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• (1430)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): I will call the meeting to order.

Welcome to the 32nd meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, for the first meeting of our clause-by-clause study of Bill C-12.

I think everyone here is experienced with the modus operandi of committees, especially in virtual space, so I won't go over that.

We have with us again today, with great pleasure, Minister Wilkinson. Joining him, from the Department of Finance is Mr. Samuel Millar, director general, corporate finance, natural resources and environment, economic development and corporate finance branch. We also have, from the Department of the Environment, John Moffet, who was with us as well last week, assistant deputy minister, environmental protection branch; and Douglas Nevison, who was with us last week as well, assistant deputy minister, climate change branch.

I will now invite Minister Wilkinson to make his opening remarks.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you for the invitation to discuss with you Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act.

I would start by thanking members of this committee for undertaking a timely examination of this bill. I understand it is a constituency week. With the climate crisis before us, we obviously cannot afford to wait.

Over 120 countries have already made a commitment to net zero by 2050, including our biggest trading partner south of the border. Major Canadian companies have also made this commitment.

As I have said, I remain very open to constructive amendments that will further strengthen Bill C-12. I look forward to the committee's work in this regard, and I remain committed to an approach of co-operation and collaboration. That is how the parliamentary process should work and I firmly believe that is what Canadians expect of their elected representatives.

Bill C-12 codifies the government's commitment for Canada to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and our newly announced target for 2030. It also creates a detailed accountability and transparency regime to ensure that we methodically plan, report and course correct on our way to net zero.

[Translation]

In December of last year, we published Canada's strengthened climate plan. This plan is one of the most detailed GHG reduction plans in the world.

Recognizing the scientific imperative for early and ambitious action, we announced a new 2030 target of a 40% to 45% reduction in GHG emissions at the Leaders Summit on Climate in April.

[English]

Measures announced in budget 2021, along with ongoing work with our American colleagues on issues including transportation and methane, will support that new target. We know more action will be required. This continued ambition is what Canadians expect—that we will continue to prioritize climate action, and that we will work to achieve targets that are aligned with science.

To ensure we meet our targets, Bill C-12 requires that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change prepare two types of reports, both of which are required to be tabled in Parliament and made available to the public: progress reports and assessment reports.

Progress reports will provide updates on Canada's progress towards achieving the target for the next milestone year and any additional measures that could be taken to achieve the target. Each progress report must be prepared at least two years before the relevant milestone year.

Assessment reports, on the other hand, will explain whether the most recent target was achieved. If Canada fails to achieve a target, the minister must explain why and include a description of actions the government will take to address the failed target. Each assessment report must be prepared within 30 days of Canada submitting its GHG inventory report to the UNFCCC for the relevant target year.

[Translation]

Bill C-12 also holds the government to account by requiring the Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development to regularly examine and report on the government's implementation of the climate change mitigation measures, including those undertaken to achieve each target.

The bill establishes an advisory body of up to 15 members, which will provide advice to the minister and conduct engagement on pathways to achieve net-zero by 2050.

The advisory body must submit an annual report and the minister must publicly respond to their advice.

● (1435)

[English]

All of this is in addition to our existing reporting requirements under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. My department has developed a chart outlining the suite of reporting requirements and transparency mechanisms, which will be provided to this committee.

By putting our climate obligations into law, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act would ensure that governments are accountable for and transparent about their actions to combat climate change. Bill C-12 would require all future governments to table strong climate plans, based on science, to address the threat of climate change.

Canadians are counting on us to have constructive discussions to strengthen this legislation, but they are also looking for us to enshrine the commitment to net zero and a pathway to get there in law.

I look forward to the robust discussion on Bill C-12 at this committee, but I also hope that this legislation will be moved forward as expeditiously as possible.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We have about 90 minutes, which means that we have time for three rounds of questions; one of six minutes and two of five minutes.

As members of the committee already know, we will have another panel at 4 p.m. for an hour and a half.

Mr. Albas, you now have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be passing my time to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, Dan, for this unexpected opportunity.

Minister, thank you for being before committee. Thank you for your personal commitment to climate action. It's evident. You know that you have my deepest respect in knowing that you care. When you say that we "cannot afford to wait", I firmly believe you mean it, which is why I'm very disappointed with this legislation.

My first question is why. In developing this legislation, it seems apparent that Environment and Climate Change Canada chose not to study the climate accountability acts of other countries—the U.K., New Zealand, Denmark—and to do better than what they recommend. In three places I note the differences with that legislation: We don't start right away with a five-year target, with five years from when the legislation started, the milestone year; we don't include carbon budgets; and we don't rely on an expert committee that reports to the whole of Parliament and actually sets those carbon budgets for the government.

There must have been a decision not to look at the gold standard of climate accountability elsewhere in the world. I wonder why not.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for the series of questions. Certainly, thank you for your ongoing commitment to the climate issue, which I know is very deeply felt.

We did certainly look at all of the other relevant acts around the world. We came to the conclusion that we were going to develop something that we felt fit best within the Canadian context. As you will know, we have established an expert panel. The expert panel is one piece of this. The role for the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development is another piece. In some other jurisdictions, those roles are fused, but in this case the commissioner does the review and effectively the auditing of that function. The expert panel is appointed to provide advice to the government, which is public. It must be responded to by the minister every year, so that piece of it is, we think, the gold standard in terms of how we actually are moving forward.

With respect to other elements of the bill, certainly, as I say, we looked very closely at those. We believe setting five-year rolling targets that essentially embed in them emissions relating to sectors is the right way to go in Canada, a federal system. We believe it is essentially similar in terms of outcomes as to what you get from carbon budgets. Many other countries, including Denmark and Scotland and others, have gone the same direction that Canada has.

Ms. Elizabeth May: With all due respect, Mr. Minister, the bill refers to an advisory committee, not an expert committee. You have only one climate scientist on the current body. I think it was disrespectful to this committee and the parliamentary process to jump the gun and appoint an advisory committee before the bill had even had a single witness to talk about why so many people and experts believe we should model ourselves much more on the U.K. climate committee, which is universally respected for its expertise. You have one climate scientist on your advisory body. Professor Donner has been clear that Canada's climate target for 2030, if we're going to pull our fair share, should be somewhere between 96% and 99% reductions below the emissions today, but he'll be surrounded by other stakeholders who have other views.

I wonder if you will reconsider the composition—more than the people on it, the structure of it—to be much more like the U.K. expert body that sets carbon budgets.

• (1440)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for the comment. To be honest, I'm a little bit surprised at the comment, because certainly the focus for us is on getting the expert panel working. The issue is so important and so timely. That's one of the reasons we moved forward with it.

I would say that achieving net zero will require the support and engagement of all parts of society. That includes provinces and territories. It includes indigenous peoples, youth, civil society and a range of sectors within the private sector. We have launched an independent net-zero advisory body that is filled with exceptional Canadians who bridge a wide range of experiences and expertise, including sectoral expertise, and that will enable us to make the kind of progress we need to make going forward.

I can certainly go through the bios of the people who are on that committee. They are an exceptional group of folks, who bring together a range of perspectives from across the piece to ensure that the government is getting the best advice with respect to pathways to achieve net zero.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Minister, with all due respect, we know the only pathway to meet and hold to 1.5°C, which is the goal of the Paris Agreement.... Net zero by 2050 is meaningless if we've blown the carbon budget to get to 1.5°C by 2030.

I've cited to you before in Parliament the very excellent description of carbon budgets from Mark Carney, at page 273 of his book *Value(s)*, so I won't read it out here. We're going to blow any chance of hitting 1.5°C well before 2030 and everyone knows it. Having a process that involves massive consultations for every step and builds in delays could defeat the whole purpose of ensuring that we meet our Paris target of holding to 1.5°C.

Are you open to considering amendments to have the kind of robust expert body that the U.K. has to hold to its climate accountability act, which has worked?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: First of all, I would correct you with respect to consultations that will require enormous obligations that will impede progress.

Ms. Elizabeth May: That's how the act was written.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: It does require consultation. We believe that Canadians actually want to have a voice in this. We believe that industry and environmental organizations want to have a voice as we go through the process of establishing targets. That's important and that is something we have embedded in this legislation.

We believe that this body, which has been set up with extremely thoughtful folks coming from across the spectrum, will provide the kind of advice that Canada needs to make the progress it needs to move forward.

As you saw, Canada actually significantly ratcheted up its level of ambition recently at the earth summit alongside our partners. We certainly are very sensitive, as will that body be, with respect to the

guidance that is in this act relating to needing to be guided by science, which includes ensuring that 1.5°C in 2050 remains something that actually is on the table.

The Chair: Good.

We have to go now to Mr. Longfield, who will be splitting his time with Mr. Saini, as I understand it.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Yes, that's correct, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Thank you to the minister for being here and to the officials who will be speaking in the last half-hour of this panel.

Over the last several months, I've been hearing from a lot of Guelphites on C-12, many of whom have offered their support for this legislation. They're lending ideas already. They've told me that the bill needs to be prioritized and passed as soon as possible. They're offering meaningful support for us to have these discussions.

Of particular interest to my constituents was the piece in this legislation that offers a greater opportunity for the participation of Canadians on the climate objectives in the climate crisis. Could the minister elaborate on this by letting us know how we're going to be engaging with Canadians on this legislation as we move forward with it?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for that very important question.

Hearing from Canadians, scientists and experts is extremely important. It's important in a whole range of perspectives in terms of getting to the right answers. It's also important in terms of building consensus in the decisions that are going to be made going forward.

Clause 13 of the bill provides that the Minister of Environment must, when setting or amending a national greenhouse gas emissions target or an emissions reduction plan, provide an opportunity for Canadians, experts, indigenous peoples and other governments to contribute their thoughts and perspectives. For instance, those opportunities could be virtual—for instance in a webinar or through social media—or in person with round tables and assemblies.

In addition, the independent net-zero advisory body is mandated to engage Canadians in a transparent and inclusive process and provide advice to the minister on pathways to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. We think this is very important.

• (1445)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

You've also mentioned accountability in your testimony.

As vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I've had the opportunity to do a lot of work with the Auditor General and the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. I was pleased to see that this legislation will make use of their auditing to hold the government of the day accountable on climate action.

Could the minister explain the importance of this bill's accountability tools?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you again for the question.

Committing ourselves to transparency and accountability is certainly important because it helps people and businesses plan and investors know that they can count on Canada to be a great place to invest. It also sets very clear goals that Canadians expect us to deliver on. They will hold our government—and any future government—to account if we don't. There is a wide range of accountability measures outlined in the act. I think you are all very familiar with those.

The act is also proactive. It requires the federal government to bring forward climate plans to meet targets based on the best available science and the advice of experts.

The commissioner will help to ensure accountability as well, with the act calling upon the commissioner to examine and report on the government's implementation and mitigation measures at least once every target. The net-zero panel will also publicly report and the minister is required to respond.

I've also indicated publicly that I am open to going further with respect to accountability measures. I have noted that I would be pleased to see the bill provide additional progress reports in 2023 and 2025, ensuring two reviews on the implementation of the Government of Canada's commitments to the Office of the Auditor General in advance of 2030, with the first to occur no later than 2024. It would have more prescriptive requirements for what the government must include in progress reports and the emissions reduction plan.

All of these will ensure accountability and transparency.

The Chair: Are you handing it off to Mr. Saini?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I am.

The Chair: Mr. Saini, go ahead.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

It's good to see you again, Minister. Thank you for coming again today with your officials.

I'm going to ask a more personal question based on some of the comments I've been receiving from my constituents in Kitchener Centre. They're extremely happy that we're taking strong measures to fight the climate crisis, including by tabling this important piece of legislation.

Minister, could you help my constituents, who may be listening, by telling us what this bill does?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I will start by saying that Bill C-12 is intended to hold the federal government to its commitment to achieve net zero by 2050—and all governments hence forth—and exceed our 2030 Paris target. The act would require the Government of Canada to set national targets every five years, starting in 2030, for the reduction of GHGs in Canada in order to achieve net zero by 2050. It would hold the government to account through a process to achieve that target, and targets must be based on the best scientific information available and on Canada's international cli-

mate commitments. These targets and their associated emissions reduction plans would be developed with advice from the independent net-zero advisory body and through consultations with Canadians.

There are a whole range of documents that will be fully public based on the various reporting mechanisms. More broadly, I think the act demonstrates to Canadians and the global community the Government of Canada's ongoing commitment to taking bold action on climate change.

Mr. Raj Saini: I want to ask you a question about the advisory body, because that's been brought up already. I'd like you to follow up on the idea that one of the key aspects of this bill is the net-zero advisory panel. Having an independent and expert-based panel is essential for making sure that we're accountable.

For the benefit of my constituents who may be listening in Kitchener Centre, could you please expand a bit on this panel and what it will do exactly?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Sure. Thank you.

The green transition of Canada's economy is required to achieve net zero. It requires advanced planning, investments in technology development and the deployment of those technologies. These measures would mean significant changes to our daily lives in the decades ahead.

The launch of the advisory panel would create an independent and credible platform to gather ideas, research and analysis on the many pathways to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 across Canada, and to do so in a manner that will ensure the prosperity and economic health of Canada in the future. The advisory panel would comprise eminent Canadians drawn from all regions of the country and from various sectors and perspectives. The advisory body's analysis would support the Government of Canada in making informed choices with respect to reducing emissions and growing our economy. The primary mandate, as you know, is to provide advice on the most promising pathways to achieve net zero by 2050.

We certainly recognize there is a need for this independent body to have the resources to carry out their work. That is why there is a dedicated budget of over \$15 million over the next three years and a dedicated secretariat to support their work.

The advisory body, going forward, would establish a transparent and inclusive process to engage with stakeholders.

● (1450)

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for taking the time to answer our questions.

I also thank the witnesses for being here.

Minister, the current version of Bill C-12 does not contain a GHG reduction target. In fact, subsection 7(2) states that you will establish the target within six months of the act coming into force. Yet, last April, you announced that your new target range would be a 40% to 45% reduction in GHGs by 2030, compared to that of 2005.

