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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome, everyone. We have a very busy agenda. We're going to start with Bill C-374. Pursuant to the order of reference on Monday, February 16, the committee commences consideration of Bill C-374, an act to amend the Historic Sites and Monuments Act.

Do I need to do a summary of the bill? Is that necessary for anybody? I can do it.

On the record,

This enactment amends the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to increase the number of members of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and to provide for first nations, Inuit, and Métis representation on the board. It also modifies the entitlements of board members.

Okay.

I'm going to begin by calling clause 1.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Nee pawa, CPC): I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

This process, quite frankly, is severely flawed.

We were given the bill on Monday night and told to have amendments by Tuesday, which clearly isn't enough time. The government members have all the resources of government staff. It's completely unfair to the rest of us to not have the same consideration.

It's quite absurd that we had to request the sponsor of the bill to appear before the committee. This is a standard practice, and the proposal for the sponsor not to appear should never have been brought forward by the chair without consulting committee members.

Furthermore, a bill should not be brought forward without witnesses and passed at the same meeting.

We have a number of technical questions for the sponsors and officials that we need to address. Only once we receive those answers is it possible for us to draft our amendments. The fact that there's no Q and A in this particular... As I see in the agenda here, the sponsor is supposed to speak for 15 minutes. There's some staff there, and then we go to clause-by-clause without questions.

We have questions about this particular bill.

The idea that we should have to submit amendments to a bill before it has been discussed at committee and without members having the opportunity to have officials or at least the sponsor respond to our questions is quite simply wrong.

We will be requesting that clause-by-clause consideration be delayed to the next meeting to give us adequate time to consider the responses to our questions and draft amendments based on that information. If we move this bill this particular way, this sets a very bad precedent for further bills.

That's my point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Let me respond.

I appreciate your point of view. There are a lot of what I would interpret as inaccuracies in it, so I want to clarify them.

I never said we weren't going to have John speak to his bill. The witnesses have been heard. This private member's bill has come out of the discussion and the study we had on heritage. If you look at our report, this is a recommendation that came out of it. In essence, we've already studied this issue. We have made this recommendation to the government as a committee. John has taken that recommendation and brought it forward in a private member's bill.

We have had witnesses. We've responded to the recommendation from witnesses. In essence, it's been studied by the committee through the heritage study that we did.

I never, ever suggested that John wouldn't come and present his bill. I'm not quite sure where that's come from, but I just want to make it really clear to everybody around the table that I never said we wouldn't have John come and present his bill to the committee.

While the Q and A may not be listed, he's here to answer questions. I think there have been some assumptions that are not what was ever intended by the chair. I want to make that clear. Absolutely we've given time for Q and A. Although it wasn't necessarily spelled out, that's the way we do things. We have the witnesses make their deposition, then we have Q and A.

I just want to make it clear, Q and A is there; John's here. There was never an intention not to have the sponsor of the bill come and explain the bill to us. We have studied this bill, not as a bill, but we have made this recommendation in committee through our previous study. We've had witnesses on it. That's where it's come from.

I hope that clarifies why we are where we are and why it's gone this way.

Okay?

Is there any further discussion on that?

I'm going to proceed with it. I think I've explained that this is why we are where we are, and why it's appropriate that it's been the way it is.

Okay.

I'm going to call clause 1, which opens the discussion of the bill.

John, the floor is yours.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Just to clarify, do I have 10 minutes?

The Chair: Yes, you have 10 minutes at the outside for whatever you feel is necessary, and then we go right to questions.

Mr. John Aldag: That's perfect. Thank you.

Madam Chair, honourable colleagues, and distinguished panelists, it's great to be here today to introduce Bill C-374.

There is a bit of background information that I'd like to give. I think that many on this committee can tell as well as I can that it arises very much from my personal background and my career prior to politics, in which I spent more than three decades working for Parks Canada. Over that very privileged career, I was able to travel, move around the country, and work in a number of very diverse national parks and national historic sites.

I had the great opportunity, which very few Canadians have, to live and work with indigenous communities in a variety of settings and it really helped inform my opinions about the need to do things differently with indigenous communities. When I was elected, I came across the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There's a section on commemorations, and it really spoke quite personally to me about the need in the commemorations field to do things differently.

I'd like to give a couple of examples.

In the last decade of my career, I was on the national historic sites program and I dealt fairly extensively with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. I saw great examples of commemorations that had been done respectfully and that incorporated indigenous histories, and then there were some examples that were maybe not as well done. One that comes to mind is a plaque that I'm sure is still sitting in the garage at the Fort Langley National Historic Site. It was for a commemoration at Stanley Park National Historic Site that was commemorated in the 1980s. We were never able to put that plaque up because the commemoration was very much a Eurocentric colonial construct in celebration of what parks mean. However, it didn't recognize that there were indigenous peoples from the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish nations who had lived in what is now Stanley Park, who were evicted from their properties, whose dwellings were burned down, and whose generational presence on that land was not recognized and not celebrated in commemoration. The plaque is still sitting there in a garage because it failed to recognize the importance of indigenous history in that context. That's an example of the kind of issue that we're trying to get to with Bill C-374, to make sure that the commemorations that come forward are respectful of indigenous history.

There are also great examples that I've come across. One of them was an early commemoration in the history of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada out at Friendly Cove, located at the end of Nootka Sound on the west end of Vancouver Island. It's a couple of hours boat ride from Gold River. Friendly Cove is the birthplace of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples, who are a whaling nation. They were there from the beginning of time, yet there was a commemoration that was done in the early 1920s that recognized that point as the place of discovery of North America. It was the first time Europeans had been to that part of our west coast. Again there was no recognition of indigenous people. It's like the story of Columbus discovering the new world, when the new world had been inhabited since the beginning of time. However, in this case, dealing with the Mowachaht Muchalaht First Nation, we were able to come up with a new commemoration that is now celebrated as Yuquot. It's very much about the first point of contact between indigenous peoples and Europeans. I think that's a real celebration, and that's the end point that this bill would try to get us to in a commemorations program.

I'll just take you back to the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action. Specifically, Bill C-374 is intended to implement call to action 79.i, and I'll just read that, to give you the context of what this is framed on. In the call to action, it says,

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration. This would include, but not be limited to

—and this is the section that is covered in Bill C-374—

(i) amending the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to include First Nations, Inuit and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat.

That's the starting piece for this bill.

The chair, in her opening comments, referred to the study that this committee did, "Preserving Canada's Heritage: The Foundation for Tomorrow", a report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

● (1110)

We heard from witnesses, including Ry Moran from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission based at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Based on the excellent witnesses, the excellent testimony, and the excellent report that this committee reached, recommendation 17 includes four points. The first one states:

The Committee recommends that, in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 79 and 81, and in consultation with Indigenous groups:

The federal government introduce legislation amending the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to add First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat.

Again, Bill C-374 is the direct implementation of that recommendation.

I will turn to the bill, which everybody should have, and I'll walk you through it.

The original Historic Sites and Monuments Act was most recently updated in 1985. It is four pages in its entirety. There are a few sections here that I'm looking to amend.

The first one, and the most important, is that implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendation 79.i. The first change is simply changing the composition of the board from its 16 members. I had called originally for it to go to 19 members, because the 16 existing would have three indigenous representatives added to it.

As a bit of historical context, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, for a number of years, had 18 representatives. There were two members for Ontario and two for Quebec. That was amended by the previous government down to 16. Ontario and Quebec were given just one seat. Over historical levels, that is an increase of one member, but from where we're at right now in legislation, it's an increase of three. The specific wording was going to be to add the three indigenous representatives.

I had consultations with indigenous caucuses, indigenous organizations, and others, and there were some concerns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's wording. For instance, if you have somebody representing, could it be a Caucasian representing those three indigenous groups? How do you get the right wording to make sure that it meets the intent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

The wording I put forward in the bill is what's there, and there are some amendments that I will get to when we get to clause-by-clause to clarify the wording. For now, the idea was simply to add those three indigenous members to the existing board.

There are two subsections in Bill C-374 that are updating language. Proposed subsections 5(1) and 5(2) refer to "Chairman", and this makes it gender neutral, to "Chair".

With regard to the quorum—I believe it's in proposed subsection 5(4)—I think the original bill had it at eight. This is moving it to 10, recognizing that there will be an increased number of board members.

The final piece was a bit of an opportunity to update some of the language. Boards generally receive some sort of compensation for their work, and so the last part of Bill C-374 is updating the language to current Government of Canada terminology to make sure board appointees are compensated in the way that all board appointees are compensated. The travel and living expenses are repackaged.

Finally, the original bill allowed for clerical and stenographic assistance of \$75 per year for the chairman and \$35 for members of the board. This is very outdated language. I'm sure there are members of Parliament who don't even know what stenographic services are, and having a dollar amount embedded in the legislation is a bit odd. It's to try to give the Governor in Council a bit more flexibility in how they can compensate for those types of support functions for board appointees. That's the final piece. Again, it's just changing that piece of the legislation to update it.

That's my context.

