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# Standing Committee on Natural Resources

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Chair: Mr. John Aldag





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• (1620)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.)):** Good afternoon. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 24 of the House of Commons standing committee on natural resources. Pursuant to standing order 108(2), the committee is continuing its study on creating a fair and equitable Canadian energy transformation.

Today is our seventh meeting with witnesses for this study. I'd like to thank our witnesses for their patience for the second time, as we were interrupted by votes. We'll be getting under way right away.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House Order of November 25, 2021. Now that we're in session, I would like remind everyone that screenshots are no longer allowed and taking photos of the screen is not permitted. The proceedings are televised and made available via the House of Commons website.

For the witnesses, I'll recognize you by name before speaking. For those who are on Zoom, there's simultaneous translation. You have the choice of choosing the floor—the language being spoken on the floor—or English or French. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

If you wish to raise your hand, please just use the virtual “raise hand” function. When we get into the question and answer session, I generally allow the members who are asking the question to choose whom they are going to be speaking with. If you raise your hand but aren't selected, it's usually because the member has something specific they're going for and may not get to you. Feel free to raise your hand indicating that you would like to weigh in.

For the witnesses, we also use a card system. I'll give you the yellow card when there are 30 seconds left in the time. The red card means the time's up. Don't stop mid-sentence; just finish what you're saying and then we'll go on to the next person for their opening statements or the next member for their questioning. We'll be going to go through opening statements and then we'll get into questions.

I'd like to welcome Ms. Brière and Mr. Morrice to our session today.

Mr. Angus, what's your point of order?

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

I'm looking at what we have left on our witness docket. I know we're trying to wrap this up. I'm getting very concerned that key witnesses that we've asked for are not being invited.

We had Indigenous Climate Action, Indigenous Clean Energy, the Athabasca Chipewyan, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en. We've asked for the Just Transition Centre and the mayors of Calgary, Edmonton and Wood Buffalo, who have an obvious stake in this. We also had the Labour Leading on Climate Initiative, the Workers' Action Centre, Canada's Building Trades Unions, Destination Zero and Oil Change International.

These aren't superfluous witnesses. These are people who have a direct say. I'm getting very concerned that we're going to try to wrap up this report without getting the full picture and the full length of voices that need to be heard to do this study justice.

I want to know why these key witnesses are not on our list.

• (1625)

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus, I'll respectfully suggest that we have that discussion at the end of today's meeting. We could perhaps take the last five minutes. We only have House resources in the room until six o'clock. We're late getting started. This is the second time we've had this group of witnesses, who have very important things to say.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I understand that. It's just that some of the witness that I had asked for have been removed from the list. I want that on the record.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I commit to our coming back to addressing your question at the end of the meeting.

I would like to get into opening statements.

Mr. Simard, do you have a question or a point of order?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** I just want to make a comment along the same lines as Mr. Angus.

In recent weeks, I've submitted a substantial list of witnesses, but only one has been kept. I think this is unacceptable.

We are asked to find witnesses. Now, I don't know what the basis for the selection of witnesses is, but there is certainly an inequity if I compare the list of witnesses we receive with the list of witnesses that has been submitted.

I don't want the committee to waste time unnecessarily, and I want to hear from witnesses. However, this will need to be discussed.

I, too, wanted to speak while the committee was not in camera.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That's fair enough. Everybody has the ability to ask these questions. We will get to an explanation.

Right now, I would like to welcome our witnesses on the study on creating a fair and equitable Canadian energy transformation.

For today, we have from the First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Chief Sharleen Gale, chair of the board of directors. From the Indian Resource Council Inc., we have Chief Delbert Wapass and Steve Saddleback. From the Metis Settlements General Council, we have Herb Lehr. From the National Coalition of Chiefs, we have Dale Swampy.

With that, we will go to Chief Gale for a five-minute opening statement.

The floor is yours when you are ready.

**Chief Sharleen Gale (Chair of the Board of Directors, First Nations Major Projects Coalition):** Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here today in my capacity as chair of the board of directors of the First Nations Major Projects. I am speaking to you from my home of the Fort Nelson First Nation in Treaty 8 territory.

The First Nation Major Projects Coalition is a non-partisan, business-focused coalition of over 85 first nation members from across the country. We support our member nations with the tools, capacity support and advice related to corporate structures and benefit-sharing models, as well as tools to promote environmental protection and effective participation in impact assessments.

On behalf of the First Nation Major Projects Coalition, I would like to start by expressing our support for the Government of Canada's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

I also want to remind this committee of the message I left the last time I was here, in 2021. We need to ensure that the measures put in place to achieve the Government of Canada's target of net-zero emissions by 2050 do not disadvantage first nations communities, further creating hardship to indigenous communities. In any policy, hardship should not fall disproportionately upon first nation communities.

We recommend that you build indigenous opportunities into the energy transition, in particular clean energy opportunities with indigenous equity ownership of new projects, and financing/government collateralization of new investments. We emphasize that this degree of indigenous involvement in investment brings value not only to first nations but also to Canada's economy, in the form of investor certainty.

The coalition's first nation members are looking for ambitious actions from the Government of Canada as part of a global effort to reduce carbon pollution. As you work to develop recommendations on a fair and equitable Canadian energy transformation, you must never lose sight of the fact that opportunities for economic development for first nations in Canada have never been fair or equitable. Long-standing disadvantages present barriers to full first nation participation in the labour force and impair the capacity of first nations to compete for capital to support project development.

The development of a national benefits-sharing framework led by the Department of Natural Resources is viewed by the coalition as having the potential to address first nations concerns around fairness and equality when it comes to major projects and the energy transition, provided the framework is implemented correctly. For this to be achieved by the framework, we need to improve access to capital, using government loan guarantees as well as continued strategic investment in indigenous capacity and business readiness. First nations need to be included in the strategic planning and decision-making process for the transition to a net-zero economy. We need to do this in a manner that is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Despite the challenges faced by first nations, we have many positive stories to share. For instance, the First Nation Major Projects Coalition was proud to support the first nations leadership in the development of the Tu Deh-Kah geothermal clean energy project, led by my home community of the Fort Nelson First Nation. This project is an excellent example of clean energy investment that has enabled a transition away from fossil-fuel driven electrical generation, indigenous equity ownership, local indigenous jobs for those previously in the oil and gas sector and indigenous board management level decision-making. All four of these aspects should be at the centre of Canadian net-zero policies and should serve as a foundation for principles being developed to guide a just transition.

We must use every ounce of our ingenuity to decarbonize our way of life, and in order to do that successfully, we need to ensure that vulnerable communities are not left behind in the transition to a net-zero economy. A fair and just transition for first nations requires recognition that we are starting from a significant deficit in terms of both employment and education. Skills development, preferred access to employment opportunities and targeted investments are all necessary components of a fair and equitable Canadian energy transition.

I'd like to thank you for inviting me to speak today. I look forward to hearing from your study.

*Mussi cho. Hiy hiy.*

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Great, Chief Gale. Thank you so much for your opening comments.

I will now go to the Indian Resource Council, and I have two members.

Who would like to provide the opening statement?

**Chief Delbert Wapass (Board Member, Indian Resource Council Inc.):** It will be me, Delbert Wapass.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'll turn the floor over to you.

You have five minutes for your opening statement.

**Chief Delbert Wapass:** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Delbert Wapass and I'm the former chief of Thunderchild First Nation and currently a board member on the Indian Resource Council. Our organization represents over 130 first nations that produce oil and gas or that have a direct interest in the oil and gas industry. Our mandate is to advocate for federal policies that will improve and increase economic development opportunities for first nations and their members.

I'm very pleased your committee is studying barriers to indigenous economic development, because we face a great many, not least from federal policies and legislation. Our communities benefit from involvement in oil and gas. The relationship has not always been perfect, but now it is positive and getting better. We are more involved in oil and gas jobs in reclamation, in procurement and in equity shares than ever. There isn't another industry in the country that has engaged indigenous peoples more meaningfully, in terms of the scale of own-source revenues, than the oil and gas industry have, and that's a fact.

That's why it is so important to our economic development and self-determination that Canada have a healthy and competitive oil and gas sector, but it often feels as though Canada is trying to eliminate the sector instead of support it. The cost overruns on TMX that indigenous groups want to buy, the cancellation of Keystone XL, the cancellation of Northern gateway, the tanker ban, the Impact Assessment Act, Bill C-69, the lack of LNG export capacity, the cancellation of Teck Frontier mine, the tens of millions in royalties that we lost in the past decade due to the differential in price between WCS and Brent crude—these have directly harmed our communities. These have cost first nations hundreds of millions in lost own-source revenues. I think everyone on this committee knows that none of our communities can afford that.

