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Chair: Mr. George Chalal



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• (1555)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 83 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, October 17, 2023, and the adopted motion of Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the committee is resuming consideration of Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Since today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, you have the choice of interpretation at the bottom your screen of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

Although the room is equipped with a powerful audio system, feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause serious injuries. The most common cause of sound feedback is when an earpiece is worn too close to a microphone. We therefore ask all participants to exercise a high degree of caution when handling earpieces, especially when your microphone or your neighbour's microphone is turned on. In order to prevent incidents and safeguard the hearing health of the interpreters, I invite participants to ensure that they speak into the microphone into which their headset is plugged and to avoid manipulating the earbuds by placing them on the table away from the microphone when they are not in use.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair. Additionally, screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

In accordance with our routine motion, I am informing the committee that all remote participants have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

With us today for the first hour, we have Mr. Scott Tessier, CEO of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. We also have, from the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, Barbara Pike, chair of the board; and Christine Bonnell-Eisnor, chief executive officer. All witnesses are appearing by video conference.

We'll begin with opening statements, but prior to doing so, I have a point of order by Mr. Falk.

Mr. Falk, go ahead on the point of order, please.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's just a very brief point of order.

I was wondering. We're well into the study of Bill C-49, and we have yet to receive a witness list of witnesses who will be providing testimony. Can you tell us if it's available? Can we have it now or...?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Falk.

We have been preparing the meeting schedule for the upcoming few weeks, and as you know, this committee did approve a travel request last week, which was sent to our Liaison Committee and then to the House for further approval.

Regarding the scheduling of witnesses, we will make sure that it is all coordinated, but upon discussion with the clerk, we will provide you with that information, whether it's today or tomorrow, as soon as we can get it out to you.

• (1600)

Mr. Ted Falk: Okay. Thank you for that, Mr. Chair. I wasn't asking for a schedule at this time. I just want a list of the witnesses who will be coming and presenting here at committee.

The Chair: We will work with the clerk to get that out to all members.

Mr. Ted Falk: I have one more question. Can you change the screens so that we have our witnesses on at least one of them?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Kind of like this screen here.

Mr. Ted Falk: Typically, one of the screens has witnesses.

The Chair: Mr. Falk, thank you for that.

Once the speakers begin speaking, that should occur. Because you have spoken, you're highlighted, but we will make sure that—

Mr. Ted Falk: One of the screens has all the witnesses.

The Chair: We'll have our technology folks make that happen.

Mr. Ted Falk: That's wonderful. There we go.

Will that list be coming today then?

The Chair: I'll confer with the clerk. It will be today or possibly tomorrow.

We'll now begin with opening statements.

Mr. Tessier, the floor is yours for five minutes. Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Scott Tessier (Chief Executive Officer, Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board): Thank you, and good afternoon.

As per the chair, my name is Scott Tessier. I am the chief executive officer of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, also known as the C-NLOPB. I have served in this role since 2013.

Thank you for inviting me and for accommodating my virtual participation. I would have preferred to have been with you in person, but the local weather has complicated travel plans. On that note, I wish my colleagues and all the people of Nova Scotia and others affected by this weekend's storm a safe recovery.

Newfoundland and Labrador is located in the traditional territories of diverse indigenous groups, and I acknowledge with respect the histories and cultures of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu and Inuit.

Ten days from now will be the anniversary of the *Ocean Ranger* disaster. Forty-two years ago, the *Ocean Ranger* capsized during a severe winter storm, resulting in 84 lives lost. This terrible tragedy and two helicopter crashes in later years are deeply embedded in the culture of the C-NLOPB. The safety of offshore workers is paramount in all that we do. Those lost, their families and their loved ones are forever in our hearts and in our thoughts.

I was able to be in Ottawa when Bill C-49 was introduced last year. I am pleased to share with you our preparations for the regulation of offshore renewable energy projects. Our staff and our board are very excited about the proposed expansion of our mandate.

We are working closely with our international counterparts in several venues, including the International Regulators' Forum, the International Offshore Petroleum Environmental Regulators, the International Upstream Forum, the North Sea Offshore Authorities Forum and the Global Offshore Wind Regulators Forum.

Offshore regulators in Australia, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States and many other countries are undergoing the same expansion of their mandates as is proposed for ours under Bill C-49, from petroleum to energy. We are fortunate to have strong working relationships with our international counterparts, so we are able to share lessons learned and best practices in renewable energy with one another as we have done for many years in the regulation of oil and gas.

We are also working closely with the CNSOPB and other Canadian regulators, and learning from the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial government's recent experience with onshore wind project selection. We are engaging with other Canadian entities such as Canada's Ocean Supercluster, Energy NL, Marine Renewables Canada and fishery stakeholders.

We are providing policy and regulatory advice to the federal government and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on land tenure and other considerations. We have been consulted throughout the development of the Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, and we continue to be engaged in the details of the regulatory framework as it is developed.

We are supporting the work of the committee and leading the regional assessment of offshore wind development for Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are available to them as a technical resource whenever and wherever requested. We are building renewable energy into our internal work planning and our training plans, and we are prepared to rebrand as the "Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Energy Regulator".

I was fortunate to participate in a fact-finding mission to Germany focused on offshore wind energy last summer. The challenges of energy security and the energy transition and the opportunities of renewable energy were on clear display, along with the importance of openness, collaboration and effective marine spatial planning.

For close to 40 years, the C-NLOPB has provided world class regulatory oversight of the oil and gas industry and the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador offshore area, with a mandate that includes safety, environmental protection, resource management and industrial benefits. We stand ready for offshore renewable energy projects. Our experience and technical excellence and our collaborative and transparent approach are transferrable to the offshore renewable energy sector.

We support Bill C-49, which is instrumental to an orderly energy transition through joint management and to the futures of Newfoundland and Labrador and the rest of Canada.

Thank you again. I look forward to your questions.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tessier, for your opening statement.

We'll now go to Christine Bonnell-Eisnor for a five-minute opening statement.

The floor is yours. Please, go ahead.

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor (Chief Executive Officer, Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board): Thank you.

Hello. My name is Christine Bonnell-Eisnor, and I am the chief executive officer of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

I am located in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Thank you for this invitation to come and speak to you today about Bill C-49, which outlines the accord act amendments required for the expansion of our mandate—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Excuse me, I have a point of order.

Unfortunately, the interpreters are unable to continue. Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor's audio quality is not good enough.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor, can you hold for a moment while we check with our interpreters?

We will suspend for a few moments.

• (1605) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1605)

The Chair: Welcome back. We apologize for the delay.

Please go ahead, Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor, with your five-minute opening statement.

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Hello. My name is Christine Bonnell-Eisnor. I am the chief executive officer of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

I am located in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Thank you for the invitation to come and speak to you today about Bill C-49, which outlines the accord act amendments required for the expansion of our mandate to include the regulation of offshore renewable energy. We support these amendments and are actively preparing for the completion of the bill and becoming the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore energy regulator.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is the independent joint agency created by the Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia. Federally, we work with Natural Resources Canada and, provincially, with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables.

We have more than 30 years of experience regulating offshore oil and gas exploration and development activities in the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area. We are the lead regulator and oversee all activities through the life cycle of an offshore oil or gas project, from exploration through development and, finally, to abandonment. We do this by recognizing that safety and environmental protection are

paramount, and we make sure the operators who work in our offshore area do too.

When it comes to any offshore oil and gas activity that an operator proposes to conduct in the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area, we go to great lengths to ensure that regulatory requirements are met before granting an authorization that would allow activities to commence. We implement effective monitoring programs to confirm that operators comply with these requirements during the execution of a program. We ensure compliance with the legislated requirements so that exploration and development of our offshore resources are completed in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.

We will do the same for offshore wind and other offshore renewable energy activities. Leveraging the similarities and managing the differences between oil and gas and offshore wind is critical to the success of delivering on an expanded mandate to regulate the broader energy industry in our offshore area. There are similarities in the geotechnical studies and the assessment of metocean conditions, the approach to risk management, environmental considerations and the need to coexist with indigenous communities, fisheries and other industries and ocean users.

The majority of what we do is directly transferable to offshore wind. We recognize that each section of the ocean is unique and each project is unique. The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board has the technical and regulatory experience and expertise necessary to regulate offshore renewable energy. We are committed to continuous improvement and invest in building and maintaining the technical competencies and expertise of our staff through training programs offered locally and globally.

We work closely and are in regular contact with the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, the Canada Energy Regulator, other government departments and international regulators, and continue to learn from regulatory peers, including those who are already regulating offshore wind.

As we have for the past 30 years, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board will continue to work with indigenous communities, fishers and other stakeholders to provide information about our regulatory role and to understand their unique and specific insights, which should be taken into consideration prior to making decisions. This remains a commitment as we transition to becoming the lead and life-cycle regulator of the offshore energy industry in the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is committed, and we will be ready to be the lead regulatory agency and deliver on this new and expanded mandate. We are trusted and recognized for the high standards to which we hold the oil and gas industry accountable and will continue to deliver regulatory excellence as our mandate is expanded to include offshore renewable energy.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We will now proceed to the first round of questions. I will be using two cards: Yellow means 30 seconds are left, and red means time's up.

We will start with Mr. Small from the Conservative Party of Canada for six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Small. The floor is yours.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for taking part in this very important study of this legislation, Bill C-49, which amends our Atlantic accord.

Mr. Chair, I'll speak with Mr. Tessier. I have a couple of questions.

Mr. Tessier, this is a very exciting time for our province and for your board. I know that with you and the C-NLOPB we're in very good hands as you work to maintain Canada's excellent safety and environmental record in the offshore energy industry.

I understand that you attend the International Regulators' Forum. How often does that take place, Mr. Tessier?

• (1615)

Mr. Scott Tessier: I thank the member for the question through you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the kind words, as would our staff and our board

The International Regulators' Forum is a collective of the offshore regulators of 11 countries. At a minimum, we meet annually. We typically have a mid-year meeting on the margins of the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston, and we meet virtually as required to conduct the business of various working groups under that forum.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Tessier, how important are stability and certainty of regulations worldwide? What has been your experience in that respect?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I think that both regulators and industry participants would universally and unanimously agree that stability and certainty are of paramount importance.

Mr. Clifford Small: In a case such as where the licences were cancelled off Sable Island in November after being awarded in October for exploration, what kind of message do you think that might send to those who want to invest in exploration in Canada's offshore?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I'm going to assume that one was for me as well.

That one is outside my purview. That's in the remit of the Nova Scotia regulator, the province and the federal government.

Mr. Clifford Small: We'll get back to that one after, then.

You were the head of the board in 2013 and obviously in 2014, 2015 and 2016 as well. Back in around 2015 and 2016, what kind of money was invested in placing bonds on parcels that were offered up in Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore? What would be the typical number of parcels that would be offered up?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I think members would be aware that there were some significant bids in the 2015-16 period, including, I believe, record bids in 2016. I stand to be corrected on that.

