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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, November 20, 2018**

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**Chair**

**Mr. John Aldag**



# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

• (1540)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to our witnesses. We see many familiar faces. It's nice to have you back.

I apologize for the slight delay in getting started today. We did have votes and getting everybody over here takes a minute. We will go a full hour with the departmental group before us today. After that, we'll be going in camera and doing some committee business. We've eaten into that time, not into this session.

The purpose of today's meeting is to look at the supplementary estimates. We have the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency with us, as well as the Department of the Environment. I believe we're going to have three brief presentations on the supplementary estimates. Let's get started with that.

Who would like to go first?

**Ms. Carol Najm (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Financial Branch, Department of the Environment):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, members.

I'm pleased to be here with you today to discuss the 2018-19 supplementary estimates (A) for Environment and Climate Change Canada.

With me are Matt Jones, the assistant deputy minister of the pan-Canadian framework implementation office; Sue Milburn-Hopwood, the assistant deputy minister of the Canadian Wildlife Service; Mark Cauchi, our director general for protected areas; and Mary Taylor, our director general, environmental protection operations.

[Translation]

Supplementary estimates (A) include \$23 million in new spending that requires parliamentary approval and a reduction of \$3.2 million in transfers, for a net total of \$19.8 million. This represents a 1.2% increase over the authorities to date, bringing the proposed authorities to \$1.65 billion.

[English]

Our estimates include new spending for six items: new impact assessment and regulatory processes; the indigenous guardians program; the federal carbon pollution pricing system; Canada's nature, parks and wild spaces; government advertising programs;

and funding to address issues in pay administration. I will now provide a summary of each item.

In January 2018, the Government of Canada announced that it would invest \$1 billion over five years to support the new impact assessment system. The new process will broaden impact assessments to consider health and socio-economic impacts in addition to environmental impacts, create a new early planning and engagement phase and strengthen partnerships with indigenous peoples.

The supplementary estimates (A) are seeking a total of \$74.6 million in 2018-19 for this horizontal initiative, which includes \$8.1 million for Environment and Climate Change Canada to provide scientific advice and expertise, collect data, implement open science and a data platform, and provide contributions to support community-based monitoring.

Budget 2017 announced \$25 million over five years to support the indigenous guardians program. This initiative will give indigenous peoples greater responsibility and resources to manage their traditional lands and waterways, and facilitate partnerships with indigenous communities in monitoring ecological health, maintaining cultural sites and protecting sensitive areas and species. Environment and Climate Change Canada is requesting \$5.3 million in these estimates to establish and administer the indigenous guardians program.

[Translation]

Moreover, Environment and Climate Change Canada is seeking \$3.9 million in supplementary estimates (A) to support the development of a federal carbon pollution pricing system that would apply in provinces and territories upon request, and in provinces and territories that do not have a pricing system in place that meets the federal benchmark by the end of 2018.

• (1545)

[English]

Budget 2018 also announced \$1.3 billion in spending over five years to support Canada's biodiversity by protecting species and spaces. The supplementary estimates (A) are seeking \$17.5 million for this horizontal initiative, including \$1.7 million for Environment and Climate Change Canada to renew and enhance the species at risk program, strengthen the management of the department's conservation areas and provide contributions to promote the conservation of biodiversity through the Canada nature fund.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is also seeking \$1.4 million in funding for advertising programs to implement the nature legacy campaign.

The last spending item in these estimates is to address issues in pay administration. A total of \$24.9 million is being sought by various departments and agencies, including approximately \$800,000 for Environment and Climate Change Canada, to strengthen internal capacity to address human resources and pay administration issues.

As for internal transfers, a reallocation of resources will allow Environment and Climate Change Canada to realign its funding with emerging priorities.

These reallocations include a transfer of \$550,000 from contributions to grants under the innovation solutions Canada program. This program supports the growth of innovative Canadian businesses by encouraging the government to act as the first customer. Environment and Climate Change Canada is increasing the funding for that program from \$50,000 to \$600,000 in 2018-19 using existing funds, and issued its first challenge in fall 2018 in support of the plastic reduction strategy.

These priorities also include a transfer of \$600,000, from the operating funds in vote 1 to the grants and contributions in vote 10, to support the Canadian centre for climate services in providing enhanced climate information to Canadians. This reallocation of funds from the program's existing operating funds will provide the funding that is required for a modified approach to delivering the program. Whereas a government-built and operated web portal was originally envisioned, Environment and Climate Change Canada will now leverage the considerable expertise of the climate services community in Canada to deliver this commitment in a more cost-effective and robust way.

A transfer of \$2.5 million from contributions to grants in support of "Taking Action on Clean Growth and Climate Change" is also included. This new grant authority was recently approved by the Treasury Board. Environment and Climate Change Canada is now seeking to list an amount of \$2.5 million for this new grant to be funded from existing reference levels. The climate action fund supports climate actions in communities across Canada. It seeks to increase awareness of and participation in climate action among Canadians, especially youth, students, indigenous peoples and organizations, and small and medium-sized businesses.

Included, as well, is a vote transfer of \$5.5 million from our operating funds in vote 1, to the grants and contributions in vote 10, to support commitments related to the G7 ocean plastics charter and the Global Commission on Adaptation. The department has a number of mandated items and priorities that were conferred through budget 2018, for which there have been no incremental resources. As such, the department has proactively reallocated funds from within existing reference levels to ensure that these high-priority items can go forward. Environment and Climate Change Canada is seeking a transfer between votes in order to provide the department with the funds required in contributions, to allow the department to fulfill its commitments related to the G7 ocean plastics charter and the Global Commission on Adaptation.

