the word "national" in national sustainable development strategy—as you might have guessed—so we changed it to "federal" sustainable development strategy to remove any suggestion that we were dictating to provinces.

The fourth major collaboration was with the office of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development to make sure that in designing the bill, we were creating an appropriate and functional role for the commissioner. Here I would like to pay tribute to the interim commissioner of the day, the late Ron Thompson, a great civil servant of integrity and strength who played a pivotal role in advancing the bill.

•(1115)

Finally, I must emphasize the importance of close and respectful collaboration with the Senate, the crucial role of which in passing effective legislation is too often misunderstood and neglected by standing committees of the House.

Honourable members, I tell you all this in the hope that the same spirit of respect, consultation, and co-operation may guide your future work. Whether it is in committee of the whole or in the cause of advancing your own private member's bill one day, it is a far more productive way of getting good and useful things done in Parliament.

As for the act itself, it has produced a living document, the federal sustainable development strategy, the third iteration of which, for the period 2016-19, is now before you. When I read the 2015 progress report on the last version of the strategy and then the new proposed strategy, planning for a sustainable future 2016-19, I believe you have the opportunity to strengthen the strategy through your thoughtful consideration and comments, particularly in the area of climate change.

I currently serve as full-time special adviser for climate change to the Government of Ontario. My comments today do not represent the official views of Ontario; rather, they are my own observations based on my recent experience.

The big challenge for governments, national, provincial, and municipal, is that the three major elements of climate change policy, mitigation, adaptation, and economic opportunity, are each whole-of-government or boundary-spanning problems for which current government structures are ill-designed. Merely adding the words "climate change" to an existing line ministry, such as Environment, will not solve any of the three elements of climate change, each of which has its own set of relevant government departments and its own unique challenges.

Instead, I would invite the committee, and indeed the federal government itself, to use the opportunity offered by the review of this new, third version of the federal sustainable development strategy to reflect on how better to deal with the whole-of-government problem. For example, might it ultimately make more sense to house the sustainable development office, currently at Environment and Climate Change, in a central agency, such as the Privy Council Office, the Department of Finance, or the Treasury Board?

Indeed, the committee might wish to reflect on the two-dimensional nature of this challenge. Not only must there be greater horizontal action for climate change across ministries, agencies, and departments at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, but there also must be greater vertical co-operation and coordination among the three orders of governments themselves.

The challenge of responding to climate change is so great and so urgent that Canada must mobilize all of its governments for the fight, as it did during the Second World War. Using the review of the new federal sustainable development strategy for the committee to focus on this whole-of-government or, more aptly, whole-of-governments challenge would, in my view, be an appropriate and timely response to the crisis.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That was excellent.

Who's up next?

Mr. Vaughan, thank you very much.

Mr. Scott Vaughan (President and Chief Executive Officer, International Institute for Sustainable Development): Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, honourable members, good morning. My name is Scott Vaughan. I'm the president of the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Let me begin by saying how honoured I am to be here beside John Godfrey, who's the architect, as you've just heard, of the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

My comments this morning are divided into three parts: first, some observations regarding the 2016 draft of the FSDS, federal sustainable development strategy; second, some examples of quickly emerging practices related to sustainable development; and third, why whole-of-government approaches are critical to address climate change.

First, the federal sustainable development strategy, as currently released in the February 2016 draft report, has a wealth of information that highlights various environmental initiatives across government. It is thus highly useful as a single information portal of government targets, programs, and initiatives related to the environment.

Environmental information is certainly important. At the same time, environment is one of the three pillars that comprise sustainable development. Quebec's sustainable development strategy in this regard clearly states that sustainable development does not equal the environment. Rather, sustainable development intends to bring together into an integrated fashion economic, social, and environmental priorities. The consequence of omitting one of these priorities is all too clear: the loss of public confidence and trust, or the erosion of social licence.

The second broad comment regarding the FSDS is that despite its name, it isn't a strategy. Indeed, its stated objective is to enhance transparency and accountability. It thus acts as a mirror of previously announced targets and programs. When we think of a strategy in simple terms, it's the plan or road map to get us from here to there. For many years, the "there" of sustainable development was contested or unclear, yet today it's never been clearer. The sustainable development goals that Canada and 190 countries adopted in September 2015, as well as the Paris agreement on climate change adopted by Canada and others in December 2015, set out clearly the expectations for the federal government ahead.

Let me thus turn briefly to some concrete examples of actions under way to implement the SDGs and also, in those actions, reflect a whole-of-government approach in doing so.

The first area involves data and indicators to measure and compare progress within and between countries. Earlier this month, the United Nations Statistical Commission released its draft report of the potential range of indicators to measure sustainable development. The current Canadian environmental sustainable indicators, CESI, in the FSDS, while world class in measuring environment-related data, can and should be expanded eventually to reflect the emerging consensus among national statistical agencies regarding the range of indicators.

One example, honourable members, that's useful to share is work that the IISD has done with United Way of Winnipeg in building an online suite of urban-based sustainability indicators, called Peg, which comprise 30 composite indicators that track a range of issues: household income and other economic data; various social indicators, including public health, public housing, aboriginal conditions, educational attainment, public transport, and nutrition; as well as environmental indicators. Together these help measure the pulse of the city of Winnipeg and also provide a strong empirical foundation upon which to adjust policy interventions. A key aspect

of that Peg model is its commitment to community input and to public engagement.

Similarly, when looking at the SDGs at the international level, they're inviting different forms of public engagement outside of Canada. For example, the European Commission in late 2015 began public consultations across the commission regarding SDGs. In Africa, among about 12 countries, consultations involving 350,000 people are currently taking place to show how the SDGs will affect their households and their communities. In October 2015, Belarus ran a special train, an express train for the SDGs, that visited regional cities and engaged 150,000 people in what the SDGs will mean for their economy and for their people.

Perhaps the most pressing challenge regarding implementation of sustainable development, as we know, and as Mr. Godfrey has alluded to, is that of public coherence. A priority of many countries has been to build a whole-of-government coordination in SDG implementation. For example, in 2014 the German chancellor's office tasked the independent German Council for Sustainable Development to assess the national implementation dimensions of the SDGs. That report was submitted to the German chancellor in late 2015.

● (1120)

Similarly, in 2015, the new Finnish prime minister expressly moved their sustainable development commission from the environment ministry to the prime minister's office in order to support whole-of-government coordination. Similarly, the Jamaican prime minister established an SDG unit within that office. Colombia has been an early leader in the SDGs and has established a high-level inter-institutional commission comprising seven cabinet ministers for various responsibilities related to the SDGs, as well as a technical secretariat and committee and inter-sectoral working groups.

From these examples of whole-of-government models, let me then conclude with some observations about climate change, which by definition requires policy coordination across government.

According to the evidence of the federal Government of Canada, climate impacts will affect all regions of Canada and almost all sectors, and thus comprehensive actions involving almost all federal ministries and agencies in order to build resilience and adaptation. These range from linking climate impacts to public health and public safety/emergency responses, as well as action to increase climate-resilient infrastructure, to increased applied scientific research into anticipated climate impacts affecting Canada's freshwater lakes, rivers, forests, mines, and agriculture.

In looking at these challenges, new models are emerging to attract private finance towards adaptation efforts by using public finance to help de-risk and leverage private investments. Indeed, that's the model, the anticipated model, upon which the Paris agreement on blended finance is based.

It's exactly the same challenge on policy coordination on climate greenhouse gas mitigation. Actions to accelerate green innovation to bring low-carbon energy to scale are welcome, but to reach scale, whole-of-government approaches are needed to coordinate different federal government innovation clusters, be they the SDTC, NRCan, the NRC, and elsewhere.

Equally important to reach scale is leveraging other public policies, from reforming subsidies to fossil fuels and accelerating green public procurement and green government operations towards low-carbon examples, to championing Canadian clean exports abroad through NAFTA and the World Trade Organization and aligning Export Development Canada financing to attract private financial investment, again by de-risking and leveraging actions.

In addition to these operational examples, there is a clear recognition among many countries, including the United States, that climate change poses a national security risk, thus the need for Canada's foreign policy to have a clear climate lens to understand, for example, the links between climate impacts and fragile states, and the related climate security.

Madam Chair, these and other examples underscore the need for a whole-of-government approach, and no one I know in government favours incoherent policies, yet in practice, coordination can be immensely difficult. Harvard economist Dani Rodrik argues that precisely because of the magnitude of climate change, many jurisdictions are taking a fresh look at industrial policy to provide a clear strategic focus across governments and to have focused priority actions and outcomes.