The investment in our licensing rounds varies. It ebbs and flows with global industry conditions, money available for exploration and the activities of local operators and potential new entrants. It can vary widely from year to year.

Mr. Clifford Small: In 2023, we had 37 parcels offered up. Would you consider that to be average or above average in terms of parcels offered up?

Mr. Scott Tessier: There were 47 parcels on offer in 2023. There were zero bids received. That was the most we've offered in terms of acreage.

Mr. Clifford Small: It was the most offered and there were no bids. Is that correct?

Mr. Scott Tessier: That is correct.

Mr. Clifford Small: How much would a typical exploration company spend on purchasing data and on their personnel and whatnot in the process of placing a bid?

Do you have a ballpark, a range, of what those exploration companies would invest under one of those scenarios?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I don't know if I could give a typical number. It would be in the millions of dollars, but it would vary widely on the parcel offered, the experience of the company, whether or not they've worked here before and exactly what their program is for data acquisition. It could be a wide range.

Mr. Clifford Small: Would you say that stability of regulation would be a factor when a company is investing their personnel, their time, their energy and their precious resources? Do you think stability of regulations would be a factor for them in putting the time and energy into creating a bid?

Mr. Scott Tessier: It would certainly be one of several factors, yes.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you.

Do you know how many companies purchased data to put in a bid in the first half, say, of 2023?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I'm not sure I follow the question. There were no bids received, so I'm not sure what sort of data acquisition went down behind the scenes. We wouldn't necessarily be privy to that.

Mr. Clifford Small: Could it be possible that no bids were made as a result of proposed section 56 in Bill C-49? It's referenced in item (g) in the bill summary. I'll read from the bill summary just to make it simple. It says, "provide that the Governor in Council may make regulations to prohibit the commencement or continuation of petroleum resource or renewable energy activities, or the issuance of interests, in respect of any portion of the offshore area that is located in an area that has been or may be identified as an area for environmental or wildlife conservation or protection".

• (1620)

The Chair: Mr. Small, your time is up.

Mr. Tessier, could you provide a brief answer, please? If you need further clarification, it can be asked for at a later time.

Go ahead, Mr. Tessier.

Mr. Scott Tessier: The reasons why a company may or may not bid are as varied as the companies themselves. I can tell members that, in my discussions with operators in our offshore area, I have not heard Bill C-49 referenced as the reason why they did not bid.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tessier.

We will now go to Ms. Jones from the Liberal Party of Canada for six minutes.

The floor is yours.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank our witnesses who are here with us today and acknowledge the tremendous work they've done both in Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland and Labrador in building a very stable energy market for investors, creating jobs and strengthening the economy.

I'm very pleased to hear today as well that you're supporting Bill C-49 because, as a lead regulator in both of these provinces, it is so important to have an independent agency like yours looking objectively at this legislation to ensure it's strong and effective for the provinces it affects. We know how critical your role is in delivering offshore wind projects in Atlantic Canada.

I think my colleague opposite was trying to establish that, because of Bill C-49, there have been no bids in the offshore oil and gas. Well, I remember many years of parcels being called for bid in Labrador with no bidders. It happened long before this past year, and it happened for many different reasons, as we know. I'm glad you were able to clear that up.

My question today is really around the regulatory piece and the safety and protection of workers. Always in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have fearless employees and skilled workers who work in the offshore oil industry and the offshore fishing industry

and have spent most of their lives on the ocean in one capacity or another.

My question is for both of you. When you look at what we're doing under Bill C-49 in offshore wind, are you comfortable that we can ensure the safety and protection of these workers in the offshore and that we're able to meet the future mandates that have been established for energy development under this act? I think those are very important questions as we move forward with the bill.

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Thank you for the question.

With respect to transitioning with an expanded mandate and still being the regulator for oil and gas as well as the regulator for the offshore renewable energy industry—primarily, right now, it's looking to be that the first type of offshore renewable energy will be offshore wind—the governments write the legislation and the regulatory regime, which we administer on their behalf.

When you look at occupational health and safety, which is very important, because an important part of our mandate is worker safety, in part III.1, the occupational health and safety requirements for any type of activity that occurs offshore will be the exact same requirements or almost identical requirements for offshore renewable energy. A primary and an important part of our mandate is the safety of offshore workers and operations and the protection of the environment. Those important parts of our mandate will remain when we are the regulator for the offshore renewable energy industry.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you.

Do you want to add to that at all, Mr. Tessier?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I would add that, in our engagement with our counterparts from around the world, what we're seeing and hearing from them—and some of them are further ahead of us in terms of the expansion of their mandates—is that the skill set for the regulation of offshore safety is very transferable from the petroleum sector to offshore renewable energy.

We're in good standing in terms of our preparedness and readiness to take on the expanded mandate.

• (1625)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: My next question is around the consultation process that your boards would conduct.

You talked about consulting with fisheries and indigenous people in those areas and with other stakeholders as well. Obviously we know how critical it is that we have a strong, sustainable fishery in Atlantic Canada as well.

Can you walk us through what would be the involvement and the process of the C-NLOPB or the CNSOPB in sanctioning alternative energy programs for the offshore?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I can begin.

With respect to Bill C-49, the consultation is being led by the Government of Canada and the two provincial governments. The regulators are not leading on those consultations.

We do have extensive experience in engagement with fishery stakeholders in the petroleum space, and we are aware that various interests in the fishery sector have concerns with respect to the expansion of activity in the ocean. We're very committed to working very closely with fishery stakeholders and indigenous groups to ensure there is effective communication, transparency and co-operation both in planning and on the water.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Would you like to respond as well, Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: I agree with what Scott said, and we also have an example that I can speak to.

We have a long-standing fisheries advisory committee. Engagement with the fishers and indigenous groups is very important to us. We've been doing that as we've regulated petroleum and oil and gas activity, and we'll continue to build on those strong relationships we have because indigenous groups and the fishers have very unique insights and information that we need to understand when we're making our decisions.

Our fisheries advisory committee includes over 30 fishing groups that fish in the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area. We meet with them a few times a year and we've been meeting with them a lot more because they're interested in learning about what this future industry will look like.

We facilitate conversations they can have with governments, and we look forward to future engagement with these groups.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: You're both energy regulators—

The Chair: Ms. Jones, your time is up. You can save that for the next round.

Thank you for your questions and thank you for your answers.

We'll now move to Mr. Simard from the Bloc Québécois for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I would've given my time to Ms. Jones, because I really like her, but I still have some questions, and I know it concerns her region.

Mr. Tessier, I wonder whether the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador board, currently called the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, has any expertise in wind energy? Has anyone in your organization already successfully carried out any wind energy projects?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Tessier: The short answer to the question is no. We don't have anybody with direct experience in wind energy projects because we haven't had any such projects in our offshore.

As mentioned in the previous response, there are many areas of transferable skills in terms of offshore safety regulation, geoscience and other areas under our current remit that are directly transferable to the offshore energy sector.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Those two sectors are nonetheless quite different, in my opinion.

I don't know about Newfoundland and Labrador, and I don't know whether you have information on future projects; however, I saw that Nova Scotia has a wind road map. In a minute, I'll ask Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor a question. She had a wind road map setting a five-gigawatt target by 2025, which is an extremely short time frame.

To your knowledge, does Newfoundland and Labrador have a similar road map setting out how much power it hopes to generate from wind energy?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Tessier: There's no such target for offshore renewable energy at this time in Newfoundland and Labrador. The focus in this province to date has been almost exclusively onshore. There are a number of proposed projects for onshore wind to hydrogen.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: If I were to ask you whether you know the cost per gigawatt of a wind project, you wouldn't be able to give me an answer. You also wouldn't know how much it would cost to transform that wind energy into hydrogen using a hydrolyzor.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Tessier: I'll begin simply by saying I do not. It would vary widely depending on the project, I would think, but I don't have that information.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I'm still a little surprised.

Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor, I saw Nova Scotia's proposed road map. It mentions five gigawatts by 2025. Five gigawatts seems like a lot to me. In total, with its dams, some remaining power plants and wind energy, Hydro-Québec produces 37 gigawatts. Hydro-Québec is one of the biggest producers of clean electricity in the world. Producing five gigawatts in such a short time frame, by 2025, seems very optimistic to me.

Do you know how wind produced in partnership with your office would be used?

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Thank you for the question.

I'd like to clarify the numbers you're speaking to. In September 2022, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston made an announcement that had two parts.

The first was that the first call for bids, which is how licences are issued for offshore wind projects, will occur in 2025. That means once we become the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore energy regulator, we will administer a call for bids or a licensing process on their behalf no later than 2025.

The second part of his announcement was that by 2030 there will be five gigawatts of offshore wind potential licensed. That doesn't mean there will be turbines in the ocean producing electricity. It means that, at that time, there will be enough licences in place to potentially install wind fields that could generate up to five gigawatts of offshore wind power in the future.

Those are the targets the provincial government has in place, and it is responsible for giving us the strategic direction for having and administering the call-for-bids process on its behalf. Those will be the targets it will use when it's providing that strategic direction to us about future processes for licensing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you for that clarification.

I have a question for both of you.

If future projects are being given licences, in my opinion, that means that the associated costs have been estimated. You know that there are federal programs and tax credits for the production of clean energy and hydrogen.

Have you calculated the cost of such a project and the tax credits that this kind of project might qualify for, or is it far too early for that yet?

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Thank you for the question.

With respect to the economics of projects, we as the regulator don't get involved with those. As I mentioned, both governments will provide us with a strategic direction on where they want offshore wind projects to be located so we can administer the licensing process. It will be up to governments, and they will take those economic considerations into account when telling us which areas to start the process for.

The Chair: Thank you for your questions and for your answers.

We'll move to Mr. Angus, from the New Democratic Party, for six minutes.

Go ahead. The floor is yours, sir.

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

Thank you, witnesses, for bringing us your expertise.

Mr. Tessier, I'd like to speak with you. At the outset you said you've been meeting with international regulators. We see huge projects coming on stream, such as the one in Aberdeen. Five years ago I was reading about the downturn in offshore oil, and they were hoping wind out in the North Sea would create jobs. Now we're looking at thousands of jobs. We see the United States under the Biden administration moving very quickly. You said you've met with regulators in Europe and Australia.

Globally are we looking at a revolution in energy with offshore wind?

• (1635)

Mr. Scott Tessier: I think it's fair to say that there is an unmistakable global movement to offshore renewable energy. Certainly, in other parts of the world, offshore wind has taken on tremendous momentum. The energy transition is under way and it is undeniable. You're absolutely correct.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I've spent some good times in Newfoundland and Labrador. I love the people and the place, but, my God, it's windy.

Are you telling me that you're going to be able to compete with those Australians, or do you have an advantage? Do you think that, if we get these projects up and running, we'll be able to hold our own?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I think the east coast of Canada has wind conditions that rival anywhere in the world. Christine and I can argue about who has the better supply of wind.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

One of the things that have surprised us on seeing what the Biden administration has put in regarding tax credits and incentives is how fast it's moved. The U.S. is now on track to have twice the solar capacity by 2030 than what they originally forecast just three years ago, and 43% more wind energy capacity than forecast in 2021. That's an enormous drive.