In question period, I asked whether your government would include this new target range in the act. Minister Guilbeault, who seems to have a fairly senior position in your department, replied that this new target would indeed be included in the act.

Can you confirm this statement?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for your question.

Yes, the new target range of 40% to 45% that we have announced as a goal for 2030 will be a requirement of the act.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: We can therefore expect the government to table an amendment, for example, to remove the part of subsection 7(2) that says that the target will be established after the act comes into force, since it will be established directly in the act. Is that right?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes, the new target will be Canada's determined contribution.

Of course, we are open to the idea of including Canada's determined contribution as a target in the act.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Okay, thank you.

If you support this idea, do you also support the idea of including a mandatory minimum target?

Let me explain. The presence of the Paris Agreement target in the act could serve as an additional judicial safeguard if more ambitious targets could not be met.

Would you also support the idea of including the Paris Agreement targets in the act, not just in the preamble of the bill, as is already the case?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I'm not quite sure I understand your question.

However, we have announced a target for 2030, which we will include in the act. We have set it with some of our partner countries like Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom. However, if we can make more progress, we may be able to modify this target in the future.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

Speaking of partner countries, the 27 countries of the European Union and Quebec calculate their GHG reduction targets using 1990 as the base year. However, Canada has decided to use 2005. Since the increase in GHGs was quite staggering between 1990 and

2005, this choice makes a big difference, because it looks like Canada has given the oil and gas companies a 15-year break so they could pollute.

For example, in 1990, Canada emitted about 603 megatonnes of GHGs, whereas in 2005, it was 739 megatonnes. By choosing the year 2005, it is clear that the target is much less ambitious.

In fact, Canada reduced its GHGs by 9 megatonnes between 2005 and 2019. However, it increased them between 1990 and 2019.

Compared to other countries, there is a real difference because of the way the projections are calculated. Would the government be prepared to use 1990 instead of 2005 as a base year in its calculations?

• (1455)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for your question.

Since it started setting a target, Canada has always used 2005 as a base year, and it will continue to do so. Many other countries use this year as a base, but you make a good point: all countries in the world must use the same base year in order to have equivalents between them and for citizens to understand.

I would also like to say that the bill you proposed in 2015 used 2005 as the base year, and a 30% reduction between 2005 and 2030.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: That is a very good point, Minister. I thank you for mentioning it.

For the sake of transparency towards our international partners and for the sake of honesty and clarity in the political debate, would you be in favour of setting your GHG emission targets using 1990 as the base year instead of 2005?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As I said, Canada has always used 2005 as a base year in all the work it has done, and is thus in line with many other countries that use the same year.

However, I agree with you that we need to discuss more often with the countries of the international community so that they all use the same base year. This will make it easier to understand where countries stand in comparison to each other.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being with us today to answer our questions.

I understand we're covering some well-trodden ground, but I wanted to start with the matter of the 2025 milestone.

So much of the feedback and response we've heard from constituents, and from civil society, is around this perceived need for some sort of near-term milestone or accountability measure that shows we're on track. When we look at the U.K. model, one of its big successes was that, right out of the gate, they set a five-year carbon budget. It was a near-term budget that they not only met but exceeded.

Could you explain to the committee why it is so difficult, in your view, for your government to set a 2025 milestone?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I would say to you that it is a few things. Certainly all of the work we have done and many other countries have done has been focused on achieving reductions to 2030. That was true with the pan-Canadian framework. That was certainly true also with Canada's strengthened climate plan. That was true if you watched the earth summit, in terms of the commitments that were made by Japan and the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom. They were all focused on a 2030 target.

I do think it's important—and I've heard some of the comments and the thoughts—that we think about what lies behind the request for the 2025 target, and I believe that's enhanced transparency and accountability. I have said, including in my opening remarks, that we are open to a number of improvements with respect to transparency and accountability so that programs can be tracked through the coming decade.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Minister.

It's good to hear your willingness to consider accountability measures in the near term. I believe what's being asked for is a sense that we're on track, because we've missed so many of our targets in the past. In order to determine whether we're on track, we have to define what “on track” actually means. My understanding is that your department conducts modelling exercises that essentially map out the trajectory for declining emissions between now and 2030. Could that modelling not tell us where we expect to be, if not where we need to be, in 2025?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes, and I think, as you will know, that modelling is an imprecise art. It is intended to essentially incorporate all of the various initiatives that the government is taking, whether those are investments or the price on [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] or regulatory changes to ensure that we are reducing emissions in line with our expectations. I would say the national inventory report that was released a few weeks ago showed us that we were actually on track with where we thought we would be if we were on track to meet our target.

That is why I say that having more frequent accountability reports that actually look at whether Canada is on track—and if in fact it is not on track what it's going to do to get back on track—is certainly something that we are open to, and I look forward to the conversations the committee will have.

● (1500)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Going back to the issue of carbon budgets versus emissions targets, I believe some of my colleagues have covered this a little bit, but I heard in one of your responses that you felt that the target approach that you have taken here “fit best within the Canadian context”.

I've heard this before but I've never heard explained what it is about the Canadian context that makes the carbon budget approach, in your view, not the best approach to take. Could you unpack that and explain precisely why you chose not to take the approach the U.K. did, which was so successful?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for the question. I would say there are probably different ways you can approach the issue of carbon budgeting. One is on the basis of geography and the other is on the basis of sector. I would tell you that in a country like Canada, which is a federation and not a unitary state, applying a carbon budget on a provincial basis is probably not the recipe for success and for collaborative working arrangements between different levels of government.

On a sectoral basis, you're essentially assigning different levels to different sectors. What I'm saying to you is that we actually have established a target system that rolls every five years and that essentially embeds within it targets with respect to sector, because you can actually, by and large, roll that out of the overall targets. It's not that different, so I think when people are getting a little bit fussed about this, they're actually getting fussed about something that is a bit of dancing on the head of a pin.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay. Perhaps I'll move along to my next question, because I believe I'm running out of time. We all know that the real work here comes not in setting the targets but in the emissions reduction plans that map out the way we're going to meet those targets.

Can you confirm that the intention is for the plans that are developed under this act to demonstrate clearly how they're going to achieve the targets for each milestone year, and are you open to amendments that would require additional detail to ensure that we really understand that those plans are up to the task of meeting the targets?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: The plan is essentially intended to demonstrate how we are going to make progress towards the target. I would be a little bit careful about saying at the beginning of a period that we know necessarily everything we're going to have to do over the coming number of years in order to achieve the targets. We obviously have to know most of it, but I do think we have to account for the fact that we're going to continue to need to have climate action as we move through those years. In the same way that people have said, “Why did the government commit to a 40% to 45% target when right now it clearly knows how it's going to get to 36%?”, the answer is that Canadians will expect that the next budget and the next budget and the next budget are going to continue to prioritize climate action and we need to continue to be ambitious going forward, given the scale of the problem.

Therefore, yes, these emissions reduction plans do need to be sufficiently detailed so that we can map out how we're going to make the progress that we need to make towards the target.

The Chair: Thanks.

We'll go to the second round now, which will be kicked off, if I'm not mistaken, by Mr. Redekopp for five minutes.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Thank you.

Thanks, Minister, for being here.

I just want to carry on right there. You talked about the targets and the way they're changing. Of course, you would know that it was 30% with no carbon tax, then we added a carbon tax or you increased the carbon tax, and then you came out with the budget that said 36%, and I still think it's a typo because a few days later the Prime Minister corrected it to 40% to 45%. I was speaking with some stakeholders who were caught unaware of these increases until they saw them on social media.

You speak of collaboration. Between when the budget was released on April 19 and when the Prime Minister announced the targets on April 22, who specifically did you consult and who did you collaborate with during that 60-hour window on these new increased targets?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Certainly we had lots of conversations with respect to Canadians about what they expect of their government with respect to climate ambition. I will tell you that in the online survey that was developed and implemented, over 90% of Canadians were looking for a much more ambitious target. However, beyond that, we consulted with provinces and territories and with the major indigenous organizations, discussing the need for enhanced ambition, and at the end of the day we've made significant progress in the budget to get to 36%, which is well below the initial target.

Canadians would just think that we were crazy, in the face of a climate crisis, if we said, "Oh, we're done; we're not going to do anything for the next nine years." That would just be ridiculous. There is a need for ambition and it needs to be attainable. There's a need for ambition and that's what the new target represents.

• (1505)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I agree totally. Attainability is really key here.

Again, specifically, if you're saying you did collaborate and consult with people between this increase from 36% to 40% to 45%, if I call the minister of the environment in Saskatchewan, would he tell me that he received a phone call from you during those 60 hours about consultations? What other people did you speak to?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Let me first clarify. What I said is that we were very clear that we were going to be developing a new target and a strengthened climate plan. We talked about moving up a range to a higher number and that we would consult, and we did that over the course of the few months before we actually announced the new target.

With respect to the minister in Saskatchewan, I spoke to him the day before I announced the target, and I said to him that we were at 36% in the budget, we knew we needed to be significantly more ambitious and we would be bringing forward a more ambitious target. We had that conversation, in fact, just hours before the target was released.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: That's excellent.

You also spoke of course corrections, and I think that's what you're getting at here.

I come from business. In order to achieve goals, you have to have lots of planning and you have to invest lots of money. In order to do that properly, you require some stability as you're looking forward into the future.

Stakeholders have complained that when the goalposts keep moving it's very difficult to implement a plan. As we move forward, are you going to keep moving those goalposts? If so, how do you expect provinces and companies to make the investments they need to make when they have to keep going back, throwing the plan out and coming up with a new one?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I agree with you entirely. I also come from the business community, so I understand the importance of certainty with respect to business investment. Certainly it has been very clear, and this government has been very clear and most other parties in Parliament have been very clear that there is a need for enhanced ambition. That's not new. That's something that people have been talking about for years. It is in line with science and what science tells us we must do, so there's no big surprise here.

However, what I would say is that they do require certainty with respect to major policy instruments. That's why I was very pleased a few weeks ago to see the Conservative Party actually endorse a carbon tax and a clean fuel standard, two policies they have been fighting for the past number of years and things that are really important in terms of having certainty. Therefore, I welcome the Conservative Party actually coming to the party.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: With this 40% to 45% target, is it your expectation that every single province will have to reduce by that same 40% to 45%, or do some provinces have different targets? What's your thinking there?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: In this country we have a constitution. The federal government has to respect provincial jurisdiction. We are not in a position to tell provinces what their targets need to be, but there certainly are provinces that have taken up the climate challenge in a much more aggressive way. I would point to the Government of Quebec, the Government of British Columbia and the Government of Nova Scotia as real climate champions on this issue.

With respect to the federal government, we are using tools that fall within federal jurisdiction. That includes the price on pollution, the clean fuel standard, a range of other regulatory mechanisms and the significant investments that we are making to work with large emitters across this country, including very much in Alberta and Saskatchewan, to ensure that we're actually working towards reducing emissions in a way that's consistent with economic prosperity.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: In Saskatchewan, have you done analysis on the economic impacts that this would have in terms of jobs?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think you'd have to be a little more precise with this, but our view would be that there is an enormous economic opportunity here and Canadians need to seize it. We are moving, as a global community, to a lower-carbon future. We need to actually prepare Canada to be successful in that future.

The Chair: Thanks.

Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being with us here with us today. Minister, it's a pleasure to speak with you.

I would say, Minister, that my constituents in Etobicoke Centre are very concerned about the impact of climate change, and I think they expect us to do everything possible to protect the planet. They expect the Government of Canada to ensure that our emissions, in Canada and globally, are reduced to the degree necessary to achieve that objective.

Over the last few months, our government has taken important steps and announced significant investments, including in the last budget, to fight climate change. Just a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister announced new emissions reduction targets.

For the sake of my constituents in Etobicoke Centre, could you summarize what emissions reduction targets our government has committed to, and to what degree this will reduce our emissions?

• (1510)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for that very important question. I think constituents in many ridings around the country are asking similar questions.

As you know very well, climate change is an existential threat to humanity, but it's also a massive economic opportunity for countries that move early and move aggressively. When our government took power five years ago, Canada's emissions were going the wrong way. They were on track to be 12% higher in 2030 versus where they were in 2005.

We developed Canada's first national climate plan. It will reduce emissions dramatically. In December, we brought forward a strengthened climate plan that provides a very detailed pathway for Canada to exceed its initial Paris Agreement targets. The plan represents one of the most detailed plans that exists in the world.

We knew we needed to do more. Science tells us that we need to do more to avoid catastrophic effects, so in April the Prime Minister announced the new target of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030. Just to put that in context, that's an increase of up to 50% over our previous target. That was made alongside our partners and friends in the United States, Japan, the European Union and the United Kingdom. Collectively, half of the world's GDP is now aligned with the goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5°C. It is both ambitious and attainable, and puts us on a credible path to net zero.

This legislation is extremely important in ensuring that it continues.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, could you summarize—again, for the benefit of my constituents in Etobicoke Centre, who may not follow this very closely—how the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act fits in with our Paris commitments?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As I mentioned, during the Leaders Summit, we announced the new target. That is a significant increase.

The Paris Agreement, as Ms. May pointed out, calls on countries to limit global warming to less than 2°C, with a focus on 1.5°C.

The Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act is aligned with the Paris Agreement's requirement for increasing ambition over time. In addition, when setting greenhouse gas emissions targets, the minister needs to take into account the best scientific information available, as well as Canada's international commitments.

As we work towards these new ambitious targets, the bill makes clear that we need to look beyond 2030 and to ensure that governments of all stripes in the future are thinking through how we actually take the steps we need to achieve net zero by 2050. That is what this bill does.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Is that it, Mr. Baker? Do you have another question?

Mr. Yvan Baker: No, that's all.

The Chair: Good.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to come back to the new target range of 40% to 45% reduction compared to the 2005 base year emissions.

