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Chair: Mr. John Williamson



Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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• (1645)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick South-west, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone.

I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 130 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[English]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I'd ask all members and other in-person participants to consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents.

Only use the approved, black earpiece, which is in front of you. Please keep your earpiece away from all microphones at all times. This is especially important today because of the close proximity of some of the witnesses. When you're not using the earpiece, please place it face down on the sticker on the table for this purpose.

I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), the committee is undertaking the consideration of Report 6 from the 2023 reports 6 to 10 of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development entitled "Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act—2030 Emissions Reduction Plan", referred to the committee on Tuesday, November 7, 2023.

[English]

I would like to welcome all of our witnesses.

From the Office of the Auditor General, we have Jerry V. DeMarco, commissioner of the environment and sustainable development; Kimberley Leach, principal; and Mathieu Lequain, principal.

It's nice to have you in today.

From the Department of the Environment, we have Jean-François Tremblay, deputy minister; Vincent Ngan, assistant deputy minister, climate change branch; and John Moffet, assistant deputy minister.

From the Privy Council Office, we have Alexis Conrad, associate secretary to the cabinet, economic and regional development policy.

Each organization will have an opening statement. Although we are starting late, I think we're going to proceed with that.

Mr. DeMarco, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

• (1650)

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco (Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Office of the Auditor General): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're happy to appear before your committee to discuss our November 2023 report on the 2030 emissions reduction plan, which was developed by Environment and Climate Change Canada under the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act.

I would like to acknowledge that this hearing is taking place on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

With me today is Kimberley Leach, who was responsible for the audit. Also with me today is Mathieu Lequain, who was responsible for the 2024 net-zero accelerator audit, which I understand is also of interest to the committee.

Emissions in Canada are higher today than when this country and the world first committed to fighting climate change at the United Nations Earth Summit more than 30 years ago. Plans have come and gone, and Canada has yet to meet any of its targets. Meanwhile, the need to reverse the trend on Canada's greenhouse gas emissions has grown only more pressing. This is not my first time sounding this alarm, and I will continue to do so until Canada turns the tide.

While we were not required to begin reporting on the implementation of the 2030 emissions reduction plan until the end of 2024, we decided to move more quickly, given the urgency of climate change. Overall, we found that the plan was insufficient to meet Canada's target to reduce emissions by 40% to 45% below the 2005 level by 2030. We found that measures needed to meet the 2030 target were delayed by departments or were not prioritized for implementation. We also found a lack of reliability and transparency in economic and emissions modelling, leading the government to make overly optimistic assumptions about emissions reductions.

I was also concerned to find that responsibility for reducing emissions was fragmented among multiple federal entities not directly accountable to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. This means that the minister has no authority to commit other entities to reduce emissions to meet the target.

[Translation]

The good news is that some measures in the 2030 emissions reduction plan are quite promising. If applied rigorously and extensively, carbon pricing and regulatory measures could lead to considerable reductions in emissions.

We expect to publish our next report under the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act in the fall. In this report, we'll assess the government's actions in three areas. These areas are the implementation of specific emission reduction measures, the advancement of our recommendations and public reporting on progress.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that it will soon be too late to avoid the catastrophic effects of climate change. Intense forest fires, smoke in the sky, heat waves, severe thunderstorms and floods are becoming increasingly serious and common. These events are affecting people across Canada.

Canada's most important response to the global climate emergency involves taking concrete action to reduce emissions. There are solutions, such as implementing effective financial and regulatory measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The issue lies in the fact that the available solutions are being implemented much too slowly.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. We look forward to answering the committee members' questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, again.

Mr. Tremblay, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll try to be brief, given my allotted time.

[English]

I'm pleased to be speaking with you today here on Parliament Hill on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

I would like to thank the commissioner for the report and for the quality of the report. I would also say that it's an important audit for us.

As he mentioned, every day, Canadians are seeing the growing impact and costs of climate change. I'm talking about people such as firefighters, first responders, indigenous peoples and people in western communities such as Fort McMurray in Alberta and Fort Nelson in B.C. who are asking themselves what kind of forest fire season they will get this year.

This audit is important because it reiterates the urgency to act. It's also important because it provides even more transparency on the government's efforts to reduce emissions. As the commissioner

pointed out, little time is left to achieve our goals by 2030. However, I would like to come back to some elements that I think are positive.

The report was released before the ERP of last year. If you are looking at the ERP for the first time, we have a report showing that we will exceed the old target of 30% by 2030, which was not the case—we were far from there—a few years ago. We will also exceed the 20% reduction by 2026.

Furthermore, the 2024 “National Inventory Report” indicates that Canadian emissions are continuing to drop. In 2022, emissions were at 44 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions below prepandemic levels. This is the lowest level ever in 25 years if, of course, you eliminate the two years of COVID.

Regardless of the progress, we agree that we do not have a lot of time in front of us and that more effort is needed.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Today, I want to reiterate to the committee that my department welcomes the commissioner's recommendations in the report.

We believe that we're taking steps in this area in terms of transparency, the quality of reporting, actions, the development and implementation of new regulations, the enhancement of current regulations, the increased capacity to model greenhouse gas emissions and the scope of different policies.

In a way, these are the points that I wanted to emphasize.

[English]

Along with my colleagues, I would now be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Last is Mr. Conrad.

It's over to you for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Conrad (Associate Secretary to the Cabinet, Economic and Regional Development Policy, Privy Council Office): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today.

I would also like to point out that this meeting is taking place on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

[English]

The commissioner of the environment and sustainable development has a critical role under the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act in examining and reporting on the government's implementations of emissions reduction actions. We very much appreciate the commissioner's work and role in this important topic. We welcome the commissioner's team's constructive engagement with the Privy Council Office throughout the audit.

The Privy Council Office is working to continuously improve our approach towards meeting Canada's climate objectives, and the commissioner's work will help us do so.

[Translation]

The Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act calls for a periodic cycle of planning, analysis reporting and distribution of climate-related information as part of Canada's efforts to meet its net-zero goals.