How important is it for us to get in the game now? I'm worried, for example, that my Conservative colleagues seem to want to block this legislation. If we're sitting at the side of the road and don't move now while Europe, Australia, the States and other jurisdictions move ahead, will it impact the potential to get investment into Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Scott Tessier: We as the regulator would offer this: Time is of the essence. There is a global imperative with respect to both energy transition and energy security, so it is certainly not too soon for Canada to get into the game.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I've seen the Premier of Nova Scotia speaking up on the importance of getting this legislation.

Would you concur that it is very important that we have the legislative framework in place so that Nova Scotia can start putting in for bids for offshore projects?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: The provincial government has issued, as I mentioned before, its target of a call for bids no later than 2025 and licensing of up to five gigawatts of offshore wind by 2030. With that, the government would determine its strategic direction and give us the timing. We're being told to actively prepare to be ready to administer it and run a call for bids by no later than 2025.

We're getting ready for that based on the priority of the provincial government.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Nova Scotia wants to be ready by 2025 to do the bids. Does this mean that, at the federal level, we have to get this done in 2024, so that you are in a position to do your work?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: That is correct, yes.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I want to raise the issue of Sable Island.

My Conservative colleagues seem to be concerned that this is chasing the oil sector away. I've followed the Sable Island issue. I know it drew a huge amount of response from fishers who were worried about the fragility of the marine operations. For tourists, this is a very unique place, as it is for environmental groups and regular Nova Scotian citizens. In the decision to stop the oil bid at Sable Island, the Premier of Nova Scotia had the veto if the federal government were to try to push ahead with that.

Is that right? The Nova Scotia government is in the driver's seat in deciding what should be protected and what shouldn't be.

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Just to clarify, when there is a fundamental decision for petroleum rights issuance, if the board—our organization—makes a decision to issue a licence, the provincial minister has the right to veto that decision if it pertains to the Sable Island area. The recent call for bids was a joint veto by both ministers. It didn't pertain to the provincial minister using that right in relation to Sable Island.

Mr. Charlie Angus: They both agreed they had to protect it because it is a unique marine conservation region, but the Nova Scotia government could have done the veto on its own. I want to ask this, because it's very important we understand that, if we are going to look at offshore wind, there will be times when questions of fragile marine ecosystems will be brought into play. There are going to be concerns and opposition to a project—maybe not two projects but one or another project.

Will there be that same focus on making sure this is done to protect the fragility of the Atlantic system, whether it's oil and gas or offshore wind? Is that something your board is capable of and ready to take on?

• (1640)

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board has been around and regulating for over 30 years. Part of our mandate is the safety of operations and workers and environmental protection, and we have regulated and had safe operations in the offshore. We will continue to do that, and that will be a focus for us as we move forward with the offshore renewable energy mandate, the expanded mandate for us.

I can't speak on behalf of the ministers and what their decisions would be with respect to issuing of licences.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now proceed to our next round of questioning.

We'll start with Mr. Small for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Tessier, I'm going to go in a little different direction here. This past Thursday we had Minister O'Regan here. He stated that One Ocean had been consulted during the forming of this bill.

Does One Ocean have a mandate to liaise with and address wind energy, or is its sole mandate to liaise between the fishing and petroleum industries?

Mr. Scott Tessier: At this point the mandate of One Ocean is specific to the fishing and petroleum sectors.

Mr. Clifford Small: It wouldn't be possible for One Ocean to be consulted and to take part in the consultation process on anything relating to wind energy.

Mr. Scott Tessier: I know there was a presentation at a One Ocean meeting in which Natural Resources Canada officials provided an overview of the legislation to participants in that meeting.

Mr. Clifford Small: Did they present to anyone, or were they presented to?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I'm sorry, but I don't understand the question.

Mr. Clifford Small: Did One Ocean give a presentation, or were they presented to?

Mr. Scott Tessier: Natural Resources Canada presented to the One Ocean members who were in attendance that day.

Mr. Clifford Small: A consultation process, to the best of my knowledge, is a little bit of back-and-forth. Wouldn't you agree?

Mr. Scott Tessier: Yes. I can't recall the extent to which there was discussion or questions and answers. I'm sure I was there. I don't remember specifically the details of the discussion.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Tessier.

You spoke earlier about the importance of stability of regulations and how important it is to have a stable investment climate. Based on your experience in dealing with the fishing industry and trying to zig and zag and keep everything together and working and producing, how important would you say it is to have a good framework for fisheries consultation and engagement so that the energy industry and the fishing industry can coincide?

Mr. Scott Tessier: Mr. Chair, I think that member in particular would understand as well as or better than anybody around the table that those industries, the petroleum sector and the fishing sector, are absolutely critical to our province and the economy of Canada, so it is absolutely critical to have an effective consultation and engagement framework in which fisheries interests are at the table with a meaningful say and a full voice.

Mr. Clifford Small: Would it be even more important in the development of wind energy to make sure the fishing industry and wind energy were getting along?

I understand that large geographical areas are required for wind farms. If the right framework is not in place, could that send a bad message to potential wind investors if they think there's going to be disruption or...? I'm searching for the right word, but you know what I'm trying to say.

Mr. Scott Tessier: Conflict...yes.

Those likely proponents are active in other parts of the world where the fisheries are important as well, though maybe not to the same degree they are in our part of the world. Currently there's a committee undertaking a regional assessment of offshore wind in both of our provinces. That committee is composed of some very eminent people, and they are listening right now. I would encourage both industries, the wind energy sector and the fishing sector, to engage with that committee to make sure those concerns are heard.

• (1645)

Mr. Clifford Small: Getting back to last week, we were told that these consultations had taken place prior to the tabling of the bill. In fact I don't think it happened that way. Did it happen that way, to the best of your knowledge?

Was the fishing industry consulted prior to the tabling of the bill, as we were told in committee?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I couldn't say. We simply aren't the lead on the consultation, so I haven't been party to many of those discussions beyond the One Ocean one that we talked about earlier.

Mr. Clifford Small: I have just one quick question left.

Can this bill be valid with the over 30 references to Bill C-69, which has been proven to be unconstitutional? Can this bill move forward with those many references to Bill C-69, yes or no?

The Chair: Mr. Tessier, please give a brief answer. His time is up.

Mr. Scott Tessier: Unfortunately, I can't give you the yes or the no. That's a question better posed to officials from the Government of Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tessier.

We'll now proceed to Ms. Dabrusin for five minutes.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. In fact, I'm going to be sharing my time with Ms. Jones.

I wanted to ask some questions about the international context.

Mr. Tessier, when you started, you mentioned a number of countries that made similar changes to their offshore petroleum boards to include renewables. I was wondering if perhaps you could tell me more about the conversations and what they were saying about our opportunities if we make that change.

Mr. Scott Tessier: Sure.

The conversations, from our perspective, have really focused on what sorts of competencies we need as regulators to effectively take on this expansion of our mandate to offshore renewable energy projects. They've been quite comforting and validating, in that the assurance we get from our counterparts is that there are not significant expansions of competencies and skills required on the part of our staff in order to take this on.

That was really our primary focus in engaging with our regulatory counterparts. Beyond that, as I think both Christine and I said in our opening comments, it's exciting. It's exciting to see the regulators from around the world take on this new mandate and really become a part of the energy transition. That's been really encouraging in our interactions with all of our counterparts in those countries mentioned and beyond.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Can I ask the same question in terms of the Nova Scotia board's perspective? In your conversations with other international regulators that have expanded their authorities to include offshore wind, what's the feedback you've been receiving from them as to those opportunities?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: The feedback we've been receiving when we speak to members of the International Regulators' Forum and the Global Offshore Wind Regulators Forum is that the transition worked really well. The majority of the skills and the technical and regulatory expertise we have is directly transferable to regulating the offshore wind industry.

That process seems to go relatively seamlessly, recognizing that there are always special skill sets you need at certain times, and activity approvals and reviews. We'll get those resources or tools when we need them, but we're also seeing the importance of being an energy regulator, because then you already have the established knowledge of environmental concerns and that sort of thing.

Another thing to point out is that what is proposed in Bill C-49 is exactly the same as was done for the Canada Energy Regulator. They are a petroleum and an offshore renewable regulator at the same time and we will be as well.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: That's great.

I'll go to Ms. Jones now, please.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you very much, Ms. Dabrusin.

I want to pick up on a couple of things.

First, we talked about energy security and how critical it is in all of Canada, and in Atlantic Canada as well, and how important it is for investors to have stability and that stability of protection when they're investing in projects in Canada.

Do you see anything in Bill C-49 that erodes that stability and protection for investors in other offshore energy projects?

• (1650)

Mr. Scott Tessier: I do not.

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: I don't either.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you.

I also want to clarify one other piece, and that is with regard to the fishing industry. Can you tell me what the relationship is now between the offshore boards and the fishing industry?

What practices and processes have you set up for consultation as related to the oil and gas industry? Is there a transfer of that systematic piece into further offshore energy development projects?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: The fishing industry has coexisted with the offshore oil and gas industry in both the Nova Scotia and the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore board areas.

I can speak to the process we use in Nova Scotia. We have a fisheries advisory committee. The current version of how that's set up has been in place since 2005. We recognize the importance of the fishers who are on this committee and of the engagement and insight they give us. Through this committee, we recognize that, with the future expansion of our mandate, we need to further build and help support them and also gain their insight.

We've been facilitating opportunities for governments to talk to the fisheries advisory committee and learn about offshore renewable energy and offshore wind, as they stand. We are also encouraging them to get involved in the regional assessment going on in both of our respective offshore areas. We hope the strong relationships we've made with the fishing industry will continue and that coexistence will continue into the future.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We will now proceed to Monsieur Simard for two and a half minutes.

The floor is yours.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you.

I'll be brief, Mr. Tessier. One of the roles of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board is to provide a framework for new projects. There are even auctions for new licences.

To your knowledge, are there several new oil projects still awaiting approval?

[English]

Mr. Scott Tessier: There are no proposals before the board currently. The Bay du Nord project is widely discussed but remains hypothetical. It is being assessed by Equinor in terms of its economic viability, so it is not before our organization at this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Is there a provision in the bill allowing licences granted to oil projects to be cancelled?

[English]

Mr. Scott Tessier: The board can cancel an interest for violation of conditions and refuse to issue an authorization. Bill C-49 has an additional provision with respect to cancellation of interest by ministers, as opposed to the board.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: I don't know whether you can answer the next question. This bill is being presented to us as a tool to ensure the energy transition. The energy transition, to me, means moving from more carbon-intensive energy to less carbon-intensive energy.

Don't you find it paradoxical to always come out with new oil projects if the goal is to be part of the energy transition?

[English]

Mr. Scott Tessier: Ministers, Premier Furey and others have spoken eloquently about the place of oil in the energy transition. I think there's going to be a place for oil in the world for the foreseeable future. We all appreciate and recognize the urgency of the energy transition you described and the imperative to lower emissions.