Currently, to meet the minimum 30% reduction target, Canada's emissions would have to reach 511 megatonnes in 2030, or 517, depending on how it is calculated. However, according to the Department of the Environment's estimates, they would total 588 megatonnes at that time. So we have a 77-megatonne surplus. I am talking about the latest figures received. Of course, if the department has new projections, we will be very happy to get them whether they are more optimistic or pessimistic. We have to keep in mind that all the measures announced may not be implemented by 2030.

I would like to know how you can announce figures like 40% to 45% when your own department's data show a somewhat less optimistic scenario.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for your question.

You give figures that come from the pan-Canadian framework. We have obviously done many other things: we have made investments and several things on the regulatory front, in the strengthened climate plan. We've also taken a number of additional measures to reduce GHG emissions.

Of course, this will be reflected in the department's projections, as will the investments included in the 2020-2021 budget in the coming weeks.

• (1515)

Ms. Kristina Michaud: When the 2020-2021 budget announcements were made, it was said that implementing these new measures would reduce GHGs by 36% by 2030. However, your target remains a 40% to 45% reduction. So there is a shortfall in this respect.

In your opening remarks, you mentioned working with American colleagues. Will this new collaboration make up for the shortfall? Will it be enough?

The Chair: Please keep your answer brief.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: We are working very closely with the Americans, particularly on transportation and methane. We are also working on other issues, such as the export of hydroelectricity produced in Quebec. Of course, these efforts are reflected in the 36% reduction target.

As I have already mentioned, we obviously need to increase our efforts.

The truth is that, for the past nine years, Canadians have thought we needed to do more.

The Chair: This is perfect.

Mr. Bachrach, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you've already established the net-zero advisory body prior to finalizing the legislation that enables its establishment. I think for many people this feels a little bit like putting the cart before the horse. Why not wait until C-12 has been finalized before appointing members to the advisory body?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I would say to you that this is a climate crisis. I think your party, my party, the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party all voted to indicate that this is a crisis. It's a crisis on which we have a finite amount of time to make the kind of progress we need to make.

The decision was mine. It was to establish a ministerial panel to begin the work of assessing pathways to net zero by 2050 to ensure that we were making the progress we need to make. Once this bill is passed through both the House of Commons and the Senate, it will become law and there will be a Governor in Council panel. My expectation is that it will be very similar but that is something that will only happen once it passes through Parliament.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Can I assume then that you're open to amendments that would change the criteria for appointments to that body?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I would say that the committee is its own master, and it will have conversations about the areas of the bill that it thinks need to be strengthened.

What I would say to you is that this is an amazing group of folks—I would encourage you to meet them at some point—who

come from a wide range of experiences and perspectives on this issue. I'm sure that within that room they are having some very interesting and forthright conversations about how to make this kind of progress. I have full confidence in it and I think that we've structured it in the appropriate way, but I'm not going to opine on the powers of the committee. That's up to you folks.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I have one more quick question if I may, Mr. Chair.

Minister, one of your colleagues speaking in the House mentioned that, in his opinion, C-12 provides an ideal evidentiary base for a potential plaintiff to bring forth climate change litigation against the government for inaction.

Has this aspect of Bill C-12 been confirmed through a legal review and, if so, would you be willing to table that review with the committee?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Whenever there is a law that is put into place there is the potential for people or organizations to see whether or not it can be litigated. I'm not going to opine on whether or not this is something that could be litigated through the courts. Certainly, I know that there are people who have different perspectives.

At the end of the day, this is intended to be a forcing function. It's intended to make governments take action and that is the whole structure and focus, to ensure that we can never, in this country, have again a government like Stephen Harper's, which signed up to a target and never had a plan.

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I believe Mr. Jeneroux was going to pass his time on to me, as long as you're okay with that.

The Chair: That's good. Yes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Minister, for being here today, and to the officials, thank you for what you do for Canada.

Minister, you've said a few things today with regard to the advisory group. You've called it a ministerial panel, and you've also called it an independent expert committee. The bill calls it an advisory committee. Which is it?

• (1520)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: It is an independent expert advisory committee that is appointed by the minister. It has a terms of reference. It is an independent body. It has an independent budget and a dedicated secretariat. The committee is intended to provide advice to me, and I am required to respond to that advice.

Mr. Dan Albas: The members are appointed by you, and at the same token, they serve at the pleasure of the minister. Is that correct?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes, just as many advisory bodies do in the federal government. Members are appointed by me. They are intended to work as a group and to provide independent advice to the minister. They are drawn from a range of different sectors and perspectives to ensure we're actually getting good external advice coming in to the government, which is something I think most Canadians would think is a good thing.

Mr. Dan Albas: I would agree with MP Bachrach that it's a little bit presumptuous of you to be appointing a group.

The bill in front of us, Bill C-12, lays out how the advisory committee is reimbursed for expenses. Obviously the bill hasn't passed. If the group is already working, are these people being reimbursed right now? If that's the case, Minister, where is the money coming from?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: There are two things. First, I don't think it's presumptuous at all. Climate change is a crisis. Ministers require appropriate forums for advice, so irrespective of whether this bill proceeds through Parliament, there's a ministerial body that is actually providing important advice on the climate crisis to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

With respect to funding, there was funding in the strengthened climate plan for the ministerial panel, and if there are expenses, their expenses are covered. However, I would tell you, in the COVID world, there hasn't been much in the way of travel, so those expenses would be pretty limited.

Mr. Dan Albas: Where's the money coming from? Is it coming from your own budget right now?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes, it comes from allocations flowing through Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. Have those been in the mains?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: They were in the strengthened climate plan, so they will probably be in the mains next year, but—

Mr. Dan Albas: Could you perhaps ask your officials to refer that to us?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes. I could have my officials confirm that. I think John Moffet could confirm it right now if you want.

Mr. Dan Albas: No. We'll have him come in a little bit later.

This bill sets out that the advisory group is covered under the workplace compensation act in case of injury due to employment. As the bill hasn't passed, is the group not covered or are they being counted as employees, as you mentioned, under another part of the estimates?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Once again, I'm happy to have one of my officials respond to the specifics concerning the workplace compensation act.

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, this is your legislation.

Ultimately, Minister, if the bill decreased the—

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I'm happy to have Mr. Moffet actually provide the answer right now if you want.

Mr. Dan Albas: I can ask him later if you don't know.

I'll go next, Minister—

The Chair: Mr. Moffet, get ready. You're going to get a question on it.

Mr. Dan Albas: Ultimately, Minister, if the bill that creates the group doesn't need to pass for you to create the group, then why is it even in the bill? It surely must be redundant and could be removed.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: It's absolutely not redundant. At the end of the day, we would like to see an expert advisory panel, or an expert advisory body, that plays a part in advising all future governments. The ministerial panel is not part of the legislation. It is an advisory body that advises the minister.

As I said before, once the legislation passes through Parliament, these become Governor in Council appointments, and they are subject to the same kinds of things, which include requiring changes to the law to actually amend this.

At the end of the day, this is intended to be a forcing function on all future governments to ensure that they take climate action seriously.

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, Bill C-28, the CEPA bill, refers to the right to a healthy environment that “may be balanced with relevant factors, including social, economic, health and scientific factors”.

Would you support adding similar language to this bill to ensure that, when setting targets and creating plans, reductions are balanced with social and economic factors in mind?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Again, I am not the master of the committee. You folks are going to have to have discussions and decide what you think—

Mr. Dan Albas: But it is your legislation, Minister, so please answer the question.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: —is appropriate. What I would say to you is that the issue of targets is a science issue. At the end of the day, you either believe in science or you don't.

Mr. Dan Albas: Don't you believe that there are relevant factors?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: The focus needs to be on ensuring that we actually understand what science tells us we need to do to ensure that this world is a livable world, and on doing that in a manner that takes into account the economic and social in terms of how we actually make the progress. That's exactly what the ministerial body is supposed to do.

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, it seems strange to me that you're okay with a balance in your Canadian Environmental Protection Act bill, but not this one. Do you not agree that striking a balance is important?

• (1525)

The Chair: Answer very quickly, Minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: What I would say to you is this: Do you believe in climate change or not?

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes but I'm asking you—

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: If you do, then at the end of the day—

The Chair: Order, please.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: At the end of the day, to have a livable world in the future, you must have a net-zero world by 2050. That's the bottom line. At the end of the day, you either believe that or you don't.

The Chair: We're going to have to—

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, that's a terrible answer. I really wish you'd come to actually speak to these issues. There are people in this country who are looking for leadership, not just of one particular ideology but to see themselves included in the legislation.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That's not an ideology. My goodness—

The Chair: Minister and Mr. Albas, order please. I don't have control of mute, apparently, so I can't do much about this.

We'll now go to Ms. Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister Wilkinson, for joining us today. I thank you for your leadership in getting Bill C-12 to committee because it is certainly an important issue for Canadians.

One of the top issues of concern for my constituents here in York Centre is climate change, and they do know that it's real and the science behind it. They're seeing the dangerous trajectory Conservatives put us on when they were in government, and they understand that failing to take action on the climate crisis is not only detrimental to our environment but also to the economy.

Minister, can you discuss what the economic and environmental risks to Canada are and would be if we don't move forward with our net-zero legislation?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you. I certainly agree. When our government took office, as I said, five years ago, Canada's emissions were going very much the wrong way, and they would have been 12% higher by 2030 versus 2005.

Both the international Paris Agreement and the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act recognize the importance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global human-caused CO₂ emissions must reach net zero around 2050 to achieve 1.5°C.

Canadians are already experiencing the significant impacts of a changing climate. Canada is actually changing at twice the average rate around the world, and in the north, it's three times. There are enormous impacts of that. The Bank of Canada found that climate change could cost the economy between \$21 billion to \$43 billion a year by 2050 if no action is taken. The Insurance Bureau of Canada has put out its own set of figures, and we've all seen some of the extreme weather events around Fort McMurray and in B.C. with respect to forest fires. This is real. It is happening. It's a science issue. It's not a debate; it's a science issue. These effects are expected to intensify in the future.

Already, there's a lot of global momentum, and 120 countries have adopted this science-based target. Canada has an opportunity to address the potential impacts of climate change to ensure that we're moving towards an economy that will provide the products and services that people in a low-carbon world are going to want, and to ensure that we can actually have a prosperous economy that

will sustain and grow good middle-class jobs. That's the focus of this bill.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Minister. Both for my constituents and myself as a mother, I can say that it's an important moment right now to change our habits in order to improve our environment and also our economy.

I'd like to ask another question. The understanding is that this bill will enable us to move forward and seize the opportunities of a low-carbon economy. Minister, can you expand on the transparency aspect of the bill?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes. That's at the heart of what this bill is trying to achieve. In addition to setting us on the right path to achieve net zero, it builds a system that's going to be more transparent and forces governments to be more accountable.

In terms of transparency, the act will require the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to table in Parliament an emissions reduction plan, a progress report and assessment reports for each target. It will require the Minister of Finance, working with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, to publish an annual report respecting key measures that the federal public administration has taken to manage its financial risks related to climate change. It provides a mandate for the Government of Canada to describe all of the actions it will take in order to actually achieve a missed target. It also provides for public participation, both through the net-zero advisory body and a range of other mechanisms.

It, as I said, provides significant transparency and accountability. I've already outlined in my opening remarks some of the areas where we're open to going further, and I look forward to the deliberations that the committee will have.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chair, those are all the questions I have for the moment.

The Chair: Thank you.

We knew ahead of time that the minister would be with us for one hour. It's right up to one hour now.

Minister, thank you for being here to talk about the bill and answer questions about the bill.

● (1530)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you, everybody.

The Chair: Thank you again.

We now have Mr. Moffet, Mr. Millar and Mr. Nevison. They are with us for a half-hour, for one round of questioning. Then we'll have a quick break to bring in the next panel, and we'll have 90 minutes, which, with witness statements, will give us two rounds.

Is it Mr. Albas who's kicking off this round?

Mr. Dan Albas: I believe so, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead. You have five minutes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you. I may be splitting my time with MP McLeod or MP May, if I have some time left.

First of all, thank you to our witnesses for the work they do for the people of Canada.

The minister described the advisory committee in Bill C-12 in many different ways. One way he referred to it was as a ministerial panel.

It's my assumption that this ministerial panel is a separate body from what is proposed in Bill C-12, because they are being compensated from the department itself and not from the legislative authority in this bill. Is that the case?

The Chair: Is that for Mr. Moffet?

Mr. Douglas Nevison (Assistant Deputy Minister, Climate Change Branch, Department of the Environment): Mr. Chair, I can take that question.

Thank you very much for the question, Member.

Currently, coming back to one of the questions that you posed to the minister, there's no funding for the net-zero advisory body in the main estimates for 2021-22. The funding was approved in the budget, but it is now going through the Treasury Board process. As a result, it will show up in future estimates.

In terms of the body itself, it is a voluntary group at this point in time, serving, as you said, at pleasure, on appointment by the minister. With the coming into force of Bill C-12, whenever that happens, the proposal would be that this would become a Governor in Council appointed body.

Mr. Dan Albas: What does your department call this group right now, formally? What's its official name?

Mr. Douglas Nevison: We refer to it as the net-zero advisory body.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay, because the minister announced this in the House of Commons as being the advisory committee. Why are they two different things?

Mr. Douglas Nevison: We have a term of reference on the EC-CC, Environment and Climate Change Canada, website, and it refers to the net-zero advisory body.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. Could you please send us that? That would be most helpful to our work.

I'm interested in it, because the minister seems to have said that this advisory committee that Bill C-12 would create is the exact same thing as what he referred to as his ministerial panel.

Anyway, I'm shocked by that because when you make a statement in the House in regard to this, you would imagine that the

government wouldn't be saying it's one thing when it's really another.

Could either you or Mr. Moffet please tell us about my question in regard to the workforce, workers' compensation, and the eligibility for this ministerial panel?

Mr. Douglas Nevison: Once the panel is stood up under a Governor in Council appointment, the employees will be deemed employees in the federal public administration, so they will be subject to other requirements under that particular stipulation.

Mr. Dan Albas: All right. Thank you.