[*Translation*]

As for transfers to other organizations included in our supplementary estimates (A), Environment and Climate Change Canada is transferring a total of \$3.2 million to four organizations to support collaborative projects and research for various programs.

[*English*]

I hope the summary of our initiatives included in these estimates provides the committee with the insights it is seeking.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you for those opening comments.

Now we'll move to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. We have two presentations, so whoever would like to go first.

● (1550)

**Mr. Alan Kerr (Vice-President, Corporate Services, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the standing committee. I'm Alan Kerr, vice-president, corporate services and chief financial officer, and I'm joined by my colleague Christine Loth-Bown, vice-president, external relations and strategic policy, to discuss the 2018-19 supplementary estimates (A) for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency provides evidence-based environmental assessments. The agency's team of highly qualified employees supports the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in carrying out her responsibilities by conducting environmental assessments for major projects in a manner that protects the environment, fosters economic growth and jobs, supports sustainable development and reflects expertise received from the public, indigenous groups and other stakeholders.

In 2017-18, the agency supported the minister in leading a national review of federal environmental assessment processes, and in February 2018 these efforts reached a milestone with the tabling in Parliament of Bill C-69 that proposes changes to the current Canadian Environmental Assessment Act of 2012.

In this regard, we are providing ongoing advice and support to the parliamentary process. Regulatory and policy work, including public consultations, also began following the February announcement. In conjunction with this support to Parliament, within the agency, we are preparing to implement the proposed new approach to impact assessment. Budget 2018 announced new funding for the agency of \$258 million over the next five fiscal years, including \$21 million of funding in fiscal year 2018-19; \$19.1 million for program expenditures, which include \$99,000 in funding for pay administration; and \$1.9 million for statutory expenditures for employee benefit programs. This funding has been requested to implement key legislative, regulatory, program and policy measures to support the successful implementation of the new impact assessment process upon coming into force and transition from environmental assessment to impact assessment.

In June of 2018, the agency accessed \$11 million of the \$21 million with a financial authorities instrument submission to Treasury Board. This funding enabled the agency to advance the necessary policy and regulatory instruments, hire staff and secure additional workspace, to take on a more proactive role and seamlessly transition to the new impact assessment act.

The funding provided through supplementary estimates (A) will be divided into three main program areas, namely, impact assessment, partnering with indigenous peoples, and cumulative effects and open science and evidence. To support these programs the agency was allocated 100 new full-time equivalent employees for 2018-19, 65 of whom have been hired thus far and staffing actions are in place to recruit the balance.

Now I'd like to introduce my colleague Christine Loth-Bown to expand on these main areas.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown (Vice-President, Policy Development Sector, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and members of the committee.

I'd like to give today some further detail on the initiatives and programs to which the funding that Alan has outlined will be allocated.

Under the proposed impact assessment act, Bill C-69, the agency will become the lead organization responsible for federal impact assessment of designated projects. This will include projects which are currently assessed by the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The agency will be conducting assessments within strict legislated timelines.

Some of the significant responsibilities and enhanced programs proposed under the legislation include the following: the conduct of a new early planning phase for projects, improved co-operation with other jurisdictions, increased opportunities for public participation and transparency, and support for indigenous peoples and the public in an expanded role in monitoring impacts during the implementation and operation of approved projects.

I'd like to note that the agency is now pursuing discussions on co-operation agreements with interested provinces, and is considering piloting early planning for projects in the early stages of

environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act—the current legislation, CEAA, 2012.

Under the new act, the agency will fulfill the role of Crown consultation coordinator for all designated projects, and the agency will ensure effective collaboration and meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples. These goals will be achieved through the provision of increased participant funding, as well as the launch of a new capacity support program that will improve the preparedness of indigenous groups and their technical expertise related to impact assessment.

In turn, this increased capacity is expected to result in improved participation in federal assessments, ensuring that indigenous knowledge, laws and culture are considered in impact assessment and influence assessment processes. These efforts will support the government's reconciliation commitments and build deeper collaboration with indigenous peoples.

The final area for which the agency is receiving funding will allow the agency to make important contributions to the government's deliberative approach to cumulative effects. The agency will lead the conduct of three regional assessments over five years, which will support the management of cumulative effects and provide important information for future project assessments.

The agency is using the funding that was approved earlier this year to support the work on the first of the three regional assessments, which will explore the potential impacts of offshore oil and gas exploration. This initiative has been launched jointly with the Government of Newfoundland.

Thank you to the members of the committee for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to taking any questions you may have.

● (1555)

**The Chair:** Thank you for your comments.

By way of information for our officials here today, you'll also note that the Parks Canada Agency received funding. They were unable to send anybody from the organization to see us today.

For committee members, be advised that we will be giving Parks Canada one hour of our undivided attention next Tuesday. They will have lots of love and attention on their own next Tuesday, after we do an hour of testimony on the study we're undertaking.

I don't want you to feel that anybody is getting off easy here. We appreciate all of you for being here and joining us today.

With that, we're going to go to the tag team of Mr. Fisher and Ms. Dzerowicz for the first round of questions, for six minutes.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of you for coming here and for your excellent presentations.