The lost own-source revenues and royalties are one big thing, but on top of that, these missed opportunities have cost our people procurement opportunities that probably would have numbered in the billions. When you talk about economic development, that's what's important: Giving our people well-paid jobs, getting first nations-owned businesses big contracts from trucking and catering to earth moving and reclamation so they can grow their businesses and hire more people and create opportunities for our entrepreneurs. There

is no sector—no solar panel installation, no tourism, no golf courses—that can replace the economic opportunity that oil and gas provides for first nations, so you can eliminate the biggest barrier for indigenous economic development if you stop hampering our oil and gas industry.

I note that government is even now considering a cap on emissions, which is poorly drafted and which will in practice be a cap on production. Instead, I ask that you promote and encourage our involvement by making sure that first nations have the access to capital we need to be real partners in new projects.

I know you've heard in this study how [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. I and our chairman are also involved in the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation. We've been able [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] in power plants, carbon capture facilities, pipelines and more, but at the federal level some people consider government-backed loans to indigenous communities to get involved in these things to be fossil fuel subsidies.

If the federal government is truly committed to reconciliation and the principles of UNDRIP, then you should be supportive of whatever kind of economic development we want to be part of, regardless of what industry it's in. You shouldn't be picking and choosing for us. You don't know better than we do what the right balance is for development in our territories. For our members, for many other first nations, oil and gas provide the best opportunity. It doesn't mean that we aren't interested in other sectors or that we don't want to be part of the net-zero economy, but this week of all weeks it should be obvious that having a strong oil and gas sector that has meaningful indigenous involvement and ownership and that is a global leader in environmental, social and governance principles is in the interests of all Canadians. I can tell you that it is in the interests of the Indian Resource Council.

Regarding the just transition, that's been put forward without consulting nations and their communities. It was handed down without any discussion. These discussions need to take place at the chief and council tables, not simply in Ottawa, for moving oil gas to alternative energy.

Thank you very much.

• (1635)

**The Chair:** That's perfect. Thank you for your comments.

I do just want to check something.

Is the translation coming through, Mario?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Given that we had interruptions last time, I wanted to let the witness finish his remarks, but there has been no interpretation for some time. It would be a good idea to fix the problem before the next intervention so that the interpreters can do their job.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Absolutely. Yes, we wanted to make sure.

I'm going to go to you, Charlie, in a second.

I was going to say that when we get to our next witness, Mr. Lehr, I'll get you to start with a sentence, and we'll make sure that the translation is coming through. I'll then start the clock, and we'll get going.

Mr. Angus, please go ahead.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Yes, I want to follow-up what my colleague said. It's not fair that Mr. Simard has to always advocate for himself regarding translation.

We are supposed to have this worked out. There's supposed to be a sound check. I was having a difficult time hearing, and it makes it difficult to do my work if I can't hear properly.

**The Chair:** I'm hoping that everybody did their sound checks, you included, Mr. Angus. Although, you're observing today—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** They didn't ask me to do a sound check, no. But I'm ready.

**The Chair:** It was Mr. Desjarlais today.

We will do everything we can to make sure that everybody gets heard in both official languages.

Mr. Lehr, if you would like to take a minute to give us your opening sentence. I'll go to the French channel, and make sure that it's coming through okay. I'll then start the clock, and we'll give you your five minutes.

Again, I apologize for the interruptions we're having here today.

**Mr. Herb Lehr (President, Metis Settlements General Council):** Not a problem, Chair.

It's Herb Lehr, president of the Metis Settlements General Council.

**The Chair:** It seems to be coming through.

Monsieur Simard, if there are any issues, I try to pop back and forth between English and French. If anybody sees that there's a problem, just flag it, and we'll stop at that time.

Mr. Lehr, I'll reset the clock for five minutes, and I'll turn it over to you to start with your opening statement.

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** Thank you, committee members, for the invitation to speak about a just transition to a new economy.

Natural resource exploitation has undeniably brought both blessings and misfortune to our communities. The most significant benefit has been high wages for relatively unskilled labour. The negatives, however, are more far-reaching and insidious. The high wages have brought with them a raft of social problems, local

economies dependent on a single industry and irreversible damage to the land and environment. These are not values that are consistent with our traditional values, but because of our limited financial resources and a reliance on provincial governments that can't see beyond the quick payoff of oil and gas, we've been forced into this boom and bust cycle that isn't good for anyone.

The Metis Settlements Accord of 1990 and the subsequent provincial legislation brought the promise of the settlements charting their own course, but the reality was self-governance under the auspices of a provincial government almost solely focused on resource extraction. A provincial resource co-management agreement appeared to be the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but the province's dependence on non-renewable resources became ours, and this continues today with recent discussions by the province to now move into mineral exploration.

Recognizing the opportunities that our non-indigenous neighbours enjoy, our leadership felt little choice but to exploit the opportunities available to the settlements and prioritized education and training geared toward resource extraction industries. The unpredictability of this type of economy, coupled with the impact on our land, air and environment, and most importantly, our people, means that we must do a factory reset and return to our indigenous values and live in concert with those values and realign our priorities with them in mind.

Alberta has told us that we have access to funding through the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, but again, the opportunities offered through this program are geared to exploitation of our land and people. To follow through with a reset, new, additional financial supports and investments will be required to advance our aspirations of food sovereignty and the pursuit of economic opportunities that align with our values, such as new horticulture ventures, solar technology, aerated concrete and hemp construction, as well as indigenous tourism, to name a few.

Some of this work has been initiated through the federal strategic partnerships initiative, which has enabled the Metis settlements to establish an arm's-length investment institution, the Metis Settlements Development Corporation, but with more significant investments, our reliance on non-renewable resource exploitation can eventually become a thing of the past.

The Metis Settlements General Council is also hoping to enter into an agreement on behalf of the eight settlements directly with the federal government on an extension to the site rehabilitation program. The program, which to date, has been administered by the province, has shown some promise, but some of our communities were not able to benefit fully from the program. Greater access will help us repair some of the damage caused to our lands through resource extraction. A just transition would also include compensating us for the carbon taxes our members and communities have paid while also planting and protecting millions of trees.

Ultimately, we know that self-government, rather than self-governance, is the key to truly determining our own future, but our shorter term goals include working more closely with the federal government on the opportunities mentioned previously, as well as accessing resources for more diverse education and skills training, and more culturally appropriate and sustainable infrastructure and housing. It is investments in these that will help set us on a renewed course that leads us to a brighter, more hopeful future.

*Kinana'skomitina'wa'w.*

I yield any remaining time to the chair.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Great. Thank you so much for your opening comments.

Lastly, for opening statements, we're going to go to the president of the National Coalition of Chiefs, Dale Swampy.

Sir, I'll turn it over to you if you're ready to go.

Mr. Swampy, are you there? If you're ready to go, you can unmute yourself. When you start talking, I'll start your five minutes.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Hello, Chair. We can't hear you. There's no audio for the floor.

**The Chair:** Can you hear me now?

Okay. Mr. Swampy, can you hear me?

We're just checking with the technical team. I'm making sure that we have Mr. Swampy here. I can see him.

• (1645)

**Mr. Dale Swampy (President, National Coalition of Chiefs):** Can you hear me? Would you like me to proceed now?

**The Chair:** Yes, you're good to go. Thank you.

We go over to you for five minutes.

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** Thank you, Chair and committee members, for inviting me to talk today about the fair energy transition.

My name is Dale Swampy. I am the president of the National Coalition of Chiefs. The NCC is a non-partisan, independent coalition of first nations leaders who recognize the importance of energy and resource development as a means to improve community well-being and defeat on-reserve poverty. We work to create mutually beneficial alliances between industry and first nations leaders to advance responsible resource development projects that positively benefit first nation people through employment, own-source revenues and economic development.

We are very concerned about this government's focus on a just transition. We have already seen its politics destroy billions of dollars in opportunities for our communities, from northern gateway to Teck Frontier to energy east and more.

We don't see a transition happening. It's not. Global demand for oil and gas has never been higher. In fact, there's an energy crisis and the G7 is calling for producers around the world to pump out more. Canada has never exported more oil; we are at record levels. Oil and gas companies are making more money than they have in

their history, and the federal government is making more revenues off them than ever before.

What about first nations? Just when we were starting to make headway in procurement and equity shares, the government decided we should limit new projects. Imagine if we had an export capacity for LNG today. First nations across Alberta, B.C. and the west coast would be on their way to financial independence. Imagine if TMX was in service instead of being delayed for years and years in bureaucratic red tape. The first nations groups that are vying to own it would have good revenues coming into their communities to support their programs and needs.

It is not realistic to think that, if Canada simply stops producing oil, other countries will stop using it. If the government doesn't want to be part of it, that's fine, but you have no right to stop first nations from our right to develop resources from our lands. I have heard that the last barrel should be a Canadian barrel because of our high ESG standards. I think the last barrel should be a first nations barrel.