This ensures ongoing improvement in our efforts to achieve Canada's climate goals and meet the requirements of the act. This first audit establishes a useful baseline and provides important information about the government's collective work in this area.

[English]

My team at the Privy Council Office, which I lead as the assistant secretary, supports cabinet consideration of climate and environmental policies. To better support that work, PCO created a climate secretariat in the spring of 2021. The secretariat supports cabinet consideration of climate policies. It also provides integrated analysis, advice and reporting to senior leadership and to the Prime Minister and his office, and supports interdepartmental coordination of the government's actions to address climate change.

[Translation]

One of the audit recommendations concerns the Privy Council Office, or PCO, and another concerns both PCO and Environment and Climate Change Canada. I'm pleased to report that we're on track to implement both recommendations.

[English]

The first of those recommendations asked PCO to work with other federal entities to review the authorities, responsibilities and leadership accountabilities relating to climate change mitigation. Based on its review, it should develop an action plan for changes needed to ensure that climate change mitigation is prioritized and should make the action plan publicly available.

• (1700)

[Translation]

In response to this recommendation, PCO supports the idea of a review to ensure that the authorities, responsibilities and leadership accountabilities remain as effective as possible. Areas and instruments that could be explored include mandate letters, cabinet committee structures and assignments, and the alignment of ministerial and departmental powers, duties and functions.

[English]

At this stage, PCO's machinery of government secretariat is undertaking a process of assessing existing legislative authorities that touch on climate change mitigation and is also examining existing decision-making processes.

[Translation]

The other recommendation concerns both PCO and Environment and Climate Change Canada. We're asked to make substantive information from the integrated climate lens analyses publicly available, as stated in the report.

[English]

Under ECCC's leadership and with PCO's support, cabinet has recently adopted a new directive that requires departments to apply a climate, nature and economy lens to policy proposals that they bring to cabinet or propose for funding. The lens aims to provide ministers with high-quality environmental information as well as economic analysis to support the government's decision-making.

Tackling climate change is a priority for the government. PCO has provided and continues to provide an important contribution towards this work. Our team brings officials together from across government to help find solutions to complex policy questions.

[Translation]

Thank you for your attention.

I look forward to answering your questions.

The Chair: I want to thank you as well.

[English]

We'll begin the first round with Mr. Mazier. The first four questioners have six minutes each.

You have six minutes, sir. It's over to you.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming out this afternoon.

The commissioner's report listed the net-zero accelerator fund as a measure to meet the government's emission reduction targets.

Commissioner, has the government revealed to you what the internal emission reduction target is for the \$8-billion net-zero accelerator fund—yes or no?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: We anticipated that there would be some questions regarding our new net-zero accelerator initiative report, and Mr. Lequin is here to address those questions.

Mr. Dan Mazier: It was just a simple yes or no. Have you seen that?

Mr. Mathieu Lequain (Principal, Office of the Auditor General): Yes.

Mr. Dan Mazier: What is it?

Mr. Mathieu Lequain: This is cabinet confidence, so I cannot share this information. You would have to ask the department.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I can't hear him, Chair.

Mr. Mathieu Lequain: Yes, we have seen the number, and this number is a cabinet confidence. It's in the MC and TBS.

Mr. Dan Mazier: You can't tell us what the \$8 billion net-zero accelerator fund is reducing in emissions because of cabinet confidence? Is it secret?

Mr. Mathieu Lequain: I'm sorry.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Who in cabinet, what department, gave you that letter?

Mr. Mathieu Lequain: It was Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay.

Mr. Mathieu Lequain: However, we note in the report that in the ECCC modelling, the net-zero accelerator initiative is expected to produce a 19- to 20-megatonne reduction.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Tremblay, my question is simple: What is the government's emission reduction target specifically for the \$8-billion net-zero accelerator fund?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I'm sorry but I think the question has to be asked to my colleagues at ISED.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Deputy minister, your minister's mandate letter actually states:

Support the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry in the implementation of the Net Zero Accelerator initiative, with an emphasis on ensuring that investments drive industrial transition and significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

That's in his mandate letter, and you can't tell me anything about the targets, the internal targets for this fund for \$8 billion?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: As was said, there were numbers included in the ERP regarding exactly the functions and how it works for these programs. The accountability is with the Department of ISED. We're there to support them, but we're not there to speak on their behalf on their programs and the way they manage them. It would be more appropriate for the Department of ISED to answer these questions.

• (1705)

The Chair: Mr. Mazier, just hold on. I'm going to ask the clerk to just turn the volume up. I'm getting reports from people who can't hear online and in the room.

Mr. Mazier, you have three minutes remaining on the clock. Please go ahead.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Tremblay, do you know the target?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: The documents that were shared with the auditor are documents that they shared. I didn't see those documents. I'm not the one who participated in the collection of the comments.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Do you know the target?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I don't. I came here for an audit on something different, and you're raising an issue about the net-zero accelerator, which I think should be answered by my colleagues.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I'm glad you brought that up, because this is report number six that the commissioner did. In it, there's a whole host of different types of projects that are in place to reduce emissions in Canada. We're talking about one of these out of the whole list of them. There's a net-zero accelerator. It's right there. It's in this fund—\$8 billion—and you don't know the target, the emissions reduction target for \$8 billion.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I'm telling you that it is more appropriate for the Department of ISED to answer your questions about how they manage their programs, the objectives of their programs and the results they expect. They are accountable for this.

Mr. Dan Mazier: You are the top official in Environment and Climate Change Canada and responsible for emissions reductions and you don't know the target.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I'm telling you that if they didn't—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Yes or no.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: —give the information, it's not for me to reveal the information, whatever it is. It's for them to do it.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Do you think that Canadians deserve a right to know?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: No comment. I'm not even part of those discussions. I think it's more appropriate to ask our friends at ISED to answer that question.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay.

How much time, Chair?

The Chair: Ninety seconds.

Mr. Dan Mazier: That's good. I'll pass.

The Chair: All right.

Ms. Bradford, you have the floor for six minutes, please.

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being with us today.