In general, I don't have any issues. I have a number of small questions, and it's just a matter of me better understanding where the money is going to be spent.

My first question is around the supplemental estimates. It includes \$23 million in new spending that requires parliamentary approval, and a reduction of \$3.2 million in transfers. What's the reduction in transfers? Where is that being reduced?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** That's money that we had in our reference level that we are asking to be moved to other departments that work in collaboration with us—

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Okay.

**Ms. Carol Najm:** —such as DFO, NSERC, NRCan and our Global Affairs.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** We just took from areas where we don't need it and redirected it to where we do need it.

**Ms. Carol Najm:** For the areas where we work in collaboration...

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Okay.

We've put some additional dollars into the impact assessment and regulatory process. It seems like we are broadening the assessment to consider health and socio-economic impacts. Could you explain that a little bit to me just very quickly?

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** Currently, under CEAA, 2012, an assessment looks at just the environmental effects of a project. Under the proposed impact assessment act, we will be looking at environmental, as well as social, health and economic impacts. As a result of that, the agency needs to increase its staffing and expertise in the health and social areas.

Carol noted that budget 2018 gave a broader budgetary allotment to a number of federal departments. Health Canada has also received funding as part of budget 2018 to support the evaluation of health impacts.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** When we look at health and socio-economic impacts, are we looking at the air quality, people breathing in things? Can you give me some examples of what that would be, just quickly?

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** We are currently developing policy and technical guidance, but yes, it would look at what water quality issues there are, what air issues there are, what noise issues there are and how a particular project's impacts may affect individuals' health. That will be included as part of the assessment.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Thank you.

There are additional dollars to support the development of the federal carbon pollution pricing system, which would apply to those that do not have a pricing system in place. I'm assuming that these dollars are for, currently, the four provinces for which we have announced the price on pollution: Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and New Brunswick. Is that correct?

**Ms. Mary Taylor (Director General, Environmental Protection Operations, Department of the Environment):** Yes, I believe that's correct.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** When we say that it's to support the pricing system, is it just the administration of it? What is the support? How do we define that?

If you don't know, it's okay.

• (1600)

**Ms. Mary Taylor:** I'll have to take that back.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Okay. Thank you.

In 30 seconds, it looks as if we're allocating money for the plastic reduction strategy, which I'm very happy about. I think we've allocated.... How much is it? Is it \$550,000? What is it specifically for?

Then I'll transfer it over to Mr. Fisher.

**Ms. Carol Najm:** Specifically with the innovative solutions Canada program, we have a project to reduce plastic waste.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Yes.

**Ms. Carol Najm:** Currently, recycling does not include all types of plastic, so in using this innovative solutions approach we are looking to launch a project to reduce plastics from food waste—food wrappings and so on. Currently, a lot of recycling programs do not accept all kinds of plastics, so innovative solutions will look to solutions that address food processing.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Perfect.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** I have two minutes left. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Julie.

I'll go to Alan or Christine. We studied Bill C-69 for quite some time, late into the night. I know you guys know that because you were with us sometimes. In the supplementaries, there's \$19 million to, as it says, begin assisting the transition from the old assessment system to the new impact assessment process. We heard a lot of testimony from various witnesses about the importance of ensuring that there weren't any unfair delays to proponents during the transition process. Is that what that money's for?

How will you guys be using these funds to avoid delays to the assessment process during this all-important transition?

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** The funding that we've received now, and in particular the advance that Alan had indicated earlier, was to ensure that the agency could bring staff on board to be able to develop the policies, the technical guidance and the proposed regulatory consultation papers, in order to ensure that we can have a smooth transition to the new impact assessment legislation, should it be passed by the parliamentary process. We did hear loud and clear that, going forward, we need regulatory certainty.

For the regulations, we've consulted on two regulatory consultation papers for the information and time management regulations, as well as the project list regulations. We've begun that consultation process and we'll be coming out with a second round of consultation papers, so that there is certainty of process and people understand what the requirements would be, should the new legislation be passed.

As well, we're working on the technical guidance paper so that, should it be passed, we'll be ready to hit the ground running and transition projects smoothly to the new system.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Is that it, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I have 10 seconds. Are those the 100 employees you're talking about, with 65 already hired?

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** Yes, and—

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I understand. Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Next up, we have Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for appearing once again before us. You are becoming an old hand at this. We will probably get to know each other better from year to year since we work together, and we all have the same objective: putting mechanisms in place to protect our planet.

We have to think of the future of our children and grandchildren. The two elements we can influence as parliamentarians are the budget deficit and the impact on our environment, on our planet. As a parliamentarian, I find those two points very important.

Today, a request for close to \$20 million in additional spending was submitted to us. Obviously we don't break down that amount number by number. That said, however, I would like to understand one thing, and I'm going to compare the situation to private enterprise. When there are additional expenses, it is because people want to do something quickly. I think that for measures to protect our planet and reduce greenhouse gases, it would have been pertinent to add an additional \$20 million.

Here are the elements in the list that justify the \$20 million: a new impact assessment process; the indigenous guardians program; the federal carbon pollution pricing system; protecting nature, parks and wild spaces in Canada; government advertising programs; and funding to solve issues related to compensation administration.

Are those really our priorities to finish the year?

This is a big problem for me. You are asking for additional funds, but what will be the immediate impact on the environment? I cannot identify it. Two weeks ago, there was a march in Montreal, Quebec, and I took part in it. People were raising the emergency nature of the situation. And yet, people come to us, the government, for money simply to improve the six points on the list, and I will not read them again.