The Chair: Thank you for your answers.

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

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, both, for your excellent testimony.

At the end of the day, this is about the climate. It's also about jobs and the people who often bring expertise. They have travelled all over the world. They are able to work from their homes and not have to travel as much.

Mr. Tessier, you said that regulators around the world are taking part in a similar process. Would you say that Canada is on track with what we're negotiating to make us ready for our competitors in Europe, Australia and the United States? Is this a standard, straight-up process we're dealing with here?

• (1655)

Mr. Scott Tessier: Yes.

Mr. Charlie Angus: If we vote—and I'm hoping we'll vote soon—you could get down to work and start getting the bids for offshore projects. You could compete and take some of that money going to the United States and bring it to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Are you ready for that?

Mr. Scott Tessier: We stand ready for offshore renewable energy projects.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

Ms. Bonnell, you're in the same situation in Nova Scotia. Would that be correct?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Yes, we are actively preparing for the expansion of our mandate and the increased interest in offshore renewable energy projects, such as offshore wind.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We have the premiers on side. Your boards are ready. We have an international market moving. The only thing stopping us right now is Pierre Poilievre, who seems to be against the bill.

Would it send a bad message if this legislation gets blocked in the House of Commons so that you aren't ready for 2025?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: We need this bill in order to become the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore energy regulator, so if the bill doesn't pass, then we cannot administer the land sales and meet the targets that were set out by the provincial government.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Tessier, I want to clarify that because I think it's really important that my Conservative colleagues understand what we're talking about here with regard to changing the mandate of the board.

You would be the only vehicle for us to be able to get offshore wind projects in the Atlantic. Is that correct? We couldn't use another form. We couldn't come up with some other mechanism. You are the mechanism that we need to have set up and ready to do this. Is that correct?

Mr. Scott Tessier: If it is to be pursued through joint management, our opinion would be that this is the best avenue to reach that objective.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay. Then let's get this done so that we can get some of those big projects off the ground.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. Small for five minutes.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor.

Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor, how many oil and gas projects off Nova Scotia's coast have been vetoed since 2015?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: There was one exploration licence that was jointly set aside or vetoed by both ministers in December 2023. There have been no oil and gas projects put forward for development in the time period that you noted.

Mr. Clifford Small: In the past, in the olden days of the CN-SOPB, would vetoing have taken place in the same fashion, or would your board have had, maybe, a little more power?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: That veto—not to speak on behalf of the ministers—was the first time that an exploration licence was set aside or vetoed by both ministers. The ministers released a statement, which is public, that said that the board followed the process that was put in place by them, so we followed the process and we approved the licence. The ministers felt—and this is from their joint statement—that there are further policy discussions that need to happen that are outside the mandate of our organization.

The governments are having those discussions, and we're waiting to get information back from them on how to move forward.

Mr. Clifford Small: Back in 2010 to 2015, or even earlier, would your board have had full jurisdiction? Would the Governor in Council have had the power to make that veto?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Yes. The legislation that provides the ministers with that opportunity to choose to jointly set aside or veto an exploration licence has existed in the accord act since 1990. That hasn't changed.

The board has not always followed its process correctly and made the fundamental decisions. It was just this time that the ministers chose to not approve that fundamental decision. It was the first time that they used that opportunity to do so.

Mr. Clifford Small: That ability was already in place.

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: Yes, it's been in place since the board was formed.

Mr. Clifford Small: I'm sure that when that legislation was formed in that way, those who formed it probably weren't expecting to have to use it, and it might have been a long shot. Now that it's been used, do you think that there's a possibility that this diminishes investor confidence in our offshore?

• (1700)

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: I can't speak to that because investor confidence isn't part of our mandate. That is a question that I would put to both ministers with regard to when they made that decision and the considerations for that.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you.

I'll go back to Mr. Tessier.

Mr. Tessier, when you meet with regulators worldwide, have you met with any regulators in the wind energy sector?

Mr. Scott Tessier: Yes, a number of our counterparts in the petroleum sector have already received the expanded mandate. In addition, as part of my tour of Germany last summer, I spent some time with the German regulator.

Mr. Clifford Small: How about any other areas like Norway or up and down the eastern seaboard? Have you met with any of those folks who have a sizable fishing industry that may be in conflict with wind energy?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I think you mentioned two right there: Norway and the United States.

Mr. Clifford Small: How has the experience been there? Has it been going smoothly? We want this to go smoothly. We want this investment. We don't want to run into the pitfalls and traps that have been there in other jurisdictions. We want investor confidence in the wind energy sector.

How have they worked in those countries, and have they had any conflicts that they've had a tough time ironing out that may have decreased investor confidence in offshore wind?

Mr. Scott Tessier: I think there have been some hiccups in the United States, and I think that has underscored the importance of undertaking those discussions with sensitivity and proactivity.

I can't speak to the effect that it may have had on investor confidence. I'm just not sure.

Mr. Clifford Small: Can we avoid those things here?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Small. Your time is up.

Thank you, Mr. Tessier.

We will now go to Ms. Jones for five minutes.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you to my colleague opposite. I'm surprised that you're looking for a way to approve the project when you guys have said that you're totally against the bill and that you'll be voting against the bill.

We also heard testimony today that this bill is very necessary in order to move forward with alternative offshore energy development in Atlantic Canada.

If this bill fails because the Conservatives are blocking it and voting against it, what does that mean to Atlantic Canada and to the energy—

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Jones, we have a point of order. I would ask you to pause.

Go ahead, Mr. Patzer, on the point of order.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we know, the NDP-Liberal coalition will get this bill passed right through. We are not blocking or obstructing this bill. We are merely raising concerns about the unconstitutional factors of the bill that should be resolved before it passes, so that there is certainty and confidence for investors.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Patzer, that's more of a debate than it is procedural relevance. I ask us—as I do at every committee, and I think we've been good today so far—not to use points of order for debate but for procedural relevance.

Thank you for interjecting.

I will go back to Ms. Jones.

Ms. Jones, I offer my apologies. We will go back to where you left off.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There was no point of order.

As I think we've already established with the witnesses today, when I asked if this bill erodes the stability and protection for investors, the response from both panellists was no.

If the bill does not pass, what does this mean for Atlantic Canada in terms of the work that's been done to try to diversify the energy portfolio in those regions? What does it mean to the economy and for jobs for skilled workers?

I believe that, in the information I have in the briefings I've been given, this is not just one of the most environmentally friendly projects that we could do in consultation with all industry. It's also one of the most important initiatives that we have in continuing to stimulate growth in jobs and in the economy.

Can you add to those comments, please?

Mr. Scott Tessier: The best I can offer is that if Bill C-49 or something like it is not put into force, offshore renewable energy will not be regulated through an agent and the product of joint management, so one can assume it would look much more federal in its regulation.

• (1705)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Ms. Bonnell-Eisnor.

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: I would agree with Scott that if the governments want to follow with a joint management regime and move forward with us as the regulator, if the bill doesn't pass, we can't be the regulator. With us as the regulator, you're not starting from scratch; you're starting at a really good place, and we're ready to go.

If the bill doesn't pass, then some other form would have to be determined on how that would be, and it might not be the joint management, which is what the province would want, so it would take longer to get going.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Can you tell me what the interest is in offshore wind and other renewable energy development in both of your provinces right now?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: With respect to Nova Scotia, there is interest. We have had lots of potential companies knock on our door and ask about our role as a regulator, because they've seen that the bill is tabled and they want to understand the process.

We've talked about our experience in regulating offshore oil and gas, and we encouraged them to get in touch with both governments that are readying the bill and the associated regulations so that they can understand what the regime will look like.

Mr. Scott Tessier: I've met with only a very small number of possible proponents in light of the fact that the regulatory regime is not in place. Similar to Christine, we steer them towards governments at this point and to the regional assessment.

I'm confident that once the regulatory regime and the legislative regime are in place, interest will pick up because, as Mr. Angus mentioned, the wind is here already.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: I have one other question.

Once a project comes before the C-NLOPB or the CNSOPB to be reviewed, what's the process that you guys would take? Is there an external consultation process that you undertake as well, or is that work already done before it gets to your board table?

Ms. Christine Bonnell-Eisnor: With respect to engagement, there are opportunities for engagement with fishers, indigenous groups and other users of the sea throughout the process at many steps. For land tenure there are lots of opportunities for engagement. For a site assessment there will be engagement. Then it moves into whether the development of 10 or more wind turbines would trigger the Impact Assessment Act. There's engagement through that process.

For us to authorize a project for construction or development and production, there would be engagement opportunities for fishers, indigenous groups and others who want to be involved in the process to help inform us for our decisions.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Colleagues, first I want to thank the witnesses for providing testimony today and for appearing for this study.

If you would like to send in additional information via a brief, please try to do so before 5 p.m. on February 16.

Colleagues, we'll now suspend for approximately five minutes to change panels.

The meeting is suspended.

- (1705) _____ (Pause) _____
- (1715)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, October 17, 2023, and the adopted motion of Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the committee is resuming consideration of Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

In our accordence with our routine motion, I'm informing the committee that all remote participants have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

As witnesses today, we have Mr. Normand Mousseau, scientific director from Trottier energy institute at the Polytechnique Montréal, by video conference. We have Mr. Peter Nicholson, chair of the board at the Canadian Climate Institute, by video conference. From the Cape Breton Fish Harvesters Association, we have Mr. Michael Barron, president, by video conference. From the International Union of Operating Engineers, we have Mr. Steven Schumann, Canadian government affairs director. From Nova Scotia Fisheries Alliance for Energy Engagement, we have Mr. Kris Vasotto, manager, by video conference. From Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association, we have Mr. Ian MacPherson, executive director, by video conference.

We will start with Mr. Steven Schumann from the International Union of Operating Engineers, who is here in person.

You have five minutes, sir. I will be using these cards. Yellow will give you a 30-second warning, and red lets you know that the time is up. I will try not to interrupt mid-sentence.

The floor is yours. Go ahead.

- (1720)

Mr. Steven Schumann (Canadian Government Affairs Director, International Union of Operating Engineers): Good afternoon.

On behalf of the International Union of Operating Engineers in Canada, I am honoured to appear before the committee today.

The majority of our members build and maintain Canada's infrastructure. We build it all, such as hydro dams, mines, nuclear plants, solar farms, wind turbines and pipelines. We fully support Bill C-49 and the development of clean energy projects. However, the bill does not address the important issue of ensuring Canadians have the opportunity to work on these projects.

We have noticed that, when large projects are discussed, labour tends to be seen as an afterthought and not a forethought in decision-making. Wind farms cannot be built without a steady supply of labour, so labour must be a key focus. The Public Policy Forum estimates that the development of 1,000 offshore wind turbines near Sable Island would employ 30,000 Canadians annually during construction. It sounds wonderful. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that Canadians will actually fill many of those positions.