I'd like to pass the remainder of my time to MP May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you so much, Dan.

I want to ask these questions to John Moffet. There were a couple of points in the minister's testimony to us that reflected inconsistencies between—and I don't know that he's aware they're inconsistencies—what we agreed to do in Paris, and what he thinks we've agreed to do. I want to put them to you.

One is that we know from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change October 2018 special report on 1.5°C, that it is not true to say that if we get to net zero by 2050 we have held to 1.5°C. There's only one pathway that the IPCC identified that holds to 1.5°C, and it requires most of the heavy lifting to be done before 2030. Therefore, I also find it worrying that the minister and many Liberal MPs persistently say in the House that there's nothing that we agreed to in Paris that required that we work in five-year increments starting in 2025.

There is indeed in the Paris Agreement the commitment to 2023 being the first global stock-taking, and paragraph 24 of the COP 21 decision document said that Canada should have improved its target in 2020, and every five years thereafter.

How is it that the department has advised the minister that Bill C-12, with a first milestone year in 2030, is not completely inconsistent with what we agreed to do in Paris?

• (1535)

Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): We didn't advise the minister in the way you just described, so we're aware and I can assure you that the minister is aware, first of all, that the Paris Agreement contains commitments for parties to strengthen their NDCs over time, starting in the 2020s. The minister is also aware that there is not just one goal that needs to be achieved in order to achieve the desired outcome of avoiding a temperature increase greater than 1.5°C. He's fully aware of that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: My time is up. I'll just say that I cited the specific section, John. You know that it is specifically 2020, not in the 2020s, but I think I've run out of time and probably the chair's patience.

The Chair: Not patience, but yes, you've run out of time.

Mr. Longfield will be splitting with Mr. Saini again, I believe.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: No, Mr. Bittle is up now.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Bittle, go ahead.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): I appreciate that. Perhaps Mr. Longfield gave it to Mr. Saini, who is now giving it to me, so I'm happy to take the floor and make it as complicated as possible for you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that your patience wasn't completely undone and that there is some left over, but we know that you, as our caucus chair, have ample patience dealing with us and we appreciate it.

To the officials, to help us grasp the current environmental government accountability with regard to climate, could you explain, please, what climate reporting obligations currently exist at the federal level and give us a glimpse of the incoming reports?

Mr. John Moffet: Probably the easiest way to do that would be to reiterate the minister's commitment to share with the committee a table we've developed that identifies all of the reporting obligations that Canada has as a party to the UNFCCC. We provide regular reports to the UNFCCC both about past emissions performance and future projections disaggregated across the various sources that are specified under the UNFCCC.

We will be supplementing those obligations that already exist and that are already undertaken with obligations to set a target, to develop a plan, to issue progress reports and to issue assessment reports, and then, in addition to that work on the part of the government, to retain and respond to ongoing advice from the advisory committee and to have the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development conduct regular reviews of each period.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I think there is a point of order .

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Whenever Mr. Moffet speaks, the interpreter has difficulty hearing what he says.

The Chair: All right.

The microphone may be too close to his mouth.

[English]

Mr. Moffet, do you have a microphone?

Mr. John Moffet: I do. I was tested beforehand, but I'm happy to make adjustments if—

The Chair: You sound good to me, so why don't you continue? I may interrupt you if we need to make some adjustments.

• (1540)

Mr. John Moffet: Okay.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Coming back, Bill C-12 introduces new reporting requirements on the government between now and 2030. Could you expand on those and how they would be integrated into the existing reporting obligations? I appreciate your previous answer as well, but if you could expand on it a little bit, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. John Moffet: Under the act, we'll be required, first of all, to formalize the target for 2030, and then to provide a plan to achieve that target. As the minister explained, that plan will include considerable detail and, consistent with existing plans and existing reporting to the UNFCCC, will include, as the member already indicated—and I apologize; I can't remember his name—projected emission reductions in the form of a trajectory from present to 2030 and beyond. Then there will be an obligation for a formal progress report two years before 2030.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Bill C-12 would put obligations on the Minister of Finance to put together reports disclosing the “risks and opportunities” of climate change at the federal level. Can I ask officials to explain what those reports would look like?

What does the bill mean by “risks and opportunities”, as mentioned in clause 23?

The Chair: Be brief, please.

Mr. Samuel Millar (Director General, Corporate Finance, Natural Resources and Environment, Economic Development and Corporate Finance, Department of Finance): The “risks and opportunities” phrase is used in many of the international standards around climate-related risks. The government would intend to develop a report that's suitable to the federal government and the federal public administration to match the best practices that are seen internationally.

You'll note that in the most recent budget, the government has committed to adopting the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures for large Crown corporations by 2022 and for smaller Crown corporations by 2024. This measure complements the existing commitments.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, gentlemen. I would like to come back quickly to the target range of a 40% to 45% reduction in GHG emissions that will be included in the act and its feasibility.

Earlier, I asked the minister whether there was a shortfall between the Department of the Environment's projections and the target range announced by the government. If we follow the current path, what will the GHG emission rates be in 2030, in megatonnes?

[English]

The Chair: Who is taking that?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: A deputy minister who has the answer to this question could answer me.

If you do not have the figures in front of you, you could send them to the committee. Otherwise, I can ask another question.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Okay.

Section 11 of the bill provides that the minister may amend targets for the relevant milestone years at any time.

If the minister saw that Canada was not on track to meet the targets set, he would therefore have the power to lower them. In other words, in the event of failure, he would have the power to change the target rather than the measures or the action plan.

Did I understand section 11 correctly?

The Chair: Who will answer the question? Is it Mr. Moffet?

[English]

This is the question, as I understand it: The minister has the right to change the targets, but does he also have a right to change the plan?

[Translation]

Is that your question, Ms. Michaud?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Is there a problem with the interpretation? I only have two and a half minutes and I don't want to—

The Chair: No, you will not lose your speaking time for this.

Would Mr. Moffet or Mr. Nevison like to answer that question?

• (1545)

Mr. John Moffet: The minister indicated that our target would be aligned with Canada's nationally determined contribution.

[English]

Under the Paris Agreement, a country's targets cannot go backwards. They cannot be weakened.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: I'm not sure I understand, Mr. Moffet. I'm going back to section 11, which says that the minister can amend the target he's set. If we take into consideration what the minister said earlier, that he will include the 40% to 45% GHG reduction target, that means that he can decide to change that target along the way. Is that correct?

Mr. John Moffet: Yes, that is true. Section 11 gives the minister the power to amend the target, but we also have to keep in mind that Canada and the minister will have to respect the Paris Agreement.

[English]

At the beginning of this bill, there is a requirement that targets be set respecting Canada's international commitments with respect to climate change, which as I said earlier, require countries to make their ambition increasingly ambitious and not less ambitious over time.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Section 11 could then allow the minister, for example, to reduce the target from 40% to 30%, which is the Paris Agreement target. Is this correct?

Mr. John Moffet: No. In the coming months, Canada will introduce a new nationally determined contribution that will reflect the 40% to 45% target.

[English]

The Chair: The question is.... Theoretically, as I understand it, yes, we could set a target at 40%, but for whatever reason, the minister or the government could say, "You know what? It really needs to be 38%," as long as we don't go below 30%. Is that the understanding?

Mr. John Moffet: Yes, I understand that's the question, but the answer is no.

It can't go below our NDC, and our NDC is going to change. Our NDC is going to increase—

The Chair: I see. Because of the change that we made, we are now committing internationally to something new.

Mr. John Moffet: We are committing to a new NDC, which the government intends to announce this summer.

The Chair: Okay. I have it.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to pick up on the topic of enforceability. We heard the minister say that the intention, or his intention, is for Bill C-12 to force future governments to meet the targets, but we know from previous court cases that certain phrases or certain clauses in the legislation can make that nearly impossible. You put in a clause about other considerations or Mr. Albas's favourite word "balance", and all of a sudden it simply doesn't have the teeth that it needs to stand up to any sort of legal challenge.

Has the department conducted any sort of internal analysis around the enforceability, the legal enforceability of the act?

Mr. John Moffet: As Minister Wilkinson explained, the focus of the legislation is on political and public accountability, so there is a legal obligation on the minister of the day to set targets, to develop a plan, to report on progress towards the target and to account for whether the target has been met. As such, the primary mechanism or means by which the act will be respected over time will be public, political and parliamentary accountability.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: If I understand correctly, then, legal accountability is not part of the focus of this legislation.

Mr. John Moffet: The minister will have very clear obligations, so I would imagine there will be clear legal obligations on the part of the minister. It's important to appreciate that they are different from the ability to enforce a target per se.

• (1550)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Right. In other jurisdictions such as France, I believe, the government has been taken to task through legal channels and various parties have been successful in the courts and have forced the government to modify its approach. I know there are people who are looking at this legislation and hoping that it would provide a framework to do just that. In fact, we have a Liberal member of Parliament saying in the House that it's his hope as well that it will provide the evidentiary basis for such legal challenges.

I'm just trying to get a sense of whether the department has considered that and whether there's any analysis around whether this legislation as currently written would stand up to such a challenge.

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please.

Mr. John Moffet: I think we anticipate that there would be an opportunity for judicial review if the minister of the day does not comply with one of the very specific obligations imposed on the minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. McLeod is next.

Go ahead, Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you.

As I go through the legislative summary, what I'm seeing is setting targets. Well, we've been setting targets for years. We're going to publish an assessment. We've been publishing assessments for years. We've published progress.

From what I can see, this is a piece of process legislation, work that has been done by ECCC already but is now formalized. Would that be accurate?

Mr. John Moffet: I think many of the measures in the bill reflect actions that have been taken.

What the bill does is consolidate those actions, including the obligations and steps we take under the UNFCCC. However, it adds a considerable amount of accountability with respect to the obligation to set targets on a rolling five-year basis that are consistent with net zero by 2050, and the way in which the various reports have to reflect progress towards that, and if targets have not been achieved, what changes would be made. Then it also directly links the CESD into the scheme.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: As I said, it's a process, and a process I've certainly seen unfolding for many years. We're hearing the different targets, the commitments that are made, but with the minister being able to change targets, I guess I'm not sure that what we've done here is create anything that's really going to move us on the path to the commitment.

I'm going to shift tracks now.

This current government has committed to the UN declaration in Bill C-15. Can you tell me what consultation process you had with the indigenous community throughout Canada before you tabled this bill?

Mr. John Moffet: We did not engage in extensive formal consultation about the specific provisions in this bill.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Okay.

The legislation that this government is committed to, which is going through Parliament right now—and there's nothing that precluded them from acting in good faith—commits them to any piece of legislation that is significantly going to affect first nations peoples.... Indigenous peoples in Canada need good and due process.

What I'm hearing is that there was no indigenous process. We have a government that's committing to the UN declaration, but even in important bills, it really is very symbolic only, because there has been no proper process with indigenous Canadians.

Mr. John Moffet: I would take exception to that characterization.

Since 2016, this government has engaged significantly and regularly with indigenous peoples, including in the development of the pan-Canadian framework, by distinctions-based processes with first nations, Métis and Inuit, via Generation Energy.

There have been extensive discussions, and there continue to be discussions with indigenous peoples around this government's climate planning, target setting and actions, including actions that create potential impacts on the rights and traditional activities of indigenous peoples.

• (1555)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Article 19 under the UN declaration creates very specific obligations for the government, and from what I'm hearing, there was no process. It is not law yet, but I think it is interesting that the government is moving in a process but they are not actually abiding by their own commitments in terms of what that process will be.

Anyway, as some of the other members have articulated here, this is a process piece of legislation. I'm not necessarily convinced that it's going to be the product that creates the outcome that the government has expressed.

Certainly the best cartoon I ever saw was a picture of a high jump bar rising higher. The government was moving it higher and higher without any plan and/or process, but it certainly looks good for the public.

Thank you.

The Chair: That has been noted.

We go now to our last questioner for this panel.

Is it Mr. Longfield?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Yes, it is, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you, and thank you to the officials for being around for more detailed questions.

Mine has maybe a bit more of a reflection on what Mr. Bachrach was suggesting around legal challenges.

I'm wondering about—as we create targets and work on goals—how we work with the other orders of government, including indigenous communities, to ensure that the goals are going to be met, and that we're doing this together with our provincial, territorial and indigenous partners.

Could you describe what that process has been up until now and what it would look like going forward?

Mr. John Moffet: I think that's an excellent question and a really important issue.

It's one where we need to distinguish between the specific legal obligations under the bill and the process that the government, and future governments, will follow in order to drive really effective action on climate change.

This bill requires the federal government to set targets. It also requires the minister to consult broadly, including via an advisory committee. The bill also enables the minister's plan to refer to actions of other levels of government, but does not require that. That's because the government cannot compel provinces, territories or indigenous governments to do something on their own, but it can encourage them.

The degree to which any government, current or future, does that will influence the overall effectiveness of the plan. At the moment we have a highly engaged process of engagement with federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and indigenous governments, as well as with a wide range of stakeholders, in developing and rolling out the design of individual measures, and in identifying opportunities for collaboration at a regional, provincial or local level. As well, very formal distinctions-based processes have been in place for a number of years with our indigenous partners.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you. As you're describing that, I'm thinking of the recent Supreme Court ruling to say that this is within federal jurisdiction, but also requires working with the partners. I think they've clarified that this is the path that we would need to follow, and that we are following that path.

We've heard a bit of discussion about the nature of advisory boards: volunteers that are helping the government in different portfolios. I know we have their help with the preparation of a budget. We have them on jobs and export development. We have different types of advisory boards working with ministers.

This legislation would take that to a different level from what you were saying earlier with the order in council process. What are the timing and selection that are done through the order in council process, and when would we see that take effect, assuming the legislation was able to pass by the end of June?

• (1600)

Mr. Douglas Nevison: Thank you for the question. Mr. Chair, I'll respond to that one.