Therefore, to conclude, the FSDS is one of the few examples of whole-of-government platforms and thus provides an important platform in your review to bring a whole-of-government approach to climate mitigation and climate adaptation.

Thank you.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much. You're giving us a lot to think about.

Ms. Gelfand.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Julie Gelfand (Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development): Madam Chair, it is a pleasure for us to be here today to share our views on the Federal Sustainable Development Act. I am joined today by two principals from the office, James McKenzie and Andrew Hayes.

As Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, I am responsible for monitoring sustainable development strategies of federal departments and agencies. I am also responsible for commenting on the draft federal sustainable development

strategy, or federal strategy, and for reviewing the fairness of the government's progress report in relation to its federal strategy.

The Federal Sustainable Development Act is an important piece of legislation. I would like to discuss three topics that the committee may wish to consider as it undertakes its review of the act.

First, I would like to talk about the environmental focus of the act.

The act defines sustainable development as meaning "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Despite this definition, the purpose of the act is directed towards environmental decision-making. As a result, we have noted that previous federal strategies have focused significantly more on the environment and less on the economic and social aspects of sustainable development.

The act could actually be considered to be a federal environmental strategy act. Our experience in reviewing previous federal strategies supports this characterization. In 2013, we recommended—it was probably Scott who did it—that Environment and Climate Change Canada should lead work aimed at integrating the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development into the federal strategy.

Practically speaking, sustainable development means thinking about how decisions can affect the economy, society, the environment, and the well-being of future generations. The committee may wish to consider whether the purpose of the Federal Sustainable Development Act should be expanded to explicitly include all of these components.

• (1130)

[*English*]

As an example, I'd like to draw your attention to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act that was passed by the Welsh government in 2015, most likely the latest sustainable development act at a national level.

The interesting thing about this act is there was a big debate on whether the act should be called the sustainable development act or the well-being of future generations act. They decided to go with the well-being of future generations. The other interesting thing about the act is that they have put in seven specific goals that all the departments have to contribute to, and not just environmental goals. Yes, there are environmental and climate goals, but there are also goals around health, economic prosperity, being globally responsible, equality in the Welsh community, a strong culture, as well as cohesive communities. So by being a little bit more specific about the goals and demanding that departments show how they're contributing, it's making for what I would say is sort of one step further than our current act.

My second point is that we would encourage the committee to look at whether the act can strengthen how the federal government considers the social, economic, and environmental aspects when making policy and program decisions. There is currently a cabinet directive that requires departments and agencies to identify potential important environmental effects when new programs, policies, or plans are proposed.

For the most part, departments and agencies that we have audited have not adequately applied the cabinet directive. For example, in my 2015 report, I found that the cabinet directive was applied in only five out of over 1,700 proposals that the four departments we audited submitted to their ministers for approval. The results were better for proposals submitted to cabinet, where we reported that the cabinet directive had been applied in 110 out of 250 cases. However, that's still not getting a 50% grade.

Despite these poor results, I believe that a relatively simple amendment to the act could produce meaningful results. In particular, the committee may wish to consider the merits of entrenching an enhanced version of the cabinet directive in a law, such as the Federal Sustainable Development Act. By enhanced, I mean that the departments and agencies should be required to incorporate not just environmental but also social and economic considerations into the development of public policies, plans, and programs. Entrenching an enhanced version of the cabinet directive into the act would send a clear message that sustainable development, and particularly the well-being of our future generations, must not be ignored when governments are making decisions today. As part of a law passed by Parliament, the cabinet directive and its requirements are much more likely to be respected by departments and agencies. In addition, my office would have a stronger basis on which to assess the sustainable development activities of the government.

Finally, my third point is I'd like to suggest that the committee consider strengthening the role that all parliamentary committees can play in relation to sustainable development. In my view, an opportunity exists for parliamentary committees to play a stronger role in promoting the consideration of the needs and well-being of future generations by government. Under the current act, the federal strategy is referred to the standing committees of the House of Commons and the Senate that normally consider matters related to the environment. But, as we have heard, sustainable development involves much more than just the environment. In my view, the federal strategy should be considered by almost every parliamentary committee. Each parliamentary committee could then hold the departments that report to them accountable for the contributions they have committed to make toward the goals and targets of the federal strategy.

• (1135)

[Translation]

This would likely result in a more systematic focus across government on how actions today could impact the well-being of future generations. I would expect that transparency and accountability around decision-making would be enhanced. And my office would be pleased to support the other committees that undertake this work.

Madam Chair, your committee can play an important role in raising the profile of sustainable development. I commend the committee for the work that it is conducting.

This concludes my opening remarks. We would be happy to answer the committee's questions.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate the view you have on things, and the opportunity for expanding this very important tool for governments.

Dan McDougall of the Department of the Environment is up next.

Mr. Dan McDougall (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today as you embark on your study of the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

[English]

I'm the assistant deputy minister of strategic policy at Environment and Climate Change Canada. I have with me Paula Brand, who is the acting director general of our sustainability directorate, and who is responsible overall for the development of the progress report and the federal strategy. I also have with me, Duncan Retson, from Public Services and Procurement Canada, who is the director general of the office of greening government operations, an important part of the federal strategy as well.

I'll focus my opening remarks on two main areas, if I may: first, the administration of the current act; and second, a bit of an introduction to the draft 2016-19 federal sustainable development strategy and the current public consultations we're in.

[Translation]

As Mr. Godfrey mentioned, I think it may be helpful to begin with a brief historical context.

Prior to this act, there was no comprehensive or overarching federal government approach to sustainable development. Federal departments each prepared sustainable development strategies, but each was more or less independent, and there was no overarching strategy that tried to knit it all together into a coherent whole or that guided the work of the individual departments.

[English]

After about a decade or so of audits by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development that were more or less generally critical of this approach, the Honourable John Godfrey introduced his private member's bill, which would ultimately become the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

I think it might be useful for the committee as well just to look a little bit at, as he was touching on, the history of the changes that went through from that process from the beginning to the end, and also perhaps the constraints that were implied by that, by it coming through as a private member's bill versus a piece of government legislation, because there are significant constraints that flow from that. It might be useful for the committee to look at it.

The act ultimately, as Mr. Godfrey mentioned, was passed in June 2008 with all-party support, marking the beginning of a new approach to federal sustainable development planning and reporting.

[*Translation*]

The act's focus is making environmental decision-making more transparent and accountable to Parliament. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has a number of very specific obligations under the act. They include tabling a federal sustainable development strategy every three years that sets out goals, targets, and an implementation strategy for each target and a minister responsible for achieving each target; carrying out a 120-day public consultation period for each draft strategy, as part of which, the draft is provided to parliamentarians, Canadians, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Advisory Council for review; and tabling a progress report at least once every three years.

● (1140)

[*English*]

Since the act was passed, two federal sustainable development strategies have been tabled, in 2010 and in 2013, and three progress reports have also been tabled in both houses of Parliament. The most recent report, tabled February past, presents findings and progress towards the goals and targets of the 2013-16 strategy.

In terms of participation across government, 26 federal departments and agencies are bound by the act, meaning they are required to prepare and update departmental strategies that comply with and contribute to the overall federal sustainable development strategy. They include the agencies named in the schedule to the act and also the departments named in schedule I of the Financial Administration Act.

As you might expect, departments and agencies generally participate in the strategy relative to their own specific mandates. However, all 26 contribute to targets related to reducing the environmental footprint of federal government operations.

Departments and agencies also table and report on their departmental sustainable development strategies through supplementary tables appended to the reports on plans and priorities and departmental performance reports that are tabled in Parliament. It has an effect on operations that goes beyond just the tabling of the specific strategies called for in the act.

Environment and Climate Change Canada also reaches out to departments and agencies not named in the Federal Sustainable Development Act in order to expand participation in the strategy. As a result of these efforts, the number of federal institutions involved in implementing the federal sustainable development strategy has increased with each cycle. Between 2013 and 2016 the number of voluntary departments has increased from seven to 11. Five

organizations are participating for the first time in the new 2016-19 strategy: the Canadian Coast Guard, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, and Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Voluntary departments and agencies contribute to the federal strategy in a range of ways depending on the responsibilities and programs. For example, the Canadian Coast Guard will contribute to the proposed target on marine pollution, coastal ecosystems, and environmental emergencies, while Sustainable Development Technology Canada will contribute to targets on sustainable energy, clean technology and green infrastructure, sustainable forest management, and sustainable agriculture.