If the federal government truly wants to support offshore wind, it must take measures to guarantee that Canadians work on these projects. We believe it is in Canada's best interest to encourage, through Bill C-49, the adoption of measures like project labour agreements, which cover all construction work for a project, utilize Canada's skilled tradespeople and apprentices, and ensure any foreign workers are paid the prevailing wage. At a minimum, strengthen the industrial benefits component found within the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland offshore petroleum board accords.

Look at what's happening in the U.S. on offshore wind. They have the Jones Act, which ensures that, between American ports—including offshore platforms—vessels are flagged, crewed and built by Americans. Some states have project labour agreements in place for offshore wind projects. The Biden administration encourages project labour agreements and community benefit agreements for these projects through their offshore leases.

Also, in the U.S., there's a national agreement with Ørsted, a project proponent that will help build the local workforce by guaranteeing that a certain percentage of the workforce for offshore work is local and provided by unions, and that our American members are able to shadow and receive on-the-job training. This allows the building up of a domestic workforce, gradually and realistically, for work that project proponents would otherwise seek foreign labour to do. However, even with this in place, it's estimated that, currently, only about 40% of the work is being performed by Americans.

At least there are attempts in the U.S. to ensure Americans are working on these projects. Nothing like these efforts has been discussed by any level of government in Canada. Unions, including our own, will have discussions with offshore wind project proponents. However, with no incentives from the federal or provincial governments, it's a challenge for us to ensure Canadian workers can work on these projects. As of right now, there's no guarantee that Canadians will have any of the offshore work, or even much of the onshore work, for these projects.

We ask that the committee consider labour guarantees in its deliberations on Bill C-49 and amend the bill to include a requirement that project proponents adopt project labour agreements, Canadian crewing requirements on vessels and, at minimum, some safeguards to ensure Canadians get to work on these projects.

Project labour agreements are more than just guarantees that local workers will have jobs on these projects. They're also a way for Canada to build its workforce by enshrining targets for the involvement of under-represented workers, such as women and indigenous Canadians. These types of agreements are nothing new to the Atlantic provinces and, in fact, have helped Atlantic Canadians obtain work on the projects that have impacted their communities.

Federal policies and incentives relating to offshore wind development should aim to benefit Canadian workers and their communities. We believe the federal government must take the lead in every effort to ensure Bill C-49 reflects the goal of supporting and building Canada's workforce. Some of the suggestions we've outlined today would be the best avenues for doing so.

Thank you.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We will now go to Mr. Mousseau for five minutes.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Normand Mousseau (Scientific Director, Trottier Energy Institute, Polytechnique Montréal, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

Thank you for the invitation. I'm honoured. I regret that I was unable to appear before you in person.

I want to go back to the bill, which is certainly relevant but still contains a number of inconsistencies. The bill aims to add the management of offshore renewable energy licences to the already existing management of offshore oil licences.

As we heard earlier, technologies for generating electricity using offshore wind turbines are already available. It is therefore essential that the federal and provincial governments in Canada adopt the legislative tools to support the development of such projects, but they also need to facilitate the rapid implementation of projects to increase renewable energy production in the Canadian energy system. In that regard, this bill is relevant, appropriate and necessary.

Nonetheless, I see two significant issues. First, it's somewhat inconsistent with climate targets. Second, there's a lack of integration with other jurisdictions when it comes to renewable energy production, which is different from oil production. I'll come back to that in a moment, but first, I'll address the inconsistency with climate targets.

The bill, as presented, will treat fossil fuel extraction and renewable energy production equally. That's incompatible with what we know and with what international organizations are promoting. They're clearly saying that, if we want to reach the climate targets adopted by the signatories to the Paris accord, the development of

new fossil fuel deposits must be prohibited. However, the bill doesn't do that; rather, it promotes both types of activities equally.

In my opinion, the bill should include a deadline, in the near future, after which no new licences for fossil fuel development will be granted or, at the very least, the bill would trigger, say, every five years, a review of the relevancy of continuing the exploitation or development of new offshore fossil fuel deposits.

In that context, we can say that the short title of the bill, which simply mentions the renewable energy aspect in relation to the Canada–Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord, does not reflect the nature of the bill in its current form, since fossil fuels get equal treatment. However, if the amendments I'm proposing are made, that title can be retained. That said, the title is a secondary issue.

Now, let's talk about how to prioritize renewable energy projects. It's important to understand that transporting renewable energy presents different challenges from those associated with transporting oil and gas. The bill refers briefly to green hydrogen. However, green hydrogen and its derivatives, such as ammonia, are still far from constituting a real market for renewable energy production, despite the visibility these molecules have been given.

This means that most, if not all, offshore electricity produced will need to be transported to the coast, and then to market. We cannot really consider offshore projects as being strictly offshore. They need to be integrated into a market connecting the provinces and other markets.

Furthermore, the current bill does not define potential upstream collaboration or an order of precedence, for example, in order to accelerate approval of projects that aren't limited to wind turbine construction. The transmission lines between provinces and more remote markets are needed. Therefore projects should instead be considered in their entirety, and an attempt should be made to create mechanisms to ensure more comprehensive approvals and consequently reduce the time it takes for projects to be assessed so they can get under way faster.

In my opinion, it would be better for the bill to recognize that putting oil in a ship for transport is quite different from the production of electricity, which requires transmission lines and more complex market integration with various levels of approval. Some thought needs to be given as to how to simplify that and allow the acceleration of renewable energy projects.

Those are my main comments on the bill. I will be happy to expand on them.

• (1730)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We'll now go to Mr. Nicholson from the Canadian Climate Institute for his opening statement.

Please, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Nicholson (Chair of the Board, Canadian Climate Institute, As an Individual): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair and the committee, for providing this forum to address the potential for really massive offshore renewable energy development off our Atlantic coast. It's a scale of opportunity that, quite frankly, has been underestimated. Realization of the opportunity will depend on many factors, but one essential precondition is an appropriate regulatory framework, and hence the relevance of Bill C-49.

I will very briefly summarize some of the content of a paper I wrote, entitled "Catching the Wind", published last October by the Public Policy Forum. The purpose was to outline the opportunity to develop Atlantic offshore wind energy at scale as a significant contribution to Canada's clean energy requirement.

I want to emphasize that we are talking here about a project of national significance, not just a regional project, although there would be very significant economic benefits for Atlantic Canada. To date, much of the discussion of Atlantic offshore wind has been in the context of green hydrogen for export primarily to European markets. While this may be a promising opportunity, in my view, green hydrogen is not the biggest prize. The first and best use for Atlantic offshore wind would be to supply the national grid and to provide massive amounts of clean energy as far west as Ontario.

The starting premise is Canada's, and indeed the world's, commitment to eventually decarbonize the energy system. This will require an enormous expansion of electricity generation and transmission, both nationally and globally. How much? In Canada's case, we can draw on a detailed scenario published last June by the Canada Energy Regulator, or CER. The CER projected that to achieve net zero, Canada will need to double electricity generation.

Where will all this new energy come from? According to the CER scenario, about 15% will be from new hydro development. Some 25% will be from a tripling of nuclear generation. Another 15% or so would come from a mix of solar, biomass and geothermal, but almost half of the new generation would come from a sevenfold increase in wind energy. In the case of Ontario, for example, electricity generation would more than triple in the net-zero scenario, with almost two-thirds of the growth coming from a twelvefold increase in wind generation.

Where will all this new wind generation come from? Obviously, a great deal will have to come from a massive build-out of terrestrial wind farms across Canada, particularly in the west. However, wind facilities on the unprecedented scale required can generate very significant land use conflicts, particularly in more heavily populated areas where local resistance has already manifested.

What's the alternative? The alternative is to generate massive new energy from the strong and consistent winds blowing off our Atlantic coast. I'll illustrate with just one hypothetical example.

Imagine one or more offshore wind facilities capable of generating a combined 15 gigawatts of electricity. That's a very large amount. It's enough to power six million to seven million average Canadian homes. This power could be provided by a thousand 15-megawatt turbines. They would occupy a total area of roughly 3,000 to 4,000 square kilometres of ocean surface. It's important to recognize that wind turbines at this enormous scale would be separated by at least 1.5 kilometres, thus greatly reducing the impact on marine activity and traffic. A great many areas off the Atlantic coast afford excellent siting conditions, including the example I provided in the paper of the vast Sable Island bank, though of course not on Sable Island itself.

There would be very significant direct economic benefits associated with the installation and ongoing operation of such a facility. For example, as was mentioned by Mr. Schumann a moment ago, there would be about 30,000 jobs during a multi-year installation and roughly 1,200 permanent jobs associated with maintenance. Fortunately, there's already a base of relevant marine skills in the region. With training, Atlantic Canada could eventually become a global centre of expertise in offshore wind.

• (1735)

The challenge here is going to be to mobilize the enormous investment to establish both the wind facilities and the expanded transmission westward from the coast. This will require many tens of billions spent over many years, but we are talking about an investment to secure both our future economy and a livable planet.

In conclusion, it is quite obvious that we have here a national opportunity of historic proportions, and for that opportunity to come to pass, Canada urgently needs a regulatory framework equal to the unprecedented nature of that opportunity.

Thank you very much. I welcome the questions.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We'll now go to Mr. Michael Barron, president of the Cape Breton Fish Harvesters Association.

Mr. Barron, the floor is yours, please go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barron (President, Cape Breton Fish Harvesters Association): Good afternoon, honourable Chair and committee members.

Once again, my name is Michael Barron. I'm the president of the Cape Breton Fish Harvesters Association. I represent multispecies harvesters. I am also an independent owner-operator harvester as well.

I sit before you today scared for my livelihood and for every other inshore harvester's livelihood. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill C-49.

I must start my remarks by stating that five days is a little rushed to appear on a significant bill such as this. It is no different from the timeline that has been proposed for the passage of Bill C-49. It is rushed.

The new green offshore wind industry on the east coast of Canada will be the first for Canada, the first for Nova Scotia and the first for our marine environment—so many unknowns and so many very different variations from the oil and gas industry. We feel that this new industry constitutes its very own piece of legislation, not an amended one where we are trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. Time has dictated the process.

In an industry that is a major economic driver for Nova Scotia, the lack of consultation has not gone unnoticed by all fish harvester associations throughout Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia provides Canada with more than 35% of the world's shellfish exports. We rely on the federal government to protect our interests and to ensure this valuable, high-protein and low-carbon-produced food source continues to feed a global market.

In 2018, the Nova Scotia industry alone generated \$1.9 billion and, on the same basis, in 2018 the total Nova Scotia employment impact of the industry was 16,300 jobs and \$865 million in wages and salaries. This income supports community infrastructure, schools and hospitals. Further, the wealth generated permits people to purchase food, other goods and services and to remain and prosper in our coastal communities.

We understand that our climate is changing, and we realize that we all have a collective role in trying to find viable solutions. The fishing industry is not against green energy sources.