As I said, I have some amendments. Since introducing Bill C-374 into the House, I have had further discussions with the minister's team and legislative staff. There are some cleanups, and I would like to address those when we move to clause-by-clause today.

• (1115)

The Chair: You're right on the button with your 10 minutes.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

The Chair: That's very good.

Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Bossio.

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

First off, I would like to congratulate my colleague on bringing forward this bill. I can't think of a more qualified individual. As you've described in your testimony, with the experience you have on this issue and the enormous contribution you made to our study on national historic sites that informs this bill through its recommendations, I am pleased and happy that you were able to bring this forward.

Can you please expand upon how this bill captures the recommendations we made around this particular issue in answer to the TRC recommendation 79?

Mr. John Aldag: Thanks for your question. This is just one small step.

Our committee report had a very robust section on moving forward the reconciliation agenda, and there are things that are going to need to be done with government leadership. There are actions under even the commemoration section that go beyond 79(i) to deal with commemoration of residential schools, missing children, and so on. This bill doesn't move into that full suite of things that need to be done.

I feel this is very foundational. It's about getting the indigenous representatives on the board and getting that indigenous lens in place for future discussions on commemorations, in whatever form they may take. I would not take credit, by any means, for the work that's still to come. I feel that this is a very small yet significant contribution to the implementation of the report that this committee developed and that has been tabled in the House. I'm very pleased to be able to use my private member's bill slot to advance that discussion on reconciliation.

• (1120)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Great. That's all I have, Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I have a couple of questions. You just talked about the remuneration. I contacted a colleague of mine who is on a board for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I asked him what his remuneration was, and it's \$225 a day—and that's just for meeting time, with nothing for preparation time—and reasonable travel expenses. What caught my eye in your bill is this notion of administrative costs. There's no such thing in terms of my colleague's appointment, which is very similar to this appointment. He isn't given an administrative cost. Where does that come from, and is there any limit on it?

Mr. John Aldag: The basis for this particular clause, as I said, comes from the existing Historic Sites and Monuments Board. The wording right now that exists is in a section in the act on page 4. I don't have the numbering for French/English, but it's paragraphs 8(3)(a) and 8(3)(b). The existing phrase is "clerical and stenographic assistance", and the existing wording is

There may be paid for clerical and stenographic assistance

(a) the sum of seventy-five dollars per year to the chairman of the board; and

(b) the sum of thirty dollars per year to the other members of the Board appointed by the Governor in Council.

I wasn't intending to enter into any sort of discussion in the bill or trying to set any new precedent. I was simply working within it. I believe that the history of it, in speaking to board members, is that many of the board members have been academics over the years. They're often historians and other leaders in the field. That's part of the criteria, the credentials that they bring. It was recognition that they may be doing their own research and other types of academic material in preparing for meetings and being able to debate the merits of nominations that come forward from the public. It was recognition by the government of the day to offset some of those out-of-pocket expenses.

To your question, in the existing bill that I've put, is there a limit? We're saying that it would be an annual allowance, to be fixed by the Governor in Council, in respect of administrative costs that are incurred in the course of performing their duties. It would be up to the Governor in Council to set whatever that limit is. The vision I'm putting forward is not to have it open-ended but to allow the Governor in Council to fix whatever that administrative cost support amount would be.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, one thing you can guarantee, knowing human nature—as we all do—is that every individual will bill the maximum amount. That's just natural.

Again, I go back to other members of other boards that I'm aware of, and one person in particular whom I called directly. There are no such things as administrative costs, so I think this is somewhat out of line.

People are appointed to these boards. They're prestigious appointments. They have a lot of influence on this significant designation of "historic site", which means so much to many communities. To me, it is indeed an honour to serve on one of these boards. A per diem is fine. Reasonable travel expenses are fine. Do you know what? They should be doing this research and thinking on their own, on their own time, and just be thankful that they're on this particular board.

In terms of meetings, on the first page, proposed subsection 5(2) reads:

The Board shall meet at least once in every calendar year at the call of the Chair, but the time and place of each meeting is subject to the approval of the Minister.

I find that very strange. Either this board is independent or it isn't. The act sets how many times the board meets. It's at least once a year. It could say it meets four times a year, but I question why each meeting is subject to the approval of the minister. That implies, to

me, that the minister's going to have a say in the designation of a historic site, and so politics and partisanship will clearly enter into the designation of these sites. Why isn't the board completely independent?

• (1125)

Mr. John Aldag: You raise a couple of interesting points, and I thank you for doing that.

I will point out that the Historic Sites and Monuments Board is not actually responsible for commemorations. The mandate of the board is to make recommendations to the minister. The approval of any commemoration currently exists exclusively with the Minister of the Environment. A former environment minister is sitting next to you, and I know he's been involved in actually signing off lists that have come forward from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board. The current act has exactly that wording. The only change that's being made is to make "chairman" gender neutral by changing the term to "chair".

What I understood when I was involved with Parks Canada and the reason for this part is that the minister would simply have a say from this one on setting, as it says, the time and location. There may be times that the minister wanted to meet with the board or wouldn't be available to. There could also be the optics of how if the committee wanted to meet somewhere in a remote location, which would incur lots of costs. The minister could say, "You know what? This is maybe not fiscally prudent and we would prefer that you meet in a more central location to reduce the costs of operation of the board". I think it's a good safeguard politically to have.

The Chair: Mr. Stetski is next.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): It's a pleasure to be here today to grill Mr. Aldag on Bill C-374 which I very much support. We'll be speaking to that support later on this afternoon. In terms of the process, we heard from many witnesses when we were doing our report on heritage, so I really don't see the value of recalling witnesses to tell us again that they support what is proposed here in Bill C-374. I'm fine with the process that we have in place.

I do have a question for you. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission included four calls to action on commemoration in their report, and action number 79 had three parts. Part 79.i was to change the representation on the board, as you have proposed with Bill C-374, which I think is a good first step. I'm curious why you stopped short of responding to the other sections in call to action 79, which included integrating indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices, as well as developing a plan for commemorating residential school sites and the contributions of aboriginal people to Canada's history. Why not move on all of the commemoration calls to action rather than just this one section? They're all important.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you for that excellent question. The reason really was that I was just trying to look at a manageable scope for the private member's bill. Given time constraints and the constraints that come with private member bills and how ambitious we can be, I wanted to have something that stood a chance of success, and when you get into the other elements of the commemoration section, they involve a much longer timeline involving meaningful consultations with indigenous groups across the country. It means there may be expenses that would go beyond what I would be able to support in those consultations. I feel that the follow-up in the commemorations program, beyond this kind of baseline or foundational piece that needs to be done, is best led by government and through the Parks Canada Agency. I just wanted to be mindful of what I could achieve in my capacity as private member.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: It was very clear during the testimony that everyone on the committee recognized the importance of all of the recommendations from Truth and Reconciliation. Thank you for putting this section forward.

The Chair: Thanks. I really just wanted to give a chance to the different parties to question you. I wasn't thinking of doing a whole 50-minute round, because I think a lot of other questions are going to come up as we move into the actual changes, the amendments, so if everybody is okay, we'll move right to the amendments and then we can have a chance for any further discussion as we move through those. Do I have agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We're going to suspend for a second to get you back in your seat, John, so you can address that.

• (1130)

(Pause)

• (1130)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone. Welcome to the table. We have Parks Canada representatives here, departmental representatives, to answer any questions as we move through the clause-by-clause. Do you just want to introduce yourself so everybody knows you, Norman? Thank you.

Mr. Norman Shields (Manager, Heritage Designations, Parks Canada Agency): I'm Norman Shields. I'm the manager responsible for heritage designations. Beside me is Rachel Grasham. She has just stepped out for a moment. She's the director of policies and legislation.

Ms. Karen L. Pearce (Legal Counsel, Parks Canada Agency): I'm Karen Pearce, Parks Canada legal services, Department of Justice.

The Chair: Great. Thank you very much for being here. We very much appreciate it.

(On clause 1)

The first amendment is LIB-1.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Where is Rachel Grasham?

The Chair: I think she stepped out for a second. If you like, we can wait.

Mr. Joël Godin: It's okay, but I have another question. Where is Paula Garrow? They don't sit at the table?

The Chair: They can come up. They are here in the room to support us. Hang on.

Monsieur Godin, I apologize. I speak very fast, and we have to wait for catch-up.

The idea is we have other representatives in the room who will be here if they need to come to the table. They are here, but these are the people the department has asked to sit at the table for us.

We're on LIB-1. Does everybody have all the motions in front of them so we can work through it together? It's pretty straightforward. Do I need to read them, or is everybody on the page together? Do I need to read it?

John, do you want to introduce it to everybody? Go ahead.

Mr. John Aldag: The first amendment changes my original wording of "19 members" to "of up to 19 members". These changes arose following consultation and feedback from discussions with those in the know, looking administratively at the challenges and issues that may arise on board appointments and the process.

The ideal is to have 19 members, but there may be times when there will be some combinations. We will get into those in the subsequent amendments. This is to give some flexibility for the minister in the appointments, so we're saying "of up to 19 members" instead of a hard 19 members.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any questions?