Mr. DeMarco, did the Government of Canada provide all the requested information to CESD?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: Are we back to the net-zero act or are we still on the net-zero accelerator?

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Yes, we're in this report, the act.

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: I'll ask Ms. Leach, the principal responsible for this audit, to return to the table and assist with this.

Ms. Leach is the principal responsible for the net-zero act report.

Ms. Kimberley Leach (Principal, Office of the Auditor General): There is a section in our act that deals with the provision of information, and there were some instances where we did talk about the lack of available information.

There were a couple of instances there where we ran into some trouble. One was with regard to some information that we were looking for on an integrated climate lens. We were looking for this information because it had the economic modelling, together with the climate change greenhouse gas modelling.

We were looking to see whether these decisions were policy coherent as a result of that, but some of that information was not available to us and is not publicly available due to cabinet confidence and budget information reasons.

We did make a recommendation on that to PCO and Environment and Climate Change Canada, which they agreed to, so some of that information will be shared in the future in summary form, which has been mentioned.

• (1710)

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Thank you.

Mr. Tremblay, are there issues with Canada's emissions modelling? If so, what is being done to improve the modelling?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: There's not an issue with modelling. Modelling is something that is always in progress. When we do modelling, it's something that, as the commissioner asked of us, we work on to make sure that it's actually as good and accurate as possible. We have sent five biannual reports to the United Nations using our modelling. Five times it has been reviewed by international experts and it passed the test.

We do work with modellers, experts, to try to improve the modelling. Modelling is a complex thing. It is complex work, but it is something that we're continuously doing and continuously reviewing. For example, our modellers are having a meeting today or this week with external modellers, as was suggested by the commissioner, to precisely compare modelling expertise and compare how they arrive at their own results.

We don't pretend that we're perfect at modelling, but the modelling we're doing is internationally recognized as actually good.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Are there efforts being made to improve the speed with which the NIR is reported?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: This is something that was raised by the commissioner and by some countries: how fast they are able to actually provide information on the emissions for recent years. We are working on this. We said that we will be doing some work with Statistics Canada. The team is working on this. Our scientists are looking at it and looking at what could be done and what the cost-benefit of this would be.

Like everybody else, we would like to have the information as soon as possible, so we're looking at ways that we can accelerate the time it takes to get the information about emissions, emissions reductions or emissions issues.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Thank you.

Mr. Conrad, recommendation number 6.79 concerns the fragmentation of responsibilities regarding the reduction of emissions. How can the Canadian carbon neutrality accountability act be monitored when no minister or other party is responsible for meeting reduction targets?

Mr. Alexis Conrad: We worked with the commissioner on this recommendation. We agree that there is space to clarify accountabilities. We are going through a process to review those. It's actually an ongoing process at any given point in the work to make sure that ministerial accountabilities are clear.

Different ministers clearly have responsibility for different programs. They have legal responsibilities. They've been mandated through mandate letters by the Prime Minister. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change does have responsibility for the act and for parts of the act, but there are numerous contributions coming from different ministers, with clear accountabilities for their responsibilities given either by Parliament or directed by the Prime Minister.

We're confident that the system works, but we are also confident that there is opportunity for us to keep reviewing the process to make sure those lines of accountability are as clear as possible. That's something we're doing now and will continue to do over the months ahead. We committed to that through the management action plan.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: You mentioned that you're excited to implement some of the upcoming recommendations and prepare them for implementation. How do you ensure that implementing the recommendations leads to actually having them followed through?

Mr. Alexis Conrad: As we go through the process—for example, with ministerial mandate letters—we track very closely the responsibilities and the commitments that have been asked of ministers. As the PCO, we closely keep track of initiatives that are moving forward when timelines have been put in budgets or in policy documents.

We gather information when items come to cabinet. We make sure that they're vetted through that process.

We keep a very good, close eye on the commitments the government has made as well, and are very careful to make sure that ministerial accountabilities are kept where they're needed.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Why not proceed as the United Kingdom has, with monitoring under the responsibility of a committee reporting to Parliament? Why would such a change require a full year's reflection?

Mr. Alexis Conrad: I can't speak for the British system. It's something the commissioner flagged and it's something we agreed, through the process, to look at. I'm working with my colleagues in the machinery of government part of the Privy Council Office on that.

I wouldn't prejudge the outcome of their deliberations, but certainly, there are different models in different governments, and we often look at how the U.K. is doing things, given that the nature of its system is so closely mirrored by ours.

• (1715)

The Chair: Ms. Bradford, your time is up.

If you have a follow-up question, I'll allow it, but not if it's something new.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: It is new.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. You can hold that until the next round.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for joining us today.

Mr. DeMarco, in your well-crafted report, we often find hidden nuggets in certain paragraphs. For example, in paragraph 6.40, you refer to a recommendation for the department. You say that you have repeatedly made similar recommendations over the past 20 years. From one report to the next, you make similar recommendations, only to find that the department agrees to them but doesn't take significant steps to address them.

Can you provide some examples? I don't have much time, but I think that it would be quite useful.

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: I can give you an example regarding the modelling that we just discussed. Our office and our principal, Ms. Leach, have made recommendations as part of a number of audits over the past two decades. We proposed a series of recommendations, which the department agreed to. However, we found that not enough progress had been made and that the situation wasn't improving.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you.

Mr. Tremblay, how do you respond to that?

The issue is glaringly obvious. For the past 20 years, similar recommendations have been made. The department agrees to them but ultimately does little to address them.

Will there be any changes, or will you say that you'll act on them, but that similar recommendations will be made again next year?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Modelling is constantly under review. As I said earlier, every two years we submit a report to the United Nations. This report is verified by our peers. After the audit in particular, we set up a forum of modelling experts from outside the department and we compare data and practices with them. We have been and will keep doing this. This doesn't mean that the modelling is perfect. We acknowledge that. However, we're constantly looking at how to do it.

As I was saying, all the experts accredited by the United Nations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC, who looked at our modelling found it accurate. The modelling passes the test every time, and it's getting better.