In what way does this request for \$20 million align with the need to act quickly? What will be done in concrete terms to reduce greenhouse gases?

• (1605)

[*English*]

**Ms. Carol Najm:** I think it's important to appreciate that we have a very diverse department, and these estimates include all aspects of the work of the department, be it climate change, conserving nature

or our role in impact assessment. It is about all of the priorities that we are dealing with on behalf of the department. More specifically, with regard to the direct actions to reduce climate change, there are a number of specific items in these estimates that are geared towards immediate outcomes.

Matt, do you want to speak to some of the more direct climate change items?

**Mr. Matt Jones (Assistant Deputy Minister, Pan-Canadian Framework Implementation Office, Department of the Environment):** Sure. I'd be pleased to. I think the bulk of the resources that are available to the department and to Parks Canada and to the Environmental Assessment Agency have been provided through previous budget allotments. In this case, we have asked for some specific funds for some specific purposes. It's more of a fine-tuning kind of approach, I would say.

In terms of climate change, I would point to the Canadian centre for climate services, for which we've asked for some modifications to the monies to change from one vote to another to allow for a more efficient application of that program. I have perhaps mentioned this program at other appearances before this committee in the past, but this is one through which we are finally making available to Canadians the government's data on the impacts of climate change in a format they can use. We're very pleased to be able to do that. We feel that it's overdue, and we're trying to do that as efficiently as we can.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I appreciate your answers, but I still find two points problematic.

First, I do not understand why you would ask for additional funds to run a government advertising campaign. Unless you are in an election year, there is no need to conduct a campaign to say that the government is taking concrete steps to benefit the environment. This was not in the initial budget, it is new and it comes out of nowhere. I find this disappointing, and it is not what I expected from Environment Canada.

That said, I understand that you may be between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand the government gives you guidelines, and on the other you must deal with daily reality.

The other point concerns issues with pay administration. None of that goes to the environment. I think it a waste, and grandstanding. I remind you that Bill C-69 has not yet been passed. You are asking for funds in connection with a bill that has not yet been approved in the Senate.

What is the priority? Are you really working in the interest of the environment? I'm asking myself some serious questions about that. Why run a publicity campaign at this point?

[*English*]

**Ms. Carol Najm:** Thank you for the question.

On the campaign funding, it is a horizontal initiative led by PCO. That money for Environment Canada is being used to promote the nature legacy fund. It will ensure that Canadians have a better understanding of the new nature agenda and what we are going to be doing with the money and how to access it.

The \$1.4 million we're asking for is broken down into three components—experience nature, funding and indigenous—and the campaign will target specific audiences depending on the component.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** At this point, that operation could be postponed until the next budget. I would have appreciated being asked for funds to immediately decrease greenhouse gases. It would not be instantaneous, but at least it would be a start.

Is my speaking time up, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You're out of time, but if anyone one would like to offer a quick comment...?

**Mr. Mark Cauchi (Director General, Protected Areas, Department of the Environment):** Maybe just quickly, the money provided in budget 2018 for the Canada nature fund is time limited. We recognize that if we're going to make any progress on protected areas or species at risk we need to work in partnership with communities. It's absolutely imperative that those communities across the country understand that there is money available, that government wants to partner with them and that there are the means to work together.

Without that basic understanding of the availability of funds under the Canada nature fund, the government's interest in forging partnerships and the matching money contained in the nature fund, it's going to be all the more difficult to make progress in that time-limited window.

•(1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Stetski.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Again, thank you for being here.

I want to start with the \$24.9 million that is being sought by various departments and agencies “to strengthen internal capacity to address human resources and pay administration issues”. Is a lot of that specifically aimed at trying to cure some of the problems with the Phoenix pay system?

I'm the critic for national parks and I've heard from individuals who weren't getting paid at all, including students trying to go back to university. I've heard from people who were paid in the following year, which increased their tax bracket because they didn't get paid in the proper year. I've heard from people who were overpaid by, let's say, \$1,000, and of course you only see about \$700 on your paycheque because of the deductions, but government wants \$1,000 back from those people. I don't know how you recover your deductions from all the various departments to get your \$300 back from those departments.

Is that specifically what this is for? Is it to try to deal with the Phoenix cases, which are extreme in national parks, certainly, because of the variety of the job positions they have there, and perhaps in the other departments as well?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** Yes, thank you. It is specifically to enable the department to establish internal capacity to do a better liaison with staff and resolve the issues facing employees as a result of the Phoenix implementation. We are focused on ensuring that we have the data analytics and are able to resolve those cases on behalf of our employees. This money will go towards strengthening that internal capacity and also focusing our efforts on establishing a team to resolve the overpayment issue, which is continuing.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Phoenix certainly was a disaster. I know that staff would appreciate any assistance you can offer in trying to resolve that in the long term.

On the \$1.3 billion, I believe that's the \$1.3 billion that a number of us advocated for and signed a letter to the finance minister on, which I think is very necessary. I didn't hear any talk, though, about what's happening with the Canadian Wildlife Service, which has been chronically underfunded. I'd like to give you an opportunity to talk about what the new funding might mean for the CWS.

**Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment):** Thank you for the question, and indeed, the Canadian Wildlife Service is going to benefit from the \$1.3 billion, although it's really important to note that a good part of that—half a billion dollars—is actually going to the Canada nature fund, which will allow funds to go out to other organizations to partner with and join us in the effort for conservation.