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: As far as I know, the objective of your bill is to provide for more active indigenous representation.

With the possibility of adjusting the number, is there a requirement for indigenous persons to be well represented on the board, or is it simply a random number, without any breakdown or stipulation regarding the percentage of indigenous representation?

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: This was a primary concern I had, in that the indigenous representation could be watered down by being combined into other existing positions. In the subsequent amendments, however, I believe you will see that we've come up with some safeguards to ensure that anybody filling any seat is fully qualified for whatever the requirements are of the position they are filling. I can speak to a couple of examples if you want, either now or when we get to the further amendments.

I will give the example of somebody with a first nations background who is being vetted for whether they have the ability to represent a national first nations lens. They could be an indigenous first nations person living in Saskatchewan, and there could be a point where the Saskatchewan provincial position comes open. While the search for a replacement happens—which can often span months or even into a year or more—this would allow the minister to have that person double-fill a position. They would also have to meet the criterion of being a Saskatchewan resident, but they would be able to do that. The intention would never be to try to double-bank on an ongoing basis, but it would give some flexibility in cases such as the example I have given, to have diverse and qualified representatives fill dual positions from time to time.

The Chair: Does that answer it?

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, but I have another question.

[*Translation*]

Would it not be preferable for the bill to stipulate an appointment period in order to ensure indigenous representation?

In the current wording, the number is up to 19, and there is no breakdown for indigenous persons. It says there can be up to 19 people because the appointment process can be lengthy. In that case, shouldn't a measure be added to give the minister latitude to establish timelines for appointments?

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: Right. In brief, I was trying to respect the existing and long-standing structure of the board.

Right now there are three representatives who come from within specific areas within the federal government. There's Library and Archives, Parks Canada, and a third representative, and then the 13 provincial and territorial representatives. This wording was trying to respect in the most efficient way the addition of those three indigenous positions rising from call to action 79. i, and so this was deemed to be the best wording to achieve that.

The Chair: Seeing no further discussion, shall the amendment carry?

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

The Chair: We'll go to Liberal amendment number 2.

Go ahead, John.

Mr. John Aldag: This one gives the clarification that I just spoke of. It indicates "one representative". This is where you can get some of that doubling up. The persons referred to in paragraphs 4(1)(a), 4(1)(b), and 4(1)(c)—the officer of the Canadian Museum of History, of the Library and Archivist, and an officer of the Parks Canada Agency—could be appointed under proposed paragraph 4(2)(e). Those could be filled by a first nations, Inuit, or Métis person. Conversely, one of the indigenous representatives could be able to overlap with one of those three positions.

There would be this addition in new proposed paragraph 4(1)(e), where we get into specifically the indigenous piece:

(e) one representative—who may be a person referred to in any of paragraphs (a) to (c) or a person appointed under paragraph (d)—for each of the following, to be appointed by the Governor in Council:

(i) First Nations,

(ii) the Inuit, and

(iii) the Métis.

Again, this is to enable that first one, "of up to 19". This gives a very good construct, I think, to achieve what we're trying to do to make sure we're respecting the first nations, Inuit, and Métis presence on the board.

• (1140)

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you, John.

The bill has worthy intent. I think with traditional procedure, you would have no quibbles from this side, but just as a matter of clarification, with regard to the addition of the three first nations members of the board, as you spoke to the criteria by which members of the board have traditionally been selected, there is an interchangeability. Your explanation just now was that there is an interchangeability between the skills, the academic aspect, and indigenous history....

The qualifications would be a composite, in some cases, and not simply ethnic?

Mr. John Aldag: Yes. That would allow for a....

I think the next amendment gets more into what you're talking about. It's saying that for whatever position a person will be filling, they have to be qualified and meet the requirements of that position. The example I would give is that if you're going to fill a position from Saskatchewan, you need to be a resident from Saskatchewan. If you're going to be the first nations representative, you need to be able to meet whatever the criteria have been determined to be. There would be then some mixing and matching allowed, should that be necessary, but you would have to be deemed qualified for whichever position on the board you're occupying.

The Chair: Go ahead, Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Aldag, I would like to make sure they are not overrepresented on the board. Earlier, there was talk of underrepresentation, but now I will talk about overrepresentation of indigenous persons. I think we need to strike a balance.

Is there a mechanism to ensure constant representation in spite of changes in appointments? If there is one, I do not see it.

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: Constant representation in what means? I'm not sure I understand what you mean by "constant representation".

Mr. Joël Godin: I don't know if the translation is good, but I'll try again in French.

[*Translation*]

Can indigenous persons be overrepresented? Is there a mechanism to prevent that? Is there also a mechanism to prevent the opposite, that is, under-representation?

[English]

Mr. John Aldag: From my perspective, I don't believe we could ever have overrepresentation of indigenous on a national people commemorations program.

Ultimately if we had multiple—you could have a first nations representative who's been deemed to be a qualified representative for Saskatchewan, and you could have a first nations person in this other position, and I don't think that would constitute overrepresentation. It just says that we have a lot of qualified Canadians wanting to serve in the commemorations field.

I wasn't concerned about that particular question. I would hope that everybody would agree that if we had more than three indigenous representatives, it could be a very good thing for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board.

The Chair: Mr. Sopuck is next.

• (1145)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I disagree very strongly with your view that there can't be enough overrepresentation of any group. What would happen, in terms of the decisions and recommendations, is that there would certainly be bias in a certain direction.

For example, in my own constituency, the Ukrainian community has a history that's both epic and tragic at the same time. There is a serious under-representation, in my view, of Ukrainian culture, in terms of representation.

This business of picking representative boards and arbitrarily deciding what's overrepresented or under-represented—and again I'm not being pejorative—is a very difficult thing to do. It's not easy. What you're embarking on is not easy.

I think as this bill moves forward and representatives are chosen, all biases need to be left at the door. We want historic and commemorative sites that truly represent Canada in all its aspects.

How will you deal with this?

Mr. John Aldag: That's where the selection process is really critical, in making sure that, as you say, people are able to represent the area of expertise that they bring, yet be objective.

We've had 150 years of exclusion of that indigenous voice from commemorations in Canada, so this is a recognition of that absence and the special relationship we have with indigenous peoples. I think with the additions of these voices, we are able to still represent and commemorate a whole range of Canadian stories, not just aboriginal ones.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Do you see—

The Chair: Joël had his finger up, then we'll go back to you. It's up to you guys.

Mr. Joël Godin: Go ahead.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I didn't see it. That's fine.

Do you see a role for “qualified amateur historians”? That's the only word I can think of. There may be a better one.

In communities right across Canada, as you well know, there are people who have taken a deep and abiding interest in the histories of

their regions. They may not have the “academic” qualifications, but their deep local knowledge is something the country should tap into.

Do you see people like that being part of this board?

Mr. John Aldag: I think that goes beyond what I can speak to in this capacity. There is a selection process, and I would say it would have to remain with the board, and ultimately the minister, to deem who is qualified for these appointments.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I was just asking for your opinion. It seems to me that qualified local historians with a deep knowledge of a certain area should be considered.

Mr. John Aldag: I think expertise comes in a wide range of forms.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thanks I appreciate that.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Chair, I would like to pick up on the topic my colleague Mr. Sopuck raised.

Mr. Aldag, you said you have established selection criteria. So far, so good. As far as increasing indigenous representation goes, we have the same objective. That said, when a bill is drafted, the necessary mechanisms must be included to eliminate as many grey areas as possible.

In reading this, I am not convinced that the level of representation will be controlled. It is all relative. What does having more or less representation mean? I think better guidelines are needed.

I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

[English]

Mr. John Aldag: I actually don't know if I can go any further than what I've said. I think I've tried to respond as best I can. This is the wording that I was able to come up with, with the input of our legal experts, on how to get to the best points in implementing recommendation 79.1, so I've had to rely on the guidance of our legal counsel on how to word that, and this is what I am able to put forward.

The Chair: I want to give an opportunity to the experts at the table.

Is there anything they'd like to share with us on this discussion point?

Mr. Norman Shields: I suppose all I would add is that in the selection process for the members of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada is currently as John has described it. There are the three federal-level members, and then there are the provincial and territorial members. With this bill, if it is enacted, there would be indigenous representation.

All of those would then go through the government's open and transparent and merit-based Governor in Council appointments process. There are notices of opportunities that outline the type of criteria that people are expected to meet to be able to serve on the board, and all residents of Canada are eligible to apply for those positions.

•(1150)

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Kent is next.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you, Chair.

This is a question arising from John's opening remarks, as the sponsor of the bill, regarding the Stanley Park plaque sitting today in a shed because of challenges by first nations communities. I know there have been any number of these situations over the years with other communities—the Ukrainian community with regard to the heritage plaque in Banff—and others.

I'm just wondering, Mr. Shields, how many historic site plaques are under challenge at the moment, or have yet to be placed on the sites for which they were designed.

Mr. Norman Shields: I'd be speculating on the answer to that question. The government has been implementing a plaque of celebration strategy. We've unveiled a number of plaques over the past number of years and we're continuing to work on that this year and next year.