An example of the fishing sector and offshore wind coexisting is Scotland. The picture that is being painted, however, is not as glamorous as we are being led to believe. Scotland has a population of 5.4 million people. Their landed seafood value is 617 million pounds, which converts to \$1 billion Canadian. In comparison, Nova Scotia is just one-fifth the size of Scotland, and in 2023 Nova Scotia's landed value was \$2.8 billion.

Scottish fishermen have also stated that the amount of space they are losing to offshore farms is affecting the viability of accessing fishing grounds and resources. They have also provided documents to show wind farms within marine conservation areas. The Scottish federation feels that allowing wind farms within the conservation areas is infringing on their way to operate viably.

Turbines have a rated capacity that allows only certain wind speeds. For example, an eight-megawatt turbine is not always producing eight megawatts—that's only when it's ideal—and they are all going to need backups when necessary. They have cut-in and cut-out speeds. They cut in at 10 kilometres and they cut out at 90 kilometres. Consider this in the context of Nova Scotia weather, when hurricanes are increasing in frequency and severity.

According to a developer—BlueFloat Energy—that met with me and my staff, the ideal depth for a turbine is from 16 to 21 fathoms,

which is prime lobster area here in LFA 27 in Cape Breton. This also affects spatial planning on other MPAs, agriculture, shipping and transport and marine navigation.

If offshore wind farms line our pristine coastline and the inshore fishery is displaced from our traditional fishing grounds, what will there be in the line of compensation? In Bill C-49, we have proposed subsection 183.22(3), which says:

Promotion of compensation policies

The Regulator shall promote and monitor compensation policies for fishers sponsored by the fishing industry respecting damages of a non-attributable nature.

We note that, assuming this means “sponsored” as “put forward by” and not “as funded by”, there is no legal requirement in this bill for developers to provide any compensation to the fishers. Regulators need to be held accountable for decisions and consequences. They need to be able to hold wind developers and operators accountable by sound legislation clearly written and understood by all marine users. Lessons should be learned from previous track records in tidal within the Bay of Fundy and in hydro at Muskrat Falls in Newfoundland.

In closing, a more involved in-depth consultation needs to be had with other primary users of this space moving forward.

● (1740)

Thank you for allowing me to present our position. I'm looking forward to your questions. Please note that I shortened this up to save time, and all of my remarks have been submitted.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We will now go to Kris Vascotto from the Nova Scotia Fisheries Alliance for Energy Engagement.

Go ahead. The floor is yours.

Dr. Kris Vascotto (Manager, Nova Scotia Fisheries Alliance for Energy Engagement): Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective on the bill before you.

The Nova Scotia Fisheries Alliance for Energy Engagement comprises harvesters from across Nova Scotia. Our alliance arose out of a shared need to communicate industry perspectives on energy development in the marine waters surrounding Nova Scotia. By bringing industry participants from all sectors, species and regions, we undertook to assemble and communicate our shared concerns to proponents, regulators and government on the development of energy resources in the waters that support the fisheries and, hence, the communities of this province we call home.

That this alliance includes participation from over 20 harvesting groups from across fisheries demonstrates the importance with which the fishing sector views offshore energy development. This issue is crosscutting, and my voice is the amplification of their concerns, questions and solutions.

To be clear, members of the NSFAEE do not oppose offshore energy development but seek that it be done in a responsible manner. Historically, members have relied on the federal government to protect the interests and viability of their enterprises. They have worked to support science and refine rules for the fishery, and they have tried to be part of the solution. In turn, they rely on the government to make good decisions.

Perhaps this is why members are surprised and dismayed by the content of the bill before you. Collectively, we understand that, as a planet, we are facing profound challenges related to climate change risk, and we realize that we all have an important role in finding a viable solution. However, rushing poorly thought-out legislation to govern an industrial marine development that remains largely in an experimental stage for Atlantic waters and lacks proper safeguards to ensure a viable and resilient coastal economy is myopic. It will act only to damage those who are perhaps the most informed stewards of the resources while potentially facilitating even more environmental damage.

Quite simply, we are concerned that the legislation as drafted fails to account for or even consider the fundamental differences between the offshore petroleum industry, which this legislation was originally intended to apply to, and the burgeoning offshore wind industry that is dramatically different in structure, function and impacts.

For instance, this legislation provides clear guidance for compensation for impacts to harvesters related to the construction, operation and demobilization of oil and gas facilities or offshore wind sites related to the release of “debris”. Let us be clear. This is to address direct damages if a trap is lost or a vessel is damaged as a result of falling infrastructure or otherwise—impacts that occur in a very narrow period of time. Any other consideration is directed to the Fisheries Act, confined to the release of “deleterious substances”, meaning a spill for oil and gas, but what does this mean for offshore wind? The answer is that it isn't even relevant. Unlike an offshore oil and gas development, wind farms render vast areas of the ocean off-line because of safety concerns and operational challenges as they harvest energy from the wind before it enters the ocean environment.

It has been demonstrated that the act of harvesting wind stands to alter the very basis of the ocean ecosystems and the marine communities and fisheries that they support, meaning that the very existence of a wind farm stands to alter fisheries productivity, stock distribution and even the ability of commercial fish stocks to survive and flourish. The current legislation before you provides no avenue for such losses to be recovered from offshore wind operators and appears to be intentionally silent on it, perhaps because the bill reads as a short rewrite of a petroleum-based perspective.

This is untenable at best.

Furthermore, as legislators, you have an opportunity to enshrine in law that the benefits of offshore wind development be required legally to be shared with those communities, fishers and industries that stand to be impacted by generation, operation, transmission and, potentially, lost fisheries production.

Again, this legislation before you speaks to sharing royalties with governments but not communities or people. This is problematic.

In Atlantic Canada, we are deep into a regional assessment process that, as approved by the federal and provincial ministers, seeks to identify potential areas for offshore wind development in the marine environment. However, embracing the outcomes of this process and using those selected areas to guide further detailed study and subsequent development are also completely absent in this legislation. This means that, despite all of the efforts of the fishing industry to help identify low-conflict areas for offshore wind and to ensure that appropriate baseline information, mitigation measures and monitoring are in place, there is no security that development would be restricted to those selected areas.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Would it be possible to ask the witness to slow down? He is speaking too quickly for the interpreter to keep up.

[*English*]

Dr. Kris Vascotto: I apologize.

The Chair: It's no problem, Mr. Vascotto. I would ask you to speak a tad slower—although you have about 30 seconds left—so that they can make sure they interpret everything you say.

Go ahead.

Dr. Kris Vascotto: Thank you. You have my apologies.

Again, this demonstrates legislation that is rushed without due consideration of the situation and the approach to the development being undertaken. We have tried to raise these issues with your senior officials and have been told to take it to the committee and discuss it directly with you.

Here we are, and I sincerely hope you listen to our advice.

In short, the legislation before you has clearly been rushed in its development. While it may be well suited for its original purpose of ensuring that offshore petroleum development is conducted in a fair and environmentally safe manner, it is not appropriate for offshore wind development.

We intend to provide a more fulsome brief to this committee that includes the shared perspective of others in the fishing industry; however, given that we only received our invite scant days ago, we haven't been able to complete this in time for today.

Let us be clear. We have the time to develop good legislation and a gold standard for offshore energy development. We have the responsibility to do it right for our members, our communities and the marine environment they depend on for survival. We implore you to take that time and use it wisely.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We will now go to Ian MacPherson from Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association.

Please go ahead. You have five minutes.

Mr. Ian MacPherson (Executive Director, Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association and the 1,360 captains we represent, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Natural Resources for the opportunity to present today on aspects of Bill C-49.

We understand the purpose of the proposed legislation is three-fold: form a new regulatory scheme, establish a ministerial decision-making process and make regulations to prohibit commencement or continuation of petroleum or renewable energy projects.

Although the current jurisdictions referenced in the bill refer to Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, it is important to note that other Atlantic provinces, such as Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, can be directly impacted by damage to the marine environment or marine aquatic life in the gulf region.

It is critical that an overarching board be aware of the following concerns that must be addressed when assessing either ocean-based petroleum or energy projects. The following is a list of preliminary concerns around offshore wind development. We suggest this level of detail be included in documents related to offshore projects so important areas do not get missed or minimized. This can happen when federal and provincial jurisdiction overlaps or environmental studies do not have the same terms of reference.

The challenge for first-time and new projects is the lack of historical and baseline data for an area under consideration for development. For example, negative impacts on North American lobster may not be felt for five to seven years in the future.

In terms of fishing interactions, what types of gear restrictions may be applied within offshore wind farm areas? Some European offshore wind farms have prohibitions on bottom trawling due to concerns about interactions that may occur between trawl gear and the offshore sea-floor infrastructure. Do offshore wind companies plan to continue to allow fishing within lease areas? How are they going to minimize these interactions while ensuring the safety and livelihoods of fishers in these areas?

In Ireland, where fishing remains permitted, fishing effort has been shown to decrease due to fisher concerns about safety. In current marine spatial planning in the gulf region, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada is using adjacency estimates for catch locations, not factual data. What process will ensure data is reviewed with fishers to confirm that DFO's assumptions are correct?

There are concerns about acoustic impacts during the planning and construction phases of a farm or turbine construction, depending on the technology used—fixed or floating. What data is available on this? Acoustic noise from pile driving has been shown to have a wide range of negative impacts on many species. How will this be assessed? Disrupted behaviour among marine mammals occurs at ranges of many kilometres when interactions occur near noise sources. How will this be tracked?

How will acoustic noise from pile driving impacts on the health and behaviour of marine animals, including American lobster and various species of demersal fish, be assessed? How will the effects of increased shipping noise during construction be assessed? What types of tools will be incorporated into sea-floor mapping at lease sites? What is the lifespan of these units and who is responsible for dismantling and decommissioning costs?

We are very concerned about the use of seismic testing. It has been shown, both regionally and globally, to negatively impact various aspects of marine invertebrates' health and behaviour. Data is lacking on the long-term effects on reproduction and how future stocks could be affected by the development of offshore wind farms.

Electromagnetic fields, like those produced by the sea-floor cables used to transfer power from offshore wind farms to land, have the potential to negatively affect the early development of larval crustaceans in their vicinity. How will this be assessed?

Last but not least, the fishing industry has been working tirelessly to protect North Atlantic right whales with mitigation measures. Fishers have spearheaded the testing of lower breaking-strength ropes and surface rope. We've been asked to move our gear out of areas where right whales have been spotted. This will not be possible for floating turbines. How will collisions [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] be minimized? Shipping traffic will also increase during construction and maintenance. How will that density be assessed?

• (1750)

In summation, we currently know the value of our fisheries from both a monetary and community contribution perspective. It is critical that policies and decision-makers understand that large-scale ocean-based projects can have immediate and far-reaching negative aspects on our fisheries. Electric power is important. Food is more important. No project should proceed if our valuable Canadian food resources are put at risk.

Thank you.

I'm sorry I was a little over there, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

If anyone would like to provide more information, you do have until February 16 at 5 p.m. to provide a brief. I know that was mentioned in a few opening statements.

We will now proceed to our first round of questions. We may get through only one full round.