I'll say a few words about the current draft strategy. On February 26 the government released the consultation draft of the next strategy, which will cover the period 2016 to 2019. The draft articulates a vision of a sustainable economy, a clean environment, and an excellent quality of life. It proposes five long-term aspirational goals: action on climate change, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our own federal operations; clean technology, jobs, and innovation; national parks, protected areas, and ecosystems; fresh water and oceans; and human health, well-being, and quality of life. The goals are supported by 36 targets as well as implementation strategies or federal actions to achieve the targets. New targets for 2016 to 2019 address clean technology and green infrastructure, sustainable energy, sustainable mineral resource development, protecting and restoring Canada's coastal ecosystems, and connecting Canadians with nature.

The draft strategy reflects federal government priorities as set out in ministerial mandate letters and in the Speech from the Throne. Examples include working with provinces and territories to establish a pan-Canadian climate change framework; developing and implementing a new 10-year plan to deliver significant new funding to provinces, territories, and municipalities to support infrastructure investment; and increasing the percentage of Canada's marine and coastal area that is conserved to 5% by 2017 and 10% by 2020.

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

For the first time, the draft strategy also has strong linkages between the federal sustainable development priorities and those of the international community.

In fall 2015, the United Nations replaced the millennium development goals with 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets.

[English]

The sustainable development goals and targets are “integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. The Goals and targets will stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.” The draft federal sustainable development strategy reflects many of the same environmental sustainable issues covered by the sustainable development goals and shows the alignment of the government's plans to these environmental sustainable development goals.

Briefly, in closing, let me speak about the consultations that we're undertaking. The Federal Sustainable Development Act that you're reviewing was very clear that consultation should be a key component, and we are using a variety of new and more modern approaches to engage Canadians. For the first time the current draft strategy is being presented in a searchable and interactive format to support public consultations. This new format allows Canadians to sift and sort through the issues that are important to them, and then have the option to use a comment box to provide input as they go. This feature also helps us understand more about how Canadians are using the e-strategy and which views and topics are most relevant to them.

In addition, the draft strategy is very much a call for Canadians to participate in its development. It's to start a conversation with Canadians about what a sustainable Canada looks like, what environmental sustainability targets the government should aim for, and how to measure and report on them.

Specifically, the draft asks Canadians to weigh in on several questions in the areas of articulating the vision, increasing the transparency and accountability, acknowledging the role of the sustainable development goals, and recognizing the contributions of our partners. While public consultations will continue until late June, we have already received a number of comments that have been very substantive, touching on a variety of sustainable development issues, such as clean technology, urban nature, investment in research, and the global SDGs.

Madam Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this overview.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I understand that you've spoken on behalf of the two other speakers, and they're here for answering questions as well.

You mentioned at the very beginning of your talk that there would be a good piece of work the committee could do, which is to look at the changes that were made as the Federal Sustainable Development Act came into play from what was brought forward in the member's bill. Who would be best to present that information to us? Who has that wisdom?

Mr. Dan McDougall: We could do some work on that if the committee wished, and I'm sure Mr. Godfrey would be more than able to provide some commentary on that today.

The Chair: If you would be willing to put that together, we would very much appreciate that. You mentioned it, and it's something that I felt would be very insightful for us to understand the changes that

were made and how it may have been ratcheted down to make it acceptable. That might be something we want to look at.

Mr. Dan McDougall: Of course.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We're going to now open to—

Ms. Julie Gelfand: The original bill was Bill C-474. I have a copy, and I could just leave it with you if you wish. I haven't marked it up already. The committee could look at that, and compare it to the final act, so that they can see the differences in terms of content, and then Mr. Godfrey and Mr. McDougall could probably talk about some of the process issues.

The Chair: Sure, that might come up in questions.

Thank you very much.

We'll start with Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): I'd like to thank the presenters who came out today, and I'd like to apologize on behalf of our group. We went to the wrong location. Things happen.

I was very glad to hear you guys talk about the need to change and bring things up to speed. I was very interested in listening to the commissioner, Julie, talk about her three changes. This just brought something to my mind that recently took place, and you guys were probably expecting this anyway.

On your strategy under target 4.3.... I'm going to fire this off to John and to Julie, and I'll get back to that in a moment. Target 4.3 is to conduct scientific research and analysis to understand the St. Lawrence ecosystem and to monitor its health. According to the FSDS, the St. Lawrence ecosystem is quite stressed at the present time. Recently they dumped eight billion litres of discharge, untreated sewage, into the St. Lawrence River.

Julie, taking your model of the three new strategies, do you think this would have happened?

Mr. McDougall, was there research done prior to that, and was there an emergency plan or anything placed to look after what the effects may be and the future effects may be?

I'll start with Julie.

• (1150)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I think I understand what you're asking me.

There is a cabinet directive that asks that every proposal that goes to a minister and every decision by cabinet have an assessment of the important environmental effects of that decision, and that this be considered in part of the decision-making. When we audit that, on whether or not departments are actually doing that, we're finding that in fact they're not following that cabinet directive. This means that proposals are going to ministers without any indication of whether or not there are significant environmental effects, positive, negative, or both, when the minister is making a decision. They're not following the cabinet directive.

The minister, when they get that information.... Mr. Fast was a minister and he got information. I'd be very curious to find out how many times he had the social, economic, and environmental—

Mr. Jim Eglinski: He would never do that.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: But it's not him; it's whether or not the department gave the minister that information so that when he made a decision, he had all three pieces.

My proposal, in the statement we made this morning, was that if you entrenched that requirement, then when you were making a decision, whatever the decision, you would have all three pieces of information: the economic, the social, and the environmental. I will give you one other example, and I will make it really personal.

Let's say you try to make a decision about whether or not to put solar panels up on your house, or to buy a local little windmill. You want to be renewable, or you want to try something new. The first thing you think about is how long you'll be in your house and what your return on investment will be. Will it pay off or not? You look at the economic and financial side. Second, you ask yourself what you'll do when the wind's not blowing and the sun's not shining. How will your kids plug in their devices? How will you operate the dishwasher? You look at the social impact, at the impact on your household. The last thing you should be thinking about when you're making that decision, on an equal basis, is how you're helping to protect the environment. What's the reduction of your greenhouse gases?

Whatever it is, that information should be available to you so that you're looking at all three things before you make a call. That's what the cabinet directive is supposed to be for. That's what we're proposing be entrenched in an act, to make it legally binding.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. McDougall, please.

Mr. Dan McDougall: Thank you very much.

I guess I would comment on two parts. First, with regard to your reference back to target 4.3 and how it's reflected in the strategy, there is an action plan, the St. Lawrence action plan, that's been in place for a considerable period of time. It's actually something of a model of intergovernmental collaboration between the federal and provincial governments. It covers across federal departments and across provincial agencies. It intersects with both municipalities and communities up and down the St. Lawrence. There's a series of *comités ZIP, zones d'intervention prioritaire*, right along the St. Lawrence. It's a long-standing means of looking at the St. Lawrence on both the economic side and the environmental side.

With respect to the particular release of sewage by the City of Montreal, I think that was the minister's day one on the job, just before she had to head off for international negotiations on day two. The first action was that she issued an order with respect to the release of sewage, and in that order, it did two things.

First, it established a monitoring program that the City of Montreal was obliged to follow so that we would have good information on what were the consequences of the diversion that had to take place for maintenance work and what were the effects on the ecosystem and the communities. That was one part of the order. The second part of the order was that the City of Montreal was obligated to participate with Environment and Climate Change Canada and the affected first nations in a comprehensive review of the circumstances that led to the cause of the release, with the intention of avoiding those circumstances in the future.

That review is still going on. A series of workshops have been held with the communities, with first nations communities, with the City of Montreal, and with the provincial government. The workshops looked at what happened there. They're looking at the scientific information that was provided by the monitoring program and will be coming up with a report to the minister, hopefully by the end of this month, on actions that can be taken to avoid this in the future.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Our next questioner is Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank Mr. Amos for swapping spots with me, because I wanted to follow up on what Ms. Gelfand was talking about on this idea of sustainability.

I really like how you phrased it in your example. To my understanding, you're putting the environment on an equal playing field with the economic and social. I think those three pillars are very important.

I'm wondering if you could add a little bit to the discussion in terms of how you see weighing those. Do you see them all being on an equal playing field? You mentioned the environment last, but does that mean you put the environment last, or does it mean you're equally weighing each of those three pillars, so to speak?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I guess I would argue that when you think about what sustainable development is, when you're thinking about the needs of future generations, you want to look at the decision you're making today and what the impact will be 20, 30, 40, 50, 100 years from now. If you're thinking like that when you're making those decisions, you're thinking about all three aspects on an equal footing.