The Chair: Peter, can you get at the point? We're trying to get—

Hon. Peter Kent: To the point, are there other first nations challenges for historic sites? This springs from John's challenge for the Stanley Park—

The Chair: Yes, it's justification for why we're trying to—

Hon. Peter Kent: Yes, exactly.

The Chair: Okay, fair enough—and the answer is...?

Hon. Peter Kent: In other words, are there other plaques for which the wording has yet to be resolved, and the benefit of having three additional members of the board might speed that course?

The Chair: That would be helpful.

Hon. Peter Kent: It's just a question to officials, but I'm sure Mr. Shields has—

The Chair: —answered as best he can.

Hon. Peter Kent: —at least a guesstimate.

Mr. Norman Shields: Well, what I can give you as a short answer is that one of the objectives of having this foundational piece would be that we'd be able to bring that indigenous lens to the board and have the board look at all designations to see if there is improvement to be had.

The Chair: Okay.

I don't see a lot more questioning on this one, and we have other amendments.

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

The Chair: The next one is LIB-3.

Mr. John Aldag: This one is ensuring that the person has the knowledge and experience relevant to the appointment that will assist with the business of the board. This is a new piece, and it's the final element in rounding out the wording on the “up to 19”. That's it.

The Chair: It's just completing the package.

Mr. John Aldag: Exactly.

The Chair: Go ahead, Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I said earlier, when a bill is tabled, clear guidelines must be established in order to avoid grey areas.

Where is “relevant knowledge and experience” defined? What does it mean? These are very general terms.

Would it not be preferable to clarify your point of view in order to more clearly define the criteria?

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: I don't think we would put that into legislation. That would be covered through, as was mentioned, the public appointment process. That process may change from time to time, so I would rather leave it in that process as opposed to enshrining it in legislation.

The Chair: You want to be careful about being too prescriptive in a legislative document.

I don't see any more questions on that one, so shall the amendment carry? Is there anyone opposed?

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

(Clause 1 as amended agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 2 agreed to)

(On clause 3)

The Chair: On amendment LIB-4, go ahead, John. Let's bring that forward.

Mr. John Aldag: This gets into the travel and living expenses and is cleaning up the wording. We are just specifying that the living expenses incurred in connection with the business of the board while absent from their ordinary places of residence will be paid. We can see what the wording was previously. This is just tightening up that language.

•(1155)

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: How is the business of these living expenses...? I assume the administrative costs clause is still there.

Mr. John Aldag: The administrative costs actually could come under the next one. This is on travel and living expenses.

The Chair: Okay. It looks good.

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

The Chair: Next is amendment LIB-5.

Mr. John Aldag: One version I sent out was deemed inadmissible, so we have revised it. The translated version was distributed this morning. I'll draw your attention—

The Chair: Hang on. It is being distributed right now.

Mr. John Aldag: Make sure you have the right one.

While you're getting it, I'll indicate that the cleanup of wording on this one is under the administrative costs. We're saying that members are to be paid expenses fixed by the Governor in Council that are incurred for administrative assistance in connection with the business of the board.

The original piece was on clerical and stenographic assistance, so that is the clarification we had to go with to ensure we were compliant with the scope of the original bill in this amendment.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: This is obviously open-ended. It almost implies that a member of the board could hire a staff person to work for them and do background research for them. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr. John Aldag: The safeguard there is that the paid expenses are fixed by the Governor in Council. The Governor in Council would deem what the eligible expenses would be.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Yes, but again this could be read that I'm on the board and I'm going to be hiring an administrative assistant within the guidelines of the Governor in Council, Treasury Board, and so on. I don't recall any other board that has this kind of thing in it in terms of administrative assistance. As I said, I go back to the board members I know, and this administrative assistance just isn't there.

Perhaps Mr. Shields could answer that.

The Chair: I'm fine if you have something to add to the discussion.

Mr. Norman Shields: It has not been our practice for board members to hire staff or employ people. I think what this amendment would require us to do, if adopted, would be to prepare a schedule of potential administrative expenses that would be ratified by the Governor in Council, and then that schedule would guide expense claims.

The Chair: For my understanding, the point here was to clean up the fact that there were identified expenses that were no longer in practice and put in a more modern interpretation of what would be included, but the details or the terms of reference for becoming a board member and what you can apply for will be identified within the report, and you will do that through the Governor in Council. Is that right? That's what I'm hearing. That seems reasonable to me.

Ms. Rachel Grasham (Director Policy, Legislative and Cabinet Affairs, Parks Canada Agency): Yes, it would be subject to an order in council process, which goes to Treasury Board for approval before being recommended to the Governor in Council.

The Chair: The purpose is to clean up archaic reference that needs to be modernized.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Chair, imagine the following situation. Let's say that—

[*English*]

The Chair: Hang on. We're at 12 noon and we had said that we were going to move to another part of business. I am thinking it's in

order to extend, but I need agreement to extend into the second period to carry on with this.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): We have only a few more minutes. I move that we extend it.

The Chair: That's up to you guys. I'm at your pleasure.

Mr. Darren Fisher: We can go on the back end of the meeting if we need to finish the estimates.

• (1200)

The Chair: All those in favour of doing that?

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

The Chair: We'll carry on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you.

I was about to give you a hypothetical situation. Let's say I was appointed to the board tomorrow morning and I asked my staff to do some research to help me perform my work for the board effectively. Will I be able to claim those costs? What process is there to limit expenses?

[*English*]

Mr. Norman Shields: Well, I think it's what I said before. I think the process would be that there would be an order in council that would include a schedule outlining what types of expenses can be claimed, so before asking people to do work for you expecting to be reimbursed, you would want to make sure that you have the right to be reimbursed under the schedule that would be established under the order in council.

The Chair: Hang on, Mr. Deltell.

Do you want to carry on?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Shields, that means that if I were able to convince the Governor in Council, I would be entitled to claim unlimited expenses under the guidelines established by the Governor in Council.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Grasham: The order in council process would be brought forward. The minister would bring forward the proposal to the Treasury Board process, and then it would be recommended through the Governor in Council process. There would be a static list of eligible expenses for administrative assistance and in connection with the business of the board, so it wouldn't be a situation in which one-at-a-time or ad hoc expenses that were outside of the scope of that order in council and the schedule that we established could be submitted

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Deltell.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Since Mr. Godin is on a roll, I prefer to let him finish. Then I will make my comments.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Deltell.

I gather, then, it is a political decision. It is political or administrative.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Grasham: I think the development of that schedule would be consistent with Treasury Board policy and directives regarding reimbursement. I mean, it's a bit hypothetical at this point, but the idea of having a fixed schedule that was approved by the Governor in Council would mean that ad hoc expenses could not be submitted. They would be very tied to that schedule.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Let's go to Mr. Sopuck and then back to you. Well, you passed your spot, so let me do that.

Go ahead, Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I just want to clarify that this last clause basically just brings it into line with what happens with other boards that the government manages.

Is that correct, Mr. Shields or Ms. Grasham?

Mr. John Aldag: In this case, I didn't look at other boards. I was simply working with legal opinion to say that we have an outdated practice that's captured within the Historic Sites and Monuments Act of Canada: \$30 a year is laughable in 2018 terms, so I said we should find the wording to try to make that a meaningful clause that will carry on into the future instead of becoming outdated again in two or three years, or 10 years. This was simply the wording that I was advised works, and a lot of the wording we've chosen is based on other legislation.

I can't speak to where that came from. This was simply the update.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I was going to address the question to Ms. Pearce, perhaps, since you mentioned legal opinion. Does this now reflect current practice for boards?

Ms. Karen L. Pearce: The chair summarized exactly what the objective was, to modernize the language.

This bill was drafted by the Department of Justice in accordance with this policy objective, taking into account federal drafting practices, and going through various revisions and editing to ensure both English and French versions are consistent, as well as consistent with both legal systems in Canada.

The point is that the notion of having this type of expense for administrative services was already in the act, so it was updated accordingly by the professional drafters.

• (1205)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Deltell is next.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you. Yes, that's what I want to say. Thank you so much for your invitation. I'm pleased to see all my other colleagues, especially Mr. Aldag. We had such great pleasure to work together on the electoral reform committee. It's good to see you again.

Mr. John Aldag: Sure.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Moving on....

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We're supposed to have fun here.

[*Translation*]

Ladies and gentlemen, my question pertains to this amendment.

This is not the first time an amendment regarding the make-up of a board has been put forward; it is not the one and only board in Canada.

Under the proposed amendment, the board members appointed by the Governor in Council will be reimbursed for all expenses incurred, as determined by the Governor in Council, for administrative assistance related to the business of the board.

Is this the first time such a provision has been included in a bill intended to create a board or amend its composition? God knows that there have been dozens and dozens of boards in Canada over the past 150 years.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Grasham: I would just reference what was already said, that this was drafted by Department of Justice. I'm not familiar with terms of references of other boards, so I'm not able to answer the question.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It could be quite interesting to see. If this is brand new, if we are in a new field of law, if we are in a new field of regulations, if there is no other precedent, well, it could raise some questions. What if this is how fields of law have been moving after so many years? As you know, there have been hundreds of commissions in Canada for the last 150 years. If we are in a new field, we can look at it carefully and ask if it is an open door to something we don't want to see. If that's exactly the wording used for other commissions, well, move on. As far as I'm concerned, I would be very careful with that.