Don't forget that fossil fuels are used for LNG and blue hydrogen and that these are essential to the energy transition. There isn't any credible source that thinks we should stop using those for decades to come. In fact, it is widely expected that the demand for that will rise. This is an opportunity for first nations and would contribute to lowering global emissions and getting other countries off coal if we are not blocked from pursuing it.

I want to end by pointing out the high costs of a poorly planned energy transition and the crisis we now face in first nations. Many of our communities rely on diesel generation. People have to drive for hours to get to doctors appointments or a grocery store. A lot of people aren't on the grid, and even those who are don't have the electricity capacity to add charging stations in garages they don't have. You won't find any electric cars on the rez.

The high costs of gas, heat, power and food are crippling many of our people, who don't have anything extra in their wallets. This energy transition, which so far is just a crisis, is hitting us the hardest. People are suffering in poverty when their communities should have been benefiting from the high value of these resources. Your policies have done nothing to prevent this and, in many ways, they have exacerbated it. There is nothing fair or equitable about what is happening today.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your opening statement.

I just want to acknowledge, Mr. Chen, that we have you online as well. Thank you for joining us today.

We're going to our first round of six-minute questions.

Our first person up, according to my list, is Mr. Melillo.

If you're ready to go, the floor is yours for six minutes.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to engage with our witnesses here today. I want to thank all of the witnesses for joining us and for your important testimony already, which gives us a lot to think about. I'm sure we'll get much more from the questions.

I want to start with Mr. Swampy.

I know that part of the National Coalition of Chiefs' mission is to combat on-reserve poverty. You mentioned in your remarks the incredible benefits of the energy sector for the communities you represent. I'm just curious to get your thoughts on the potential, or perhaps lack thereof, of the green energy sector from an economic perspective to replace the prosperity that's currently being provided by oil and gas.

• (1650)

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** We believe the transition to blue hydrogen is the way to go. We know there is an abundance of natural gas in western Canada, and in eastern Canada for that matter, that we can use for the next century, if we wanted to. As we move forward, closer to technology, that will give us a better opportunity to get away from greenhouse gases. I think natural gas converting to hydrogen is the way to go.

The Alberta government is fully behind us on this. We're developing a southern hydrogen hub in southern Alberta. We have 14 first nations behind it. There are many nations in Saskatchewan that are organizing coalitions to develop these types of green energies, including biofuel and so forth. In northern B.C., for example, the amount of opportunity for LNG is incredible. They'll be employing some 800 people over a period of 30 years on the coast, something they needed because of the lack of forestry and the lack of mining, which have pulled out of that region in the past decade.

With respect to the just transition, I think we have to look to natural gas, to blue hydrogen, to carbon sequestration and so forth, and we need the government to support us with this transition.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** I appreciate that answer.

Mr. Swampy, you also mention in your opening remarks that the government has “no right”, I believe was the quote, to tell first nations communities to stop production on their lands. I would certainly agree with you. Previously in this committee, I asked you directly, in regard to a proposed emissions cap on oil and gas, if you felt that the government should acquire the consent of indigenous communities before moving forward, and you indicated that you believe so. I asked many other witnesses the same question and had the same response.

Since then, Mr. Swampy, we had the opportunity to have the Minister of Natural Resources here in committee. I asked him six

times if he felt that his government would have to abide by the conventions set out in UNDRIP and have the consent of indigenous communities before moving forward, and he refused to answer. In fact, he said, “the government is looking to ensure that communities that have a strong interest in this put their hands up and tell us that they want to participate.”

I would argue that's certainly not an empowering way of doing consultation, waiting for communities to put their hands up and say that they want to be a part of it. I'd like to get your thoughts on the seeming lack of consultation by this government and the fact that they're saying one thing about UNDRIP on the one hand, and then acting in the opposite way on the other hand.

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** There is truth in the fact that a lack of consultation by this government has hurt us quite a bit. The northern gateway project, for example, had 31 out of the 40 right-of-way communities signed on in support of the project—and not only support, but they were also willing to take on the risk of ownership in this project. We tried to meet with the federal government before November 2016 when they cancelled this project.

I know exactly why they didn't want to meet with us. They wanted deniability, to be able to say, “We heard first nations say that they don't want the pipeline. We didn't hear any first nations say they wanted it.” Well, of course they didn't, because they wouldn't talk to us. They wouldn't return our emails. They wouldn't return our letters. They wouldn't return our calls.

It's an unjust transition that's coming up right now. It's unjust because the government has a purpose in mind and wants to make sure it gets this law passed. UNDRIP itself can become a vehicle to deny projects, allowing the government to be hypocritical. It gives first nations people, because of their treaty rights, the power to deny projects, but it also gives us a right to approve projects. Under UNDRIP, we should be able to build our own resources on our own lands and traditional territories. If we want to do that, we should be allowed to do that.

• (1655)

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Thank you.

I don't think I have much time for much else, so I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're going to Mr. Sorbara next for his six minutes.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I welcome all the witnesses this afternoon. I found all of their testimonies quite interesting.



On this topic of an energy transformation or transition.... I don't mean to personalize this, but I will for 30 seconds.

I grew up in northern British Columbia. Mr. Swampy, you mentioned northern gateway. I grew up in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, until I went off to university. I know that Kitimat is benefiting from the LNG project. Prince Rupert benefited from a number of pipeline projects after the pulp mill closed and displaced hundreds of workers. A lot of individuals lost their jobs when it closed, including indigenous folks who worked at the pulp mill. I worked there in the summertime and at a JS McMillan Fisheries cannery to pay for my education. Those jobs are now gone, as well. Workers from the indigenous community were very prominent at JS McMillan Fisheries and the other fisheries along the coast—Port Edward, Prince Rupert, Port Simpson and all of those communities there.

I will first go to the First Nations Major Projects Coalition.

Ms. Gale, you talked about a project that you saw as successful. I think it was a geothermal project. Can you describe the particulars of that project and what made it successful?

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Thank you.

First, I think it's really important for everyone in the room to know that it is 100% indigenous-owned by the Fort Nelson First Nation. The Fort Nelson First Nation has been involved in oil and gas for over 60 years. Oil and gas is something we all need, as Canadians. However, in the Fort Nelson area, we have been the highest polluter of greenhouse gas emissions through the Fort Nelson gas plant, because that's where we currently get our power. We're not part of Site C.

The Clarke Lake field, where the geothermal facility is being built, is a 60-year-old gas field. It has now been depleted, so we have repurposed this gas site and are creating the geothermal facility, which should generate between seven and 14 megawatts of power. We'll be able to provide power to over 14,000 homes.

With that come spinoff opportunities and the possibility of what is in the brine: lithium extraction for greenhouses. We are looking at over 100 greenhouses. We know that food security is one of the main concerns for our people and the people living up north in the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Alaska, so we're very proud of this geothermal facility.

What made it successful is a \$40-million grant from NRCan. If not for the \$40-million grant, we wouldn't be where we are today.

*Mahsi.*

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Ms. Gale. It's great to hear about this collaboration, and to see the ownership of that project and that project moving forward. You're absolutely correct—food security is very important these days, and even more pressing with the unprecedented actions taken in Ukraine by Russia.

Both the Métis Settlements and the National Coalition of Chiefs mentioned skills training in their testimony, if I'm not mistaken. I believe this is a huge opportunity and a huge “must” on the part of the Canadian government working with indigenous peoples across Canada on skills training. The indigenous population is very young

in Canada, relative to other groups. We need these folks in the labour force. We know our labour force issues.

Are there any programs you can point to that we can determine as successes, in terms of skills training?

I'll go to Mr. Swampy first.

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** We have many examples across Canada, but we want to try to focus on on-reserve training. The most important part of defeating on-reserve poverty is to be able to bring training to our communities. In order to do so, we need the government to recognize this and to empower regional coalitions of first nations communities to develop their own training programs.

The reason I say this is that we've had training programs that have succeeded in the past that included life skills programs to teach our people how to transition into a regular working lifestyle, which means going to bed early and waking up in the morning. We had retention trainers who were working with the industry people to resolve some problems with first nations people who didn't show up at work, and so forth. We also had retention trainers on-reserve to visit community members who were not showing up for work in order to see how to transition them back into the workforce. It's going to take time.

The Fort McKay First Nation, for example, is probably the richest community in North America. It has a household median income of almost \$150,000. That didn't come overnight. It came over 50 years of extra consideration it received from the six big oil sands companies. Through that, working together with the community, the community was able to transition from a social welfare society to a producing society, where everybody is working—

• (1700)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Mr. Swampy.

I'm out of time, but thank you for your testimony. It was very insightful.

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Saddleback, somebody else may be able to pick that up when they get to you.

We're going to Monsieur Simard, for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I hope the interpretation will work well during the witnesses' interventions.