We did get funding primarily in the area of strengthening our capacity to deal with species at risk and in the movement toward protecting 17% of Canada's terrestrial environment. That will allow us to deal with some of the gaps we've had in our organization. We will grow our organization by somewhere around 250 to 300 employees over the course of the next five years.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** There's nothing in the supplementary estimates, at least nothing that was spoken to directly.

**Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood:** Yes, there are a few bits—and I don't have the exact amounts—programs through the indigenous guardians program, funding through the nature funds. It's small numbers of FTEs and some Gs and Cs funding to very specific pieces. It was really more of a cleanup, as a result of the approval of the submissions.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** When I saw the government advertising programs, I had some of the same questions and issues. Whenever you're heading into an election year, of course, there is a little bit of cynicism that comes with government advertising dollars.

The only advertising dollars you have are the \$1.4 million that you referenced to promote the nature legacy campaign, at least in the supplementary estimates.

•(1615)

**Mr. Mark Cauchi:** That is correct.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** What does that actually look like?

**Mr. Mark Cauchi:** The strategy right now is still under development. The department is working, as Carol noted, on a plan to build a website where Canadians can go to access information on the nature legacy program, including the Canada nature fund.



The goals are essentially to encourage Canadians to experience nature and to visit protected areas including national wildlife areas, national parks and other protected areas across the country. We as Canadians all understand the benefits of nature, and the notion of nature as being integral to our well-being will be promoted.

As I mentioned before, we'll also be providing information on the Canada nature fund. There will be community organizations and indigenous groups, such as first nations, who will be interested in accessing that Canada nature fund and providing matching funds, in many cases, towards conservation projects. They do need to know and to have information about the Canada nature fund.

We're also specifically targeting indigenous communities. You may recall that under the budget 2018 announcement, the government did indicate that indigenous protected and conserved areas would be a major theme under the nature legacy. This is an innovative part of the approach, and we are aiming to establish a minimum of 20 and up to 35 IPCAs moving forward.

There's lots of interest out there on the part of first nations. We know that, and we need to be engaging them, reaching out to them in a positive way and sharing information with them. There will be an element here dealing with indigenous-specific communications to various communities across the country.

**The Chair:** Great. Thank you.

Mr. Bossio, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

As always, thank you all so much for being here. You're starting to feel like part of the family.

I want to follow up on Monsieur Godin's comments about \$20 million and having an immediate impact, and connect those to Mr. Fisher's question around ensuring that, when there is legislation like Bill C-69 and so on involving protected spaces and all of these areas that are unfolding, there's a transition period. Therefore, funds need to be spent in order to prepare for that transition, so that it can be as seamless as possible and so that we don't have an adverse impact on good projects moving forward as quickly as possible.

Can you explain that? Is making sure that transition is seamless part of the aspect of the funding here?

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** In the case of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, yes, that funding is to ensure a smooth transition to the proposed new process, should it be approved by Parliament. The desire, should that be approved, is that it would come into force rather quickly.

We've heard a considerable amount from stakeholders and industry about how they need certainty of process, so we need to prepare. With the advent of the early planning process, we'll need increased staff to the agency to be on the ground out in regions, to be able to work with proponents and stakeholders, to ensure that we're engaging earlier in the process and to work with indigenous groups as well, so we're setting that up.

As well, we've heard strongly that the guidance to support this new system needs to be developed in a collaborative manner. We

will be hosting workshops and working with folks throughout the course of this year to prepare that material so that we're in a no-surprises environment and can afford that regulatory certainty for all.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Is this a usual practice that the department would go through when a legislative change is occurring?

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** It is very good best practice, yes.

In times when we've not done these types of transitions we get considerable feedback for not having been prepared, and that—

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** It's like the Phoenix fiasco.

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** I can't speak to Phoenix, but I can speak to previous changes when we weren't prepared for them. We got feedback from industry that it was frustrating to them and it gave them a lack of certainty. We're trying to learn from that and prepare.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** It's the same thing on the \$3.9 million that is going to ensure there's a transition. In order to bring about the federal backstop, there's going to need to be money used to set up this process of putting a price on pollution, and also the rebate that will come back to those four provinces.

It's unfortunate that many of the four provinces, in many instances, backed out of a pricing mechanism that they already had in place, and chose in the end not to move in that direction, but at the end of the day they did.

The department has had to react fairly quickly in order to ensure that, come April, we have a system in place that individuals can count on and understand.

The type of system that we've decided to put forward, where it's targeted as far as the pricing on pollution, the areas it will...and the rebate is one amount that will go to all households equally. In the end, is that not also reducing the actual overall cost of the program?

• (1620)

**Ms. Mary Taylor:** Certainly we are using that funding to implement the system. We need that to set up standards and to establish the price and standards for various regulatory industries.

At the end of the day, the actual expenses to the economy are less than 0.1% of GDP. I think it is a very small amount, and that's within the fluctuation of energy prices as it is.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** As far as the indigenous guardians are concerned as well, this is a commitment we've made as a government. We feel it is vitally important to get indigenous communities engaged in environmental practices within their own communities, to provide that local protection using the traditional knowledge they've developed over thousands of years.

In that \$5.3 million that is going towards the indigenous guardians program, can you expand on what that money is going to be used for and the importance of it?

**Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood:** Yes. Thank you for the question.

In this year, we have just recently announced that there will be 28 indigenous projects funded initially, for a total of \$5.7 million. This will fund their projects across the country. It will fund things like protecting sensitive areas and sensitive species, monitoring ecological health, whether its biodiversity, climate or water, as well as maintaining some of the important indigenous cultural sites that are very much connected to those locations.

It's a program that we're administering jointly with first nations, Inuit and Métis. We have 28 projects off the ground this year, with calls for proposals to come for later-year funding.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lake, you have six minutes.

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Since we're discussing the budget, I'm going to start with the big-picture question that gives some context.

Does anybody at the table know exactly what the projected budget deficit is for this year?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** No.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** No one. That's interesting.

Does anyone know what the current government promised the budget deficit would be by 2019?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** I don't have the information with me.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** It's zero. That was the promise that was made during the election campaign.

Was there any conversation, as it relates to the planning for a meeting like this, that centred around saving money, saving taxpayer dollars, in the context of being \$20 billion short of the overall budget promise made by the government of the day for 2019?

Was there any conversation around how we can save money to fulfill that promise? Is that part of the equation in terms of what we're discussing today?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** I think at the departmental level, no. That type of strategy would better be discussed on a whole-of-government level through Treasury Board, PCO and Finance.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** To that point, then, would there have been communication received at the departmental level from the folks having the conversation at the whole-of-government level that would have given instruction to take a look at your budgets with a target of keeping the balanced budget promise in mind?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** Not specifically, but as you can see in our estimates, we are finding funding internally to reallocate to priorities for work that we had been asked to carry out that we did not get funding for. In these estimates, you will see the transfer of resources to enable those commitments to be carried out without additional resources being sent to the department. I think that is our way, amongst ourselves, to find the most efficient use of the investments that we are given.

• (1625)

**Hon. Mike Lake:** I'm going to switch gears. I could go for a long time on that. I would like to switch gears, if I can.

In the context of the government's overall approach on the environment, taking a look at the top 10 exporting countries for oil

around the world: Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Canada, UAE, Iran, Kuwait, Nigeria, Angola and Kazakhstan, one of those countries seems to stand out among the other ones there.

My question is this. Is there some international agency tasked with the measurement of emissions produced per barrel of oil exported by those 10 countries?

**Mr. Matt Jones:** I'm not sure if there's an international agency specifically tasked with that. I know there has been lots of analysis over the years, mostly within this country by Natural Resources Canada, on the emissions intensity of oil production. International comparisons have been developed, and that analysis has been done. I can't recall if that was done just by the natural resources ministry or if that was in conjunction with the International Energy Agency. This is not something I've worked on directly, but I'm sure that analysis exists.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** For the Environmental Assessment Agency folks, maybe you could speak to transparency in other countries, comparisons that have been made with Canada, with specifically those nine other countries in terms of transparency.

I know that we have a regulatory process right now. We're putting forward Bill C-69, which has a significant impact and has raised a lot of concern in the industry in Canada. The biggest concern that I'm hearing is that other countries that we compete with are not subject to the same requirements.

Maybe you could speak to your understanding of levels of transparency in Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, UAE, Iran, Kuwait, Nigeria, Angola and Kazakhstan.

**Ms. Christine Loth-Bown:** I'm not in a position to speak for those countries. I am in a position to speak for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the priority that we place on transparency for environmental assessment processes.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** As we pursue an impact on the global level of emissions under the Paris Agreement and the mechanisms available to us, would it be safe to say that Canada probably has standards above and beyond each of those nine countries that are measured in terms of implementing technology to reduce emissions?

**Mr. Matt Jones:** In terms of transparency when it comes to other countries and specifically with respect to the Paris commitment, all countries report to the United Nations through their national communications and their inventories on their greenhouse gas policies. Those policies and those reports are available online. I have not personally gone through Nigeria's, Iran's or Saudi Arabia's policies specifically on the oil and gas sector.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Is the comparative level of emissions even taken into account when assessing Canada's strategy in reducing the global level of greenhouse gas emissions? For example, we have \$54 billion in export dollars that we bring in through exporting oil. If we're able to maintain that or even grow that by maybe building a pipeline or two to help increase those exports, the level at which those dollars can be invested in green technology, relative to what other—so it's an opportunity cost question—countries might do with that same amount of money, and the subsequent impact on greenhouse gas emissions...?

**Mr. Matt Jones:** That's a complicated question that we could talk about for a long time potentially, and I don't think we have looked at our environmental policies being tied explicitly to export revenues from one sector. Certainly revenues are the revenues of the government, but the government has taken a balanced approach where they're looking to grow the economy, of course, and reduce our emissions intensity within the country.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Amos, we should be able to get through your six minutes, and then I need to leave a couple of minutes to go through motions related to this.

We'll see where we are after Mr. Amos's six minutes, and that may be as far as we get with this.

**Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses, once again disrupting your busy days to come and speak with us.

I'm interested in some of the investments being made around Parks Canada. There were some investments, particularly in the Bruce Peninsula. There was a significant amount of money there. Could that be addressed?

• (1630)

**Ms. Carol Najm:** Unfortunately, we don't have representatives from Parks Canada here today. They're going to join you next week.

**Mr. William Amos:** Okay. I'll press pause on that, but just point to our interest there.

To what extent can you speak to—I'm not sure if I'm using the right phrase—the “catch-up” effect? Environment Canada went through a period of significant austerity. There were cutbacks over a series of years in science, impact assessment and a number of aspects. To what extent is what we're seeing here the rebuilding of different aspects of the department?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** That is a great question.