My colleagues raised some issues about the fact that we could open the door to so many things that we cannot identify right now. We have to be careful.

The Chair: I'm not seeing any other information coming from the end of the table.

I'm going to make a comment. There are some other speakers—Mr. Sopuck and then Mr. Bossio—but what is clear is that what was in there was antiquated and needed to be modernized, and it has gone through a rigorous process. The safeguard is that it isn't opening the door wide, because it's referring to the Governor in Council, who is going to define what is going to be covered. It's not as if it's open to some other interpretation. It is following the process, as far as I have been able to ascertain, that the Governor in Council will then have to go through Treasury Board to make sure it is standardized practice in government.

I'll leave it at that because I'm not the expert; they're the experts.

Go ahead, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I say this with the deepest respect, Madam Chair: the intervention that you just had is not appropriate for a chair. Chairs run the meetings, and I've chaired committees. For chairs to intervene into offering an opinion on the substance of the matter is unusual, to say the least. The chair should be careful.

The Chair: I was trying to be helpful. Thank you.

Go ahead, Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

With all due respect for the committee and my colleague Mr. Aldag, I think we are going to create a precedent if we agree to modify this board. Correct me if I am wrong. Should we not give this some thought, as parliamentarians, and establish guidelines for boards throughout the public service?

We have to go further. Otherwise, it will set a precedent, and that is the danger. That is why I am questioning this. I support the bill's objective, but some of the details bother me. This one bothers me the most because it will have an impact on all other federal government institutions. I would like us to consider this and be conscientious. My reluctance does not pertain to this bill specifically, but rather to the precedent.

• (1210)

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. John Aldag: To go back, as far as precedent is concerned, I don't see it as precedent-setting. The intention was that there was already this clause for these costs in the bill, and it's simply a modernizing of that.

If it were precedent-setting, I would think other acts, other boards, could have looked at that since this was done. I think it goes back to the 1950s, so it has been a long-standing practice that this board has had this clause. It has definitely been in place since 1985 at this dollar amount. I believe we've been able to put in the safeguard to capture and reflect what this board has operated under for a number of decades, and that safeguard is through the Governor in Council process.

I'm very comfortable that we are not opening up a brand new issue for other boards. That would have happened previously if that were the case. I really believe that through the drafters and legal advice we have, we've come to a good solution on this one.

The Chair: Go ahead, Monsieur Deltell.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: With all due respect, what Mr. Aldag just said worries me even more. If it had existed since 1950, there would be no need to amend the act.

The bill is being put forward to amend the composition of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. If it were already possible to do this, there would be no need for the bill. The bill is being put forward because there are new rights, it is new terrain; we

are doing something different. As my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier so aptly put it, we are creating a precedent, we are creating case law that could be cited by all other boards of the House of Commons or indeed of the Canadian government.

I respect your work, of course. No offence intended. Yet you yourself admit that you did not draft the bill; it was drafted by jurists. I am sure it is well drafted. The real question is whether this is new terrain, whether there are new rights. If there are new rights, the least we can say is that we have not only the power but also the duty to ensure that this is well aligned with our objective. If there is a chance that this could have an impact on other boards, we have to be informed in order to measure the broader impact it would have.

We heard that it has always existed, since 1950, that is. If that were the case, however, we would not have to amend the act. Clearly, it does not exist.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there anything anybody wants to add to the discussion? No? Okay I think all positions have been adequately and appropriately put on the table.

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

(Clause 3 as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*]))

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry, as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill, as amended, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone, for helping us through that process, and for the good questions. I'm going to suspend for a few seconds to change up our witnesses and move to the next subject matter. Thank you.

• (1215)

(Pause)

• (1220)

The Chair: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), we are proceeding with supplementary estimates (C) 2017-18, vote 1c under Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, votes 1c and 10c under Department of the Environment, and vote 1c under Parks Canada Agency, referred to the committee on Monday, February 12.

We're packing all this good stuff in because we cancelled a meeting on Tuesday, and that has caused everything to get jammed into this one day, because there's only so much time to get everything back to the House. I apologize to the committee for the compression of our work, but that was the result of not having a meeting on Tuesday.

Welcome, witnesses. There are quite a lot of you at the table there, so we're going to get started with your names. I'm going to introduce you.

From the Department of the Environment, we have Douglas McConnachie, director general and deputy chief financial officer of the financial management directorate, and Matt Jones, assistant deputy minister of the pan-Canadian framework implementation office. It's nice to see you again.

We also have John Moffet, acting associate assistant deputy minister of the environmental protection branch. You guys are getting to be regulars here. It's fantastic.

From the Parks Canada Agency, we have Rob Prosper, vice-president of protected area establishment and conservation, and Sylvain Michaud, chief financial officer. Welcome.

From the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, we have Alan Kerr, vice-president of corporate services and chief financial officer, and Heather Smith, vice-president of operations.

Welcome to all of you. Thank you for being here today to present to us. I know not all of you are speaking, so who would like to go first?

Go ahead, please, Alan.

Mr. Alan Kerr (Vice-President, Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's my pleasure to join you today to discuss the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (C) and the 2018-19 interim estimates for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. I'm Alan Kerr, vice-president of corporate services and CFO, and I'm joined by my colleague Heather Smith, vice-president of operations.

I will begin with my presentation of the items that have been requested by the agency in the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (C), and close with a brief overview of our 2018-19 interim estimates.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency provides evidence-based environmental assessments that protect the environment, foster economic growth, and serve the interest of Canadians. We support the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in carrying out her responsibilities by conducting environmental assessments for major projects, which are based on science, and which include feedback and expertise received from the public, indigenous groups, and other stakeholders.

In the 2017-18 fiscal year, the agency actively supported the minister in leading a national review of federal environmental assessment processes. In June 2017, the government released a discussion paper that outlined a series of changes that it was considering to strengthen Canada's environmental assessment and regulatory processes.

The government has engaged extensively on the discussion paper since its release, both online and through in-person meetings, including through the launch of an engagement website to solicit input on the proposed approach. During this consultation, the minister and the agency's staff collectively held over 100 meetings with indigenous groups, provinces and territories, industry, and non-

governmental organizations. The result of these consultations was the tabling of legislation by the minister on February 8 of this year.

Supplementary estimates (C) provide the agency with \$1 million in expenditure authority from Environment and Climate Change Canada to assist in managing the costs of these extensive consultations.

In 2018-19, in addition to supporting the minister during the parliamentary process as the proposed bill is considered, the agency will continue its important day-to-day work in conducting environmental assessments while also preparing for the potential passing of the bill into law.

To accomplish these critical mandates and deliver on the government's priorities, the agency seeks an interim supply of \$15.1 million to meet the agency's financial obligations pending approval of the main estimates. Our team will fulfill our mandate of conducting high-quality environmental assessments that contribute to informed decision-making and support sustainable development. In all of our activities, we will continue to consider feedback and expertise received from the public, indigenous groups, and other stakeholders.

We will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

•(1225)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to hear from several of you and then we'll get into questions. We'll keep the questions until we've heard from all of you.

Thank you.

Go ahead, Monsieur Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Michaud (Chief Financial Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Madam Chair, thank you for this opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (C) and the 2018-19 interim estimates for the Parks Canada Agency.

[*English*]

I will begin by addressing the Parks Canada Agency supplementary estimates C, which is Parks Canada's third and final opportunity to make adjustments to its 2017-18 main estimates.

The agency's submission amounts to an increase in appropriations of approximately \$27.5 million, bringing the agency's total appropriations to \$1.7 billion in 2017-18.

Parks Canada is seeking adjustments to its appropriations for three items. The first is \$27 million relating to emergency responses to natural disasters and associated health- and safety-related costs due to extreme weather and weather-related events. In 2017, British Columbia and Alberta saw a series of record-breaking wildfires in terms of size, severity, duration and risks to people, infrastructure and economic activity. These fires resulted in Parks Canada having to engage in its largest fire response season in history.

In addition to fires in western Canada, eastern Canada experienced several major flood events that required higher than normal emergency water control responses.

Second is approximately \$700,000 to implement activities to pursue a national marine conservation area in the Canadian portion of the Last Ice Area within Canadian Arctic waters and complete a feasibility settlement and negotiations for an Inuit impact and benefit agreement.

The Last Ice Area is a large region within the high Arctic of Canada and Greenland. It is the area where the oldest Arctic multi-year ice is found and is the most likely to retain its summer sea ice into 2050 as the planet warms up due to climate change.

The third is a transfer of \$405,000 from Parks Canada to Library and Archives Canada in return of a parcel of land in Gatineau, Quebec, to serve as the future site of the agency's national collections facility.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Next I would like to address the Parks Canada Agency's 2018-19 interim estimates, which are approximately \$321 million. These estimates represent the agency's spending requirements for the first three months of the fiscal year and include a list of grants to allow the agency to make grant payments as of April 1, 2018.