I would just like to begin by saying that I'm a bit confused because the presentation of certain witnesses is somewhat contradictory to my vision of the development of oil projects. I think the number of oil projects needs to be reduced if we're going to address the climate change crisis.

At the same time, I want to be very respectful of first nations interests in economic development. Perhaps the best thing is to speak frankly, with due respect, and to see what the answers to my questions will be.

Perhaps I should start by asking Chief Gale a very simple question.

Chief Gale, back home in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, an Innu nation living in Mashteuiatsh has spoken out strongly against the GNL Québec project, or the Énergie Saguenay project, if you will, which suggests that the interests of first nations are not monolithic. Many first nations are speaking out against oil projects.

Is your coalition engaging in dialogue on this issue with first nations that want to develop fossil fuels and those that may see it in a negative light? Is it trying to find a consensus?

[English]

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** The First Nations Major Projects Coalition is a non-political organization. We're not project specific. The projects we work on ones that are supported by the communities. However, I understand that not every community is fully supportive of LNG, but that goes down with consultation and consent.

Many oil and gas projects have happened here in my territory. It's not that we were against oil and gas; it's where the project was being developed. If you're going to put a pipeline through a moose calving ground, that's not going to meet our values and we're going to refuse the project. It really comes down to consent and consultation, and to find out why the first nation is saying no.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** I understand this very well.

We know that climate change may have a slightly greater impact on first nations, particularly with respect to species extinction, poor air quality, and the loss of some infrastructure and habitat.

Isn't it difficult to reconcile this discourse with a discourse that defends new oil projects?

I'd like to hear what Chief Gale and Mr. Swampy have to say about this.

• (1705)

[English]

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Dale, do you want to go first?

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** Sure.

We have to keep in mind that the National Coalition of Chiefs and its members are not climate deniers. We believe the transition has to exist, just like we believe the transition has to exist in both Canada and the rest of the world. We are the leaders in environmental protection. If you meet with the Canadians who run the oil and gas sector, you'll see that they are just like you. They are concerned

about the environment, about safety, about integrity. They'll do whatever they can to protect our country.

In order for us to be able to transition, we need to transition to something. I don't think we have an ability to be able to transition to any green energy right now. They're just not sustainable. We're suggesting things like blue hydrogen, biofuels and so forth to start off so that when we get to that technology that can provide us with the development of hydrogen as a replacement for gasoline, then I think we can move forward.

In the meantime, we have to be sustainable. We have to react to what's going on in the rest of the world. We don't want an energy crisis in Canada. An energy crisis will create problems for the impoverished. That includes our first nation people on the reserve.

Thank you.

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Thank you.

I believe when first nations have equity in major projects that are happening in the territories it's the truest form of consent. First nations build projects from the ground, so that includes our land users. When the Indian agent went into our villages to push people to the reserves, not everyone left. We still have people living a traditional lifestyle that has been out there for thousands of years. That's how we do a lot of our traditional knowledge. That's how we get our information about the changes that are happening on the land.

When first nations have seats as owners and as members of boards of directors, it's not all about prosperity. We can make the right decisions to do the correct thing for the environment while we're part of these projects.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we're out of time on that.

I should point out to everybody that, unfortunately, we have lost Mr. Wapass's connection. We still have Mr. Saddleback here from the Indian Resource Council, so if anybody's looking for a representative there, I would invite you to direct your questions to Mr. Saddleback.

Mr. Angus, it's over you for your six minutes.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Desjarlais.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair—and Charlie, for the recognition.

I want to thank all of the witnesses today. Thank you for your knowledge and your testimony.

President Lehr, I'd like to focus on you, if you don't mind. I have a few questions related to northern Alberta. Specifically, I understand that the Metis Settlements General Council actually is the largest independent-of-the-government landholder in the province of Alberta, making you one of the largest stakeholders in Alberta in the environment and also in the development of natural resources and otherwise. I have a few questions pertaining to your vision for these communities.

Can you maybe elaborate more on what you mentioned in your opening testimony related to the experience to date of the oil and gas industry in these communities, which are often situated right near oil and gas sectors today? Could you maybe elaborate a bit more on how the oil and gas companies have treated the indigenous communities that you represent? What kinds of liabilities are still outstanding in terms of the environmental deficit?

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** Thank you for the question.

We do own one and a quarter million acres of land. We have more wells than first nations people have on their lands, yet I look at what has transpired with our people.

I just want to say, for the record, that 30 years ago, I made a deal with Texaco. It was bought out by CNRL. The deal was to develop the resources in exchange for developing the people. What we received was a whole bunch of our people going bankrupt. They were kept inside the little sandbox of our area and told to be competitive with other businesses around them that enjoyed full-time employment. They never lived up the master development agreements that we had with them.

We looked at Alberta's policies where it says that if you come here, you're supposed to leave it in the condition you found it. I challenge anyone to go on Google Earth and look at Alberta. Look at sites that are 60 years old and older than that. What are they? You'll find that none of them are the same as the area around them. They put it down to pastured grasses. They run cattle on it. Sometimes they'll put the odd tree. You lose all of the traditional medicine and the berries. Everything we had there before is gone. It changes the whole landscape.

We talk about the impact. In our communities, we see different kinds of animals that don't belong here, whether it's raccoons, antelopes or the grizzly. We know that climate change is real. We see the change in the animals. We see the ducks and the geese that we can't eat anymore. We wonder if next it's going to be our moose and deer that we can't eat.

We look at all of these things and we say that we were part of that problem. We were never given the opportunity, like the first nations talk about, to maximize the opportunity under oil and gas. We've always been second fiddle to everything. When something is closing, they want to bring it and say that now it's an opportunity for us.

We need to get in at the ground floor—right now—of what the new move is for moving forward with Canada and the world economy. That's why, for us, we want to say goodbye to oil and gas. It's still going to happen, but we don't want to destroy our land.

As I said earlier, Blake, we are the stewards of the land in our settlements and communities. You'll see there are very few fields. We've protected the trees, the environment and our way of life. I take it as an affront when we're charged carbon taxes and all of this stuff when we're the people protecting it, along with my first nations brothers and sisters. I don't believe that it's appropriate to charge us for that.

• (1710)

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Thank you very much, President Lehr.

One really interesting part of your testimony was when you mentioned this idea of the incentivization of resource development. In many ways, we can also look at our responsibility, globally, to our environment and to our land. We can look to the leadership of indigenous leaders, like yourself, who recognize the reality that our planet has just a few decades before we see catastrophic impact to the life of our lands. This is more relevant now than ever. You know this first-hand. You visit all of the lands. I visited eight of the communities in northern Alberta and I've seen it as well. This is truly detrimental.

What I really appreciate about your testimony is that you spoke about the opportunities that are present to indigenous people looking forward. Could you elaborate on ways we could incentivize participation of organizations and communities like the Métis settlements to better participate in renewable projects that will both see prosperity in the community and help in terms of our emerging global climate change crisis?

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** For sure.

The settlements moved into what they call “budget-based taxation”, so that we can actually tax with industrial tax and set our mill rate based under the budget that's required by the oil and gas companies. We make sure we're getting some money out of them because they don't contribute properly.

I look at things that I've talked about, like the trees we've kept and protected for generations. I believe that indigenous communities should be compensated for the amount of treed area that they retain, rather than try to get paid to do oil and gas.

As I heard one of my first nations brothers say earlier, we do all of this stuff because of poverty. We are exploiting our own resources because we are forced to. We need to get compensation to us in a different way, so that we can make a better value judgment as to whether or not we still want to participate in oil and gas or if we want to keep our indigenous way and not exploit that because we don't have to.

We've done it because we've had to and that's Canada's shame.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** All right.

We're out of time on this one. We're going now to the slightly shorter round of five minutes, starting with Mr. McLean.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses here today.

I'm going to start my questioning with the Indian Resource Council, if I could, please. It would be great to hear some responses as well.

Your communities' representation as workers in the resource industry is higher than other communities' participation in the resource industry. These jobs of course pay more than any other jobs in Canada, but particularly in your communities. You're participating: your labour and your indigenous regional benefits.

Now, after years of trying, you're finally getting equity and the recognition of section 35 rights. You've come a long way. This is very important, and we're pleased to see that progress. I particularly am pleased to see that progress, yet you've been catching up. Think about the leadership you brought to this.

But one common note that I've heard here from a few of the witnesses, of course, is that this just transition misstatement—in my opinion—is being put forth without the consultation of the indigenous communities. It is in fact, as Mr. Wapass says, an “unjust transition”.

Can you tell me, Steven Saddleback, how you see this operating better as far as the outcomes go for your community over the next decade?

**Mr. Steve Saddleback (Director, National Energy Business Centre of Excellence, Indian Resource Council Inc.):** Thank you for that question, MP McLean.