It's false to claim that we aren't trying to make improvements. We're constantly improving the quality of our modelling. It's an ongoing process. That's why the calculations sometimes change. The reason is that we take into account new approaches and new information from the experts consulted.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you.

However, everything you just described is considered insufficient by one of your peers who gives us information. This peer is the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. In paragraph 6.34 of his report, he refers to the lack of reliability of emission projections from economic modelling. In paragraph 6.37, he states that the peer review of the modelling was insufficient.

You said that you were doing certain things, but that it wasn't considered enough. Do you think that you could do more?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We'll keep working hard so that the commissioner, at some point, will consider our efforts adequate. He said that efforts had been made, but that it wasn't enough. We'll continue to work to meet the highest standards. I hope that, sooner or later, the commissioner will agree with us.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. DeMarco, do you think that, given the rate of change, you'll ever agree with what Mr. Tremblay just told us? Or, on the contrary, do you think that it won't happen?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: I would like the department to reach a target and improve its modelling. However, I can't say whether this will happen and whether I'll agree with the department—

• (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: One moment please.

Ms. Khalid, say “point of order” if you want attention. I don't just look for random comments.

Yes, I know you're anxious to get out. The bells are ringing for 30 minutes, so I'm looking for unanimous consent to continue for another 20 minutes before we suspend to vote.

Do I have unanimous consent to continue?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. DeMarco, you're welcome to take it from the top if you like. You have the time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: Thank you.

I can't say whether I'll agree with the department until I see what happens. We'll see.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: How confident are you? Are you quite confident, given what you have seen in recent years?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: I'm not confident right now. I want to see a reduction in emissions from year to year to bring us closer to the target. We need to focus on results. We need to see results.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you.

Mr. Tremblay, I'll ask you a quick question.

Do you know the approximate budget for your department for 2021-22? Can you give us an order of magnitude?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It was around \$2.7 billion. That may vary. There were changes.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Do you know how much money Canada invested in fossil fuel subsidies in 2022, according to the International Monetary Fund, or IMF?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: No, I don't.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: It invested \$51.5 billion. Are you satisfied with this order of magnitude?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It isn't my place to judge.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: The issue is that you don't have a target.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It depends on what you call a fossil fuel subsidy. For example, does this include investment in decarbonization?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Perhaps. However, even assistance with decarbonization may be considered improper given that this industry rakes in billions of dollars in profits.

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

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you.

It must be a bit frustrating, though, to see Canada doing more to help oil companies than to reduce emissions. Even if the goal really was to help them reduce greenhouse gas emissions, only five or six of the 80 objectives in your emissions reduction plan focus on the oil and gas sector. Yet this sector is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases.

Again, isn't this a bit of a dichotomy? Aren't there two contradictory messages here?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We have regulations for methane emissions. We're also working on a regulatory framework to cap greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector. These measures target the fossil fuel sector. When we work on reducing greenhouse gases, we need to work with the entire industry, because we need to go—

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Of course, that's my point. However, you probably aren't helping it enough, or you aren't imposing enough measures on this industry.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Next up we have Mr. Desjarlais for six minutes, please.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Growing up, I often heard a phrase from many of the elders in the very small, rural, indigenous community I grew up in, which was that for young people, particularly children, this planet and this place and this earth is more theirs than it is ours. We have a responsibility to that principle, to know that those who act and those who

are stewarding this land have a real and very tangible connection to the next generation and the fact that they'll have to deal with many of these things.

I am a more recently elected member of Parliament. I'm sure our witnesses could sympathize with the many stories I hear about the fear of young people. At every school I go to speak to or visit, a young person comes up to me to ask whether enough is being done to make sure that they can have a livable planet. They fear that the smoke and wildfires that took over much of Canada last year will become the new norm; that the historic floods that we're seeing in some parts of the region, like those that destroyed our supply chains in British Columbia, could become the new norm; that the immensely dry conditions that threaten cities like Fort McMurray, Yellowknife and much of Edmonton will continue to get worse.

It's a serious question and one that I think we owe young people the most credible answer to, even if that answer is one of failure. I also do believe these audits, most particularly the audit presented today, make clear where we are and where we need to go.

I'm disappointed in a few facts. The report suggests that we've now had 10 climate mitigation plans since 1990, and Canada's current emissions are significantly higher than what they were in 1990. What we heard today, as admitted by the members of the government and by Environment Canada, is that there is a lack of centralized authority.

To the contention of the member from the Privy Council who said that they are the ones who act in the centralizing work of institutions, the audit makes clear that we're not seeing any tangible changes. It's clear to me—and I think it's clear to Environment and Climate Change Canada—that Canada is going to miss its target for reducing emissions. Again, these are the things we have to tell young people.

In addition to this, in December of 2022, the department revised the emissions reduction that is expected from the 2030 plan from achieving 36.4% below the 2005 level to 34%, missing the 2030 target by an even larger margin. This is, in my mind, the moving of goalposts. It doesn't seek to actually reduce emissions but tries to prevent what would be a better level of accountability. The audit suggests that only 45% of the measures in the plan had an implementation deadline.

My question is to the audit team. What measures did not have an implementation deadline that are of most importance to actually achieving emissions reductions, please?

• (1725)

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: Principal Leach will address that.

Ms. Kimberley Leach: In paragraph 6.26 and in the exhibit, we talk about the 80 emission reduction measures in the plan, and we point out that there was no deadline for about half of them. The ones that did have a deadline were mostly the regulations, because you have to do a regulatory impact statement when you're proposing regulations, so those deadlines and those emission reductions were fairly clear. We also noted there that 95% of those 80 measures did not have an emissions reduction target.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much.

It's deeply disappointing and a bit disturbing to me that something as serious as climate change and the crisis that faces Canadians in drier conditions.... Well, it's all over the globe, but the fact that we're now experiencing it means we're truly in the age of consequence.

As a young person, I experienced a wildfire, and I know how devastating that can be for rural people, for indigenous people and for those who succumb to its smoke. It's pretty devastating, and it leads to lifelong impacts, both to one's psychology and also to one's own feeling of safety and security, which is why I find these audits so difficult. They enable us to understand the grave severity of the consequences of not acting sooner. I think this act, which is intended to provide some kind of clarity, speaks more of an agenda of political theatre than it does of actually reducing emissions.