But each decision will be different. The minister would have to make each decision, and may weight one thing more than the other. The problem we have right now is that when they're making those decisions, most of the time they have zero information about the environmental impacts, negative or positive—nothing. What we're saying is that they should be getting that information, and then how they weight the decision is up to the politicians, who make those calls. Sometimes they may weight something more strongly because they're thinking about the environmental impacts. Other times it may be a social reason that they make the decision. Other times it might be an economic reason.

What we're calling for is that the information be available to the decision-maker about all three aspects. Then they decide, based on the criteria in their head at that time, where to go. But at least they have that information.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you envision some kind of standardized reporting system that is properly displaying all that information? Mr. Godfrey talked a little bit about decentralizing, for lack of a better expression, the role of who's overseeing this, or not who's overseeing it, but how the act is implemented through different departments, taking it away from just the environment department and kind of putting it into every department.

Do you envision some kind of standardized way of how this information is reported, or do you envision that this is different in each department?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Mr. Godfrey did indicate that it might be an interesting concept to put the sustainable development strategy in a central agency. You heard from Mr. Vaughan that many governments are in fact doing that. The sustainable development strategy, the achievement of the sustainable development goals, is to report directly to the Prime Minister through separate offices. The way it is structured currently—love you, Paula—

Voice: Oh, oh!

Ms. Julie Gelfand: —is that it's buried inside. It's not at an ADM level; it's buried at a director general level, the federal sustainable development strategy.

So when Paula calls out and says, “Hey, everybody, come and help me work on the federal sustainable development strategy”, she's likely getting people at the director level and maybe even below, meaning that just in terms of where the strategy sits, it's not at a high enough level to do the horizontal work that Mr. Godfrey is talking about. That's number one.

• (1200)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Sorry, I don't mean to interrupt you. I just want to give Mr. Godfrey an opportunity, too.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Okay.

Number two, in terms of how we get that information to ministers, I think we could talk about that to try to figure out what's the best way to make sure they get all three pieces of information. But for now, let's make sure they get it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes.

Mr. Godfrey, did you have something to add?

Hon. John Godfrey: Yes, I did.

I want to be clear that I wasn't arguing for a more decentralized model. That's what we have. I'm arguing for a more centralized model in the sense that there needs to be some place at the heart of government...and there are only three central agencies at the federal government. There's the Prime Minister's Office, or PCO, there's Treasury Board, and there's Finance. They're the only ones with the kind of mission to roam and the authority to be able to compel, frankly.

A line department can do its very best. I thought we were quite clever in the way we gave them as much authority as we could under the act, but at the end of the day, you need to have an overview of how all this stuff hangs together. There are also synergies that will take place. If you're going to be interacting with your provincial counterparts, you need to have a kind of united front, if I may put it that way, or a cohesiveness, to use Scott Vaughan's words, which doesn't currently exist.

You need a central clearing house so you can get the big picture, the presiding intelligence over the system. If need be, you also need the authority to ask the tough questions on a yearly basis, i.e., what did you actually mean by that? I think the environment department goes only a certain distance, but it's only a line department.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you. This is very useful.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is Mr. Cullen.

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

I'm sitting here trying to think of how, if a Canadian walked into this room, he or she would try to make sense of all the very interesting things that have been talked about today with these noble intentions in a well-crafted bill that are hit and miss—and that's being generous—in terms of whether they manifest or not.

This cabinet directive has been ignored—Ms. Gelfand can help me here—from 1993 or....

Ms. Julie Gelfand: From 1990.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: From 1990, a little less than 1.5%, 2% of the time. Is that right? So I'm wondering what carrot or stick it needs. We've talked about different mechanisms: placing this in a different department, placing it within Finance, placing it within PCO. One of the witnesses we called, either a current or former head of the PCO... to say, “You're in charge of the government, so what are you doing about this? If less than 3% of the time this is actually happening, that stinks.”

What carrot and stick would you suggest needs to be employed to get that up?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: What I'm suggesting is that the cabinet directive be entrenched in the act. I'm not a lawyer. There are some lawyers at the table who could help me figure out how to do that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So it becomes the law rather than a suggestion?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Right, exactly.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What would be the consequence of breaking that law, then?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: At least it would be a law and not just a directive. A directive is easily ignored. I can bring attention to it, but that's about it. If it's in the act, then I believe line departments would actually pay more attention.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I want to get Scott in as well.

John, what do you think of that?

Hon. John Godfrey: One of the things that is potentially useful in getting people to pay attention at the director general level and up is that section 12 of the current act says:

Performance-based contracts with the Government of Canada shall include provisions for meeting the applicable targets referred to in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and the Departmental Sustainable Development Strategies.

In English what that means is that civil servants above a certain rank will have their annual performances reviewed. In part one of the considerations will be how much they adhere to the targets in the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

•(1205)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Has it ever happened?

Hon. John Godfrey: Well, my understanding, and perhaps the commissioner knows better, or the department can confirm this, is that what it's turned out to mean in practice is about how they are they meeting the greening-of-government stuff within their own departments, not how the actions of their departments are actually improving the sustainable development strategy.

You could read this a couple of ways, but I think if you read it in the more stringent way, and there is no reason not to, and perhaps somebody from the Department of the Environment can comment on this, there is already a bit of a carrot and a stick for civil servants to make sure they're being active on this file. It would seem, but I would defer to others, that maybe that hasn't been the case. But under the clear meaning of the act, it could be the case.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Well, let me just hazard a guess here that if it was costing people money—

Hon. John Godfrey: They might pay attention.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Well, it's funny, strange motivation.

Mr. Vaughan, do you want to...?

Mr. Scott Vaughan: No, that was exactly the point. There was in the original act that provision to measure—

A voice: It's still there.

Mr. Scott Vaughan: I believe the intention was originally to measure the performance of deputies, and then I think by legal opinion from Justice and others it was watered down to a very narrow, specific of third party contracts.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Because saving on some photocopying is great, but the ambition is so much greater in what John originally constructed in that Parliament.

So I come back that if we say this is good and this is important, then by the way it's been described so far the government is not treating it as important. I'm trying to remember if there are other directives. When the government came in and said to a deputy minister, "You need to shed 5% of your workforce" and it was connected directly to their pay and benefits, it happened. It was very rare, with one exception at Transport, that it didn't happen.

Why is this treated so less seriously, and if it is treated less seriously, then it sounds as if we need to move it out of Environment into something much more significant.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I would argue that the suggestion Mr. Godfrey made.... It's sitting in a line department. It's being run by Paula. I'm sure she's doing a fabulous job.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Paula's great.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Exactly, and she's doing the best she can at that level. But it's very different to be running it out of a line department than it is running it out of a central agency.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'll go to Mr. McDougall, because I know he wants to talk.

You found, Ms. Gelfand, that when you reviewed the draft FSDS for 2013-16, only six of 34 strategic targets met the most basic

criteria of being relevant, specific, measurable, time-bound, and achievable. That is 18%.

Mr. McDougall.

Mr. Dan McDougall: Thanks.

I think it would be a mistake to conflate strategic environmental assessments with the sustainable development strategy. The strategic environmental assessments predate both the individual and the collective sustainable development strategies. They are certainly one tool that the government has available, one that the auditors tend to focus on because they are perhaps more measurable than some of the others in some ways, but the strategy is much larger than that.

With all due respect to Paula, she's not the only one who works on this. We have a very large group of people, almost 50 people, who work on this, including up to the assistant deputy minister level—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: But the question is that it has performed so poorly. We're not talking about Paula here.

Mr. Dan McDougall: There are aspects of it that have performed poorly and aspects of it that have performed well, and I think you'll find that by going over the reports. Where they have been done, there are a lot of helpful suggestions that come from the commissioner through the auditing process, which are incorporated not only by our department but by all departments as these things improve, including those on the question of strategic environmental assessments. Departments have committed to improving their performance on those based on her last report, and I expect that she will be following up with that.

The Chair: I'm sorry to have to end that line of questioning.

Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thanks, folks, for your presentations.

I'm going to continue on along Nathan's line of questioning.

This is a really smart plan. No offence to the folks who wrote this plan, but writing a smart plan is easy. I think everyone around this table would agree that we all want good strong environmental legislation. I think we're talking about a culture here that we need to change. We need a smart plan, but we need the tools to enforce the smart plan, and it seems as though those are missing.