Thank you for all the comments and for allowing us to be part of the round table today.

In terms of the discussion at hand, this committee has labelled it a “just transition”. Since the onset of this, I am reminded of the just society that was put forward and ultimately resulted in the White Paper, and what ultimately happened with that was as a result of the Red Paper.

If we look back at the history, that came about because of a lack of consultation with first nation communities. We were notified about this activity without having that involvement of first nations, and then being down in first nation communities and having that consultation with those chiefs and councils, as our board member,

former Chief Wapass, had indicated. I just want to have that as a point of order for folks to be mindful of this: that consultation does need to happen.

In terms of—

**Mr. Greg McLean:** I'm sorry, Mr. Saddleback. I have to move quickly here because I have only a short amount of time. I appreciate the comments on the different papers.

Just quickly, if I can, I'll move now to Mr. Swampy, please.

Mr. Swampy, we talked about jurisdiction here. Think about how much you've participated with the Alberta government, with the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation and also in the education that you've brought up here and the programs that this has helped.

Can you comment, please, on the jurisdictional overlap that the government at the federal level is trying to impose here to more or less put another ratchet, another regulatory hurdle, in your society's social advancement?

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** That's right. In my mind, under this legislation, it's a vehicle for the government to be able to stop projects that first nations are supporting. It's contradicting the fact that once you give power to first nations to deny a project, you also give power to first nations to build a project. We think we should be given the same rights that are afforded to first nations across the country and across North America, and that is to develop our own traditional territory.

If you look at Alaska and the 13 bills of Congress and the tens of millions of acres that were given to first nations out there, they never sold one acre of those lands to a foreign country or a private landholder. They kept that land, they developed it and they developed it properly. It doesn't mean that model can't work for us in Canada. That's what we're all about. Reconciliation is about land. Give us back the land you assigned to us at treaty and then we'll take advantage of the—

• (1720)

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Swampy.

Can Mr. Saddleback answer that same question as well, please?

**Mr. Steve Saddleback:** When you talk about involvement with first nations communities, the energy sector has been a big part of our first nations, and we can have that balance between economic development and the environment.

There was some mention of job creation. In the last 18 months, the Indian Resource Council has created over 400 jobs, which include not only reclamation—well activity and cleaning up over 1,800 wells in the province of Alberta—but careers. It has created careers in looking at alternative energy.

When we talk about poverty, we talk about this just transition, and we need to ensure this for those first nations that are going to be the most greatly impacted by any fluctuation in energy prices. When we do these increases and the investment in alternative energies and those activities that are happening, where are we going to get these dollars for a family that's living on social assistance and that doesn't have activity in their nation? We're not sitting there in a major centre, and we need to be mindful of that when we're talking about these just transitions.

**The Chair:** Okay, great. Thank you.

We're going to go now to Ms. Lapointe, who will have five minutes.

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair Aldag.

My questions are for Chief Gale.

Your organization recently released a report entitled "Indigenous Leadership and Opportunities in the Net Zero Transition". The report states that "All battery metal/mineral extraction that occurs, or that will occur, in Canada is on lands and waters to which Indigenous nations and peoples have inherent legal rights." Furthermore, the report indicates that "Canada has much to do to realize the opportunity that Indigenous leadership provides...in terms of net zero economic and environmental opportunities."

Can you expand on this statement?

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Thank you.

I think one of the other important pieces in this is putting the "I" in "ESG", so that if people are to get access to our natural resources, they're going to have to consult and work with us. As I said, our members across Canada, who are from coast to coast, from Miawpukek First Nation to the province of British Columbia, are going to need to be meaningfully consulted, and the truest form of consent to us is equity. We want to be part of our natural resources.

When the Indian agent came, you guys pushed us on the reserve and we watched your communities grow, but we haven't had the opportunity to grow alongside with Canadian society.

That document is very well put together by my team, and I really encourage everybody to read that document, as well as "Indigenous Sustainable Investment: Discussing Opportunities in ESG".

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe:** Thank you.

A fair transition for current energy sector workers is important, but more importantly, I believe, is inclusion for those who are traditionally left out of benefits of the energy sector.

What opportunities do you believe are available for first nation communities when looking at the entire ecosystem or supply chain, from mining to the production of EV batteries?

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Through equity ownership, I see our people not only having labour jobs where they're laid off in the spring-time, I see our people being CEOs and on boards of directors, and managers and being able to make decisions in the corporate world. Also, on the ground, I see our people being guardians, land users,

hunters, fishers and trappers. We bring that information back to our lands office.

When we get involved in major projects, there's a huge separation between our economic arm and our governance arm, but we still have to do that due diligence in striking the balance between economic prosperity and environmental stewardship. That's why I feel it's very important that indigenous people are involved in the extraction of materials that are happening in their territories, whether that's one nation that wants to be involved or bringing in a collaboration of nations to work together.

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe:** The report lays out a list of Canada's "barriers to gaining a strong foothold in the battery mineral supply chain".

I would like to hear more details on two of the barriers that are listed in the report.

One deals with "Indigenous involvement", where you talk about "The centralization of Indigenous leadership in the battery supply chain planning and actualization" and how that "needs to happen while projects are in their initial planning phases, not after the fact or later in [the] project".

The second one is on remoteness, namely the "The relative remoteness of resources in Canada leads to higher cost for exploration."

What I'd like to know is how Canada can lead by helping in these two areas.

● (1725)

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** We don't have the capacity to make business decisions at the speed of business. That's why the support of the First Nations Major Projects Coalition is so important to indigenous communities, because we provide that capacity to make those informed decisions for free.

What Canada and industry have to do is to come see us on day one. Don't come to us with your preplanned construction ideas. Come to us on day one. We'll tell you where projects can be built, and where they can't be built. Many of our communities are remote, but that doesn't mean we don't have the ability, or don't want to be involved in a project, especially if it's happening in our territory 400 kilometres away from our village.

Ultimately, I feel that if you come to us on day one, we know where things can and can't go on the land. Many of our nations have land use plans, and they are very detailed. By coming to us on day one, we can get projects built faster. We can overcome regulatory approval processes. They can be built on time if we're involved meaningfully.

The other thing I would like to add is that first nations just want an opportunity. We've been left behind since you guys came to Canada, right? Never underestimate the ability of our people. We're hard workers. We want to be a part of our economies just as bad as you guys, because we want to put bread and butter on the table. We want to look after our families. We're like all Canadian citizens in this country who want to look after their families.

When I feel that first nations are involved meaningfully, and when we are involved in a project, nobody gets left behind; but when governments and corporations come in and try to do it for us, we always get left behind.

That's just my closing comment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're going to go now to Monsieur Simard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

If I'm not mistaken, in his presentation, Mr. Lehr talked about land reclamation. I remember that the federal government gave \$1.5 million to clean up orphan oil wells. I think it was in 2019 or 2020.

I'd like to ask Mr. Lehr if any of that \$1.5 million has been spent on cleaning up wells on first nations lands.

I would also like to hear Mr. Swampy and Chief Gale's comments on this.

[*English*]

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** I can start on this one if you like.

Yes, we did receive some monies to clean up the oil patch in our backyard. That's what I find so challenging. There's no responsibility from the oil and gas companies to do the right thing. They made billions of dollars from the extraction of resources on our territory. Unfortunately, we had a bit of a bust with the markets, and the processing of this sulphur gas. They pretty much up and left. We're now left with infrastructure, roadways, seismic lines, you name it. There's a pile of junk in our backyard that we're left to look after at the end of the day.

Before this had happened, 10 years ago, the provincial government sold our lands without our knowledge for \$5 billion to the oil and gas companies. We need to find a better way to do these things. It has taken away from my treaty rights to hunt, fish, and trap. My territory is now totally opened up to anybody to come in to take substance away from my people. It's been very challenging. We need to look at a better process, and have corporations take more responsibility when they come into our territories.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Lehr, would you like to add anything?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I would say be brief. We are almost out of time. If you want to weigh in, please do.

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** Thank you.

One hundred million dollars came to Alberta. Eighty-five million dollars went to first nations and \$15 million went to the Metis Settlements. It didn't even touch those we need to reclaim. It had a big provincial twist to it. The ones that we were involved with as settlements got left by the wayside. It wasn't enough money to really move forward on the reclamation that's required when it comes to the settlements.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Angus for two and a half minutes for this one.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to turn to Mr. Desjarlais.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Thank you very much again to the witnesses.

I have a few more follow-up questions for President Lehr.

You just commented on the way that many of these companies have left a massive number of abandoned orphaned wells, creating a tremendous responsibility for the communities. This is something that Albertans are seized with. There's a massive deficit in terms of what's left to clean up. Our own Parliamentary Budget Officer projects that over \$1 billion is the price tag to clean this up by 2025. It's massive.