The Governor in Council process would start to apply to members of the net-zero advisory body when the bill comes into force. The remuneration would be fixed at a level by the Governor in Council. The Governor in Council appointee process is an open and transparent process, and that would start to apply to the advisory body as well.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: The existing members could apply, but other people could apply, as well?

Mr. Douglas Nevison: That is correct.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Okay.

Then the independent review of the Governor in Council application process is done outside of government, and then comes back to cabinet. Is that how it works?

Mr. Douglas Nevison: I'm not an expert on the Governor in Council appointment process.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Okay. That would be something for us to look at as a committee just to confirm how that process works.

Thank you very much. I've run out of time.

The Chair: I want to thank Mr. Millar, Mr. Moffet and Mr. Nevison. We will now break for five minutes while a new panel of witnesses connect.

I will just take a moment to remind members that we have two more three-hour meetings this week with witnesses, on May 19 and May 20 at 2:30 p.m., same time, same channel.

The following week, on May 26, we will start clause-by-clause, so I'm asking that amendments be submitted by Friday, May 21, at 5 p.m. and no later. The next week, it looks like we only have two meetings of two hours. That's all we could get under the circumstances. Hopefully, maybe there will be an extra hour we could get somewhere, but right now it looks like four hours over two meetings. Please submit amendments by Friday, May 21, at 5 p.m.

Let's take a break, and we can test the sound for the other witnesses. Thanks again to our three witnesses.

Mr. John Moffet: Mr. Scarpaleggia, I was asked a question about exactly what the target of 40% to 45% would represent, and the answer is 438 to 401 megatonnes.

The Chair: Thank you so much. We appreciate that.

Thank you to our witnesses.

Members, we'll be reconnecting, or we can go on mute and stop our cameras, but only for five minutes, please. Thank you.

• (1600)

(Pause)

• (1610)

The Chair: We'll resume the meeting.

We have six witnesses who have opening statements of five minutes each.

We'll start with Ms. McLeod. She's an articling student at Miller Thomson.

Ms. McLeod, you have five minutes.

Ms. Christie McLeod (As an Individual): Thank you.

My name is Christie McLeod, and I'm calling in from the unceded, ancestral traditional lands of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish nations in the city of Vancouver.

As mentioned, I am an articling student at Miller Thomson LLP, and I have a master's degree in environmental studies that focused on Canadian climate accountability. I have authored and submitted a brief that 179 young individuals and 11 youth-led organizations signed on to. I am also a co-author of the brief submitted by the national group, Lawyers for Climate Justice.

My generation and the generations to follow will bear the brunt of the climate crisis in the coming decades. It is our future that will be shaped by the strength or weakness of the climate accountability laws we pass now.

The Canadian government has recognized the climate emergency, yet it continues to faithfully subsidize the industry most responsible for fuelling climate change. Canada's projected oil and gas expansion from now to 2050 will consume a staggering 16% of the world's carbon budget in a 1.5° C world. We have tried maintaining business as usual, but it has failed. Since setting its first target in 1992, Canada's emissions have increased by net 16%. Our emissions in 2019 were higher than when the Liberal government took office in 2015. We can and must do better.

I understand the challenges that politicians face in addressing the climate crisis. The benefits of climate action emerge over time, while our election cycles focus on the short term. As our futures are at stake, however, it is critical that climate efforts not be politicized and that Canada's accountability legislation contain sufficient measures to ensure the government meets its climate obligations. I am frightened by the lack of urgency and accountability presently in the bill.

Bill C-12's focus is on achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The target set by the minister for each milestone year is to look towards achieving the 2050 target. We need to ensure that our focus is, first, doing as much as we possibly can by 2030 and then looking towards 2040 and 2050. We cannot leave the brunt of the effort to be tackled in the distant future.

As the bill presently stands, Canada's first milestone year is 2030, which means that the minister's first progress report would not occur until 2028. We should not have to wait that long to receive an update on the progress made towards Canada's targets. By amending clause 2 to include the year 2025 as a milestone year, the minister would be obligated to prepare a progress report in 2023, which is a much more appropriate timeline.

Under subclause 7(4), each target must be set a mere five years in advance. Under clause 10, Canada is only required to create an emissions reduction plan that contains key reduction measures and strategies as opposed to a robust plan of how the target will be reached. The stakes are simply too high for us to draw our map to net zero while already en route.

Young people deserve to know what Canada's plan is to address this emergency and secure a better future. Those working in industries and markets want to know Canada's plan to get to net zero so that they can respond and adapt.

When Teck Resources withdrew its federal application for the Frontier oil sands project, they noted that industry values jurisdictions with frameworks that reconcile resource development and climate change, and that this was lacking in Canada.

The international community also deserves to know what Canada's plan is. Canada is responsible for 1.7% to 1.8% of all the emissions in our atmosphere. In 2018, Canada was the 11th-highest emitting state globally and the fifth highest per capita. Our country's actions have and will continue to play a pivotal role in the global race to reduce emissions and address the climate emergency.

A target that represents Canada's fair share of the global mitigation burden would have to be an estimated 56% to 153% below 2005 levels, which is significantly more than the 40% to 45% range enshrined in Canada's new target.

I urge the committee to ensure that Canada follow its peers by setting bold targets that begin to approach our fair share of mitigation and put forward a credible plan that ensures we can reach these goals. As young people, our future hangs in the balance.

Thank you.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We now continue with Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers, Resident Physician and President of the Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement.

Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers, you have the floor for five minutes.

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers (Resident Physician and President, Association québécoise de médecins pour l'environnement): Thank you very much.

Thank you for having us today.

My name is Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers. I am the president of the Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement, and I am also a member of the board of directors of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, or CAPE.

With me today is Dr. Courtney Howard, former president of the CAPE and Emergency Physician in Yellowknife.

The World Health Organisation, or WHO, has identified climate change as the greatest threat to health in the 21st century. In fact, climate change acts as a risk amplifier. It increases asthma and evacuations due to forest fires, particularly in western Canada. It increases secondary mortality and morbidity from heat waves, as was the case in Montreal in the summer of 2018. It lengthens allergy seasons and amplifies symptoms. It poses food safety issues. Most importantly, climate change accelerates the spread of some diseases, including Lyme disease, and even increases the risk of some new pandemics.

The impacts are unevenly distributed. Above all, in Canada's North. They also affect women, children, racialized people and indigenous peoples.

Many deaths could be avoided if we change the current trajectory, and as quickly as possible. A recent CAPE report even showed that improved air quality could save 112,000 lives between 2030 and 2050 in Canada alone.

I am a family doctor by training. In everyday life, I treat patients from the time they are very young until the end of their lives. I don't have a miracle pill to protect my patients from climate change. I need an effective treatment, that is, strong legislation that enshrines the state's climate responsibility.

Strong climate accountability legislation has proven successful elsewhere in the world. In the United Kingdom, binding carbon budgets, which have been legislated since 2008, have improved the efficiency of the health sector like never before. The National Health Service, the public health network, reduced its emissions by 18.5% between 2007 and 2017, despite a significant increase in clinical activity.

In 2020, in the United Kingdom, a group of health experts was brought into the process and development of the sixth carbon budget at the request of the Climate Change Committee. The aim was to take the best possible approach to protecting people's health, focusing on measures that have health co-benefits, for example, improving air quality, increasing active transport to reduce chronic disease and even improving the food system. These kinds of successes are possible here too.

In CAPE's view, Bill C-12 contains some of these key elements, which have enabled similar legislation to succeed internationally.

We would like to highlight three important elements. First, the establishment of a framework on climate responsibility. Second, the requirement to have national climate targets. Finally, the idea of creating plans to reduce GHG emissions and drafting regular reports on progress.

However, some of the current shortcomings of the bill diminish its scope and limit its ability to truly protect the health of the youngest and the oldest. In our view, three amendments are necessary.

Firstly, a GHG emission target from 2025. We would like to have a target and a requirement to report, as early as 2025, to really give us the impetus to start reducing our GHG emissions quickly and effectively, so that we can be sure to reach the 2030 target.

Secondly, we need an independent body of experts and scientists. For us, this includes health experts, who have their own secretariat and their own capacity to do climate modelling. This advisory group must have a substantial budget, to ensure its independence and accountability not only to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, but also to Parliament. It must also be able to applaud the government or even criticize it publicly, when necessary, without fear of reprisal. In our view, the net-zero advisory body does not meet all these conditions.

Thirdly, the bill must explicitly reflect the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is important to remember that the health of indigenous peoples is already profoundly affected by climate change, and any assessment of climate liability must reflect the rights of these peoples.

Science tells us that climate change is truly the greatest threat to health in the 21st century. But it also tells us that an effective climate change plan, anchored in strong climate accountability legislation, is our best opportunity to improve the health of everyone here at home and around the world. That's why the Paris Agreement is considered by many to be the most important public health treaty in the world.

So I wish for us to have that future, for our health and that of our parents and children.

Thank you.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We also welcome Dr. Courtney Howard, from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

The floor now goes to Dr. Reynold Bergen, Science Director with the Beef Cattle Research Council of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

[*English*]

Dr. Reynold Bergen (Science Director, Beef Cattle Research Council, Canadian Cattlemen's Association): Do we know if Fawn will be able to present, or will it just be me?

The Chair: If we haven't fixed the mike issues, it will just be you—for now.

Dr. Reynold Bergen: Okay. I will start rolling through, and then I'll let Fawn jump in if she wants to.

Good afternoon. Thanks for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm Reynold, the science director with the beef cattle research council. My silent collaborator is Fawn Jackson, who is the director of policy with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

The CCA represents 60,000 beef producers in Canada. The beef industry contributes \$21.8 billion to Canada's GDP and supports 348,000 full-time jobs. Fifty per cent of Canada's beef is exported around the globe.

The beef industry is a hidden gem when it comes to Canada's environment. Beef production is one of the best tools Canada has to reach our shared conservation and climate change goals. When we talk about net-zero emissions, it's important to recognize where beef production fits into Canada's climate change picture. The emission intensity of Canadian beef is about half the global average, and we're continuing to improve. Our per-kilogram greenhouse gas footprint dropped by 15% between 1981 and 2011. That happened because Canada is a world leader in research and because Canada's farmers and ranchers are adopting the improved animal and plant health, nutrition and genetics practices and technologies that research generates.

Reducing consumption of Canadian beef would be detrimental to Canada's net-zero emissions goals, and here's why. Beef contributes 2.4% to Canada's total emissions, but emissions are only one side of the carbon ledger. The other side of the ledger is the soil carbon that's stored in grasslands. Canada's ranchers steward 44 million acres of grasslands, which are a stable store of 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon. Reducing beef production and consumption would mean that privately owned grasslands would be converted to other agricultural uses. Cultivating Canada's remaining grasslands would release much more soil carbon into the atmosphere than we would ever save from reduced cattle emissions. This risk is real. Canada lost five million acres of grasslands in the early 2000s when beef producers faced tough economic times.

To further improve the net greenhouse gas footprint of Canadian beef, we need to tackle three key challenges. The first is to further reduce our emissions per kilogram of Canadian beef. Our industry's goal is to reduce Canadian beef emissions intensity by another 33% by 2030. Achieving this will require continued advancements in genetics, animal health management and nutrition. Canadian researchers are also investigating nutritional supplements for cattle that could significantly accelerate those improvements.

The second challenge is to further increase carbon sequestration on grasslands. Our industry's goal is to sequester an additional 3.4 million tonnes of carbon every year. This will require research to develop more productive plant varieties and to identify forage and grazing management practices that increase productivity and carbon sequestration. We will also need to support producer adoption of these beneficial practices.

The third challenge is to protect the large and stable store of carbon in Canada's grasslands. Canada's beef industry has a goal to maintain and protect the 44 million acres of grasslands that are under our care. We've already lost 80% of our natural grasslands. The World Wildlife Fund's "2020 Plowprint Report" found that the great plains are continuing to be lost at a rate of four football fields every minute. We're working very closely and collaboratively with the conservation organizations and the Canadian round table for sustainable beef to protect these grasslands.

We worry that these efforts will not be enough. The biggest unknown is how a myriad of government policies such as offset pro-

ocols, clean fuel regulations and significant investments in irrigation will drive land use change, on top of record high crop prices. We need thoughtful deliberation to avoid policies that drive irreparable damage to this grassland ecosystem and its significant carbon stores.

We give this detail on Canada's beef industry because it emphasizes why, in regard to Bill C-12, our key ask is that holistic policy analysis be done to understand the potential unintended negative consequences of well-intended environmental policies. We also ask that experts from Canada's beef industry be included in advisory roles under the act to ensure that the best analyses and policies to support net-zero emissions are developed.

• (1625)

We look forward to being partners in this work towards net-zero emissions in Canada.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Bergen.

We welcome, of course, Fawn Jackson, as well, from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

We will go now to Ecojustice and to Alan Andrews, climate change program director, for opening remarks.

Mr. Alan Andrews (Climate Program Director, Ecojustice): Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today.

I am Alan Andrews, the climate director at Ecojustice, where I lead a program of law reform and litigation aimed at securing a stable climate.

I'm joining you from the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh first nations in Vancouver, B.C.

I'm a qualified lawyer both in Canada and in England and Wales. Prior to joining Ecojustice, I practised environmental law in the U.K and the EU, where I focused on holding governments to account for missing pollution targets and advocating for stronger laws so that I didn't need to.

Ecojustice is pleased to see Canada aiming to join the growing number of countries that have adopted this type of climate law, which has really become a standard tool worldwide to ensure governments meet their climate commitments and is increasingly viewed as essential for the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Ecojustice has made joint written submissions with West Coast Environmental Law and a number of other organizations. Given time constraints, I will focus on one of the key themes in these submissions and, thus, the obligation on the minister to prepare emissions reduction plans.

This is the foundation of the accountability framework that Bill C-12 establishes. These plans are where the real action and accountability stem from. Unfortunately, as I will explain, that foundation is, at the moment, rather shaky. Strengthening those provisions will be the key to the success of Bill C-12.

If you fail to plan—

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I am sorry to interrupt you, but we no longer have any interpretation because the sound is not good.