The draft talks about federal leadership. I think there was mention of greening government operations.

Madam Chair, I hate to get down in the weeds here, but when I was a councillor they called me a “curb and gutter” councillor. I saw the small picture sometimes much more clearly than I saw the big picture. Yesterday I walked into the men's room in Centre Block and the window was wide open to provide cool air and yet the radiator was blaring hot. On any given day, just around Parliament Hill, there a hundred cars idling for eight-hour shifts, gas-powered cars. We have our gas-powered parliamentary buses. We have loads of room for charging stations, and I know strategy, I think, 1.4 speaks to that, but I call that low-hanging fruit.

If we're going to send a message and try to change a culture, it has to start here, perhaps right on Parliament Hill, but certainly in all of our government offices all across the country, and we're not doing that. We're not even really recycling. I hate to throw in a plug for light bulbs, but we're still throwing our light bulbs out when they're spent as well.

I guess my question is for the commissioner.

Every time you speak, I either want to high-five you or I want to hug you, but my question for you is very simple and you can get this on the record: Do you have the enforcement tools you need to better implement this act? It's a good act and a good plan with excellent intentions by Mr. Godfrey, but we're not following through on the good things in this plan.

• (1210)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: The commissioner of the environment and sustainable development is in the Office of the Auditor General.

The role of the commissioner is not an enforcement role. I'm not the police person or policewoman of the strategy or of the act. I'm not a lawyer. I'd have to think about what we could think about in terms of enforcing the act, but right now that's not my role.

My role is to tell you whether or not the strategy is measurable, smart, achievable, or realistic, and to give you comments on the draft strategy. I'm also supposed to look at the progress report and tell you whether or not it seems fair in terms of what's in it, so somebody else is looking at it and it's not just Environment Canada saying that they've done a great job. The commissioner comes in and gives an assessment of that progress report

The commissioner also gives an assessment of the strategy and then has an obligation to review departmental sustainable development strategies. We have to review, I believe, all 26 in a period of five or six years. We have very specific jobs that we have to do according to the act as it now is, but an auditor isn't usually also a police person. An auditor is the reporter, the person who gives you the information, and Parliament is really the police person.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. I stand by my comments. I have a great plan to lose 10 pounds, but so far I have not done very well with that plan.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: And I would tell you how well you're doing.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Julie Gelfand: My apologies if that was disrespectful.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do I have any more time, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Darren Fisher: On regional council we had a review every five years of a regional plan. Unfortunately, it takes two years to review it.

My question, a quick snapper, would be for Mr. Godfrey.

Is three years realistic when you have a 120 turnaround, you have multiple people reviewing it? Is this something we could look at, or is this something that people might consider changing to a five-year plan?

If you have a five-year plan and it takes two years or even a year to do it, is three years a little bit too aggressive? Do you think that maybe switching to five years might be more reasonable?

Hon. John Godfrey: No. One problem with five years is you'd be in different parliamentary cycles, for one thing. I think that if you did it too quickly there wouldn't be time to change or correct. I think three years is about right, but I suspect, and one could confirm in talking to Ms. Brand and to the commissioner, the idea was to keep the pressure on but not to be unreasonable.

Another thing I would say is that this thing was designed to take into account that there would be changes in political administration, and that there would be changes of emphasis. As I say, if you look at the original draft bill from Suzuki, they didn't really talk about climate change; they only talked about CO₂ as one of the substances that was listed.

As political priorities and public priorities change, you need the flexibility to be able to put a greater emphasis on things. That's where I think parliamentary committees come in, because they reflect the urgency of the day. Also, we have to be thinking about tomorrow as well.

The act itself, in describing the sustainable development strategy, is an empty vessel. It's what you put in that thing, and it's how you update it, and it's how you build on the basis.... It's an iterative policy that allows you to get better and better at the measuring part.

I would just say right now that I suspect there is a perfect kind of alignment between the concerns of Canadians and the concerns of members on this committee. Therefore, you can be more ambitious with this bill, which did pretty well, actually. I think the fact that there were three iterations speaks well for the previous government as well, frankly.

• (1215)

The Chair: I'm so sorry to have to keep cutting this off, but it's a good discussion.

A voice: I'm chomping at the bit to make comments.

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): I love the SDGs everybody is talking about. I'm looking at them, and there are all the best intentions, but what's really happening?

I'm trying to think, how do we take these targets and these goals and all the rest of it and make it real? How do we build in accountability, enforcement, and all the rest of it? I've heard many things as far as legislative changes, as far as data, are concerned. We need data. We need to be able to measure. We need a central body. We need education. There are so many different aspects.

Scott gave a number of examples, as did Julie, of some of the actions that are just starting to happen around the world. We don't have to reinvent the wheel here.

In looking at the best practices that you see, I'm sitting here, thinking, where do we start? It's an evolution, not a revolution. Even though we are a changed government, where do we start to make the changes to build on that to make it more effective, accountable, and enforceable?

I'll start with Scott, and then ask Julie.

Mr. Scott Vaughan: Very briefly, when you look at it, there's a lot going on right now. At the international level, the World Bank, the IMF, most UN agencies, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, they're basically reframing their work, beginning with the measurement around the SDGs.

One example is we're working with the World Economic Forum, the Davos group, as well as UNDP and PDAC, to look at what the SDGs mean, specifically for the mining sector, and then going through that range of what it means in terms of trade policy and market access if you don't comply. As well, are there potential market advantages to demonstrate to world markets that you are in compliance?

I agree with you. The SDGs at their worst are policy sprawl. There are 169 targets. How do you actually think about them all at the same time?

I think the emerging practice is to say you can't do it all at once, but you have to set a strategy to say what your priorities are moving forward. The second part, which has been at the centre of this conversation, and I think it's the right one, is then from the Canadian perspective this all-of-government coordination of having a central agency—and Mr. Godfrey referred to it; it's a limited number, the PCO, or PMO, or TBS—that actually can help to coordinate this. Getting this all-of-government coordination, from my perspective, is about as tough as it gets.

Mr. Mike Bossio: The first thing is to legislate and put in.... Once we legislate as to the central agency, the department that's going to drive this forward.... No offence to Julie, but the environment commissioner is not the one to drive it forward. It has to be driven by the legislative agenda and that accountability.

By making it central, then establishing the measuring points, the different points you're going to measure at, and then building criteria of enforcement and accountability around those points: is that really where you...?

Mr. Scott Vaughan: Absolutely, I'm nodding my head in agreement. I think that's exactly the right sequence. I think enforcement may be early, but I think that getting that measurement and then getting it out in the public domain.... We heard from Mr. Cullen. The numbers speak for themselves. If you're only getting

18% compliance, that should be sending up a red flag that the system as it is is not working—

Mr. Mike Bossio: So the federal government leads and establishes this, and then it also puts us in a better position. Once again, you're not getting all governments to agree to this at the same time. You have to have leadership happening at the top to establish the model or the framework, which then feeds down to the provincial and municipal levels, once they see that it works and that it happens.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Could I add a couple of things?

I think that Scott has talked about the idea of putting it in a central agency. Mr. Godfrey has done the same thing, and I would agree with that.

I think the other thing is the role of this committee and the role of other parliamentary committees. Right now, the FSDS comes only to your committee, the committee that's concerned with the environment. If this were a broader strategy, more like the Welsh one that considered health, the economy, culture, equity, and all of the things that are in the sustainable development goals, is this really the only committee that it should come to? Probably not—

• (1220)

Mr. Mike Bossio: But if it's in a central body, I would assume that the purpose of that part of the legislation would be to get it out to all government departments and all committees.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: One of the things I tried to say in our opening statement is that we think these strategies should come in front of all the other parliamentary committees. What is the Department of Health doing in terms of implementing a sustainable development strategy? What's the Department of National Defence doing?

What are all the other parliamentary committees doing to ensure the well-being of future generations? That's a role that parliamentary committees can play.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you very much. I'd like to pass the rest of my time to John.

Sorry about that, John.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): That's okay.

In the one minute I have, Mr. Godfrey, this is the burning question I had as I was reading everything and as you spoke today. Was there one thing that you had to trade away in order to get the legislation through which you felt was important and needs to be brought back in, or were you satisfied overall?

I'd like to hear if you're satisfied with what we ended up with in the legislation, or if there's something that ended up getting missed to get the support that you needed to get it through as a private member's bill.

Hon. John Godfrey: As a political realist.... As you know, things haven't always gone too smoothly in committees during the last 10 years. I think that's fair to say.