President Lehr, you said you're involved in some of this reclamation, but with just \$15 million. Who, in fact, is going to pay for this?

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** That's a great question, Blake. We don't know. We've had oil companies go bankrupt. We have a great number of different providers. The biggest provider in our communities of course is Canadian Natural Resources, which has posted record profits, but they don't even pay their industrial tax to us. They contest everything that we do when we try to hold them accountable.

I look in our community. Again, I talked about Google Earth. Go look at the number of wells and the impact there. A lot of the old infrastructure still sits there. Land is just wasting away. It hurts our hearts.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Thanks so much for that, President Lehr.

Now, when it comes to these companies not paying their taxes, I know that you have actually accessed the courts in order to try to get them to enforce, on behalf of these communities, that these companies pay their basic fair share. How successful were the indigenous communities in that application?

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** They actually lost on a technicality. They won when it came to being able to use budget-based bylaws and taxation. We will be able to hold them accountable in the future.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais:** Thanks so much, President Lehr.

I do believe this is my final few seconds. I just want to thank all of the witnesses.

Again, we hope that we can find ways to create a better fair share for your communities, President Lehr.

**The Chair:** We're now going to move now to Mr. Bragdon, who will have five minutes for his round of questioning.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** I believe it's going to actually be Mr. Maguire.

**The Chair:** Then we'll go over to Mr. Maguire.

The clock's yours for five minutes.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thank you.

I thank all of the witnesses for their presentations today as well.

I would like to go to Chief Gale for just a moment.

I was very pleased to see that you have 85 partner nations and that you're into a lot of clean projects and very much in favour of partnering. You are part of the Coastal GasLink equity transitions and others, it appears.

I wonder if you could just expound on the benefits of being involved in those and if you could indicate others that you may have been involved in.

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Thank you.

When I look at all of the things that are happening around the country right now, including LNG, geothermal, biomass, battery storage, I see indigenous people leading this transition. We're the biggest owners of these renewable projects, other than municipalities and governments. I want to see our people doing more of it. When these projects are done right, it's a way to alleviate the poverty of our communities and to address the legacy of colonization.

Our people have been seeing these projects being built but the benefits have not been going to our people for over 100 years. We want to find a new way to be involved in these projects. Going forward, I think that any kind of resource project in Canada will require indigenous knowledge, indigenous involvement and social licence. When I say I don't want to create any anxiety or fear, I just think it's a chance to create inclusion and recovery. That's what we're promoting as members of the coalition.

The one reason I love economic development is that it's not a zero-sum game. My success and my community's success don't have to trump your success. In the coalition, we're not project specific, as I said. We don't pick the projects. It's the members who come together. We had about 16 of our members come together to form a coalition to get equity for the Coastal GasLink pipeline. It took a long time. They ended up being successful with 10% equity in that pipeline. That pipeline's going to be running for 30 to 50 years. That's great own-source revenue for those first nations communities to build their schools or health centres, and to provide jobs for their people—

• (1735)

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** If I can just interrupt you there for a second, thank you. That's great. I hate to interrupt you, because it's good to hear the success story there.

I was also impressed with your comments about how people don't understand you, that people have to come to you first with plans, that you need to be in the consultations, which we heard didn't happen in some of these areas. I think that's a must.

I know Mr. Wapass indicated that it was an unjust transition. I think we need to look at the comment, too, by Mr. Wapass, that if the emissions cap is poorly implemented it could lead to a cap on production, which would be really hurtful to our first nations. That's what he said. I'm just wondering if you could expand on his comment and how you see that happening. We certainly are not talking about a cap on production, but I sympathize with his view.

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** I would like to get a little bit deeper than caps on production. I think our nation has historically faced the bar-

riers that other first nations also face in participating in their resource development due to the lack of capital. I don't think that any government policy should ever affect any indigenous right to move forward on a project. We need to look at some of the barriers that are not allowing first nations to move forward.

We were stripped of our wealth. It makes it hard for us to provide equity and to be partners and to reduce the risk and the costs because we can't borrow money. If the bottleneck for first nations to get involved in any project they want to participate in is access to capital, we need to overcome that.

I think the solution is to change the financing system in Canada, with indigenous people leading this transition. Indigenous people are going to decide when and where they want to be involved in a project. If we don't have access to money, then nobody's going to be able to have access to anything. We need to look at that by doing good business and being a good society.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you. I think I have one.

Mr. Swampy indicated in previous testimony that if you put a cap on production, you won't be able to produce or export LNG, which so many first nations are involved in and counting on. It is a big benefit to them.

You and Mr. Swampy, I think it would be a good thing to continue to export our energy, but if we decrease Canadian energy exports, would you predict that other countries with lower environmental standards would just step in if we don't do it, which could raise global emissions, which is exactly what we don't want? Could you just comment on that, and Mr. Swampy as well?

**The Chair:** You're going to have to be really brief. We're at the end of this one. I'm trying to get into one more round of two and a half minutes for all members. I have one five-minute round left.

I'll go to Chief Gale and then Mr. Swampy, but keep it nice and tight, please.

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Yes, I think you nailed it right there that Canada has the highest standards for environmental leadership when it comes to developing projects. I think we can make that better by allowing first nations to be a part of that through equity, and also including our traditional knowledge with the scientific knowledge. Our people see the changes on the ground faster than you can collect data.

I'm telling you that because I'm a land user and I can see the change when we had oil and gas in our territory. You can't deny that a lake is becoming a two-island lake and a three-island lake when you're seeing all of the vegetation being taken away for fracking.

Traditional knowledge needs to be involved too, and I think the more you involve indigenous people, the faster we will get to building projects and a cleaner environment.

• (1740)

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Swampy, I'm not going to be able to give you the time here, but somebody else may be able to pick that up. I do need to go to my next person.

We're going to jump to Ms. Jones, who will have five minutes for her round of questioning.

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I would like to thank all of the panellists for their presentations today and for their very helpful answers to some difficult questions, I'm sure.

First of all, regarding the discussion on orphan wells, I want to say to Mr. Saddleback, thank you for at least mentioning that those investments have been able to create indigenous jobs in western Canada and have certainly helped the environment.

I know what the PBO has said. Even though they estimated it at \$361 million, they projected it to go to \$1.1 billion by 2025. However, let's not ignore the fact that industry itself has very minimal security deposits on any of this cleanup and that this has been a program implemented by the government since 2020, which has invested \$1.7 million into this particular project. I really think that in energy transition, we also need to look at when companies transition out of the industry and what they leave behind.

I'd be interested in hearing the feedback of people on the panel about that as well.

I'm going to ask a second question as well, and hopefully they'll have an opportunity to answer both.

I know that, especially with the First Nations Major Projects Coalition, you have partnerships in LNG, and you've talked several times about having equity to invest and how that contributes to indigenous jobs. I'd like to hear where you head is in terms of that space and what the government should be doing.

Also, Mr. Swampy, you talked about UNDRIP, which I support, though I'm not sure if you support it or if your interpretation of UNDRIP is different from my understanding of it. UNDRIP will have a tremendous impact in helping and aiding indigenous people going forward in resource development in Canada. I'm not seeing your optimism on that and I'd like to get more clarification.

So, I have three questions. One is a general question, one is to Ms. Gale, and one is to Mr. Swampy. You can start with the last and go backwards if you want, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Swampy, we'll start with you, and then we will go to Chief Gale and then to general comments to the first question.

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** We advised our chiefs and wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, who was nice enough to write back acknowledging our concerns and issues regarding UNDRIP.

We feel that it's an ambiguous law, and whether or not it is going to be upheld will depend on the government in power. We believe it's so ambiguous that it's going to give the legal industry a large swath to sue the federal government and industries and rest of Canadians for their taxpayer dollars. That's an industry that's going to balloon like you wouldn't believe. The indigenous law industry

right now is horrendous—it's huge. There are thousands and thousands of lawyers out there waiting for an opportunity to be able to sign on a first nation to sue the federal government, and your UNDRIP is going to allow them to do that.

I disagree with the idea that Canada has the lowest deposits by the oil and gas industry for environmental protection. Canada has the best industry in the world and I'm proud of the industry that we have in Canada. We have 14,000 self-identified indigenous workers working in that industry in Alberta alone.

**Ms. Yvonne Jones:** I didn't say it was the lowest; I said it was minimal. Their deposits were minimal, according to the PBO report.

We can move now to my next question. That was for the First Nations Major Projects Coalition.

• (1745)

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Was that with regard to jobs?

Thank you.

When first nations are getting involved in equity positions, along come the jobs. I worked at a gas plant for over 20 years and right now I see a crisis with the baby boomers retiring and the need for us to ensure we have opportunities for youth in the trades, in post-secondary and university. We're partnering with local universities, colleges and the Construction Foundation of BC,. We're getting our people out there to get ready for this renewable transition. A lot of the jobs that our members are currently working at in oil and gas are transferable.