We will begin with Mr. Small from the Conservative Party of Canada, for six minutes.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for taking part in the study and second reading of this bill.

I will start with you, Mr. Vascotto. Do you think the Conservatives are trying to hang up this legislation, or do you think we're simply wanting to give stakeholders like you...? You are a stakeholder when wind energy and the fishing industry compete for the same territory.

What's your opinion on that?

• (1755)

Dr. Kris Vascotto: To be honest, as we've been sitting back trying to engage in this process, we've actually been very welcoming of the opportunity to come to committee and make these statements. In many respects, this is democracy in action. You have been able to hear our concerns. You have been able to hear Mike's concerns. You have been able to hear concerns about labour.

The hope is that these conversations that are happening at this committee will then be taken back to help shape a better piece of legislation that better shapes the landscape. To be honest, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be able to come forward and have these discussions.

Thank you.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Vascotto, had this bill gone from first to second to third reading without entering committee for review, where would that have left you with your concerns?

Dr. Kris Vascotto: As we have been having these discussions internally about offshore energy development and offshore wind energy in particular, we would have been at the end point of having to see this get delivered to us. Then you would have seen us being forced to come back to try to find an avenue of recourse to be able to solve these problems before they became legislated in law. We would have been working closely with the CNSOER under its new

name brand, but really, this is a question about trying to solve the problem before it becomes a problem. This is what we view this process as being all about.

Mr. Clifford Small: Would you say that this process will lend more certainty to those who want to eventually invest in our offshore? Could a process like this put the framework in place that your industry needs to make sure your concerns are looked after?

Dr. Kris Vascotto: Yes. I would say that this process of being able to provide our perspective and see it come out in the legislation inspires confidence in the fishing industry. You become much less obstructive toward any sort of ocean development that's ongoing if you know that your concerns are being mindfully cared for during the development of the legislation and during the implementation of the regulations.

I also would suggest that a proponent would be in a much better position of understanding that the fishing industry had confidence in what was being done as opposed to taking another perspective.

Thank you.

Mr. Clifford Small: Again, Mr. Vascotto, on February 29 Minister Wilkinson said, and I quote, that he sees the bill as standing as is, in response to our questioning about whether or not he would be open to amendments or changes.

If this bill doesn't change to address the framework that you're looking for as a fishing industry stakeholder and for the 20 groups that you represent, where does that leave you?

Dr. Kris Vascotto: Thank you. That's a great question. An intractable position always generates some degree of push-back. I can envision the discussions we'll have: What are we going to do now that we don't have confidence that our interests and our concerns are being upheld?

I hope that there will be wisdom in what has been discussed at this committee by all parties and that everybody's perspective will be seen in what develops as the final product.

Thank you.

Mr. Clifford Small: If we can't get a final product out of this bill that builds in the framework for consultation that your industry needs, could that breed conflict and could that cause investors to be less certain about investing in wind energy in Atlantic Canada?

Dr. Kris Vascotto: Thank you.

I would say it wouldn't just be investors who are concerned about investing in wind energy. I think the fishing communities would be concerned about providing investment for much-needed fleet renewals and much-needed plant renewals. Really, this becomes a larger question if there's a lack of confidence.

Thank you.

Mr. Clifford Small: You mentioned earlier that vast areas of ocean will go off-line. What does that look like to you in terms of the economic impacts on the fishing industry?

Would it also affect the conducting of DFO science within wind farms, based on your knowledge?

• (1800)

Dr. Kris Vascotto: Yes, very much so. If we look at an idea of five gigawatts of power, which is industry accepted, and about five megawatts per kilometre, you're looking at about a thousand square kilometres of ocean that will be immediately taken out. What that means is that scientific surveys can't be done in those areas, which means we no longer have confidence in the type of stock dynamics occurring within those areas.

It begins to undermine the science, depending on where these areas were placed. Michael put this very clearly by saying, if you go to those less than 30-metre depths and put it entirely within the lobster producing area, you're taking one of the most valuable exports out of Nova Scotia and knocking a hole in its ability to land that wild fish and seafood. At the same time, fishers can't just adjust once you take these areas out. Because it piles more effort into a smaller area, we can actually do more damage to the stock.

There are a lot of pieces and a lot of strings that you can pull at with this ball. You start to see that this is a far more difficult question than simply talking about one small piece of ground.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening round of questions and answers.

We'll now go to Mr. Sorbara for six minutes.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be splitting my time with Parliamentary Secretary Jones in this round.

One question goes over to Mr. Schumann. Steve, your union represents workers across the country. They would be employed in the renewable energy sector—in this case, offshore wind.

We have put forward a number of measures here with our government, including in budget 2022, budget 2023 and the fall economic statement, with the tax credits and the ITCs. These will require us to make sure that we pay prevailing union wages and provide apprenticeship training opportunities to be met in order to receive the maximum credit rate for the clean technology, clean hydrogen, clean electricity and CCUS investment tax credits.

In your eyes, along with Bill C-49 and what we've laid out in ITCs, how important is it to you—and, more importantly, to your members and for future apprenticeships—for Bill C-49 to pass and to have the ITCs come into effect?

Mr. Steven Schumann: Thank you for the question.

Obviously, we build it all and we see that renewable energy is necessary not only for climate change but for us to get ahead of it. I think it's very important in the sense that it will provide us with opportunities, but we need to make sure now, through the tax credits, that those opportunities really do exist. This is because a company can do a project and choose to either meet the prevailing wage to get the full tax credit or just to use cheaper labour, not meet the standards and not get the tax credit.

I want to make sure that we benefit at all ends. If we can ensure that the work is met with prevailing wages and that Canadians can do it, it's a win-win for us.

However, I am somewhat concerned. I see what's happening in the U.S. and how much other work is being done globally on offshore wind. You'll see lots of offshore work being done by foreign companies, with foreign workers from Denmark and Norway, and we'll lose some of that opportunity.

We'll fight for that work and we'll push for it, but I think we need to have more safeguards in place to ensure that we can maximize it.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Schumann, for that answer.

Mr. Chair, I'll turn my remaining time to Parliamentary Secretary Jones. Thank you.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Sorbara.

I want to thank all the witnesses. You've made some very important points as they relate to the bill.

First of all, I'm happy to see you're not opposed to the bill, and I think your concerns are very legitimate, especially in terms of the workers and ensuring Canadian workers have jobs. I agree with Mr. Schumann. I also agree that any development we do in the ocean needs to have as minimal an impact—or no impact—on fish stocks as we possibly can.

I know there's not enough time for everyone to answer questions. However, I do want to acknowledge the work of Mr. Nicholson and his contribution to our committee today.

I'm going to start with the fisheries piece. In terms of what we're doing in the offshore right now with oil and gas, for example, how have the relationships been between fisheries organizations in Nova Scotia—Prince Edward Island is appearing here as well, so feel free to jump in—and the offshore oil industry in moving that piece of energy forward? How is it different in terms of what's being looked at in the offshore wind sector and other renewables? If there's a duplication of models that work, we want to hear about it. Maybe it wasn't in previous legislation. Maybe it's not in this legislation, but maybe there are best practices that have worked. I'd like to hear about that, and how you've been able to get around it.

If there's enough time, I want to go to Mr. Schumann, because it goes without saying that everything we do in energy development has to be done to maintain not just the best environmental protections for fish and other species but also to ensure maximum employment and opportunities for communities and workers in Canada. I'd like to take a few minutes to hear what his suggestions would be around this bill to maximize the incentives and benefits for Canadian workers and communities.

Maybe we can start with Mr. Barron, who presented first on the fisheries piece.

• (1805)

Mr. Michael Barron: Kris, you'd be more versed to answer the oil and gas piece, so if you don't mind, I would ask you to answer that.

Dr. Kris Vascotto: Thank you for the opportunity to address this one.

We see it has been an evolving relationship between fisheries and oil and gas developers. Really, it's one that has matured over time. I like to think those relationships have been greatly improved as we've had improved communications. Fisheries observers have been on board for oil and gas work, and that's been ongoing. In many respects, we've gone past that point in time of just being obstructionists. It is a shared marine environment, and it's about finding the solutions that work for both sides.

I'll take a pause, because I can see the red. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Time is up for this round.

As mentioned earlier, if you'd like to answer that, you can put it in a brief and provide that information.

I will move to the next speaker.

Monsieur Simard, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mousseau, I want to follow up on something you said in your presentation.

You flagged an inconsistency in Bill C-49, the fact that renewable energy projects and oil projects are treated the same way. I think that's an important point for the analysts to note in light of the answer Minister O'Regan gave the committee when he was here last week. As I understood it, he said that the government didn't have a genuine desire to draw a distinction between the two. That is, however, an essential step to achieve the energy transition.

That is a political matter, so I'm not looking for you to weigh in. Instead, I'd like to talk about the second part of your presentation. I'd say you are surprisingly adept at taking the wind out of the sails of certain politicians, who occasionally talk about energy without really understanding the situation.

What you said earlier about wind energy, electricity and the use of clean electricity to produce hydrogen suggests that certain types of modelling may not have been done already.

Are the government's aspirations to supply hydrogen to Germany achievable in the short-to-medium term?

Mr. Normand Mousseau: Thank you for your question.

The answer is no, not right now. First of all, we don't even have a vessel that could carry the hydrogen across the Atlantic. That's a problem. Certain technologies are not yet available. That is why I agree with Mr. Nicholson, who gave his presentation after I did. He said that the real problem was getting the electricity to land and distributing it to the market, conventionally or traditionally, via cables.

Mr. Mario Simard: Cost is another issue.

I see wind energy projects being carried out in my region, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, in Quebec, by, among others, Rio Tinto, which already has expertise in the field. It has dams and infrastructure, so I think it's far enough along, since it has that infrastructure. In fact, Hydro-Québec actually uses some of the infrastructure. There are costs associated with building transmission lines, for instance, to carry and distribute wind power.

Have any estimates been done to see what that might cost per kilowatt-hour, for instance?

• (1810)

Mr. Normand Mousseau: It depends on the distance. Mr. Nicholson may have examined that more closely in his article on the deployment of wind power. Regardless, there's no doubt that the challenge is figuring out how to replace fossil fuels. The fact remains that, if you take into account Hydro-Québec's infrastructure, the company has more than a thousand kilometres in lines connecting the major production centres to the major centres where the energy is consumed. It is therefore possible to build transmission lines at a reasonable cost. The same goes for the transmission of energy between Churchill Falls and the Montreal market. It is therefore possible.

The availability of offshore wind is really something because it ensures a fairly steady supply, thereby reducing storage requirements to balance out variations in offshore supply.

However, all of that requires a conventional power grid once the offshore power has been generated. To justify these projects in eastern Canada, people are talking a lot about green hydrogen, ammonia and other elements, which lack adequate markets, cost a whole lot and are very uncertain.

I think it would be very tough to carry out projects with a 25-year horizon without a real economic plan that is sound.

Mr. Mario Simard: The federal government's strategy is to grant clean electricity tax credits this year. There will be clean hydrogen tax credits. It's an attempt to attract investors interested in carrying out these types of projects.