My objective was to create something, I won't say for the ages, but to survive changes of regime. Therefore, rather than dictating in specific detail what should be in the strategy, I thought it would be more powerful if the government of the day started working on that. That would give future governments the chance to build on it, but the main thing was to keep the machinery ticking over. One of the reasons that I spent so much time working with the commissioner of the environment was to make sure we had a review process that forced people on a three-year cycle to keep coming back, reviewing the draft, coming back to these committees, and so on.

I think it has worked as well as could be expected, or even better. The mere fact that we're having a discussion today is a testament to that.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Thank you very much.

John, welcome back.

Hon. John Godfrey: It's good to be back.

Hon. Ed Fast: By the way, I did appreciate the kind comments about the previous government. We don't always expect that from former adversaries, so it's very generous of you.

I did want to go back to Madam Gelfand and the lack of implementation, really, of the cabinet directive. You said it goes back to 1990, so that directive is actually straddling at least three different governments.

Am I correct in assuming there was no political direction given by any of those governments not to comply with the directive?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: There was none that I'm aware of.

Hon. Ed Fast: All right. So, this rests with a culture that may have been present within not only the Environment department but beyond that. It was almost benign neglect of a directive that perhaps at one time had been taken seriously, and then faded into obscurity for a long period of time. Is that a correct characterization?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I don't know all the history of the cabinet directive, but when you think about the tools you can use to look at environmental impacts, the two big tools you have are the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which looks at projects on the ground, such as a new mine or a new railway, and examines the environmental impacts. But there's a whole bunch of other things we do, such as decisions, programs, policies, and plans. Also, do we look at the federal budget every year from an environmental perspective? I know for sure that we look at it from an economic and from a social perspective, but where's the environmental assessment of the budget, as an example of a big policy decision that we make?

The strategic environmental assessment tool was to try to grasp and help us look at all three pieces of information—economic, social, and environmental—when we're making policy decisions that have big impacts. You do it for projects on the ground, for things you can physically look at, such as impact on fish, water, air, people, and all that stuff. What about all the policies and plans? That was the idea behind the tool of strategic environmental assessment.

Hon. Ed Fast: What hasn't been mentioned, and I think this is very important as we expand this discussion, is the issue of

resources. Having served some time in cabinet, I know how complex many of the policy proposals are. We then place them within the context of an environmental assessment or review as we add the social and economic elements to that review. Doing that takes resources, especially when you have complex policies for which you have a multitude of stakeholders who might have to be consulted.

Am I correct in assuming that our departments may be under-resourced right now in terms of being able to do justice to the directive as it was intended?

• (1225)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I've never looked at that question in terms of capacity. When we audit the implementation of the directive, we go in and say, "How many proposals did you send to your minister? Show me them. What's the number? Then show me whether or not you did an environmental scan." That's the first thing they have to do.

So, it's hard for me to answer specifically whether or not they have the resources. We go in and tell them that there is this cabinet directive and ask if they are following it.

My proposal to you is to consider whether or not you should enshrine it in an act.

Hon. Ed Fast: My comment to the members of the government is that if we all agree that we're going to be serious about this directive, and if, in fact, the intention is to bake it into the legislation, then there should also be a discussion about the resources required at each department level to make sure this work can be done. This is not simply going to be an exercise in public relations to say that we did this. It has to be beyond that. It has to be substantive.

I have another question. Do the departments themselves identify which projects require this evaluation, or do you, after the fact, say that there are 1,700 projects or proposals that should have been subject to a review?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: For those proposals, we go into the department and ask them to tell us the number of proposals they sent to their minister. They don't even necessarily know how many proposals they've sent to their minister, so we get numbers from 3,500 to 500 to 200. We're trying to get them to figure out what a proposal to a minister is, number one. Then, once we have them, we look at whether or not they have performed the environmental scan, which is phase one of the strategic environmental assessment.

Hon. Ed Fast: Are you saying that every single proposal has to go through this screen?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Yes, every proposal does, according to the directive.

Hon. Ed Fast: Every single government—

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Every proposal for which there could be important environmental effects, either negative or positive, does.

Hon. Ed Fast: Okay, that's just the point.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: That's right. There's a little bit more.

Hon. Ed Fast: If there could be substantial negative—

Ms. Julie Gelfand: —or positive—

Hon. Ed Fast: —or positive environmental impacts.... So there has to be an assessment done within the department itself—

Ms. Julie Gelfand: That's correct.

Hon. Ed Fast: —to determine whether that standard has been met, and anything above that standard is going to have to go through the review. Are you saying that the departments have actually been doing that review of the standard to make sure every policy is identified either way?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I have the two people who know this, and they would say no, they are not even doing that.

Hon. Ed Fast: Because that's the real question for me. Who actually makes that assessment of whether we should even apply this review to any particular policy?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: What we're finding is they're not applying it at all.

Hon. Ed Fast: Except in five cases.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Five cases out of 1,700.

Hon. Ed Fast: So somebody in the civil service is actually doing it right.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Somebody is following the rules.

Hon. Ed Fast: Can you give me that answer? I'm assuming that I'm running out of time.

Mr. James McKenzie (Principal, Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development): I think you've touched on a very important point: what is that standard of significant environmental effects, and is that being consistently considered across departments? That's something that would be a useful question and clarification. I think it would help in terms of making sure the SEA process is not trying to cover everything, that in fact only the key ones go forward and go through a more detailed, thorough SEA.

The Chair: At least the key ones.

Thank you.

The next person up is Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): What an honour to participate in this discussion. We have committed civil servants. We have the current commissioner and a former commissioner. It's really appreciated. I wish more Canadians were paying attention. I hope we can find a way to draw attention to this discussion.

I appreciate comments that have been made more broadly about the sustainable development goals of this legislation. Clearly we are engaging in a review of this legislation. I think one of the biggest challenges related to the legislation is the fact that it is focused so broadly on sustainable development. Where we start getting closer to being capable of measuring specific achievements by our government.... If we get to climate change, then we actually start getting somewhere specific.

I recognize that the goals of this legislation, as articulated in section 5, enable that focus. In my line of questioning, I would invite our witnesses to focus specifically on the climate change aspect of

this. I'm not focused on the broader sustainable development right now. I'd like to focus on the climate aspect.

The purpose of the legislation is to make decision-making more transparent and accountable to Parliament. That means accountability to Canadians. Right now Canadians expect a whole-of-government approach. They don't know how to do it. They want government to achieve it. It's our role here to review the legislation as well as the strategy, based on the strategies that have emerged, to evaluate whether we are engaging in the processes that are going to achieve the kind of accountability and transparency that the legislation demands.

Canadians want to trust us, but I actually believe that right now they don't. I fundamentally believe that Canadians right now don't trust that any level of government, let alone the federal government, is actually engaging in concrete efforts to measure what sustainability and specifically climate outcomes the governments are achieving.

Number one, I'd like to invite any organization in this country but specifically IISD.... I would love if that message could be spread further through social media and other mechanisms. I would love to invite organizations to specifically suggest how the federal government could change its approach to a whole-of-government mentality around measurability of emissions and emissions reductions. We could have the same discussion around adaptation as well. We could have the same discussion around clean technologies and innovation, but specifically, I want to focus on emissions reductions.

My first question would go to Mr. Vaughan, since he has the benefit of having been in this position before. Perhaps the commissioner could follow.

What specifically needs to change within the Federal Sustainable Development Act, or if not the act, then within how government operates, to achieve measurability? I mean beyond sort of putting this in the centre of government. I note that section 15 of the act enables cabinet regulations. Do we lack the powers to compel?

Section 15 of the Federal Sustainable Development Act enables, broadly, regulations for the purpose of achieving any of the goals of the act. Cabinet can do whatever it wants, effectively, to achieve sustainable development as identified in the goals. Is there anything that could be added to the legal architecture and the regulatory architecture that would better enable measurable targets?

After you've had a chance, I want to return to Mrs. Brand, since she's involved specifically in the production of these strategies. Is there something that would better enable interdepartmental collaboration, so that you'd have some measurable goals and targets that could then be reported on?

I'll go first to Mr. Vaughan.

● (1230)

The Chair: That was a five-minute question for a one-minute answer.

Mr. William Amos: Oh, boy.