The other main thing the coalition is looking at and helping our members with is procurement. The procurement of these projects is another opportunity for people to be meaningfully involved.

**The Chair:** That's the end of that one.

I'm going to take a little bit of liberty with the times. We have ten minutes left if we want to have the discussion that Mr. Angus and Mr. Simard asked to have at the beginning of the meeting.

With the 10 minutes, I'm going to do two and a half minutes for each group. We're going to have to be pretty tight with that. At the end of the two and a half minutes I'm going to jump in so we can wind it up within 10 minutes.

Mr. Bragdon, you're up first. I'll give you two and a half minutes on the clock.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to each of the witnesses today. It's been very insightful for all of us. I appreciate your insights and hearing this information. I truly hope more Canadians have access to your perspective and that your very important perspective is heard during times like this.



The opportunity before Canada right now is incredible. We have amazing potential as a country in the face of what's happening geopolitically with all the instability around energy, food and resource supply around the world. Canada can be looked to as a safe haven and could be very much a reliable partner for a world that's desperate for reliable sources of energy and food under some of the best environmentally regulated circumstances. Our indigenous people play such an important role in that and add such credibility to our sector.

Hearing the testimony from you today is extremely powerful. I think more Canadians need to hear that because we have a great news story.

I'd like to turn it to Mr. Swampy, Ms. Gale and Mr. Saddleback to give a brief remark each on your thoughts about how there's real potential left in our resource and energy sector that we just need to tell the story of and promote, rather than try to move away from it.

I'll start with you, Mr. Swampy.

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** As I said before, we've been steeped in the oil and gas industry on our first nation for the last 70 years, reaping some two billion dollars' worth of royalties from the Bonnie Glen deposit. We get all the impacts of both environmental damage and the work we have to do to partner with our partner companies in the oil industry.

We've seen the positive kind of resources that they apply towards environmental protection. We're happy to see the kind of cleanup they do and have done over the 2,500 wells around our area. We think they have the capacity, knowledge and capability to transition us properly into the green energy environments.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** With regrets, we're out of time on that one. I need to go over to Mr. Sorbara to keep it moving and make sure everybody gets their last two and a half minutes in.

For anyone participating today, if there are things you want to expand on from the questions you've heard, we do welcome up to a 10-page written brief in addition to the testimony we've had today. I know it's asking a lot, but if you have time or additional thoughts, you can send that in through the clerk.

With that, Mr. Sorbara, we'll go to you for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Chair. I wasn't expecting to have a follow-up, but that's great.

Mr. Swampy, I've listened to your concerns and comments today. I also understand full well that the energy sector in Canada and the world needs more Canadian energy, whether it is renewable or non-renewable. I wrote about this several weeks ago in an op-ed. It's very important, in the context of the world we live in now, that energy comes from Canada. I truly believe that, from coast to coast to coast.

With that, how would you describe the opportunities that are currently available for young indigenous folks to enter the energy sector here in Canada?

• (1750)

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** I think the first and biggest opportunity is the blue hydrogen transition that we're seeing in Alberta, in both the north and south. Six big oil sands companies are applying a lot of their resources toward this, and we hope the government will be able to back them in this venture, including on carbon sequestration, and so forth. I think Alberta can be the leader in providing hydrogen.

In Europe, Germany just signed an agreement with Middle Eastern countries to buy 2,000 tonnes of hydrogen per day from them. The Chinese government has committed to 200,000 tonnes of hydrogen per day from the international market. Canada has to be on that precipice. It's first nations who want to get into the STEM programs and be a part of this. We need help from both industry and government to do that.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Mr. Swampy, for acknowledging the role that the energy sector has played and continues to play. If you look at the monthly trade statistics, last month, 30% of all money earned by this country came strictly from oil and gas sales. Those aren't my numbers; those are directly from Statistics Canada. The energy sector continues to be significant for our economy and the 800,000 to 900,000 Canadians who directly depend on the sector for their livelihoods.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now go to Monsieur Simard, who will have his final two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Thank you very much.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their enlightening remarks.

I will give my time to my colleague Mr. Morrice.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Thank you, Mr. Simard.

[English]

I want to follow up with President Lehr.

I really appreciate some of the reflections you shared. In a conversation earlier, you spoke about compensation, in particular. We've heard other committee witnesses talk about iron and earth, for example, and a national upskilling initiative for the fossil fuel industry and indigenous workers to the tune of \$10 billion over 10 years, in order to support a million workers. We've had the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives speak about a just transition benefit and a just transition transfer.

I'm wondering if you would be open to sharing more insights with this committee on what kind of compensation is required as we move through a truly just transition.

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** Sorry, who is the question for?

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** The question is for President Lehr.

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** Can I get a short version of the question again, please?

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Can you elaborate on what kind of compensation you feel is required to support indigenous workers in a just transition?

**Mr. Herb Lehr:** Thank you.

I look at it all *carte blanche*. I look at what's required to bring indigenous people up to parity with all other Canadians, so I'm not going to say there's any one set amount. I think you have to take a look at where people are, statistically, in terms of health, education and financial resources, and look at it as a benchmark to create equality across the road. I'm suggesting that part of this can come about through the saving of the human race, in my mind, by ensuring we have our trees.

• (1755)

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Thank you.

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

Finally, Mr. Angus, you have the last two and a half minutes today.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you.

I have two quick questions.

The Alberta Federation of Labour says the transition is happening. Workers for the Canadian Labour Congress say we need a plan. The energy workers from iron and earth are saying their members are ready and they want to move forward on the transition. When I listen to my Liberal and Conservative committee colleagues, I often think I'm at the just transition denialism study.

Chief Gale, among your members, are you seeing that an economic transition is under way and that we need to be ready for it?

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** I believe that indigenous partners and communities are the key partners in making sure we meet our net-zero goals by 2050. If we're left behind, it's not going to happen.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Absolutely.

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** We definitely want to be part of the solution. We are very innovative and resilient, and we have the expertise in our communities. I feel this is a huge opportunity for this country, and if we want to address climate change meaningfully, we have to ensure indigenous rights and benefits are finally at the forefront of any new development, and—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Wonderful. I'm running out of time. Could you send us some recommendations that we can look at, because I think that voice is really important? That would be very helpful.

**Chief Sharleen Gale:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Swampy, I just want to close on that, because I think this issue of indigenous rights is fundamental. I'm listening to you talking with the Conservatives, saying that UNDRIP and the climate targets can't be moved ahead without indigenous consent. You're on the record speaking out against UNDRIP in numerous publications because it would slow down oil and gas projects. How is it okay to say we shouldn't have indigenous consent that would slow down oil and gas projects, but now you need

indigenous consent from groups who want to expand oil and gas? Don't you think that's a strange contradiction?

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** We already have consent with the ESG guidelines. I don't believe UNDRIP is going to give us more power than we already have.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Then why did you speak out against it?

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** If we had ESG guidelines in the 1970s, we wouldn't have the environmental problems we have today. The first nations are being charged with the development of the natural resources. UNDRIP is—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** But you said this was the best industry. Why do we have environmental problems with that great industry. Shouldn't they have handled this?

**Mr. Dale Swampy:** We have environmental protection and regulation that's sufficient to protect our country, and we have Canadians running these businesses. We don't need another level of regulatory hurdles to go through in bureaucracy. It's big government all over again—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** To oversee the industry...

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, I have to jump in. We're out of time now.

I would like to say thank you to each of our witnesses for the very important insights you shared today. We weren't able to make the first meeting happen because of votes, so I really appreciate your coming back and sitting with us while we got through more votes today. That is really appreciated. The invitation is there, if you have additional thoughts, to submit those to us.

You're free to sign off now, unless you want to stay for the last couple of minutes, but don't feel that you have to. Thank you so much. Have a great evening.

For committee members, before I get into responding to Mr. Simard's and Mr. Angus's question from the beginning, I just want to say that June 1, on Wednesday, the plan is to try to conclude the current study, with Ministers Wilkinson and O'Regan appearing along with officials for the first hour. In the second hour, we have a second panel of witnesses coming in, and I'd like to carve off about 10 minutes at the end for drafting instructions. If anybody has drafting instructions, it would be great to have those sent to the clerk in advance, so that if we need to get them translated we can. That's going to hopefully be the plan for Wednesday.

To both Charlie's and Mario's points on where we are at, where we are coming from in this study, I want to go through the parameters I have tried to work within and respect, in keeping with the motion that was given to us.

The motion included that the study was going to have up to 12 sessions and that it be concluded—I think the intent was to table by June 17. It was a very tight parameter, dealing with the analysts and the clerk, to try to get to that timeline. We were hoping to wind up before the constituency week we just had so we could have a first draft by next week.