The Chair: How long has it been like that?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: It hasn't been working since, or almost since, the witness began his presentation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Clerk, is there a problem? Is it a technical problem, or is it a problem with the mike?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): Apparently it's a problem with the particular brand of microphone. All of the stats we're getting are good.

Just to try to speak slowly and clearly, Mr. Andrews.

The Chair: Yes, that would be great, and maybe you could move the mike a bit farther away from your mouth. I find that always helps.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Alan Andrews: Okay, I'll do my best to talk clearly.

I'm going to focus on the emissions reduction plans, which I've explained are really the key to success of Bill C-12. That's because if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Too often, Canada has failed to meet climate targets because it has not had a credible and detailed plan for achieving them. Too often, we see climate plans that are really just a glossy marketing brochure with no real detail or substance.

A credible plan must do three things. First, it must explain how much carbon pollution needs to decline in order to meet the targets. Second, it must set out the policies that will close that gap. Third, it must explain who is going to implement those policies and when. The plan must be detailed enough that the public, Parliament and civil society can determine whether it is credible or whether it is overly optimistic and likely to fail.

As drafted, unfortunately, Bill C-12 does not require plans that meet that standard. Clauses 9 and 10 are the relevant provisions of the bill. Clause 9 requires the minister to prepare a plan for achieving the net-zero 2050 target and each of the five-year milestone targets. Clause 10 then prescribes the information that a plan must contain, but clause 10 is very light in terms of the specific details

that plans must contain. There's a real risk of the glossy brochure type of plan that we so desperately need to move beyond.

For example, clause 10 does not explicitly require that the plan explain how it will achieve the milestone targets to which it relates. By contrast, the U.K. Climate Change Act is more explicit, establishing a clear duty on the government to not only achieve the 2050 net-zero target, but also to prepare policies that it considers will enable the five-year carbon budgets under the act to be met.

Bill C-12 also does not require projections of what impact the actions described in the plan will have on carbon emissions. It doesn't require plans to include any details of sectoral strategies or actions by provinces and territories. Taken together as drafted, the bill would allow the government of the day to prepare an obviously deficient plan or maybe even worse—a plan that contains so little detail that we really have no idea whether it will be adequate. This would undermine the main purpose of the bill, which is to ensure accountability for the achievement of climate targets through transparency.

Fortunately, some simple amendments to clause 10 would significantly improve the bill. First, the bill needs to make clear that the plan must demonstrate how it will achieve the relevant milestone targets. Second, it must require the minister to show how the action being proposed adds up, tonne by tonne and year by year, to the cuts in pollution needed to reach the next milestone target. This will require projections based on the evidence of what the plan is expected to achieve.

Third, the plan must—

● (1635)

The Chair: I'm told there is no interpretation again.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauzé, am I right that there is no interpretation?

Do we know why the interpretation is not working, Madam Clerk? Is it a technical problem or a microphone problem?

The Clerk: That make of microphone does not work very well with our system.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have no interpretation, so we'll have to stop there, Mr. Andrews.

We will go now to Mr. Gage, from the West Coast Environmental Law Association, for five minutes.

Mr. Andrew Gage (Staff Counsel, West Coast Environmental Law Association): Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today from the territory of the Lekwungen-speaking people in Victoria, B.C.

The Chair: Do we have interpretation, Madam Clerk?

Go ahead, Mr. Gage. I would move the microphone up a bit, though.

Mr. Andrew Gage: I'm the head of West Coast Environmental Law's climate program, the author of several reports and submissions on Canadian climate law and a member, as Alan mentioned, of a coalition of organizations that really want Bill C-12 to be a real climate change accountability law.

In 1992 under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada played a leadership role in negotiating the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the governments of the world agreed to “[stabilize] greenhouse gas concentrations [and] prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.” In 1992, I still had a full head of hair. I have waited my entire adult life for Canada to deliver.

Canada set specific targets in 1997 under Prime Minister Chrétien and then in 2010 under Prime Minister Harper, but as a country, we continue to miss every climate target set. My daughter at age 15 is now organizing climate strikes, worried about her future. The challenge is that climate change doesn't follow election cycles. Too often governments claim credit for setting targets and then push off the work and ignore the difficult choices necessary to meet those targets. We need accountability.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, here is the definition of accountability: “the quality or state of being accountable, especially: an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions”. At their core, climate accountability laws insulate climate policy from the election cycle by making each administration accountable for keeping the government on track to achieve both short- and medium-term climate targets.

Bill C-12 fails in a number of respects. First, as drafted, and as Alan noted, clauses 9 and 10 don't clearly require the minister to show how the country will achieve the climate targets that have been set by the government. Rather, the minister is required to identify measures and strategies that the federal government intends to take that will contribute to achieving the 2050 target.

Second, because Bill C-12 sets only one target at a time—initially a mid-term target for 2030 and then short-term targets of five years each thereafter—it never requires governments to consider both short- and mid-term action at the same time or to be held accountable on both time scales. Generally, international climate accountability laws achieve those short- and mid-term targets through rolling short-term targets that, together, plot a path to one mid-term target further down the road. For example, the U.K.'s Climate Change Act, when it was enacted in 2008, established three targets, known as carbon budgets, covering the next 15 years. When the first budget was finished, a new budget extending out to 2027 was established and so on. We're now expecting the sixth budget, which will extend to 2037, in July of this year. Each U.K. government is therefore accountable both for achieving a target within the next five years and for putting in place measures that will help achieve future targets further out.

By setting a first target for 2030, with the first progress report not until 2027 or 2028, Bill C-12 invites cynical claims that it creates accountability for only future governments. The post-2030 targets set for just five years at a time are equally problematic. Five years is simply not enough time in which to roll out new programs, to see them deliver significant emissions reductions and to get the

results we're looking for, nor does a single five-year target give an administration an incentive to look beyond those five years and put in place the measures that will help future governments achieve their five-year targets.

Here's what we need from Bill C-12: rolling five-year milestone targets—not one target at a time—supplemented by robust plans, set at least 10 years ahead, preferably 15. For example, in 2025, a target for 2035 should be set, and a new 10-year plan would then update the second half of the existing plan and incorporate new measures to extend the road map out to 2035.

Second, we need to require immediate action, ideally by setting a 2025 target reflecting the expected emissions reductions from Canada's climate plan or, alternatively, simply requiring all plans to identify emissions reductions for each year covered by the plan.

Third, we need frequent and earlier progress reports much more often than every five years, ideally annually, and starting by 2023 at the latest. As Alan mentioned, plans that actually set out a road map to achieving the milestone targets are key.

It's impossible to separate these aspects of accountability from the other important requirements that my co-panellists have already mentioned and that are referred to in our submissions.

● (1640)

Despite its name, Bill C-12 does not yet deliver on the promise of climate accountability. We hope that you will make the amendments necessary to bring it up to where it needs to be.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go to our first round of questions.

I have Mr. Jeneroux, Mr. Saini, Madame Michaud and Mr. Bachrach speaking. If that's not correct, let me know when the time comes.

Are you leading off, Mr. Jeneroux?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): I sure am, Mr. Chair. Thanks for checking.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, everybody, for putting together your presentations. I know it's not easy to come before committee here like this, but again, I appreciate your taking the time today.

I'd like to go to Dr. Bergen. I had some questions for you at the start, but then as you were going through your presentation I was quite blown away by some of the information that you shared and some of the work that the Cattlemen's Association is already doing. You started talking a little bit about the uses of research and development, and how some of this work has already impacted the environment. I'm hoping that you can expand on that with maybe some acute examples that you could share with the committee.

I'll also open it up, obviously, to Fawn if she's available with her headset now.

Dr. Reynold Bergen: Certainly. Thanks for the question.

The first thing I'd point out is that, as I mentioned earlier, over a 30-year period we managed to reduce our emissions, per kilogram of beef, by 15%. That was between 1981 and 2011. Those dates are important, because that was before the beef industry really started to pay very specific attention to the environment. It was always understood that the environment was important, because so many of these are intergenerational farms and you're not going to keep these things going if you're not taking care of the environment you're living and working in.

Those improvements—and this is getting to the research point—happen because of steady incremental improvements in plant breeding, animal breeding, animal nutrition, animal health and so on. All of those things stack up together, not only to improve production efficiency and productivity but also to reduce emissions. In order to move forward, we need to do two things. One is to continue those investments in the steady, slow incremental things that have generated those improvements and will continue to, but the other is to invest in some of the more novel things that are very specifically environmentally focused.

A couple of examples—the ones that I mentioned actually—are nutritional supplements. There are a few of them. Some of them are kind of mundane. They are just simple dietary things. Feeding distillers' grains that are left over from biofuel production has been shown to reduce emissions by 5%. There are a number of more novel ones like biochar, algae, lemongrass, sprouted barley and whatnot. Those are, I would say, unproven. They've certainly been investigated in the lab, but before you know whether they're effective in cattle, you need to do large-scale feeding trials. Those haven't been done yet and that's important, because if cows don't eat it you're not going to get the benefit.

There are a couple of new additives that have been tested and are showing promise. Probably the most promising one is a product called 3-NOP, which is developed by a Dutch company called Royal DSM. The product name is Bovaer. The point is that this feed additive can reduce emissions by 20% to 70% in feedlot diets. That's not lab stuff. That's not modelling. That's work that's been done in large-scale commercial feedlot trials.

• (1645)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: That was one I was hoping you'd talk about.

I'm sorry. I hate to cut you off, Dr. Bergen. I just have a short amount of time.

Dr. Reynold Bergen: Yes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: From what I understand it's yet to be approved by the government. You're welcome to get into that, but I won't dwell on that at this particular point.

If we could tie it back to Bill C-12, with all the research and development and, really, the leading way that the Cattlemen's Association has been going forward on the environment, what are some of the reservations that you have with C-12? Do you think the bill balances GHG emission goals and economic factors fairly?

Dr. Reynold Bergen: I'll talk a little bit more about that product and then I'll throw it over to Fawn for the specific issues around Bill C-12.

This product hasn't been approved, but it's not a C-12 issue. It is a regulatory issue. Canada has a veterinary drug approval process for things that go in feed and things that are for animal health, but it does not have a regulatory path for products that are specifically designed for environmental improvements.

That's not what you asked. I'll let Fawn answer what you did.

Ms. Fawn Jackson (Director, Policy and International Relations, Canadian Cattlemen's Association): With Bill C-12 we want to make sure that there's holistic policy analysis done and that folks from the agriculture community are there to understand and advise on it.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Do you mean on the advisory panel? Is that what you mean, Ms. Jackson, or is it broader, in terms of the way Bill C-12 pins the cattlemen ranchers into a hole, if you will?

Ms. Fawn Jackson: Certainly we would want to see folks from the agriculture sector represented on the advisory council, so that when we charge forward on initiatives for climate change we're considering all of the factors that could impact both the environment but also, of course, the economy.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Saini, you have the floor now.

[*English*]

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all of the witnesses for coming today. It's great to have all of you.

Being a pharmacist, I want to take more of a health lens to certain issues.

Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers and Dr. Howard, you're both physicians. Can you describe to all of us the health and health system impacts of climate change, if we continue along the current emissions pathway?

Dr. Courtney Howard (Emergency Physician and Planetary Health Researcher and Policy Worker, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment): Thanks.

I am speaking to you from a house in Yellowknife's Dene territory that is atop permafrost. This part of the world is already 2.5°C warmer than it was when an 80-year-old elder was born. We're deep into adaptation. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on our foundation here to try to keep it from sliding down into Great Slave Lake. In 2014 we had, in fact, two and a half months of wildfire smoke, and it ringed Yellowknife. It didn't really even matter which way the wind was blowing, because there was a fire in almost every direction.

We published a study in the British Medical Journal Open recently showing that in fact we had a full doubling of our emergency department visits for asthma over the course of that time.

We did community-based interviews and asked people how it felt to live in smoke for that long. We got all sorts of answers, such as they felt isolated, they felt anxious, they didn't have enough physical activity, they felt disconnected from the land and it made them really worry about what climate change means for their children.

I'm a sort of voice from the future, in a way, because as Minister Wilkinson pointed out earlier, the north is warming at triple the global rate. What we need to know is that we're going to get worse until mid-century. Since I've done the wildfire research, I often get the question from media, "Dr. Howard, is this a new normal?" I have to say, no, it's not. It's going to get worse.

We need to prepare our hospitals for this adaptation that's already built in. "Canada's Changing Climate Report", produced by Environment and Climate Change Canada, showed that we will continue to warm until at least the 2040s. That's when a child born today will only be in their twenties.

We need to make sure that our hospitals have adequate ventilation. We actually had to close our operating room for part of that summer, because it was filled with smoke and we couldn't operate. From having presented with some architects at a national architecture conference, we did an audience poll, and only about 40% of the audience were taking into account future projections of precipitation and heat as they built the buildings of the future.

We see from COVID, then, that not preparing for something does not protect you when it happens. Even to just adapt to what we're already facing, we have a lot to do.

• (1650)

Mr. Raj Saini: I just want to give Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers a chance, if she wants to add something.

[Translation]

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers: I would like to add one thing.

I briefly mentioned that Quebec and the south of Canada will have heat waves. In line with that, some estimates can be made.

A few years ago, the Institut national de santé publique du Québec estimated that, in the next 50 years, extreme heat was going to cost 20,000 people their lives in Quebec alone. That is huge. It is distressing to realize that those deaths will primarily occur in urban areas. The people at risk are those presenting with various vulnerabilities to heat. The phenomenon has become worse because of a number of environmental factors.

I feel that it is important to mention the number of annual deaths related to air pollution. This is closely tied to climate change. A recent Health Canada report estimated that 15,300 people died because of air pollution in 2016. The pollution cost the Canadian economy \$120 billion, which is certainly no small amount.

The more studies we do, the more we realize that pollution is too toxic for almost all organs and all parts of the body. A recent Harvard University study found that pollution was responsible for 18% of premature deaths around the world. At this moment, therefore, one in every five people in the world is dying as a result of air pollution.