One part of the act, for example, does not require the minister to achieve targets, but simply explains why targets were not met. To me, the fact that we had to write in the act that the minister would have these powers speaks to the lack of genuine nature that I think the act provides a framework for.

Deputy Minister, what explanation do you have for young people in my riding and across Canada for the audit that you see here today and what is, I think, a pretty glaring litmus test for how far away we actually are from achieving this reality for Canadians, most particularly for young Canadians who have to deal with these facts and hear that the audit has failed them?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: First, as a grandfather, I have the same questions. I'm asking the same questions on how I would approach those issues.

Let's come back to a few things. I didn't say that the targets have changed. Our commitment in the targets for 2030 is still the same.

Second, on the—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Your department said that. Sorry, if I can respond, the department revised the emissions reductions.

• (1730)

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: No. The 34% and the 36% you have there is information that is based on modelling and on the existing measures that are in place. With regard to measures that are being implemented, we assess that we will be at 36.2%, which means that we still need to do more to get 40% to 45%, but we never said that we don't want 40% or 45%, so that's something to change.

The other thing I would tell you is that we have, since 1990, with all the efforts that were made by different governments, decreased the carbon intensity of the economy, but it really took too much

time to arrive at the tipping point where the emissions were reducing themselves because the economy, as you know, goes up and the population goes up, and even if you go with less intensity, you end up with more emissions.

We have turned that curve for the first time. What you had, in reality, in 2022 was a reduction. You're seeing a reduction in the emissions.

That's what we have been saying, and that's what we're seeing for the future.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

I'm sure we'll come back to this.

I do want to get two others in before we suspend.

Mr. Mazier, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Tremblay, the government gave away \$700 million to a company by the name of PowerCo through the net-zero accelerator fund. PowerCo is owned by Volkswagen Group, a German company that made over \$476 billion in revenue last year.

How many emissions are supposed to be reduced directly by the \$700-million handout?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I don't have that information. That's a question to ask the people who manage the programs, as I told you before.

Mr. Dan Mazier: You are the deputy minister of environment—

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I am the deputy minister of environment, but I'm not responsible for all programs that are managed under the federal government.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Who is responsible, then?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: The deputy minister of ISED is the one who should answer your questions about the agreements they have with this business and why they—

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Oh, that's convenient.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It's not convenient. It's actually—

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Mazier, you have four minutes.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I will ask another one, and I'm sure you will have the same excuse.

The government gave away \$61 million to Pratt & Whitney through their net-zero accelerator fund. Pratt & Whitney is owned by RTX, an American company worth over \$190 billion.

How many emissions are supposed to be reduced directly by this \$61-million handout?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: The answer is the same.

Mr. Dan Mazier: You have no idea. What's most frustrating is you're so flippant about it. You don't even care.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Oh, I do care.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Prove it.

What is the goal? How many emissions? Were there even any targets?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I also care about accountability. I will not accept other—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Do you? You would think the big cheese at Environment and Climate Change should absolutely know how many emissions are being reduced, especially by an \$8-billion program. Do you think you should be a little bit concerned about that?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It is not for me to comment on this, and you know that. You have to talk with the departments that are managing the programs. They are the ones that are responsible and accountable for this program, and that's the way it always has been.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay.

You gave the Parliamentary Budget Officer a copy of the government's impact report on the carbon tax. However, in your letter on behalf of Minister Guilbeault, you stated, "I request you to ensure that this information is used for your office's internal purposes only and is not published or further distributed."

Why is Minister Guilbeault keeping this carbon tax report secret from Canadians?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We didn't give him a carbon tax report. What we gave to the PBO was basic data. It's Excel spreadsheets of information, and some of this information has not been published, and that's why. Sometimes it could be protected by certain acts like the Statistics Act.

As we always do with the PBO, we wanted to make sure he had all the information so he could develop and provide his own analysis. We gave him the information, and we put in this request that he not distribute the information but use it for his analysis and make sure it's useful for him without necessarily releasing it.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Could you table that report with the committee?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It's not a report. It's a decision the government will have to make. We can do the due diligence and a decision can be made.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Could you table that?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I'm sorry.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Could you table that?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I'm not in a position to table it at this stage.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Who would be?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It's a decision the government will have to make.

Mr. Dan Mazier: What government? Is it the Privy Council Office? It is Mr. Conrad? Would he be in charge of that?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: The government must make this decision. This would probably involve discussions with central agencies. As public servants, we must ensure that the necessary verifications have been carried out and that due diligence has been exercised with regard to the information intended for release. This involves checking whether the information is confidential. The decision on whether to publish the raw data—this isn't a report—ultimately rests with the government.

• (1735)

[English]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Commissioner, are you concerned about the answers the deputy minister gave about this net-zero accelerator?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: Yes, I am, in terms of the principle of transparency.

If Canada were a country that showed it could set targets and meet targets, and we didn't necessarily need to see what was going wrong because nothing was going wrong, I would still agree they should be transparent. However, it's even more important that they be transparent with a track record of failure after failure. Be transparent with peers in terms of modelling, and be transparent with Canadians in terms of targets. All of this is important.

I don't have any specific comment about the document or the Excel sheet that you're speaking about, but increased transparency is something our office is concerned about. It's a theme in several of our reports, including this one.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Weiler, you have five minutes.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today. There are some familiar faces from the time I had the honour of sitting on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Commissioner DeMarco, this report was tabled over a year ago now. I think we had you at the ENVI committee to talk about it. In the time since then—with the responses of the government to your report, and with the recent policy and program responses the government has brought in with respect to climate change—would any of the major conclusions of your report change today, if you were doing the report today?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: Time flies, but it hasn't been a year yet. It was in November, I guess, when we tabled this report.

I would say there's been no major change in the key, existing measures when Environment Canada models them. Do they add up to 40% to 45% yet, or do they not? They still do not. It's oscillated between 34% and 36%. Their latest addition in the progress report.... It's back up to 36%. Whether it's 34% or 36%, it's still not 40% to 45%, so there's still a gap to be filled through additional measures.