It is about the department today compared with what the department was a few years ago. We have developed a new departmental results framework that we have restructured—our core responsibilities and commitments to everyone. That has been the baseline with which we are seeking funding, moving forward. This new results framework clearly highlights the climate action, climate change and clean growth priority of the government, not just of the department. It also establishes the renewed commitments on conservation, and also on the weather and monitoring. I don't have the details with me, in terms of the numbers, to speak to what has changed within the department, but I know that today the department has investments in those key responsibilities in terms of outcomes for Canadians.

**Mr. Alan Kerr:** Could I just expand on Carol's comments?

For the Environmental Assessment Agency, the funding proposed to be provided to the agency under supplementary estimates is really to help build the agency to prepare for the expanded mandate under Bill C-69, which will allow us to be prepared for a broader early planning, improved co-operation with other jurisdictions and greater public participation and work with indigenous communities. It is really more about building for the future than any sort of catch-up.

**Mr. William Amos:** Okay. That's helpful.

I'd like to follow along the line of the agency here. How many new hires do you expect will have to be made in the coming 24 months to build the agency to the level it needs to be to properly implement Bill C-69?

**Mr. Alan Kerr:** The agency will bring in about 100 full-time equivalents in this fiscal year. That will grow by approximately 100 more in the next fiscal year. We'll see the growth of the agency by about 200 employees, which would bring us to an overall agency strength of about 450 employees.

**Mr. William Amos:** Could you give me a geographic breakdown of where they'll be situated?

**Mr. Alan Kerr:** Sure.

We are quite a small agency, so most of our workforce is centred here in the nation's capital, but we do have regional offices. We have regional offices in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Quebec City and Halifax, and we recently opened a satellite regional office of the Atlantic office, in St. John's, Newfoundland, to help us with the regional environmental assessment that we're embarking on there. We have just over one-third of our employees in regional offices across the country.

**Mr. William Amos:** We're talking about serious new opportunities for individuals interested in aspects of environmental assessment, with in excess of 100 new jobs in the national capital region.

• (1635)

**Mr. Alan Kerr:** Yes. That's correct.

**Mr. William Amos:** That's great news for a number of young Canadians who are very interested in this topic. I'm sure they'll be thrilled to join the assessment agency, so I do look forward to the passage of Bill C-69.

Perhaps one of my colleagues has something to ask in my last minute.

The time is over to you.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** This is with regard to the \$5.5 million to support the G7 ocean plastics charter. Certainly that's the buzzword right now. It's very important to the people in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Can you tell me what specifically the Department of Environment will be doing with that \$5.5 million to take action on plastic pollution?

**Ms. Carol Najm:** Again, this is money we're seeking to fulfill our commitments following the G7 ocean plastics charter. It's more for international work. The Netherlands launched the Global Commission on Adaptation along with the convening countries and commission members, and they are requesting participation from countries. The key deliverables will include preparation of the flagship report on adaptation and leading global institutions on the delivery of the UN climate summit in September 2019. The financial contribution from Canada will support the commission's work in the deliverables contributing to international efforts to galvanize further action on adaptation as well as showcase and enhance Canada's leadership on climate change adaptation at a global scale.

With respect to the G7 plastics charter, the funding will be used to support agreements that advance science and research on plastics, plastics waste and pollution. The funding will also be used to promote outreach, education and engagement as well as to organize and deliver consultations across the country.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're out of time.

Thank you to the officials for your comments and for being available to us.

There was a question asked, and I just want to confirm something. The opposition had requested that the minister come here. We went to the minister's office to see what her availability was. We were told she was not available this week.

There's this whole formula about when we have to report back on supplementary estimates (A). With next Tuesday, that may be the end of the window. She's not available next Tuesday either, so I made the decision to proceed with the departmental officials. They're excellent resources to have for this. That's why we heard from the officials today.

The intention now is to move to the vote on the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the Department of the Environment pieces.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes. Just give me one second to explain.

Then we will deal with the Parks Canada portion of the supplementary estimates (A) next Tuesday. That's the flow that—

**Hon. Mike Lake:** I actually have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** What is the date by which these have to be reported back?

**The Chair:** It's a floating deadline. The report back has to happen by the final opposition day in this session. We've had six of seven already. We don't know when that seventh one will be, but in all likelihood, given where we're at in the schedule, we're anticipating that it will be next week.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Why are we anticipating that it will be next week?

**The Chair:** I don't know. It's—

**Hon. Mike Lake:** It has to be by when? When is the time slot that it has to be determined by?

**The Chair:** It's December 10.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Right. So—

**The Chair:** We went to the minister's office and we gave her four hearings. The end of November was when we were looking at likely needing to have this done. That is the time frame that we asked for her availability, and we were told that this month she was not available.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** But we only pitched the times that we have meetings scheduled as opportunities.

**The Chair:** Correct.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** I would suggest that as a committee—this is the environment minister—we should be prepared to meet at any time, if she has any availability between, say, now and December 3, whenever it fits into her schedule, 24-7. I don't care. I'll come here at two in the morning if that's the only window she has in her schedule.