Mr. Scott Vaughan: Just very briefly then, on whether the government has the powers.... You've more experienced people around this table. From my perspective, the government has the tools now, looking at it from the government right to regulate and Ottawa's exclusive jurisdiction on international matters, on interprovincial, federal-provincial, with territories. I think there are lots of ways of demonstrating and putting in action those powers. One is green government operations. I think this is hugely important for the reasons that you've remarked on. People who are working with building codes now, companies that are buying fleets, people who are looking at how to install solar and geothermal, and others will be looking to examples and performance data from the federal government on making those investments and showing the leadership. So is it going to cost? Yes. Is there a payback? Yes. Brussels has actually now changed the way they're doing public procurement in order to have a more flexible payback, as well as actually getting new de-risking instruments that will bring in investors from the private sector to make these joint investments. I think there's plenty of stuff around innovation on this.

The more specific issue...and I think Mr. Godfrey could speak to this as well. When you look at coming out of Paris, I think you're right that the public has turned off now, saying we'll never get there. But the monitoring, reporting, and verification system coming out of Paris has to be worked out now, urgently.

•(1235)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and I'm really sorry to cut that short. We probably will have an opportunity for a second round of questioning, but let's finish this round and see where we are.

Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the presentations. I really do. One of the things I did look through...and when you mention small things, sometimes small things jump out at you and you want to ask about small things, and I appreciate the large conversation. But I think it comes to monitoring. I see a goal in here for marine ecosystems. We're at 1.3% protected. In 2017 we'll be at 5%, and by 2020 we'll be at 10%. It will be interesting to see what we get when you evaluate those large goals.

I saw the thing on agriculture, the concern about fertilizing. Well, it's a very technical industry these days, and they go by right rate, right time, right source, and right place to fertilize. The agriculture industry is a lot farther ahead than maybe this report thinks they are, and I hope they pay attention to that.

When you talked about the first nations, the water, you talked about how the federal role is only for guidance and monitoring. If we had that in the municipal world with our water system we'd be in large trouble. You have to go farther than guiding and monitoring when you talk about water. We have to have certified people who are trained 24-7.

So I don't think it goes where it needs to go. I think I've mentioned this before. If you're going to have treatable water—we all have to be the same in this country—then you have to have certified people 24-7. The federal role has to be more than just monitoring and guiding.

It won't work. That's something I'll look forward to when you do your evaluation.

When you mention building codes—I've brought this up before, and brought it up with you—you're absolutely right. Municipalities are out there trying to figure out the building codes; the builders are trying to figure them out. We need some federal leadership or it's not going to get done. It needs it. They're looking for it. And we need to provide that leadership.

I quit.

The Chair: Is there a question there?

Mr. Martin Shields: The question was about building codes and monitoring those things I'm talking about.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: In May of this year I'll be issuing three chapters of my next report. In there we're looking at the federal role in getting ready for severe weather. The building code is one of the things we looked at, so you'll be interested in that. We also are looking at infrastructure spending and whether or not it achieved the environmental goals that the infrastructure spending was supposed to achieve.

So stay tuned, end of May.

Mr. Martin Shields: Great.

Mr. Dan McDougall: I'll be really brief. Buildings is indeed one of the sectors that will be explicitly looked at in the federal-provincial work that's ongoing from the Vancouver declaration on climate change. There will be work reporting back to first ministers on that in October, and ministers before that.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was one of the issues that I had raised and wanted to have looked at, too, so thanks for bringing it up.

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: As Mr. Shields pointed out, the proposed plan, the strategy going forward from 2016 to 2019, talks about increasing the percentage of land and waters covered, certainly marine areas, from 1.3% to 5% by 2017, and then to 10% by 2020. That seems like a fairly audacious goal. I believe that was carried over from the previous government, if I'm not mistaken.

I would just love to know how you're going to do that. You're talking about a multitude of stakeholders. You're talking about commercial interests that will likely be impacted. It's going to require negotiations to get this right. Is there a formal plan in place, beyond what's listed in the strategy, as to how we're actually going to achieve those very ambitious goals?

Mr. Dan McDougall: There are a couple of points. Several departments are involved with this as well. Environment and Climate Change Canada has one aspect of it through the Parks Canada Agency. Fisheries and Oceans is going to be a key player in all of this. The legislative framework currently exists, so we don't have to go back to square one. There are clear authorities for both ministers, Minister Tootoo and Minister McKenna, to give effect to this. It will be complicated. We went through a significant period, a number of years, in which there weren't many, so it is going to have to be ramped up, but there's a strong commitment to doing that. It is going to require working with provincial partners and with the industry in order to get this right.

• (1240)

Hon. Ed Fast: In your assessment, are these timelines reasonable or are they stretching it a little bit?

Mr. Dan McDougall: In my assessment they're doable, and I say this with six years of experience in putting marine protected areas in place. It is doable.

Hon. Ed Fast: I'm glad to hear that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Chair.

When a proposal or a policy is being reviewed by the department, and then is issued forward, is there any transparency on the weighting of the different factors that are going into that? For example, the government came out recently and said they're going to include a climate test on resource projects, pipelines in particular. That's laudable in form, but when they were asked how they were going to contemplate carbon emissions, we don't necessarily have an answer for that.

John, just from your perspective, having been at cabinet, would there be a more public, more transparent way for these environmental or sustainable development principles to be judged for policies that are coming forward from the department, rather than having the lack of transparency that we have right now? All we have right now from Ms. Gelfand's report is whether they are being passed on. You can consider climate as 1% of the factors. You can have it at 50%. It depends greatly on how much weight you give to these things. I don't believe it's imagined in your act, but would there be a way to do that if we were to enhance what we have right now in law?

Hon. John Godfrey: I really don't think I'm qualified to answer that in terms of giving you an answer about the kind of machinery that would work best for you. The one thing I would say is that I think we have to balance two things. One is the importance of getting decisions out rather than simply ragging the puck and having procedures that can go on for years and years and years. I do think that up or down more quickly would be helpful for municipalities, for industries, and for everybody else.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sure. You know what I'm getting at, and I noticed.... Maybe Ms. Gelfand or Mr. Vaughan could....

Hon. John Godfrey: The one thing I would say is that building in both the mitigation and the adaptation parts is hugely important. If there's one neglected element to the climate change story, which I think is reflected in the documents that we have before us, including

the progress report from 2015 and the forward strategy, it is how little attention adaptation actually gets, and yet this is the one that's going to come at us, and for which governments are going to be held responsible.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's true.

Hon. John Godfrey: It's fascinating that the role on adaptation for climate change is actually NRCan's, and yet if you read the mandate letters of the ministers and you try to figure out who's really in charge of this whole-of-government strategy, it's not at all clear that we've captured it, at least in the mandate letters. The one thing I would urge, even if it might seem to belong to the committee on natural resources, is that this committee reflect very closely on the whole-of-government challenges of doing adaptation, because it is coming at us, and I think we're very ill-prepared for it. It's the one thing that people don't seem to want to talk about, and yet it's so urgent at the municipal level and everywhere else.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I have a quick question.

Mr. Retson, I heard in the introductions your title was about the greening of government. Are you part of that mandate?

Mr. Duncan Retson (Director General, Portfolio and Government Affairs Sector, Policy, Planning and Communications Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): I am.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The question of the long-standing condition we have here on the Hill, which is symbolic, has been brought up a few times. Is the parliamentary precinct included in your mandate as well, or is it the federal government more writ large?

Mr. Duncan Retson: It's the federal government more writ large. Our role is basically three things. We work in support of our colleagues at Environment and Climate Change Canada to help them in setting targets and goals with respect to greening government operations specifically.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Is this government services?

Mr. Duncan Retson: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So getting an EV station, a charging station up here on the Hill, would be through you.

Mr. Duncan Retson: No, our role is more of a secretariat type of function, where we provide support to Environment in establishing goals and providing some implementation support and guidance.

• (1245)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You don't cut the cheques.

Mr. Duncan Retson: No. Correct. That would be another part of my department, though, that's responsible for the parliamentary precinct.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: We could sure use a charging station to help with all those idling...we used to call them limos. They're not really limos anymore, are they? No. It's been a while.

Ms. Gelfand, just on this weighting of projects, of policies, this would help a lot. Again, you can weight things differently. You gave your example before about retrofitting a house, as to what's important and what's not. I can put climate change in the headline, as Mr. Godfrey said earlier, and that doesn't change anything. What changes it is if you actually give it some importance in the way you make your decisions.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: There's no transparency on the weighting. How cabinet decides is a cabinet confidence. However, the cabinet directive that we're talking about on strategic environmental assessment does require public reporting when a scan leads to an assessment, and then a decision is made. It's supposed to be made public.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: And is it?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: First of all, it's hardly ever done; therefore, it's hardly ever made public.