Their target is a little odd. It's not a number target but rather a range of 40% to 45%. I would argue that they may have to focus on the upper part of that range because of their historical failure to meet targets. They may need to factor in a bit of a buffer and aim for something higher, not the bare minimum of 40%.

At this rate, they're on track for what they believe to be 36%. We believe there are overly optimistic assumptions here and that it's actually something lower than 36%.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Commissioner, if you had to put your finger on one area that should be the priority for the government to act on to reduce emissions, what would that be?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: I can answer that from two perspectives.

The first is at a conceptual level. Our 2021 "Lessons Learned" report says stronger leadership and more effective plans are needed.

Then, at a sectoral level, I can answer it from a second perspective. Canada really needs to get a handle on oil and gas and transportation. Together these account for more than 50% of total emissions.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Thank you for that. I know there are a number of regulations with respect to the transportation sector, with a zero-emissions vehicles mandate or availability standard being chief among them.

I think you're pointing to a measure that has long been worked on but hasn't been completed yet: the cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector.

I want to put this question to officials from Environment and Climate Change Canada. Could you provide this committee with an update on where the cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector is at in the process of regulatory development?

Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): I can respond.

The Prime Minister committed to develop the cap. We put out a discussion paper on different approaches. We then put out a regulatory framework. The minister committed to publish a draft of the regulations. As you know, these regulations always have to be published twice, in draft form and then in final form. The minister committed to publish the draft regulations this fall for comment.

We're very close to the final design of the draft regulations based on about a year of extensive engagement with various experts in the sector and our own internal analysis.

● (1740)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Thank you, Mr. Moffet.

Could you maybe provide some details to this committee on why this process has taken as long as it has, understanding that this may be longer than a lot of folks, including me, would have liked? I'd be curious to hear why the consultations and this process took this length of time.

Mr. John Moffet: I know that we've seen commentary from the commissioner and others about the length of time to develop regulations. While I think the government would...and as my colleague the deputy minister has acknowledged, there is urgency to address climate change. I take serious issue with any allegation or assertion that the speed at which we've developed these regulations has been slower than usual or slower than could be expected. In fact, for a regulation of this magnitude, I think we're moving considerably faster than would have been the case for the normal pace at which we develop regulations of this kind.

As I said, we've moved from a general commitment to a discussion paper to a regulatory framework to draft regulations in the space of a couple of years. That is faster than has been our track record for many different kinds of regulations. We regulate air, water, soil and greenhouse gas.

The last thing I'll say about this is that while one metric of success in terms of a regulation is how fast we get it out, I think equally important is ensuring that we have a well-informed, well-designed regulation that can stand the test of time. That's our goal.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now suspend the meeting for votes. I'll bring it back into order right after those votes.

This meeting is suspended.

● (1740)

(Pause)

● (1800)

The Chair: I call this meeting back into session.

Just to update everyone, I'll let you know that we'll have about another 15 minutes of questions, at which point I will thank and excuse the witnesses. Then there is just some very brief business to conduct, which will be neither controversial nor lengthy.

[Translation]

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to turn to you, Mr. Conrad. I wouldn't want you to come here and not have the opportunity to answer questions and share your thoughts.

In exhibit 6.8 of the report, we can see the Privy Council Office's climate responsibilities. I'll read them out for everyone.

You're responsible for "supporting climate policy development and consideration at cabinet and supporting the Prime Minister on climate policy."

I provided the figures earlier for the government's contribution to the Department of the Environment's budget. The total is about \$2 billion. I also pointed out that Canada has invested in, or rather subsidized, the oil industry to the tune of \$51.5 billion.

In supporting climate policy development, don't you find that the Privy Council Office is doing something with one hand and something else with the other? Is this simply greenwashing?

• (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Alexis Conrad: Mr. Chair, if I can maybe just back it up a little bit to explain my role in the system, I think that will clarify how the Privy Council Office fits in.

I have a responsibility to help manage collective decision-making through the cabinet process. We provide advice to the Prime Minister, but we do not take over individual ministers' line responsibilities and accountabilities. We do not make spending decisions ourselves on specific items. We play a role to bring parties together. We ensure that the right information comes to ministers for consideration and that things are properly vetted and properly analyzed. However, we leave it to the individual line ministers to manage individual progress.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you. Sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Conrad, but my time is limited.

We learn in CEGEP, and even in high school, that goals must be based on the SMART approach. This means that a goal must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

Is the government generally taking a SMART approach to its climate change policy?

[*English*]

Mr. Alexis Conrad: Mr. Chair, I assure you that all proposals coming through the cabinet process meet strict criteria in terms of considerations. We don't use that specific terminology, but we have a very detailed set of considerations.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Yet the commissioner's report shows that all these criteria for good public policy aren't being met.

What's your role in this? Will you do something to ensure that climate policies simply move in one direction, either to openly subsidize oil energy or to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stop lagging behind the G7 countries?

What position will the Privy Council Office take?

[*English*]

Mr. Alexis Conrad: I have a great deal of confidence in the internal process to ensure that all factors that go into collective decision-making are there. The report of the commissioner, which I respect—and we have agreed with the recommendations—is about our trying to improve our processes and bring greater clarity on accountabilities, and we have moved forward with an integrated climate lens, which is something that's part of a cabinet directive that has been publicly released. We're committed to being transparent

on the results of that work. I have a great deal of confidence that we are on the right track, and we will use the report and the recommendations of the commissioner to help improve our processes.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now turn to the NDP representative.

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

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

I'm happy to be here covering for my colleague. My time is short, so I want to make sure that I get some questions in here.

First and foremost, as someone who is not a regular member, there are some benefits to coming to committee and seeing things more from a bird's-eye view. I'm able to figure out what the most important questions are that I'm hearing from Canadians.