Those figures concern us greatly as physicians. As I mentioned, I can't give patients a miracle pump that prevents them from breathing polluted air. We breathe the air every day. It's therefore important to have a climate plan that addresses greenhouse gas emissions and has a goal of improving air quality, and adapting to it.

[English]

Mr. Raj Saini: I don't mean to interrupt. I have one more question.

I'll go back to Dr. Howard for maybe 30 seconds, and then Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers.

Can you explain the links between climate change, habitat change and the risk of further pandemics of a zoonotic origin?

I'm sorry. Can you do that in 30 seconds or less?

Dr. Courtney Howard: Sure.

To take a local example that can be extrapolated, last year we flew elders from around the territory down and sat around a map of the NWT and had people draw where different animals have gone in their lifetimes. We ended up with, "The beavers used to be here and now they're here; and the fish used to be here".

Essentially, most of the infectious diseases, the new ones we've had over the past several decades, have come from animals. Therefore, as habitats change, as we have further biodiversity loss and everything is moving around, we end up in the position of having animals and vectors and humans in novel proximity and that's what puts us at risk of further zoonotic transfer events of further viruses and pandemics.

Mr. Raj Saini: Also, I think the melting permafrost would also release certain things. I don't have enough time to go there. It's a fascinating discussion. Thank you very much.

Dr. Courtney Howard: It's true.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Whose turn is it to speak? Is it Ms. Pauzé or Ms. Michaud?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: It's my turn to speak, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: First, I would like to thank all the witnesses for being here.

This bill was introduced before Christmas but it took a lot of time for the government to fit it into the agenda. So everyone had to “turn on a dime”, as they say.

Like Mr. Saini, I am going to ask questions about health, because it's an area that interests me greatly.

My question goes to Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers.

We have talked a lot about physical health, but climate change is also creating problems with mental health and psychological distress. I would like to hear your comments on that.

You would certainly wonder about me if I did not ask a question about the pandemic. Can you explain the links between climate change, disturbances in the ecosystems, and the risk of future pandemics?

• (1655)

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers: Thank you for your questions, Ms. Pauzé.

Let me answer the second one, which we have already dealt with a little. We need to understand that the environmental disturbances are many. They include the degradation of natural habitats, climate change, intensive land use and deforestation. They all have impacts on the habitats in which insects or other transmission vectors live. We are in the process of bringing humans dangerously close to sources of infection.

The most recent great viral infections, Ebola and COVID-19, are diseases that are basically spread by animal zoonotic transmission chains. The disturbances are becoming more serious more quickly, which increases the risk that incidents like those will be repeated. The future is difficult to predict, but, in a way, we are playing Russian roulette. We are taking unnecessary risks with our health.

The World Health Organization and a number of UN bodies have, in recent months, recognized that environmental disturbances played a role in the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I will let Dr. Howard tell you more about your first question, on mental health, because she has done research on the topic. Troubling mental health phenomena do occur in the context of climate change, specifically because we lose our natural reference points. We talk a lot about people feeling disconnected from their homes, their ancestral territory. But we also know that extreme climate events like hurricanes, floods and forest fires create stress.

Studies done in Quebec by public health agencies reveal that those who have gone through episodes of spring flooding subsequently show higher rates of anxiety and depression. Some even

develop posttraumatic stress disorder. Of course, issues like that concern us.

Our young people are wondering what their future will be like. I am one of those young people wondering what kind of environment our future children are going to grow up in. It creates a kind of anxiety called ecoanxiety that psychiatrists, physicians and psychologists are studying a lot at the moment, in an attempt to find out the extent of the phenomenon.

These are certainly troubling questions, the more so because, over the last year, a lot of people have been isolated. There has been a lot of talk about mental health and we know that the issues are critical.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: You wanted Ms. Howard to answer...

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers: Yes, I will let her—

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Actually, because you know a lot about it, I would like to ask you another question before you hand over to Ms. Howard.

What impacts on the healthcare system can we expect as a result of climate change? How can we mitigate those impacts or make our healthcare systems more resilient?

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers: That is an excellent question.

Climate change is altering many of the risk factors for certain diseases.

Let me give you a very concrete example. Heat waves cause an increase in visits to emergency rooms and an increase in the pressure on the healthcare system. They are associated with hospitalization, heart disease, heart attacks, even strokes and blood clots in the brain. That results in costs for the healthcare system, because people spend weeks in the hospital and need complex care. Climate change causes heat waves, but also forest fires. We know that those phenomena will bring about an increase in consultations, both on the front lines and in secondary centres.

In addition, a number of good studies have been done showing that extreme meteorological events, like forest fires, can put the healthcare system itself at risk. When a hospital is located in an area that has to be evacuated, access to a healthcare network, essential though it is, becomes limited. During the Fort McMurray fires in 2016-2017, around 20 healthcare facilities and long-term residential care establishments had to be evacuated. When people are in residential care, they already present with a number of risk factors, and climate events cause additional stress that can have an impact on their health. We know that the healthcare system is not ready, because it is already at full capacity. Last year, we saw—

• (1700)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I would like to hear from Ms. Howard, because the clock is ticking.

So we will need major health transfers.

Ms. Howard, could you talk to us about mental health?

[*English*]

Dr. Courtney Howard: What really worries us as doctors.... I've worked with humanitarian organizations, and I had the honour of helping to produce the first brief between Doctors Without Borders and the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change. We worry about the limits of adaptation. What I'm describing is already a challenge. We already have to urgently evacuate emergency departments in a matter of hours, and we know that we're going to continue to warm until at least mid-century. If we continue along the high-emissions pathway we're currently on, what.... My prior boss at the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change, Dr. Nick Watts, who's now in charge of decarbonizing the National Health Service, has described that as catastrophic.

What I am telling you as a physician is that we cannot guarantee that we will be able to continue delivering the services for health that you would expect as citizens of a high-income country through to the end of the century. Not only is this a critical risk to the health of today's children, but it is a critical risk to the health systems they depend on.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the comments we've received already from our panel.

I'd like to begin with Ms. McLeod.

I thought your comments about intergenerational equity were particularly well put. I wonder if you could talk a bit about Bill C-12 in that context. If there was one change to Bill C-12 that you feel would best reflect that obligation we have to future generations, what would that change be?

Ms. Christie McLeod: Thank you for the question.

In the youth brief that I submitted to the committee, I recommended that clause 8 of the bill be amended to require that the minister consider the responsibility of Canadians toward future generations. This is language that the MP for Winnipeg Centre, Leah Gazan, put forward in Bill C-232, which is the climate emergency action act. It calls for the minister to consider “the responsibilities of Canadians toward future generations” in developing a climate emergency action framework.

Considering the responsibility of Canadians toward not only the present generation but also future generations will put at ease people like me who are wondering what the future looks like for our future children and future generations.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Ms. McLeod.

I'll turn now to Mr. Gage and Mr. Andrews.

You spoke a bit about this in your introductory remarks. We've seen a number of countries and subnational governments pass climate accountability legislation over the past decade. I wonder if you could expand on your opening remarks in terms of how Bill C-12 stacks up to those international examples.

Specifically, what improvements—and you noted some of these—do we need to make to Bill C-12 in order for it to really reflect the international best practices in this area?

Mr. Alan Andrews: I just want to check. Is the sound okay for the translation service?

The Chair: I think so. If you speak slowly, it should work.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Don't speak too slowly though, because we only have six minutes.

Mr. Alan Andrews: In short, and to be frank—and I'm looking to Andrew to develop my answers—it doesn't stack up well compared to international examples. We've heard a lot about the U.K. I'd also mention New Zealand as a more recent and possibly better example.

Some of the key criticisms we've already heard about. I won't elaborate further on the lack of detail in plans, but that's one obvious area of improvement. Similarly, Andrew mentioned the need for a bigger runway—a bigger lead-in time—between the targets being set and the plans developed, so that we have better advance warning that allows adaptation and innovation.

Finally, I'll talk about the advisory body. There are various amendments that could be made to take Bill C-12 closer to the U.K. model in order to better insulate that advisory body from the political process and give it that cross-party consensus that's been so successful in the U.K.

Mr. Andrew Gage: They've come in just this morning or maybe it was yesterday, so I don't think they've been translated yet. When they are available, I'd refer you to the submissions from us, Ecojustice, Climate Action Network and Équiterre.

We identify five pillars. They are early and ambitious action; mid- and long-term certainty; credible and effective plans and reports; accountability; and science and expert advice. I think that in all five areas the bill does not stack up compared with what we've seen in other legislation. There are clearly some pieces related to each of them, but they just don't gel.

It's really difficult to say.... There's not one change that needs to be made. There are a number of amendments that need to be done to really bring this up to snuff.

• (1705)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: On the topic of carbon budgets, you've heard the back-and-forth with the minister comparing the U.K.'s carbon budget approach to the approach he chose to take with climate targets. I believe the words he used were “dancing on the head of a pin”. Maybe “potato, potahto” would be a better comparison.

I'm wondering what your perspective is on this. Are these essentially similar approaches just phrased differently, or are there key substantive differences between the carbon budget approach and the climate target approach?

Mr. Andrew Gage: I would say that there are substantive differences, but done well an approach involving targets can achieve many of the same functions that a carbon budget approach takes.

One of the key points is the one that I mentioned in my opening. Carbon budgets have always been established going out a number of years, with carbon budgets covering different periods of time as opposed to one at a time. There are no examples of carbon budgets being used internationally a single budget at a time.

The other thing is that carbon budgets I think are actually better for a jurisdiction like Canada in that they express the emissions over a multi-year period in terms of how much we can emit as opposed to reductions relative to a base year. There's more opportunity for businesses, local government or provincial governments to take ownership over how much they're contributing and to see how that fits within a broader conversation.

I don't agree with the minister that carbon budgets are not well suited for Canada. That being said, if the government has decided to go with a targets-based approach, if it does it well—and currently Bill C-12 doesn't do it well—it can certainly achieve many of the same goals.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go now to our second and last round. I have Mr. Redekopp, Mr. Baker, Madame Pausé, Mr. Bachrach, Mr. Albas and Ms. Saks. If that's not correct, please let the clerk know.

Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you.

I have a question for the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. One of the major economic drivers in my home province, of course, is agriculture. While in my riding of Saskatoon we don't have a lot of farms, we do have feed mills, train hubs and food processing and many constituents who work in these industries. My son worked on a dairy farm for a while, which he loved, although it was the hardest job he's ever done.

Ms. Jackson, you guys produced this great short film called *Guardians of the Grasslands*. Can you just quickly describe the central message of that film?

Ms. Fawn Jackson: Yes, it was environmental organizations and beef producers talking about how Canadian grasslands are really Canada's Amazon rainforest or our coral reef, and what we need to do to protect them because they're disappearing at very alarming rates. It's quite an emotional short film. It's 12 minutes long. I really encourage everybody to look it up.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Is that something you could provide to the committee so that we could watch it?

Ms. Fawn Jackson: Absolutely. It would be our pleasure.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I have another question. I've heard people talk about beef production being harmful. I'm just wondering; what

is the impact of beef on other species and how does that relate to what we're trying to accomplish through Bill C-12?

Ms. Fawn Jackson: Reynold, do you want to take that?

Dr. Reynold Bergen: Certainly, I can.

I think in terms of how beef production impacts other species, beef production occurs on one of the most biodiverse landscapes in the world, in Canada, in particular. Beef production is occurring on natural habitats that develop under the influence of a large grazer.

Maintaining the health of those rangelands means maintaining the health of everything that's on there and preserving those rangelands maintains habitat for pollinators, for thousands of different species of plants and for all kinds of wildlife. It contributes, obviously, to carbon sequestration—we've talked about that—but also to watersheds and maintenance of habitat for migratory waterfowl because we don't drain our wetlands. It's very compatible with biodiversity. It supports it actually, and one of the big challenges is, as we mentioned, the 80% loss of the northern great plains. That's led to significant habitat fragmentation.

We still have patches of northern great plains here and there, but it's shrinking and it's fragmenting and that's not good for biodiversity.

● (1710)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Maybe related to that, I know that the cattle herd in Canada has faced significant reductions in the past couple decades. There was BSE and low profitability on farms and, in fact, it took a lot of heavy lifting by Prime Minister Harper and agriculture minister Gerry Ritz to bring the beef sector back to profitability.

Can you explain the unintended consequences of beef farmers when they exit the industry and what impact that has on greenhouse emissions?

Dr. Reynold Bergen: Certainly. The number one thing... I mean, we just talked about biodiversity. When canola is worth \$20 a bushel, one of the first things that happens is that shelter belts get torn out. The second thing that happens is that marginal lands get torn out. When we say "marginal lands", those are lands that aren't really great for crop production, but it might be worth the risk when canola is worth \$20 a bushel.

When that land gets cultivated, right off the bat between 30% and 50% of the stored carbon enters the atmosphere. It's like burning down the bank. Soil carbon is like a bank account. Whether it's through good crop management or good rangeland management, we're making incremental deposits in that carbon bank every year. When we cultivate it, we lose it. It's like burning down the bank with no insurance. We lose it very quickly, and it takes decades to get it back.

Those would be the two big things I would point to: loss of biodiversity and significant loss of sequestered carbon entering the atmosphere.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: What are the events that cause that loss? What would cause somebody to cultivate a piece of land, then?

Dr. Reynold Bergen: Economics is largely the one. Regardless of the crop, when the price is high, there is an incentive to grow that, because you don't pay the environmental cost right away. You see that over time.

The Chair: We're out of time.

We'll go now to Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of questions for a couple of the folks who are here, and I hope to get to them. I ask for your help in being as concise as you possibly can on a very complex topic.

Thank you all for being here, though.

Mr. Gage, first off, it's interesting that you said you had a full head of hair when Canada started setting climate targets, and then started not meeting them. I may lose my hair quickly as well, particularly in this line of work, but I'm pretty confident that Canada is going to start meeting those targets. In part that's because I believe the government is committed to it, and in part because I think Canadians consider this a priority and will support the government.