We've had to carry it over now, because there was a meeting that was cancelled with the ministers which was agreed to with all of the whips, but without any discussion with me as the chair. We've lost time to votes, to these types of things, and it's had an impact on us.

We also know that the government intends to introduce just transition legislation sooner rather than later. In discussion, the hope was to have our study concluded before that legislation is introduced, as we could perhaps try to influence it.

On Wednesday, we are going to have the eighth session—which I know doesn't get us to 12—and there is also, I would say, the final sort of context piece, which is that I've heard from the committee, including Mr. Angus, that it would be good to conclude some of the studies we have started. So we've also tried to carve off some time to get through reports. My intention was to try to conclude the witnesses today for just transition, work with what we have, but then to get the analysts working on that and finishing up some of the studies we have on the go already.

I'd also like to mention we have the low-carbon fuel study that we still need to get back to, from the last parliament. That was put forward as a possible discussion that is on the table, and we still have a proposed study from Mr. Simard for a three-session study. I don't see how we can get to that before the end of June, but it could start building our agenda for September.

The master list was shared with everybody. We had 159 witnesses. If you do the math, over eight to 12 sessions, we had too many witnesses to try to fit into that length of study. We tried to make it proportional to the seats on the committee. With that, the way the numbers will stand, as of the end of Wednesday, are that the Liberals have had 16 of their witnesses come before the committee, the Conservatives 11, the Bloc 4 and the NDP 3.

**A hon. member:** Can you say that again?

**The Chair:** It's Liberals 16, Conservatives 11, Bloc 4 and NDP 3.

I also want to point out that not everybody who was on the list accepted the invitation to attend. Not everybody was available to participate. Those who were not able to attend the sessions were invited to submit a 10-page brief. We've made every effort that we can to hear from everybody who was put forward on the list.

Those are the parameters that I was working with. Those are the efforts I made with the team to try to respect the desire of the committee to meet that June 17 deadline, which is extremely optimistic and ambitious.

● (1800)

That hopefully gives at least some idea of where things have gone since we started this particular study.

Mr. Angus, you have your hand up.

I was told that we have a hard six o'clock deadline, because this room is getting used at 6:30, and they need to reset it, so please be really tight with your comments.

We'll go to Charlie, Greg and Mario, and I don't know if there's anybody else. My mike is going to get cut here at any moment.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Okay. I'll be very short.

I think this is total bad faith, Mr. Chair, absolutely bad faith. You never said, ever, that this was going to be divided up between seat proportions. That is a major decision you made. What you've done is you have not allowed us to have our witnesses be heard, and it will certainly favour the government. It will favour the Conservatives.

As I said, am I sitting on a committee on just transition denialism? Without having the voices who are key to this, this report will be a joke. It doesn't really matter what I say about drafting instructions, because we have not been able, as New Democrats, to bring forth credible witnesses. I'm hearing the same witnesses I heard the last time the Conservatives brought them forward.

You're bringing forward farmers organizations when you're ignoring the Athabasca Chipewyan, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Indigenous Climate Action, Labor Leading on Climate Initiative and Workers Action Centre.

I just have to say that what I've seen from you and this committee is really bad faith. You never, ever, told us that you were going to try to limit our input based on an arbitrary decision based on seat allocation.

If that's how we're going to move forward, then we're going to play a lot more hardball with this committee from a New Democrat perspective. Things that you expect will be easy to get through are not going to get through based on the kind of bad faith I've witnessed here today.

**The Chair:** To that point, though, I will say that the list was shared. I have been very transparent in who has been invited and where it's gone. You have had the opportunity to—

● (1805)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** You shared a list. You didn't say who were going to be the witnesses. We never had that discussion. We trusted you.

**The Chair:** The the master list of everybody went out.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** You sent out a master list; you didn't tell us who was going to be chosen.

**The Chair:** I'll need to check with the team afterwards to see what....

Anyway, I have been trying to keep things moving along here, and that's what I'll say.

I hear you. It's unfortunate that you feel that way.

Next I have Mr. McLean and then Mr. Simard. Like I say, we need to be out of here shortly.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Chairman, you're doing a good job. Thank you. I would make somewhat similar decisions if I were in your chair.

I take Mr. Angus' point, in that it wasn't transparent and clear to us how the witnesses on the list were chosen. Nevertheless, proportionally I would make the different argument that 16 to 11 is not proportional to our representation here on the committee or in Parliament, if you will, and I would ask that you to look at that.

Let me put something on the table that I think would be a progressive move forward. You're fighting two different requirements. One is that, in this study, we have a minimum of 12 meetings. The other is that we report by June 17. You're choosing the latter, but not the former.

I suggest that we choose the latter and push the study out when we have to report back on this, as opposed to rushing towards a report that may or may not be considered by the government in the drafting of its legislation. If we do that, we can have the report more fulsomely reported later in the parliamentary session, presumably in the fall. Or, if we have to have these meetings sometime in the summer between ourselves, so be it.

I would suggest that there's a way to get that math back into the equation, but 16, 11, 4 and 3.... Like I say, it doesn't seem far off to me, but just a little off. If we can get square on that and make that decision, it would be better for me, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

I only received the split a few minutes ago. I hear what you're saying, and I can happily look at it.

I will also say that the intention was to have a subcommittee meeting before the end of the session. We can do that sooner rather than later.

If we want to make this an ongoing priority, I'm happy to do that and we can have a discussion in a subcommittee meeting about how we want to balance witnesses. Hey, if we want to have all 157 here, we can fill the fall calendar with them, but the government's legislation is going to get out ahead of us.

Where do we want to be with this? That's a discussion I'm happy to take to the subcommittee in the interest of moving the room availability forward for today.

Go ahead, Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard:** I'll try not to be as caustic as Mr. Angus. At the outset, it was a very bad idea to say that we were going to hold eight to 12 meetings. Planning a 12-meeting study and planning an 8-meeting study are two different things, if only for the preparation of our witness lists. There was no discussion at the subcommittee about prioritizing the witnesses we wanted to hear from or the topics we wanted to cover.

Personally, I find that this study is not representative of the mood of the stakeholders on this issue in Quebec, since we did not invite them to appear before the committee. The management of witnesses was haphazard, and the themes we discussed will not allow us to produce a report of any consistency. In fact, the scope of the study was far too broad.

What I would suggest for future studies is to establish clear rules on how our witness lists work and to ensure that a list of priorities is established at the subcommittee, so that we are a little more efficient and at least succeed in giving direction to the studies we do. In this case, I get the impression that it has been a waste of time.

Advancing the idea that there can be clean oil is one thing, and I don't want to criticize my Conservative colleagues, but tainting an entire study on just transition with these concerns and bringing in witnesses who say these things doesn't serve the public well, in my view. That's why I think it's important that we have discussions about this at the subcommittee.

• (1810)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Mr. Maguire, you also had your hand up.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I agree as well. With 157 witnesses listed, there's no way that we would ever get to them all given the time frame that we have here. There are only about three years left in the mandate—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Well, apparently, there are three years.

I just want to say as well that there are other sectors, and Mr. Angus alluded to one that I think is pretty pertinent in a just transition as well, and that is the agricultural industry.

I'm just wondering if the Canadian Canola Growers Association has been one of those that were contacted, because they play a major part. It is a major part of their whole research program for the types of canola products that could be used in biofuels and other areas, particularly in the area of the industry that's certainly going to be very impacted by any decision that we make here or any decisions that the government comes forward with in legislation. That's all I would say on that one.

If we need a meeting or two more to accommodate some of that, I have no problem trying to do that. If Mr. Angus feels that there are some witnesses who he wants to have as well, that's fine with me.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Charlie, briefly, if you would, because we do need to get out of here so they can get the room ready for the next committee.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I just want it to be very clear that whenever I've been on committee, if we had a lot of witnesses, we sat down and said, "What are our priorities?"

We weren't given that opportunity. I thank my Conservative colleagues for offering to say that we could expand, because I agree with Mr. Simard: I can't sign off on a report at this point. To me, if we stop it now and we don't have those other voices, it's been a complete waste of time. We'll just be saying, "Well, you guys can do it." We can't sign off.

It's about the process. We all come up with many witnesses and then we come back and say: "Well, who do we need to hear from? How do we feel this this is going to work?" If you're going to say that it's going to be decided on seat allocation in the House, then it's

a waste of our time as well, because then I can't bring forward... While I think that for the good of the committee these are witnesses who need to be heard, I'm going to have to be a lot more parochial in my decisions, and that's going to affect the quality of our work. From here on in, we're going to have to decide how we're going to operate.

**The Chair:** Yes. I've heard you.

Just as we prepare to gavel out, I understand that Minister Melillo has a big weekend ahead, so I just want to wish you all—

**An hon. member:** He's Prime Minister now...?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Thanks for that—

**The Chair:** Have a good one.

Our meeting is adjourned.

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