One thing that's been brought to my attention is, despite the fact that we are clearly in a climate emergency and are feeling the impacts.... I'm from Vancouver Island. My riding is Nanaimo—Ladysmith. We've seen first-hand the impacts of the wildfires, the flooding and the heat dome that hit us. People in my riding are paying attention to the fact that we're in a climate crisis.

We need to see federal action from all departments. That's one thing I'm being asked about. We have the Minister of Environment, but why are we not getting all departments to have the priority of addressing the climate crisis at front of mind?

This isn't just the environment minister's job. It is the housing minister's, the fisheries minister's, the health minister's and everybody's job to make sure that we're all moving in the right direction.

The commissioner is perhaps the best person to answer my question.

What would his suggestion be to see a government that's taking this as seriously as it needs to be taken, and to see a comprehensive response being taken, rather than the patchwork approach that's currently being taken?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: In answering that question, I'll take us back to my first appearance before this committee a couple of years ago.

In the lessons learned on climate change report from our office in 2021, lesson one is, "Stronger leadership and coordination are needed to drive progress toward climate commitments".

We've had a fragmented approach for 30 years now in Canada, without good results. Our emissions are considerably higher now than when we started this endeavour. Continuing to do the same thing but expecting different results is not a good approach.

Somewhat inadvertently, some of the responses you've heard from the departments today have reinforced our point that continued siloed approaches do not work. At least, that's been the experience on climate, and perhaps on biodiversity as well, in Canada. Stronger leadership and coordination...that's the reason we made it lesson number one in that report from 2021.

We've yet to see that tangibly occurring in Canada with respect to climate change. There's still a fragmented approach. It's a "not my department", siloed approach.

• (1810)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: My final question will be for the deputy minister of environment, Mr. Tremblay.

Perhaps you can follow up in writing if we don't have time for this today. There's the assertion that certain first nations representatives are saying that the 2030 plan did not take into account the standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, when we know indigenous people have been stewards of the land since time immemorial.

Do you have any comment on that?

Mr. Vincent Ngan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Climate Change Branch, Department of the Environment): The development of the emissions reduction plan stems from the requirements of the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, which requires that the Government of Canada engage with provinces and territories, but also with indigenous partners. As part of the emissions reduction plan, there is an annex specifically dedicated to all three distinction-based groups providing input.

That being said, we recognize that we have to do better. On that front, the emissions reduction plan takes into account and reflects submissions from indigenous partners.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next is Mr. Stewart for five minutes.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I have a question for Mr. Conrad. The government is claiming that the emissions reduction target of its \$8-billion net-zero accelerator initiative fund is protected under cabinet confidence.

Seeing as your role is with the Privy Council Office, can you explain why?

Mr. Alexis Conrad: Mr. Chair, if the question is why we are protecting cabinet confidence, it's a legal requirement—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Excuse me. That's not the question. I'm asking why we protect under cabinet confidence information that should be public. On this file in particular, it's about the net-zero accelerator initiative fund.

Mr. Alexis Conrad: I can't speak to the specific program. I can say in general that we do not have specific rules for the release of different programs. We apply—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Can anybody from the Privy Council speak to this issue?

Mr. Alexis Conrad: I can speak to the cabinet confidence issue—

Mr. Jake Stewart: That's not what I'm asking. I'm sorry. No.

Mr. Alexis Conrad: I can't speak to the specifics of the program. That's an ISED program.

Mr. Jake Stewart: No. That's enough. It's my floor now, not yours.

Why would cabinet choose to conceal under a shroud of secrecy its own targets, which should be public information, from the taxpayer?

I'm going to go over here and ask a question of Jean-François Tremblay, deputy minister of the Department of the Environment. You said earlier that you can't release the information. Is it that you can't release it, or you won't release it? Those are two different things.

Just answer if you can't or won't.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I just need specificity. If you're referring to information that they said was under cabinet confidentiality, I can't release it.

Mr. Jake Stewart: So it's "can't", then.

I have another piece of paper here from the Parliamentary Budget Officer where, on behalf of the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, you put a gag order on Mr. Yves Giroux, the PBO. You said, "I request you to ensure that this information is used for your office's internal purposes only and is not published or further distributed". That is your signature on this. You're gagging the Parliamentary Budget Officer on behalf of your minister.

If the answer is "can't" rather than "won't", at this point, who instructed you that you couldn't release it?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Okay. There are just a few things. We can—

Mr. Jake Stewart: No, no—one question.

• (1815)

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: You have the right to ask the questions that you want, but you're not going to gag me. I should be able to answer your questions—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Oh, I'm not trying to gag you. I'm asking questions.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Yes, and I want to—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Hold on. Hold on.

I want to point something out, Mr. Chair. It's important.

A lot of questions earlier, you said that you just couldn't answer it because that wasn't your purview. This is. I expect an answer.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Yes. I'm answering.

First of all, we didn't gag him, because we gave him all the information he needs to develop his own analysis. There was nothing there that was actually not provided to Yves Giroux. That's the first thing to say.

Now—

Mr. Jake Stewart: You said that the PBO couldn't release it.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: What we told them was that we requested them not to—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Excuse me. I just read what you told him. You told him, "I request you to ensure that this information is used for your office's internal purposes only and is not published or further distributed". You told him he couldn't put it out—precisely.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] because the information had not been vetted in terms of protections from a legal perspective—it could be protected under a certain act—and also because it was never released. We asked him to not release it. We gave him confidential information and said use it for your analysis.

As I said to your colleagues, the issue of releasing or not this information or data is a decision for governments to make.

Mr. Jake Stewart: That's great. To go back to my initial point, who instructed you to carry out this letter to the PBO—

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: No one instructed me—

Mr. Jake Stewart: —and who instructed you that you could not release the information?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Advice of the department; and to be fair with you, this is something we've been doing for years.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Hold on. You were advised by the department, but over here you're saying it was cabinet confidence. Which is it?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: No. Those are two different—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Yeah, exactly—two different answers to the same question. I agree with you.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: No. It's not the same question.