Would you say those things are likely to attract investors looking to undertake an offshore wind development project, or is the development of such a project still a good ways off?

Mr. Normand Mousseau: I think adding offshore and hydrogen production are significant risks. Hydrogen projects need support, partly because we don't know where the sector is headed. We have set extremely ambitious climate targets for ourselves, so we are going to have to try things out and scale industries that could fail but that could also succeed.

As far as I'm concerned, despite the risks and uncertainty, we should move forward—on the understanding that we can't create more uncertainty for a given project if we want to understand what's happening and still make progress on the transition.

Mr. Mario Simard: Finally, I'd like you to give me a short answer to this next question. We need models in order to conceptualize things properly. I'm hearing about blue hydrogen projects, green hydrogen projects.

As far as you know, do we currently have any modelling for that type of energy in Canada?

Mr. Normand Mousseau: Yes. Calculations have been done, but the issue is how we incorporate hydrogen at the service level. Production-wise, we have a good idea of the costs, especially at the Trottier Energy Institute, where the Transition Accelerator is at work. A number of organizations are studying the subject.

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Angus for six minutes.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I want to thank all the witnesses for the excellent testimony.

In my 20 years in Parliament, I've never seen perfect legislation. This is why witnesses are so important. Your point of views matter so that we can make sure the legislation does what it's supposed to do.

To that, Mr. Vascotto, I'd like to start with you.

My mother is a MacNeil. They came from Cape Breton to work the mines in northern Ontario, but I'll admit that the only fish I ever caught was a six-pack going over to buddy's house after you'd spent all day out on the lake.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charlie Angus: Fisheries are not my area of expertise, but I know you've said that your colleagues.... You've just been invited to this, but are you able to provide us with language on issues of consultation and of compensation that may be necessary to put into the bill?

My understanding was that these were issues that were dealt with at the offshore petroleum boards, but if there's something that's needed in the federal legislation, would you look at language where you think it would be important and that you could bring to us? You could call my office, and we could work with you on it. That, to me, is how we improve bills. Is that a possibility?

• (1815)

Dr. Kris Vascotto: Thank you for the question.

To be honest, I've eaten an awful lot of walleye from your riding.

Yes, we can start to look at working on some of that compensation language. There are a lot of models out there. We have models that are related. They say, "Okay, what if we develop a fund in case something happens?" There are opportunities to look at those

pieces. I'll commit to doing some work on the side and reaching out to you.

Thank you again.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We will reach out to you, because it's very important. We don't want to have a new industry come up and affect either the environment or the people who are working.

Mr. Schumann, I'm going to turn to you. I was just in Edmonton. Every time I go to Edmonton, I seem to meet the operating engineers. You guys are everywhere.

We're having a conversation about the importance of Canadian workers and union jobs in this transition. We saw that Joe Biden went to COP26. He said he was going to create a new economy based on good-paying union jobs. We haven't quite heard that language from our Prime Minister. In the last three years, half a trillion dollars of investment have moved through the IRA with tax credits—170,000 jobs. We're still trying to figure things out. We're still talking about it.

What are we missing out on in terms of what you're seeing with your colleagues in the United States and the projects they are getting up and moving ahead with?

Mr. Steven Schumann: That's a good question.

Rarely do I say that I'm jealous of our neighbours south of us, but, in this case, I am. President Biden has put the metal to the pedal. He has been true to his word, and he's acted. They have acted. I will say that unionized construction work has reaped the benefits. We are busier now than we have been for decades. We're very happy about how they pushed it forward. It's a plan for tax credits and putting action into words.

I think, in Canada, we get bogged down. We take very long to get some things through, and it sometimes seems half-hearted. ITCs are very beneficial. We had conversations with officials. We asked for more. They gave us what they gave us. Part of the thing is this: They don't understand labour. The finance end didn't understand it and was somewhat reluctant. We went to deal with some other officials. They got the need for offshore wind. They got the need for development. They didn't understand that they needed a labour component to make sure that Canadians benefit from the work as well.

I don't know where the disconnect is, but there seems to be a disconnect sometimes. I don't know whether it's our system or what it is, but, yes, there is something missing here. We should look to the U.S., for once, on this. They got it right.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The ITCs are supposed to give us both a prevailing wage and apprenticeships. I'll admit that it was a heck of a step for the Liberals to even mention apprenticeships. However, we don't want loopholes so that workers are brought in from other jurisdictions to take our jobs.

Are there steps we need to take to make sure that doesn't happen?

Mr. Steven Schumann: Let me be clear: Corporations and companies will always find loopholes.

In talking about Bill C-49, the government told us that, under the “Principles” component of this bill, industrial benefits should be covered. Principles mean nothing. If you look at the benefits plan, it says companies will give us “first consideration” for supply. Nova Scotians and Newfoundlanders will be given first consideration. First consideration doesn't mean a guarantee.

If you look at the principles.... I'm pretty sure Stellantis was all good on the principles. Foreign workers got in. If you look at the offshore stuff.... Remember, offshore wind has two components: the stuff that's going to be built onshore and the stuff that happens offshore. Offshore is all done by massive ships, which we don't have. They'll come from Europe and other places. They'll come with foreign crews. They'll use loopholes to make sure their workers work. The European trade agreement will allow them to have specialized workers on these ships. They can argue it will be specialized because we've never done this work before.

That's our challenge. We need to figure out ways to close these loopholes, and there might be many.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We saw how Aberdeen was suffering from the downturn in oil. That port city turned it around with construction jobs, transportation jobs and shipping jobs. They were able to do it.

Are your members set to take this on? Can they say, “We can take on those jobs, we're able to do them and we can put trained workers on to make these projects work”?

• (1820)

Mr. Steven Schumann: It's a good question.

I think we can do a lot of work. I agree that, at the beginning, there will be some type of co-worker who will have to come from abroad. Can we train our workers to do that work? Yes. We've done it on other projects. If I understood it rightly, the boring machine for the LRT.... We in fact had an agreement. There were a lot of foreign workers on it, but we got trained on it.

I think there are opportunities, though maybe not at the front end. If you look at the agreement in the U.S., that's what it is. It's 25% on the ships and it increases every year to ensure we get that training and build that workforce.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Colleagues, we have a few minutes. I will propose that we have one last one-minute round each for all parties, starting with the Conservatives.

Is everybody fine with that, so we can get a few more questions in for this large panel today?

You have one minute each. Everybody seems to be in agreement. Very good.

I will start with the Conservative Party.

Mr. Falk, please go ahead.

Mr. Ted Falk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses here. You provided some excellent testimony.

Several of you commented on the fact that you felt this bill had been very rushed, and you indicated you had five days' notice.

Last week, we heard from two ministers at this committee. Both of the ministers indicated that the fishing industry was very important. That they wanted to hear the voices of the fish harvesters was what Minister Wilkinson indicated. Minister O'Regan said that there had been consultations within the fisheries and oceans sectors in the provinces. This was also indicated by the Liberal member, Yvonne Jones. She said she was also aware that broad consultations had taken place with fisheries and oceans, and that she was very supportive of the fishing industry.

Is that how you fishermen feel?

The Chair: Can we have a quick response?

Please go ahead, Mr. MacPherson.

Mr. Ian MacPherson: On our consultation to date, I can appreciate that we're not directly involved with this just yet, but these can be located anywhere. There were two calls with DFO. We reached out to the staff at Marine Renewables Canada and had several calls with them to try to find more background information. There was an open house held in Charlottetown by the offshore wind development advisory board. That is it to date on what we received on Prince Edward Island, and we're seeking more avenues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacPherson.

We'll now go to Ms. Jones for a minute.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you.

My last question is going to be for Mr. Schumann.

In the bill, under proposed section 96.6, which has been added, when we did briefings with officials around the legislation—they were before our committee as well—they indicated that, under this particular clause, there would be an opportunity for you to define how the workforce would transpire and how you could ensure that it's more Canadian-based and that we're not bringing in foreign workers, and so on.

Have you had those discussions with officials, and is it a real opportunity under that clause for you to do something in that area?

Mr. Steven Schumann: We haven't had any discussions with officials. We've had some brief conversations with the minister's office. If there's a will, there's a way. We always want to work with anyone who wants to work with us to find solutions. We'll be more than happy to sit with officials to see how we can put proper wording in there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schumann.

We'll now go to Mr. Simard for one minute.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Mousseau, I'd like you to give me a short answer.

The costs associated with offshore wind projects have to be pretty high. The disaster at Muskrat Falls and the significant cost overruns come to mind. If I recall correctly, the project cost was around \$13 billion.

Do provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador have deep enough pockets to introduce these types of projects?

I assume that private companies won't want to go it alone in the face of high project costs.

Does the federal government have to provide a significant share of the funding in order for companies to get the job done?

• (1825)

Mr. Normand Mousseau: It depends on the price of electricity.

Usually, the request for proposals specifies that the government is prepared to put in so much.

Offshore electricity is a bit more expensive than land-based wind power. We saw prices drop and rebound recently because of significant demand.

There is no doubt, however, that experienced private companies will be the ones setting up the wind facilities. These kinds of projects present tremendous technical challenges, so they require a lot of expertise. We heard that earlier.

It's important to train people in Canada, but the first ones who undertake these projects will be the ones who have done it before elsewhere.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have Mr. Angus for one minute to finish us off.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your excellent work as our chair.

Mr. Nicholson, I'm sorry we didn't get to you earlier because so much of what you said is so interesting. I would have thought just a

few years ago that offshore wind was a hypothetical. Could it work? Could it not work? However, we see these projects that are happening in the United States: the New Jersey project, which will power 700,000 homes; one off Martha's Vineyard, which will power 450,000 homes; one off Rhode Island, which will power 200,000 homes. These are staggering amounts of clean energy.

Where are we on the cusp of this transformative revolution? What's it going to mean for low costs, for clean energy and for being able to transform our economy?

Mr. Peter Nicholson: Clearly, the advance so far in this field has been largely concentrated in Europe around the North Sea and in China. There is extensive experience there. They've already installed amounts that are far beyond the discussions that we've been having here. The plans in Europe, in particular, are to employ about 300 gigawatts of new electrical energy over the next 10, 15 or 20 years.

The bottom line is that this is an opportunity of historic proportions. If this country is really serious about its net-zero objectives—I know we are and we have to be—I cannot see this country meeting that without some very extensive development of offshore wind energy. The figures put forward in the Canada Energy Regulator scenarios virtually state that. The amounts of wind are quoted without saying precisely whether they are onshore or offshore. The greatest opportunity is clearly offshore. It's just a question of the detailed economics, the extent to which that wind will fulfill Canada's need.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Colleagues, that brings us to the end of today's meeting.

Before we leave, I want to thank all of our witnesses for providing testimony. If there's something you missed or if you would like to provide a brief, please do so by 5 p.m. on February 16. Thank you once again.

This concludes our meeting for today. Is it the will of the committee to adjourn the meeting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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