I believe that in my last report we found one out of four departments, with all the proposals and all the cabinet ones, we found one that was made public.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: You know what? You had three minutes before, and then I was adding four, so you have another minute and a bit. If there's anything else you want to ask, why don't you ask it now? I'm running backwards up the list for one more round. I gave you some extra time because you only had three at the end of the last round.

Are you done?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I feel comfortable. Thank you, though.

The Chair: Okay, I just want to make sure because our guests, I know, organized quite a bit to try to get here and give us this chance to ask some questions, and especially Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Godfrey. They've really reorganized their lives to be here. I really appreciate it. I want to make sure we take advantage of that as much as we can.

The next one would be, if we're going backwards, Mr. Amos.

We'll go to Mr. Amos and end with you guys. Is that okay with you?

An hon. member: Sure.

The Chair: Mr. Amos, you have four minutes.

Mr. William Amos: My apologies for my loquaciousness before. I would just like to go right back to where I was and invite Ms. Brand to comment, followed by Ms. Gelfand.

Ms. Paula Brand (Director General, Sustainability Directorate, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you for the question.

I would probably answer by saying that we have a very committed interdepartmental community in all of the departments, the 26 and the 37, that there are a lot of committed folks engaged in all of the measurement aspects of it.

One of the issues that we face writ large when it comes to indicators and measurements is the availability of data and timely data. I would probably just leave it at that.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you for that.

I wonder, with the minister's office's collaboration and the minister's consent—because I know that this request would have to come through them unless it was a whole-of-committee request—I think this committee would benefit from the department's own assessment of how this could be done much better.

Your own contributions to this committee, for example, around what data you are missing, would be so helpful to have. I would invite the minister's office to engage on that. I'll thank you. I'll leave that one with the parliamentary secretary.

Could I turn to Ms. Gelfand for a response.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I'm just going to check, Mr. Amos, whether you're asking what needs to change in order for the government to achieve measurability of climate emissions. Is that what you're asking?

Mr. William Amos: We just heard the comment that for the government one of the key lacunae is data, and access to timely data. If we're going to actually measure government operations in emissions reduction, for example, what do we need? How do we create for Canadians a transparent scoring system so that Canadians, on a triennial basis, can know they're actually achieving something, or no they're not, they're getting 70% or 65%? What do we actually need in order to get there?

You're the ones measuring. What do you want measured?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Absolutely. The government prepares its annual emissions report to the UN. You could ask the government to report more frequently to you, to me, to review those reports.

I remember our last audit on climate, where we looked at some of the regulations that have been put in place, yet we still couldn't tell whether or not the fuel efficiency regulations were achieving any reductions. There still wasn't any measurement capacity in place yet.

I'm struggling with trying to help you find an answer.

Mr. William Amos: Sure. I don't want to focus on what Canada's doing vis-à-vis the world. I want to focus on what the federal government is doing in its operation.

• (1250)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: In its own operation, in greening government....

Mr. William Amos: In greening government operations, in our procurement, in our energy usage, in our crown corporation activities; I'm focusing solely on our house, which is, you know, a pretty big house.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: The Public Works witness, Duncan, might be able to answer in terms of reporting on emissions, from the greening of government. Are you measuring that?

We could definitely look into it, in terms of an audit. That's a potential audit subject, right?

Mr. William Amos: I think it would be fabulous if we actually understood what we have and don't have available to us to measure the entire federal government operation in greenhouse gas emissions.

I do take John's point around adaptations; that's a separate question, and I think a great question. I'm just choosing to focus on emissions and the Government of Canada.

Mr. Scott Vaughan: We'd be glad to share with the committee. I think there are examples outside of Canada, as you were asking. The U.K., for example, will specifically measure the carbon footprint of the U.K.. The Prime Minister has made commitments to move that down dramatically over a time period.

I'll ask my colleagues to pull up.... I can share this with the committee, through the clerk.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McDougall.

Mr. Dan McDougall: Sure. We'd be pleased to provide emissions data for Canada as well. We do have that information available. It is published annually, as has been noted.

As well, greening-of-government operations is another of those areas that we're going to be looking at through the specific mitigation measures working group that we've established with the provinces. There will be some additional work going on over the next six months on that, from a federal-provincial perspective, engaging with the sector and with everyone else involved with this as well.

I would note that in the current draft of the federal sustainable development strategy which we have now, we have incorporated the new Canadian target from the Paris summit, which is minus 30% by 2030. So we have a 2030 target for government operations.

The Chair: Thank you very much for bringing that up, because it hadn't come up here. We have just recently had those sessions with the premiers and the territorial leaders, and obviously they're working on this as well. How that all dovetails and how we measure our progress is really important. I think it's a great question.

We have our last questioner, Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I want to follow through with that. Mr. Cullen was going on about this measuring thing. Going back to the idea that you talked about, sociological, economical, and environmental, do we have a level that it has to achieve, the corporation that might be applying for this, or whatever we're dealing with?

Is there a level that they have to reach within government or is it...? Say you don't meet one of those factors, does it stop there and you have to meet the factor, or do you pass it on uphill? Is there any way of measuring? Do any other countries measure a specific line that they have to get to?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I'm sorry. You mean measuring what, exactly—the environmental effects?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Well, if you're looking at the sociological, the environmental, and the economical thing, if it doesn't meet that, does it stop, or does it continue through the program? Are there some countries that have a certain level that it has to reach or it doesn't meet the criteria, and why waste further time on it?

Mr. Scott Vaughan: I will give you one example. There are international standards, for example, the World Bank International Finance Corporation, by which, for any money going out of there at a project level, there's an immediate trigger at 100,000 tonnes that has to be disclosed.

What you're seeing now is that disclosure is now happening on Wall Street, on Bay Street, and in Europe, where private companies are now saying they're going to disclose, and the thresholds are where CSR, corporate social responsibility, reporting is kind of all over the map.

There are specific triggers for GHG emissions, which are embedded through the international standards of IFC.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Okay, the international standards....

I would like to share the last part of my question with Mr. Fast. I think we have a couple of minutes.

Hon. Ed Fast: If I could go to Mr. McKenzie, we didn't finish our discussion, and it's still not clear. Who actually makes the assessment that a certain threshold has been met to trigger this cabinet directive review?

Mr. James McKenzie: Thank you for the question.

My understanding is that it's within departments. They have to apply the directive and in so doing, departments develop their own policies and tools internally to determine first.... It's a two-step process, so they'll do a scan to determine whether there will be significant environmental effects, and if they determine that there are, positive or negative, then they will go on and do a more detailed strategic environmental assessment.

It may be worth the committee considering whether there is enough clarity or guidance surrounding that directive, in terms of what is a significant environmental effect, and whether that will trigger a more detailed environmental assessment.

• (1255)

Hon. Ed Fast: My question then for Ms. Gelfand and Mr. Godfrey is, would both of you agree that a clearer, more precise definition of that threshold, and baking that into the legislation, would be helpful to the departments as they seek to apply the directive?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: It probably would. I mean, right now the directive is a directive, and it's not linked to the FSDA. They are two separate pieces.

Hon. Ed Fast: That's right. I totally understand that.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: You have the act and you have a cabinet directive.

My suggestion was to take the cabinet directive and bake it into the act, so that you have to report; you have to apply the cabinet directive. That was the suggestion that you might want to consider.

Hon. Ed Fast: You're suggesting the directive would be expanded to include the social and economic impacts as well.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Yes, that's exactly it.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Godfrey.

Hon. John Godfrey: I think that's an idea well worth examining.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you.

The Chair: If that's it for questioning, I want to thank our guests very much for joining us today. It has been an enlightening discussion.

I also want to leave it open. If there's anything that came up today that you felt wasn't explored and you didn't get to say what you'd like to have said, we would very much welcome your sharing that with us, through an email, a letter, or however you want to get it to us. We'll make sure that the whole committee gets it. The wealth of experience that you bring to this is very welcome.

Hon. John Godfrey: Could we get Mr. Vaughan's speaking notes?

The Chair: Yes, they're in the blues.

If there is anything that anybody else wants to share with us, we'd welcome it.

Hon. John Godfrey: My question is, where do you go from here as a committee with regard to—

The Chair: I think that you've opened the eyes of a lot of people to the possibilities of what we can do with this, and that was the point of today's meeting.

There will be a subcommittee meeting right after this. We'll start the subcommittee at 1:00, and we'll start discussing where we go from here.

Thank you so much. We'll end this session and take a break. The subcommittee will meet at one o'clock.

The meeting is adjourned.

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