It's a pretty significant department. We have this pretty significant role, and she has a pretty significant position. I think it's incumbent upon us as the environment committee to to make ourselves available more, beyond just the four two-hour windows. Surely at some point between now and the end of the month, or whatever date we pick, she'll be able to make herself available to the environment committee of the House of Commons to meet for a couple of hours.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** I hear what you're saying.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** She's met with us six times. She makes herself very available to this committee.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Is Darren on the list?

**The Chair:** At this point, it's only a point of order. We have no speaking list.

Is it a point of order?

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** I'd like to speak to the point of order that's on the table.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I don't think the point of order is open to debate.

**The Chair:** Do you have a point of order, Mr. Warawa?

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** I request to speak to the point of order, so I'm the next person on the list.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Can we ask our—

**The Chair:** You can raise a point of order. You can't speak to a point of order. Is that correct?

We seem to be moving into debate, and perhaps into the motion we had about having the minister come.

[Translation]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I cannot hear the interpretation.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** You're ruling that this is not a point of order. You're ruling that this is debate. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Well, they've ruled.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** We don't need a bunch of puppet masters here.

**The Chair:** I'm consulting with the person I consult with on these issues.

I will recognize you on the point of order. It has to be related to procedure.

[Translation]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I can't hear you. That's twice I haven't been able to hear the interpretation.

[English]

**The Chair:** Is there an issue with the translation?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Okay, I hear it now. I want to make sure I understand what's going on.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We have a comment on the point of order, so it has to be tied to procedure. I will hear it.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Thank you, Chair.

Having been in committees for 14 and a half years, and I was also the chair of the Standing Committee on the Environment. I do have a bit of experience on this. The tradition is that the minister would come for the budget. Tradition is that the minister would come for supplementary estimates. What Mr. Lake is bringing forward is a request that at any time we would make ourselves available on this side.

The other point I would like to make on this is that, Chair, you said it was based on the information you received from the clerk, that this has to be dealt with before the last opposition day. It's the government that decides when the opposition day is given, so it's the government's call when that day would be. This floating date is the government's call, but it cannot go later than December 10. Today, being the 20th, we have time for the minister to come.

That's the tradition of this institution, that we would have the minister come. If she's come many times before, that's nice, but we have new members on the committee—me being one of them. I have not seen the minister at the committee. I think tradition should be respected as well as transparency on budgets and supplementary estimates. I would also make myself available for when the minister can come, and when it's convenient for her.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Stetski, when you had your hand up, did you have a point of order?

• (1645)

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** I'm just wondering why we're keeping the witnesses here through this discussion.

**The Chair:** We can let the witnesses go.

I thought that if we were moving into the vote, you might want to see if we approved your money. That's very exciting. You're welcome to stay until we go in camera, but if you want to leave, you're welcome to do that. Thank you so much for joining us today.

We don't have any more points of order on the floor. At this point, we will proceed to the votes.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** I have a point of order again.

Do we get a chance to debate the individual votes, or is it just straight-up votes?

**The Chair:** The three actions that can be done with these votes are that—and we'll go through the questions, “Shall vote number 1a, under Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, carry?”—they can be adopted, negated or reduced. We cannot increase through the vote. The call for the vote will be, “Shall it carry?”

**Hon. Mike Lake:** I have another point of order, then.

I want to get an understanding of how this invitation went out to the minister. What options were given? How would we even deal with that if we don't agree with that? Do we get to this point and vote right now, with no discussion about this?

**The Chair:** The procedure is that we would vote on the three, because we've heard from these departments. We have not concluded the discussion because we still have the Parks Canada supplementary estimates (A) next week to deal with. There's still an opportunity to have this discussion. We can go back to the minister with the....

I haven't heard agreement about whether others are open to meeting outside of the scheduled time. We had heard, under other studies, that there wasn't that agreement. I had assumed that we were working within the Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 to 5:30 slots. That was the invitation we sent to the minister.

**Hon. Mike Lake:** I would like to understand. Can I move a motion now, then? I cannot move a motion.

Just for clarity, that decision has been made. Is there any discussion of having the minister appear and creating more options? You're asking us right now to vote on this, without having heard the minister, and potentially to have the minister come after we've already voted on her supplementary estimates—this portion of her supplementary estimates. That doesn't make any sense to me at all.

**The Chair:** The suggestion that I am being offered by the clerk is that we still have a bit of time. We can deal with this next week. We can go in camera, deal with the piece of business we have on the agenda and perhaps figure out what sides want to put forward, as far as what we'll consider in the next week.

Is there a point of order?

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** No. I'm speaking to the same point of order we are discussing.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** That was going to be my suggestion, that the third option was that we do not have to vote on this today. We can wait. Then we can deal with all of them at the same time: “Shall this carry? Shall this carry?”

**The Chair:** We can suspend today. Like I say, that gives us.... We still have Parks coming next Tuesday, so we can—

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** We have until the 10th or this other date.

**The Chair:** The last opposition day....

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** We have until then to vote. If we do not vote in support of this, it is deemed carried and goes on to the House. That is an additional option. If there was hanky panky and we wanted to go on and on, it's still going to pass.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** I agree.

I'm happy to suspend at this point and simply move in camera.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** I think Mr. Lake is asking that we work with the minister's office and have her invited here. I'd love to have her here to answer some questions. If we can have that again, find out what day she is available and then send out an invite....

**The Chair:** I've heard your wishes. Let's suspend, and.... Is this a point of order, Wayne?

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** No. I just want to speak in favour of having the minister here as well.

**The Chair:** We are suspended. We'll now clear the room and go in camera.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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