You spoke of something that I want to ask you about, if I could.

If I understood you correctly, you spoke about the need to set more frequent targets and further in advance. I'm wondering, in 60 seconds or less, why do you believe that's important?

Mr. Andrew Gage: As I indicated in my opening, climate change action requires the government to take short-term action to bend the curve now—we're all familiar with COVID terminology—but it also requires that you put in place measures now that will start achieving further reductions 10 or 15 years out. If you set just one plan at a time, the government is focusing on achieving that target, but they are not charged with considering what happens next.

The minister, in his statement to you, said that the plan provides for “rolling targets”. That's not true. Rolling targets means that you set more than one target, and when one expires you set another.

The minister has indicated a couple of times that this is the intent here. However, the legislation as drafted has government either just considering what happens between now and 2030 or in five-year increments thereafter, and that doesn't really work in terms of considering both relevant...and for the 2050 target as a long-term goal.

• (1715)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Your recommendation, though, is that those targets must be set further in advance. I think you said 10 years at one point, or 15 years. Does that address that problem?

Mr. Andrew Gage: It's on a rolling basis, so there will be two five-year targets in any one year's time.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Okay. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I would like to ask Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers a question now, if I may.

I represent the constituency of Etobicoke-Centre, which is located in the western part of the city of Toronto. Your colleague, Dr. Howard, explained to us in detail the impacts of climate change on her community. However, I believe that, at times, those of us in cities may not see the same impacts as in Dr. Howard's community.

For my constituents watching us, could you describe the impacts of climate change on people living in urban communities?

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers: I would be glad to. Thank you for your question, I will be quick.

One of the most significant effects of climate change on health in urban communities is the exposure to extreme heat. Climate change will bring about heat waves that are more frequent, longer-lasting and hotter. So they will grow in intensity, as will the stress they cause on the public. During hot weather, those who are better off or who have few health problems can adapt. But in less fortunate areas, with lower socioeconomic levels, you find fewer trees and more concrete. That creates conditions that make exposure to heat much more toxic and dangerous.

In the south of the country, especially in the cities, the effect of heat can be very significant, both in terms of mortality, meaning the number of deaths linked to climate change, and in terms of morbidity, meaning the number of conditions that can become more serious. These are conditions such as cardiac disease, lung disease and diabetes, all very current in the adult population.

So, in cities, we can expect very specific impacts, without even considering significant additional exposure to the extreme meteorological events that can be expected. One example is the flooding we have witnessed in a number of cities in Quebec recently.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Okay.

Thank you, everyone.

The Chair: You asked good questions.

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Can I have the 15 seconds left over?

The Chair: Sure, go ahead.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: My question is for Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers.

Could I ask you for a quick answer, because I would also like to ask Mr. Gage a question?

What are the main improvements that you would make to Bill C-12?

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers: There are three. I will go through them quickly.

The first is to set an objective and to report on the progress made by 2025. This is because 2030 is much too late to decide on an action plan. We have to see the progress that has been made much earlier, and 2025 is a good target.

The second suggestion is that the advisory body as such be made up of independent scientists. This would ideally include health experts, because of all the evidence showing the links between health and climate. That committee must have the resources it needs to really do its analysis work and to be accountable to Parliament and Canadians as a whole.

Finally, the bill must be genuinely aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers.

As I listen to you and Dr. Howard, I was wondering whether there would be doctors on the committee.

My next question goes to Mr. Gage.

I will not be commenting on heads of hair, Mr. Gage, but you were very harsh in your assessment of Bill C-12. Do you believe that the environment commissioner has a role? In my opinion, it's more a cosmetic role than anything else.

Do you believe that the bill should provide for some collaboration between the commissioner and the advisory body?

If so, can you give us an idea of what that collaboration could be?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Gage: I understand you to be asking whether the advisory body really should have legal status, which I think it absolutely should. It should have a clearer role in actually doing some of that evaluation of government progress on the bill, as is the case in the U.K. act.

The commissioner's role, as written, is on auditing essentially the implementation of the plan. Taken broadly, that's probably helpful, but the key question is not just "Are we implementing what we said we'd do?", but "Are we achieving the results that are necessary to get where we need to go?" The commissioner could have an expanded role to do that, but we certainly have been pressing for the advisory body to play that role.

• (1720)

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, you have the floor for two and a half.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gage and Mr. Andrews, I wonder if you could share your perspective on the discussion around the need for a 2025 milestone as part of Bill C-12.

Mr. Alan Andrews: Andrew, maybe I'll go first and hand it over to you.

A 2025 target would undoubtedly improve the bill and provide that more immediate accountability checkpoint. However, again I'd bring it back to the need for detail in plans, because if you think about it, the real key accountability checkpoint in the next few years will be that first plan prepared pursuant to the bill. It's absolutely critical that this plan charts a credible path to the steep emissions cuts we need to see by 2030, and to do that it needs to contain some of the detail that I've spoken about.

Mr. Andrew Gage: To add to that, it needs to also include very clear information on how we will make the cuts in the next five years, before the 2025 target.

I don't think there's any doubt that we would prefer to see a 2025 target, but we also think if the government is resisting that, clearly it can be achieved through the types of details in the plans and clear accountability reporting at an early date.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Under Bill C-12 as it's currently written, if the government is not on track to achieve its milestones and we understand that prior to hitting the milestone because of the reporting measures, does the bill currently require the minister to take corrective measures that get the government back on track towards meeting that target?

Mr. Alan Andrews: This is one of the features of the bill that perhaps hasn't received as much attention as it should. It's actually quite a positive provision and would require this kind of advanced warning mechanism. If we see that there is a risk and a target's going to be missed, there's a requirement on the minister to take that corrective action.

Unfortunately, as drafted, the provision is a little weak, but again, with some very simple amendments, that language can be strengthened so there's a clearer and firmer obligation on the minister to come forward with those corrective measures.

Mr. Andrew Gage: One concern related to that is that the progress reports currently happen only once during each plan's mandate and just before the end of the mandate, so it doesn't provide as much time to correct the course.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, you have five minutes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for making time for committee, and I appreciate your expertise and your sharing it with us and all Canadians.

First of all, I'd like to start with the Cattlemen's Association.

I've read a book called *The Tyranny of Metrics*. Sometimes, if you only focus on certain numbers, you get certain results, but you're blind to other things. One thing you mentioned in the grasslands video was the importance of natural sequestration.

As the targets in the bill, specifically the net-zero target, referred to anthropogenic emissions and reductions, there doesn't seem to be any mechanism for collecting and reporting on non-anthropogenic emissions and sequestration. Would adding that to the report so that Canadians can see the entire emissions picture be something that we, as a committee, should consider in C-12?

Ms. Fawn Jackson: We would absolutely support holistic policy analysis with full data, because when you get really tunnel focused in one direction, you can lose the forest for the trees—or perhaps the grass for the grasslands is a better example here. We think that it's very important.

I would also like to say that I think all of agriculture offers really amazing nature-based solutions, so whether you're looking at crops or livestock, I think that the sector should really be looked at as a key sector for both economic growth and the environmental outcomes that we're looking for.

• (1725)

Mr. Dan Albas: COP 26 is going to be focusing largely on nature-based climate solutions.

Mr. Gage, from West Coast Environmental Law, do you agree that there should be something in C-12 that has reporting on the non-anthropogenic emissions and sequestration in Canada so that the public at large has a better picture?

Mr. Andrew Gage: Certainly, sequestration is hugely important, obviously, and carbon sinks are absolutely critical. I think that, if that's something the committee wants to add to the bill, that could potentially make sense.

I would caution against rolling it into the existing planning and reporting structures without careful consideration, simply because right now the structure of the bill is that it sets a target. It plans to achieve that target and implements measures to do that, and it reports on that. It would be a significant restructure. I think it would make more sense to have a separate requirement for a report on carbon sinks, rather than trying to roll it into that process, but in principle it seems like a good idea.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you for that.

Under another area, under subclause 15(2) of the bill, the minister can include other information when he's giving these reports. He mentioned in his own testimony today that Canada is not a unitary state, and obviously provinces and territories should be respected.

I find that interesting because he doesn't find time to talk to them about tripling his carbon tax, but then suddenly says that it's good to have collaboration. I think collaboration should be from the start.

Do you think that adding a provision in the bill so that there is a summary of provincial efforts on achieving our net zero or our Paris national objectives.... What do you think about including a provincial summary of actions?

Mr. Andrew Gage: One of our recommendations is that a summary of the provincial actions the government is relying on to

achieve the milestone target be included in the plans, along with the modelling associated with that. An assessment report would presumably also—

Mr. Dan Albas: I would like to ask the Cattlemen's Association.... I believe most of your members are provincially regulated. In my province, for example, most of them are grazing on Crown lands.

Ms. Fawn Jackson: Coordination across the provinces with the federal government, whether it's through this, offset protocols or I suppose any other initiative on climate change, is going to be extremely important to making sure we get that right. If it's too confusing, that's when we run into not being able to achieve the goals we want to achieve.

Mr. Dan Albas: A lot of people ask me about the state of Canada's electrical grid because, and I think this is partly due to Madame Pauzé's motion and subsequent study on electric vehicles, many people want to know where all of our power will be coming from.

Mr. Gage, recognizing that this is under provincial regulation, do you believe that perhaps there should also be something summarizing the state of Canada's electrical grid? I still think giving a summary on the state of our electrical grid would be important, as we see transportation electrification being a principal focus for many of the actions of the government.

The Chair: Very briefly, please.

Mr. Andrew Gage: Of course, the federal government plays a role in interprovincial grid aspects, and it may well be something that the government might choose to include in its plans during the reporting on the strategies it's using.

There's a lot we would like to see in the plan. I'm not sure whether that reaches the level of something we would totally require to be included, but I'm not opposed to it.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Last but not least, we'll go to Ms. Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses who've joined us today. It's been a very fulsome conversation.

I'd like to touch a little on my colleague Mr. Albas's comments about the provincial and federal relationship. I'm an apples-to-apples kind of gal. The U.K. has been bandied about a lot, whether it's hitting the mark on the model there or not, but the U.K. is largely a unitary state. It doesn't have a constitutional framework like we do with sections 91 and 92 of the 1867 act. Does the U.K. have to work with other levels of government the way we do in terms of our federal-provincial relationship?

We'll start there. Mr. Andrews or Mr. Gage could answer.

Mr. Alan Andrews: As the resident Brit—and being half Scottish—I should probably take a first crack at that.

Obviously, yes, Britain doesn't have quite the complex federal system that Canada has, but it's not exactly simple, constitutionally, as you might have gathered from watching the news in recent years. Environmental issues are a devolved issue. The U.K. government has to negotiate and co-operate with the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

There are other examples of more complex constitutional arrangements that have effective climate legislation. Germany is another example of a federal system—

• (1730)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Germany's system is quite different from ours. The provinces there have much more power in the relationship.

I'd like to focus, really, on the U.K. or perhaps New Zealand.

Mr. Alan Andrews: The U.K., with the devolved powers, is different. It's an apples-to-oranges situation. Taking a step back, the bigger point is that there will always be these more difficult challenges in terms of the constitutional arrangements between different state actors. It prevents a complete copy and paste from the U.K. to Canada, but I think the fundamentals of the U.K. climate act hold, particularly if we brought in the improvements we've suggested around having more information about the measures the provinces and territories would be taking.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Perhaps a made-in-Canada model, as the legislation proposes, with a nod to the U.K. model would be a preferred situation.

Mr. Alan Andrews: Yes, I think so—with key amendments.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Okay.

Mr. Andrew Gage: The U.K. legislation specifically says that, if the U.K. government is including measures that relate to the authority of Scotland or Wales, it's required to consult. The process is set out.

I think the concern here is that, if you create an act that deals with the difficulties of talking with provinces by just pretending they don't exist, we're not going to meet our targets.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I understand.

Mr. Andrew Gage: The importance of transparency around... We need to talk to the provinces and we need to ensure that the measures the provinces are doing are celebrated and put front and centre in our plans. It's very helpful.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I understand.

I'd like to touch on one more aspect of that to expand this, to unpack this a little more.

Clause 10 includes implementation with provinces and territories and first nations. The U.K. and New Zealand have a more direct route to implementation in dealing with first nations. I didn't hear much comment about that in terms of clause 10 in a review, either from Mr. Andrews or from Mr. Gage.

Mr. Andrew Gage: Are you talking about subclause 10(3)?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Yes.

Mr. Andrew Gage: It's actually one of the problematic sections, I think, in the sense that by saying the plans “may contain” other information related to these other levels of government, businesses, etc., and indigenous governments, it allows the government an out for accountability. Ultimately, the federal government has to be the one to.... If it's a true accountability act—saying that the government is accountable for ensuring that somehow, with all the different pieces in play, it has a plan as a country to get to its targets—by saying “may” rather than requiring that the government actually identify which measures it's relying on, that actually undermines the accountability considerably.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Again, it is a much more complex relationship than a simple unitary system where there is an opportunity for collaborative work.

Mr. Andrew Gage: Absolutely.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Chair, that's really the only key question I had. I wanted to clarify that.

[Translation]

The Chair: That was a good question. Actually, all members have asked good questions.

I would like to thank our witnesses. We have had a great discussion and it has allowed us to deepen our knowledge and broaden our view of the bill. Thank you so much.

Let me remind members that the committee is going to meet twice this week. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 19, at 2:30 p.m. It will be a three-hour meeting and we will have two groups of witnesses.

This concludes today's meeting.

Does anyone want to move to adjourn?

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On a quick point of order, you've said 2 p.m. I'm just double-checking—

[Translation]

The Chair: The meeting will be at 2:30 p.m.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Okay. It's 2:30.

• (1735)

The Chair: Are you proposing we adjourn, Mr. Longfield?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I will now propose that we adjourn, and we'll see you at 2:30 on Wednesday.

The Chair: There seems to be unanimous consent, so thanks again to the witnesses and have a wonderful evening.

Thank you.

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