[English]

I'd like to thank you, Madam Chair and the committee, for your time today.

We'll be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Mr. McConnachie, go ahead.

Mr. Douglas McConnachie (Director General and Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Financial Management Directorate, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Madam Chair, vice-chairs, honourable members.

Good morning.

[Translation]

It is my pleasure to join you today to discuss the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (C) and the 2018-19 interim estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada, or ECCC.

[English]

My name is Doug McConnachie. I'm director general of financial management services and deputy chief financial officer.

I'm joined by my colleagues Matt Jones, assistant deputy minister of the pan-Canadian framework implementation office, and John Moffet, acting associate assistant deputy minister of the environmental protection branch.

I'll begin with a presentation of the items that were requested by ECCC in the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (C) and close with a brief overview of our 2018-19 interim estimates.

Through the supplementary estimates (C), ECCC is requesting Parliamentary approval of a net increase in authorities of \$195.8 million. This amount comprises \$197.1 million in new spending as well as \$1.3 million in net transfers to other government

departments. This represents a 17.4% increase in our authorities to date, from \$1.1 billion to \$1.3 billion.

[Translation]

The supplementary estimates (C) include new spending for three items: the low carbon economy leadership fund, the green municipal fund, and funding for the Pacific Environment Centre.

The low carbon economy fund was announced in budget 2017 with a total budget of \$1.4 billion over a five-year period. ECCC is requesting \$115 million of this total through these estimates and will request the remainder of this funding through future estimates.

[English]

The low carbon economy leadership fund is a key component of the pan-Canadian framework that will help provinces and territories deliver on leadership commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The fund will deliver clean sustained growth, support innovation, and reduce energy bills, helping Canadians save money and contribute to fighting climate change. The low carbon economy leadership fund also supports implementation of the pan-Canadian climate plan by investing in projects that will generate clean growth and reduce carbon pollution. These investments support Canada's Paris Agreement commitment and align with the 2030 national climate target.

[Translation]

Additional funding of \$125 million for the green municipal fund, which is administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, was announced in budget 2016. ECCC is requesting \$62.5 million through these estimates, with the remaining half to be requested by Natural Resources Canada.

[English]

The green municipal fund provides loans and grants that have a positive impact on the health and quality of life of Canadians by reducing greenhouse gas emissions; improving local air, water, and soil quality; and promoting renewable energy by supporting environmental studies in projects within the municipal sector. The green municipal fund supports the investing in Canada plan, a long-term ambitious plan of transformational investments in infrastructure that will help us to build strong communities, create jobs, and grow the economy.

ECCC has requested \$19.6 million through these estimates to increase baseline funding for the Pacific Environmental Centre. ECCC's lease for this site requires the parties to conduct an independent review of rental costs every five years. In June 2017, the ECCC received an arbitration decision that increased the annual rent by \$7.2 million, retroactive to the beginning of the five-year review period in 2013-14.

[Translation]

Finally, ECCC has requested four transfers of authorities to other government departments through these estimates. These transfers are \$1 million to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to assist with temporary operating pressures; \$0.2 million to Correctional Service of Canada to help address contaminated sites under their jurisdiction; \$0.2 million to Global Affairs Canada to support whole-of-government initiatives internationally; and \$0.1 million for Fisheries and Oceans Canada to be applied under the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk.

• (1235)

[English]

I will now provide a very brief overview of the 2018-19 interim estimates. The tabling of interim estimates is a new process that has been designed to provide more coherent information to Parliament and to better align the federal budget and the estimates.

In past years, the main estimates were tabled by March 1, followed by an interim supply bill that was typically based on 25% of the main estimates. The interim supply bill ensured that the government had sufficient funding to commence the fiscal year.

[Translation]

The 2018-19 main estimates will be tabled on April 16, after the federal budget has been presented. This will allow parliamentarians and Canadians to more clearly see the alignment of the federal budget and estimates as compared to previous years.

With this change, through the 2018-19 interim estimates, ECCC is requesting funding for the first three months of the fiscal year and the authority to make commitments up to the amount of planned spending.

[English]

The ECCC is requesting funding of \$357.4 million to the 2018-19 interim estimates, which represents one-quarter of its anticipated planned spending for the fiscal year. This amount comprises \$188.2 million in operating expenditures, \$19 million in capital expenditures, and \$150 million in grants and contributions. The most significant increase in year-over-year funding is related to the anticipated planned spending for the low carbon economy fund of approximately \$500 million.

I hope that this summary of initiatives in the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (C) and the 2018-19 interim estimates provides the committee with additional clarity on ECCC's request.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for the quick summary. We'll move right into questions and we'll start with Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I'm going to share my time with Mr. Aldag, and he's going to start.

Mr. John Aldag: I'm in a bit of a parks headspace right now after my first hour here, so I have a couple of quick questions for Parks Canada.

On the \$27-plus million for natural disasters, it was mentioned in the opening comments that this arose from a lot of the issues in

western Canada this year. Is that money that has been spent, or are there still expenditures arising? How confident are you that the \$27.3 million and change will cover off the expenses arising from the natural disasters? That's the first one, if you could give a brief comment.

The second one is that I was a bit surprised with the \$405,000 transfer for land acquisition. I know there have been some decisions to not transfer the collections from Halifax, and now recently Quebec. I assume we're going ahead with the new collections facility.

I suppose the land needs to be purchased, but is Parks Canada still going with the full-size facility that was envisioned after the DRAP cuts in 2012? What's happening there? As I said, I was surprised that this was still moving on, in light of some recent decisions.

Mr. Sylvain Michaud: In terms of the expenses for the fire, we're still on track to basically spend every single dollar that we will receive. We're just in the process of getting the final invoices from some of our partners, but so far, we've looked at all of these estimates of the expenditures coming in, and we'll be exactly bang on in terms of the money that we're asking for versus the total expenditures.

In terms of the collections consolidation project, we're still moving ahead with this one. Currently our collections are located in six different facilities across the country, so yes, a decision has been made that we're still going to consolidate those artifacts over time. It's going to take some time, but we are still moving ahead. This is really to ensure the protection and the conservation of these artifacts. We have to make sure that we have the proper environmental conditions and security measures in place to protect and conserve those artifacts.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you all for being here today and for your presentations.

There are a number of different funds that you have brought up that I am very excited about. One of my communities, Amherstview, benefited from the green municipal fund in a constructed wetland, so I am over-the-top excited about the budget announcement of \$1.3 billion for protecting Canada's nature parks and wild spaces.

Is this going to enable the Department of the Environment to continue funding those types of projects in order to continue to expand our protected spaces?

• (1240)

Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment): Yes, there was exciting news in the budget related to investments in conservation activities, and there will be details of all of this. It is not yet all worked out, but there will definitely be opportunities for investment in private lands, in public lands, in protected areas, and in other ecosystem services to protect areas and also to protect species in the areas.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Outstanding. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Another area that I find really exciting is the \$150 million for the low carbon economy leadership fund. I have a company in my riding that wants to turn an old abandoned mine, the Marmoraton steel mine, into a 450-megawatt battery, so a massive carbon sink would result from this. Is this the type of project you envision this fund is geared towards?

Mr. Matt Jones (Assistant Deputy Minister, Pan-Canadian Framework Implementation Office, Department of the Environment): The low carbon economy fund is designed to leverage the monies of provinces and potentially companies and other participants, municipalities and others. The leadership fund is set up so that we're taking proposals from the provinces and sifting through those, so which proposals are brought forward is largely driven by the provinces within the parameters that we have set.

Because there are different funds, such as the green municipal fund, green infrastructure fund, and clean technology fund, we've set up the low carbon economy fund to focus on a fairly niche area, mostly the built environment, which means existing buildings, energy efficiency, industrial emissions, forestry, and agriculture. There is an opportunity for some movement around there depending on the projects and what is brought forward.

Typically, for funds of that nature, when we receive proposals that don't fit the low carbon economy fund, we have an interdepartmental process to see where they would fit in terms of other funds that exist within the federal family.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Some of you know that what I'm doing up here means you have one minute to go until the time is out. That means you're out of time and you should just wrap up whatever you're saying.

We're out of time, so we'll move on to Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

My first question is to Mr. Kerr, who talked about the environmental assessment process.

You are aware that all modern industrial projects—pipelines, natural resources projects, and so on—are built with the highest environmental standards built in, right? There is no company that builds a substandard project these days, correct?

Mr. Alan Kerr: I just don't have the technical expertise to offer the committee to make that assertion.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I do, because I worked for a pulp and paper company and in the oil sands. I can guarantee you that every project is designed with the highest environmental standards built in.

Mr. Kerr, what's the state of Canada's environment right now, or can any of the witnesses give me any environmental indicators and trends?

Mr. Alan Kerr: Madam Chair, I was prepared to come here to speak with the committee about supplementary estimates (C) and the interim supply. I did not prepare myself. We can certainly cause a subject matter expert to appear in front of the committee to address the question if you like.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Surely somebody on the committee has ecological expertise.