Mr. Jake Stewart: No, I agree with you; it's two different answers to the same question.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: The other question—

Mr. Jake Stewart: I have another question. Was it the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment or the Minister of Industry who put the gag in the cabinet? Who instructed you that you couldn't release public information?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: This information has nothing to do with the net-zero accelerator. This is information coming from Environment Canada. This is not cabinet. We never pretended it was cabinet confidential. What we said was that the information, as you read in the letter, was unpublished. That's what we said. It may have—

Mr. Jake Stewart: That's right. If it's not cabinet confidence, you can release it, then.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: As I said before to your colleagues, there is due diligence to be made in terms of whether it is information that should be protected under certain legislation—

Mr. Jake Stewart: You just said yourself that you could release it if it wasn't cabinet confidence. Which is it?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: In the—

Mr. Jake Stewart: You guys are going to have to start coming in here and learn to be accountable. None of you want to be accountable.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We are accountable.

Mr. Jake Stewart: People are watching it, too.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: This is the accountability under the Federal Accountability Act—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Yes, well, answer the question.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: There's more than one legislation that actually manages confidentiality. So yes, we have to do the due diligence, and ultimately it's a decision that governments can make—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Answer the question.

The Chair: That is the time, I'm afraid.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I answered the question.

Mr. Jake Stewart: You're an apologist for the government. You didn't answer anything.

The Chair: That is the time, Mr. Stewart.

Ms. Khalid has graciously ceded her time to Mr. Morrice.

Mr. Morrice, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you, MP Khalid.

I want to start by saying thanks to the commissioner and to your team for the work you've been doing.

I'll start with recognizing that, in exhibit 6.3 of the report being discussed this afternoon, you're helping Canadians to see that emissions have gone up in Canada since 1990 and that we're the only G7 country for which that is the case.

Emissions in Canada, as of the most recent inventory report, have gone up 100 megatonnes since 1990. It was around 608 megatonnes in 1990 when we all decided that we were going to start to care about the climate crisis, and it's about 708 megatonnes as of the most recent inventory report.

In your report, you've concluded that the measures the government has proposed to reduce emissions by 2030 are insufficient to meet their target of between 40% to 45%. I'll note that the target doesn't follow climate science and that we need to get to at least a 60% reduction by 2030, but we have started to go down in the last year. There's been a 7% reduction in the last year at least.

I'd like to ask questions about the measures we need to see this government taking it further and faster. On one hand, we had oil and gas CEOs at the environment committee last week, and they made it very clear to parliamentarians that they have no interest in an oil and gas cap. They have no interest in a windfall profit tax on their record-breaking excess profits. In fact, they have no interest in any additional regulations whatsoever. That's oil and gas on one hand, a significant emitter in this country.

On the other hand, we have this draft framework for the oil and gas cap that has come out since this report, and there are significant exemptions contained in it, including 25 megatonnes lost to compliance flexibilities and carbon offsets, essentially.

Commissioner, to you or Principal Leach, I'm wondering if you could share how important you think it is for this government to strengthen what was in the regulations, or if you can speak broadly about how important you see the oil and gas cap, this cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector, as it relates to making progress towards the 2030 target?

• (1820)

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: You're absolutely right that Canada is the worst performer in the G7 since both 1990 and since 2005, the two baseline years.

What is needed is a collection of effective measures that will meet or exceed the next target. We're not in the business of setting a target. You mentioned 60% or something else, but we're in the business of assessing performance towards the committed target, which is 40% to 45%.

They need a package of measures—and it's their choice as to what the measures will be—that are effective and that will meet the target. How much they will get from each measure is up to the government to decide, but it has to be something that is at least 40%. As I said earlier, because they've tended to miss their targets over the past 30 years, they may need to aim higher and then hope to get to the minimum of 40%.

Mr. Mike Morrice: That's my concern, that the aim with the oil and gas cap was to get 79 megatonnes of reductions, and with the draft framework that we now have, we're looking at maybe 34 megatonnes, which is about half. You're saying to aim higher, and the draft regulations are telling Canadians that they're about half as much as they had originally intended with the framework.

Do you have any advice for government on the oil and gas cap framework or any comment you'd like to make about that measure in terms of meeting our climate change goals?

Mr. Jerry V. DeMarco: Yes, if any of their measures are delayed or watered down in the consultation process, it means that it is all the more important to have other measures to fill in that gap. If you diminish the scope of a measure, for example, as happened with the clean fuel regulations in terms of the evolution of that regulation, then you need to catch up somewhere else.

We aren't in the business of prescribing what the full menu of measures will be, but the measures have to be, in aggregate, effective enough to meet the target.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Thank you, Commissioner.

I have one last question to ask Mr. Tremblay.

I believe that my colleagues on the government side are well intentioned in terms of working towards this target, so I appreciate what we've heard from the commissioner in terms of advice for them to work towards doing so. I know one of the critiques that the commissioner has shared is a lack of coordination.

Mr. Tremblay, when I heard a colleague asking about that, I saw you shaking your head earlier. In this report, I don't see a response from Environment and Climate Change Canada. I know I'm low on time, so could you table to this committee the evidence that I assume you would purport to have that shows the increased coordination that the commissioner has said is really important for us to meet our goals?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: The reason I was raising it is that there is actually a lot of coordination. Is it perfect? No. This is a complex issue that everybody is responsible—

Mr. Mike Morrice: I'm sorry. I apologize for interrupting. I expect to be cut off very soon.

I understand your position. Can you table some evidence to the committee that demonstrates that what you're saying is the case?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We can respond by writing with some of the coordination that exists, yes.

Mr. Mike Morrice: I would appreciate that. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thanks very much to all of you.

Thank you, Mr. DeMarco, Monsieur Tremblay and Mr. Conrad, for your testimony and participation in relation to the study of "Report 6—Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act—2030 Emissions Reduction Plan". I will excuse you. We're going to continue with some business here. Any information you have can be submitted to the clerk.

Committee members, before we adjourn, a budget was distributed yesterday by the clerk in regard to our study on "Report 6—Sustainable Development Technology Canada". I'm just looking for agreement to adopt the budget in the amount of \$2,000.

I'm seeing no dissent. That is passed.

We'll see you back here Thursday for that study. This meeting is adjourned.

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