As an MP I can ask any question I want in supplementary estimates.

This is the environment committee. I'm asking a direct question about the state of Canada's environment and the trend in Canada's environmental indicators.

Perhaps Ms. Milburn-Hopwood would be the logical person. I'm assuming there's somebody with environmental or ecological expertise on the panel.

• (1245)

Mr. John Moffet (Acting Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): I can point the member to the Canadian Environment and Sustainability Indicators that we publish. Those track—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I know that report. I'm asking about the trends in Canada's environment. It's a very simple question and highly relevant.

Mr. John Moffet: I would respectfully disagree. It's not a simple question. As an ecologist, you know in Canada, environmental quality is composed of numerous complex interactions. We're able to track and report on the state on specific indicators of specific attributes. Environment Canada does not have a postilion on, nor do we report as a single statement, overall environmental quality or overall directions around environmental quality.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I find that shocking, because in my own research most of Canada's environmental indicators are improving: nitrous oxide, sulphur dioxide, water quality, and so on. There are certain environmental indicators that are not, such as Great Lakes water quality, and so on. I would have expected a better handle on that particular question.

I would like to ask Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood a few questions, if that's possible.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: If we could stop the clock, because....

The Chair: Yes, I will give you your time.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: If you don't ask, you don't get.

Ms. Milburn-Hopwood, I was very interested in your comments on conservation. I own private land myself. I have land that has a conservation easement on it. I represent farmers and landowners in a very large area of western Manitoba.

If you can delineate it fairly quickly, what's your strategy in private land conservation and investment? How are you going to deal with the farm community in implementing conservation on private land?

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: We have a number of programs that work on this issue. One in particular is the natural areas conservation program administered by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. That program is in the final year of the funding that it has been allocated already. That's just one program that focuses on private lands.

We also have a number of other programs. The habitat stewardship program can provide funding for securement and also for activities on land. Then we have another program, called SARPAL, for species at risk. It focuses particularly on agricultural lands. We will enter into agreements with farmers or ranchers to do specific activities.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thanks. I'm a big fan of SARPAL. I think it's quite a success story. Will it continue in the new budget? Is there funding for it?

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: That's good, because the enforcement approach related to conservation on the private lands landscape, as I think you might agree, has been a dismal failure.

I'd like to talk a little about the Species at Risk Act for a minute. It's been going since about 2001, 2002. Is that when it was put...?

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: It was 2002 and 2003.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Can you name one species that has been brought back directly because of the Species at Risk Act? The peregrine falcon came back by itself and the white pelican came back by itself, but is there a single species that has been brought back because of the Species at Risk Act?

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: That's not a simple kind of question, because—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I think it is.

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: There are a number of factors to look at, and I think you would argue that the peregrine falcon has benefited from the act. We can come back to you with an answer that looks at the broad range of species—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Sorry, Ms. Milburn-Hopwood; I don't mean to cut you off—

The Chair: You're almost out of time.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: —but I did ask a previous director of the Canadian Wildlife Service that question about four years ago. There had been about \$300 million spent on the Species at Risk Act, and her answer to the question was "zero", so the act is a deeply flawed act that needs some work. It's certainly not your fault, and again, I think your department has some great programs, including the SARPAL program and the habitat stewardship program. As you know, in Manitoba, I have a little bit of experience with that program.

Thank you very much.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you very much. You did that right on the button.

Go ahead, Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you very much. It's good to you all here again. Sorry to take you away from your important work.

I have three questions. I may not get to all of them.

I have a theme every time you come back, and now it's the UNESCO strategic environmental assessment.

It's my understanding that this responsibility has been assigned to Parks Canada. When I look at these estimates and the previous estimates, I'm not seeing any additional monies. Why are we not seeing additional monies here for that? That's a major undertaking.

In that connection, what dollars are being assigned to directly engage indigenous people? That's one of the directives of UNESCO.

As well, what additional costs do you anticipate in order to complete that strategic environmental assessment?

Mr. Rob Prosper (Vice-President, Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation, Parks Canada Agency): Perhaps I can start. Thank you for the question.

Certainly, in terms of the circumstance in Wood Buffalo and the issue that we have there with the state of the park—that's the state of the universal values there—we're guided by the guidelines for UNESCO in terms of the processes that we have to have in place to address those concerns. The two areas that we're currently working on are the strategic environmental assessment, as you know, as well as an action plan. We're working on both of those elements with indigenous groups, with the intent to develop a robust response that would—

Ms. Linda Duncan: Okay, I don't want to interrupt. I know all of that. My specific question is whether you have been allocated additional resources, or are you having to rob Peter to pay Paul? Are some of the Parks Canada programs suffering because you're having to carry the weight of doing the strategic environmental assessment?

Mr. Rob Prosper: We have internally reallocated resources focused on addressing the strategic environmental assessment and engagement with indigenous groups. A comprehensive action plan, however, will require additional resources, and that is something that we would be looking at going forward.

Ms. Linda Duncan: We definitely don't see those in these estimates.

My second question is about the transfer of indigenous resources for SARA. I think those are probably coming from Indigenous and Northern Affairs to Environment and Climate Change Canada. I don't know where they are coming from, but there is a transfer to Environment and Climate Change Canada. I'm wondering if that's to do with the woodland caribou we're covering.

Mr. Douglas McConnachie: Thank you very much for the question. I'll just look at my notes.

Ms. Linda Duncan: That is the almost \$67,000, or is it \$67 million?

Mr. Douglas McConnachie: I'm sorry. Is that in supplementary estimates or...?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Yes, it's in the supplementary estimates, page 2-43. It's for indigenous involvement in SARA, and I'm wondering if that's related to the woodland caribou.

Mr. Douglas McConnachie: I don't believe it is. I'm just having difficulty locating the information at this time.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Maybe you could get back to us on what that is about, because I have another question.

Mr. Douglas McConnachie: Certainly.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I have a different opinion on the low carbon economy. I am troubled that the \$1.2 billion that was committed in 2016 has been sitting, and I'm a little stunned at the small amount that is being disbursed. I'm puzzled as to why that money has not been released to the territories and provinces more expeditiously.

Mr. Matt Jones: Thanks for the question. This being a brand new program, we needed to establish the parameters around how it would be operated, what its scope would be, and how the guidance would be provided to provinces to ensure that we would have proper oversight and review of the individual programs. As is often the case with new programs, an awful lot of work has gone into the front end in order to set out the parameters, the application process, the review process, and the approvals process. We've been working away on that while consulting with provinces and while receiving projects. A lot of things have been happening in parallel to help speed up this process.

We've been engaging with provinces, receiving proposals, and reviewing those proposals while negotiating contribution agreements simultaneously in order to move those monies as quickly as possible. We now have contribution agreements in place with a couple of provinces, and we have agreements in principle with a number of others. We have sifted through, reviewed, given feedback on, and reviewed again a very long list of projects, and there is quite a pipeline now of projects. Our expectation is that those agreements will be concluded shortly and that the monies will start to flow soon.

• (1255)

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm a little puzzled when I look at the budget

The Chair: Please be very quick.

Ms. Linda Duncan: This follow-up will be really fast.

You're saying the money will be coming, but, in the coming budget, there's nothing about the fund. There are no plans to allocate any more money. The only thing is the federal carbon pollution pricing backstop. That all goes to the Department of Finance. I don't see anything in the budget for future allocation of these dollars. It leaves me wondering what's going on.

I would appreciate some kind of update on what is going on with this fund. Perhaps you could send that to us.

The Chair: Be very quick, if you could. That's a decent question. Go ahead.

Mr. Douglas McConnachie: Just very quickly, the funds were announced in previous budgets. The transfer that you see in the supplementary estimates (C) is the first of several waves of funding that will come through future estimates. Our main estimates will also include a sizable transfer of funding for the low carbon economy fund, but not the full amounts that have been announced previously. You will see those allocations in future estimates documents.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next up we have Mr. Amos.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for their patience.

I want to get into the new budget around nature parks and wild spaces. I too am very enthusiastic about this, as I'm sure you're aware. I note that for 2018-19 there will be \$24 million available. That will be ramping up, at least on the parks side. I presume there are some other funds for the species at risk side and some other funds for the CWS side.

I wonder if there's any breakdown between the species at risk aspect of it and the CWS and migratory birds side of it. We have the parks stuff; that's fairly clear. I just wasn't sure about the rest. Then I'll get more specifically into next steps on that.

Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: We still don't have all of those details laid out yet. There's still some work to do. I think we can get back to you, but there's still some work to do. This has just come out, and we have to work through what that allocation is.

Mr. William Amos: I understand, and I look forward to that. Thank you for getting back to me on it.

The Chair: I know that all members can ask any and all questions, and that has been clear, but this really is about estimates. To be fair to those who have come prepared for estimates, if we could.... You're allowed to ask anything. I get it. However, if we could focus on the estimates, it would be great. Thank you.

Mr. William Amos: Sure.

Madam Chair, I'm not really interested in losing my time to quibble with this—

The Chair: It's okay. You have the floor.

Mr. William Amos: —but the main estimates indicate that there are interim estimates that are presented at \$321 million so that they can enable operations, specific aspects of the first quarter of expenditures. I think since the issue of first quarter expenditures is raised, I can ask questions about how that money is going to be spent. I don't think that's untoward, and I'd love to have those 90 seconds back.

The Chair: I'll give them back.

Mr. William Amos: Now that there are significant new funds that enable a whole different range of activities that the Parks Agency, the Wildlife Service, and those dealing with CERA can move forward with, what suggestions would you have for interested provincial governments or municipal governments that want to engage, and engage early, to foster those kinds of partnership opportunities that the budget presents?

I think there's great enthusiasm when people see the positive opportunities for incentivizing those partnerships. What would a government do? In the Pontiac, for example, what would municipal governments do? What could the provincial government do to express interest and a desire to move forward together? That would go with the CWS side as well as the Parks Canada side.

• (1300)

Mr. Rob Prosper: Thank you for the question. I can start.

As you obviously know, this committee has given us excellent advice on moving forward with the conservation agenda in protected areas. That advice is being utilized as part of the Pathway to Canada target 1, as we are engaging with provinces, territories, and indigenous groups to essentially map out the approach on a national basis of how we're going to reach the Canada target 1, which is the Aichi target 11. Through that process, every aspect of conserving biodiversity on land basis is being considered. That's private lands, provincial and indigenous lands, and so on.

Ministers are currently engaged in that process, with the expectation that they will be providing guidance on that on a national basis. Presumably each of the jurisdictions will be looking at their current plans and the types of flexibilities that are being discussed in terms of new tools for conserved lands and how that forms part of the overall strategy to get to 17%. I think over the course of the next year there will be an enormous amount of work around what those opportunities are and how we would explore all of those opportunities, because obviously the landing zone between now and 2020 is very short.

Mr. William Amos: That's very helpful. Thank you.

Is it fair to suggest that at both the CWS level and at Parks Canada, the doors are open for suggestions from subnational governments as to how to move towards this pathway to Aichi?

Mr. Rob Prosper: I would say that the current explorations into the new types of tools that may be available are going to have every jurisdiction looking at those opportunities.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Great.

Mr. William Amos: Are there any comments from the CWS side on this? Mr. Prosper is obviously speaking on behalf of Parks.

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: I assure you that Environment Canada and Canadian Wildlife Services are working hand in hand with Parks Canada on this project. If communities have proposals, I think we're ready to start receiving them and thinking about them.

All the details of these programs aren't all worked out yet, but we are working through some of the new tools and concepts. We would certainly be interested in receiving proposals from communities that have ideas.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

The Chair: I did give you your time back.

We've done our first round. I had only considered a first round so that we could go to what we have to vote on, but I believe we have agreed that we're going to add about 20 minutes to the meeting. I will give two more minutes for each party for questions, and then we'll move to the voting.

We'll start with Mr. Sopuck for two minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thanks.

I just came across an article in Bloomberg that says, "Foreign Direct Investment in Canada Plunges on Oil Exodus". It's down about 26% this year. Then recently Suncor CEO Steve Williams said in an article, "Suncor to shun major new projects amid Canada's difficult regulatory environment".

Mr. Kerr, in your comments you talked about strengthening Canada's environmental assessment and regulatory processes. It's clear that the environmental regulatory processes implemented by this government are driving away foreign investment at a significant rate. Do you ever consider the economic impact of the regulatory processes that your department is designing when you are developing these processes? Do you consider the economic impact?

•(1305)

Mr. Alan Kerr: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the question.

The legislation that was introduced by the minister is the result of consultations with stakeholders across Canada, including industry, and one of the things that was heard loud and clear was that environmental responsibility and economic development go hand in hand. The legislation that is going through the parliamentary process is very respectful of that, and the processes that we're working to put in place, should the legislation be passed, will reflect that.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I vehemently disagree with that, and the statement by the Suncor CEO proves that I'm right.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Are you ready over there, or do I go to Mr. Stetski?

Mr. Stetski, you go next, and then they'll go. We're out of order.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

I have a couple of quick questions for Parks Canada. I am the critic for Parks Canada, although I prefer "advocate", because that's really what I am.

The \$26.7 million is basically to cover last year's costs, I assume.

Is there going to be money in this budget anticipating additional natural disasters like fires, particularly in British Columbia where I'm from? Climate change is not going away.

Second, it was announced that people aged 17 and under will have free entrance to parks. This is perhaps more a budget question, but are there operational dollars to replace lost revenue from the decrease in entrance fees?

The third question is specifically for my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, where there are four national parks, Kootenay, Yoho, Revelstoke, and Glacier. I would love to see additional money going into the highway, particularly through Revelstoke and Glacier parks, where there continues to be an unreasonably high level of fatalities.

Mr. Sylvain Michaud: In terms of the budget, as my colleagues at ECCC said, we haven't got all the details yet. We have yet to see the details in the budget to be able to answer that question about whether we have any additional funding to deal with climate change and additional fires.

In terms of the second question about the replacement of revenues lost as a result of free entry for youth, we did get that money last year in last year's budget. We got \$2.5 million a year on an ongoing basis to basically replace the revenues lost as a result of it.

Do you want to address the third question?

Mr. Rob Prosper: The third question was....

Mr. Wayne Stetski: It was about funding the highway through Rev-Glacier parks.

Mr. Sylvain Michaud: Your question was specific to—?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: It was about highway improvements, in Revelstoke and Glacier parks in particular. There was almost \$90 million in Yoho National Park last year for highway improvements. I'm just wondering whether there will be money this year—

The Chair: Wayne, I'm sorry, but we're out of time on that question.

Go ahead, Churence.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): This is a question about the green municipal fund. I see there's \$125 million to be added to that fund. As a past mayor, and of course sitting on a board of directors for FCM for a number of years, I'm pleased to see this.

I think it's well administered and it does some great work across the country, but what kind of reporting mechanisms are in place so that we see that the money is efficiently used and meets the objectives that the federal government has in place?

Mr. Douglas McConnachie: Thank you very much for inquiring about the green municipal fund.

As members may be aware, there has been a strong partnership between the Government of Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on the administration of the fund for a number of years, and the transfer you're seeing in our current estimates represents a top-up to the already sizable commitments that have been made by previous governments.

From a reporting perspective, as with all grants and contributions, there are accountability provisions in our funding agreement with the FCM that require them, first of all, to produce an annual plan, which is also reported upon in our departmental report on plans and priorities, as well as an annual plan at the end of the year reporting on the outcomes and the usage of the funds, with an audited financial statement. There is, then, full accountability for the funds that are being administered via FCM.

• (1310)

Mr. Churence Rogers: I was thinking more particularly of meeting the objectives of clean energy, wastewater regulations, and all that stuff. At one point we, as a board of directors, questioned the board of directors that runs the green municipal fund, which is a separate body, about certain projects that were approved and whether or not they were most efficiently using the funds to meet those objectives that we wanted to meet and the federal government wants to meet. That's why I asked the question.

Mr. Douglas McConnachie: Thank you very much for the clarification.

An official from Environment and Climate Change Canada is part of the board of directors and assists in those decisions in which value-for-money propositions are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for everybody's questions; they're good questions.

We will now move into the vote on the supplementary estimates (C).

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AGENCY
Vote 1c—Program expenditures.....\$1,000,000

(Vote 1c agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Vote 1c—Operating expenditures.....\$19,632,704
Vote 10c—Grants and contributions.....\$177,500,000

(Vote 1c agreed to)

(Vote 10c agreed to on division)

PARKS CANADA AGENCY
Vote 1c—Program expenditures.....\$27,386,302

(Vote 1c agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report supplementary estimates (C) 2017-18 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It is agreed.

Next we have the interim estimates.

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AGENCY
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$15,116,160

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$188,154,737
Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$19,039,506
Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....\$150,160,323

(Votes 1, 5, and 10 agreed to on division)

PARKS CANADA AGENCY
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$318,934,529
Vote 5—Amounts credited to the New Parks and Historic Sites account.....\$2,251,750

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

The Chair: I think I could have guessed that.

Shall I report the interim estimates 2018-19 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed, on division.

The Chair: Before we leave the room...wait. Wait. You're not scaring anybody; just let me finish this up.

Thank you very much to our guests. I'm just going to carry on into what we're going to do. I want to make sure that when we come back...wait. Wait.

I'm sorry. You guys are fine to leave; the committee is not fine. They just have to listen for a minute.

It is very likely that we will be getting Bill C-69 very soon. I want to make sure that the committee is as prepared as we can be; I want to make sure everybody is okay.

I would like to let the universe know that it's likely going to come to the committee and I'd like to call for submissions. I want to make sure everybody is okay with our putting out a call for submissions.

We've already been polling for your witnesses. Some of you have sent them; not everybody has. We will get the witnesses as fast as possible so that we can put out a list to all of you, which we can then work on in the first week we're back.

An hon. member: That's perfect. Well done, Chair.

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much. Well done, everybody.

The meeting is adjourned.

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