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• (1720)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone.

I don't think it's really necessary to read the whole procedure on how to avoid acoustic incidents.

As you know, you must maintain a certain distance between the microphone and you, and avoid touching the microphone. If you chose not to use your earpiece, please place it on the sticker in front of you.

It's our pleasure to once again welcome the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who will tell us about the factors leading to recent fires in Jasper National Park.

It's nice to have you here again, Minister. We're listening; the floor is yours.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am always happy to come before the committee.

I'm accompanied today by Andrew Campbell, senior vice-president, operations, Parks Canada. I am also accompanied by Landon Shepherd, one of the expert firefighters at Parks Canada, whom I've already had the pleasure of meeting. If you have any more specific questions on the subject, I invite you to put them to him, he's really the expert in the room, and even in the country.

Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss this important bill, Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act.

[*English*]

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that I stand on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Last week, I brought forth a unanimous consent motion to expedite Bill C-76, and I want to thank all parties and members for their support.

In the evening of July 22 of this year, a lightning storm sparked four wildfires near the Jasper townsite. By 10 p.m., an evacuation order had been issued for Jasper National Park. In just a few hours, more than 20,000 people had been safely evacuated without any casualties. As fires merged, a wall of fire nearly 300 metres high set across the southern valley in which the town of Jasper is found, projecting fiery pine cones and snapping treetops and branches up to a kilometre ahead of the fire.

[*Translation*]

Firefighters from Parks Canada, Jasper, Alberta Wildfire and dozens of towns across the country fought heroically to save homes, schools, the hospital. But there was no stopping this fire and no forest was going to escape its path.

[*English*]

Through heroic efforts, the men and women who fought this unprecedented wildfire successfully protected 70% of the Jasper townsite, on top of all the lives saved.

I would like to pause for a moment and thank Mr. Shepherd and all of his colleagues at Parks Canada, as well as the firefighting forces from the city of Jasper, the province of Alberta and other towns across the country who made this possible. I cannot thank them enough. The courage and application of the collective efforts deployed in the first hours and days of the wildfire saved lives and the majority of the community.

We remember especially the loss of Morgan Kitchen, the Alberta Wildfire crew member who died in early August while fighting that fire. It is a sobering reminder of the risks our first responders face every day in their dedication to protecting the safety, lives and property of others. Only through the efforts of Morgan and hundreds of others like him was any further loss of life prevented.

This fire has had profound impacts on the lives of so many people, impacts that are all too familiar to thousands of others in a growing number of communities that have been affected by wildfire in this country.

[*Translation*]

Buildings and critical town infrastructure have been damaged, and people's lives and their businesses have been upended. A full recovery for the community will take time, and Parks Canada is already collaborating with the Municipality of Jasper to streamline processes and facilitate a sustainable Jasper of the future.

[*English*]

Bill C-76 is part of helping the reconstruction of a sustainable Jasper community.

[*Translation*]

I would like to take a moment to recognize the collaborative efforts, ongoing for decades, to prepare and mitigate the risks of wildfire in Jasper and elsewhere in the country.

[English]

Parks Canada, the Municipality of Jasper and indigenous partners have worked together for almost 30 years to reduce known wildfire risks in Jasper National Park and around the town, making it one of the most fire-prepared and resilient communities in Canada.

Parks Canada has used prescribed fires for four decades, including 15 in the last 10 years at Jasper National Park, to reduce the risk of wildfire to national park communities and to enhance ecosystem functioning. Millions of dollars have been invested in the battle against pine beetles, removing fuel sources from built areas and establishing a fire break around the townsite.

FireSmart Canada's best practices have been implemented in Jasper National Park, and in fact they have been largely inspired by the work that has been developed in Jasper.

The Government of Canada has invested in Jasper National Park for wildfire risk reduction activities, such as vegetation management to reduce wildfire risks to people, infrastructure and assets. The total area treated in Jasper National Park since 2014 is approximately 1,700 hectares. However devastating the fire was, Parks Canada's response and preparedness ensured that it was not much worse.

[Translation]

The government recognizes the situation on the ground in Jasper and our thoughts are with all those affected by the wildfire and to the family of firefighter Morgan Kitchen. Hundreds of individuals, families and businesses have been forced to cope with being evacuated, the loss of their property, streams of income and for many, their employment.

• (1725)

[English]

We are working hard to ensure that all of those affected receive the services and benefits to which they are entitled. We're seeking to ensure barriers to the sustainable reconstruction of the Jasper community are removed.

[Translation]

As part of this effort, we are seeking to update the Canada National Parks Act to enable the transfer of land use planning and development authorities from Parks Canada to the Municipality of Jasper. This change to the legislation will help facilitate streamlined decision-making where locally elected officials are empowered to make decisions regarding the reconstruction of their community.

Parks Canada remains a committed partner in reconstruction. Parks Canada and the Municipality of Jasper have a strong working relationship that was demonstrated time and again.

[English]

A unified command structure with the Municipality of Jasper was established on the first full day of the fire. This unified command has continued through re-entry and will remain in place through recovery and rebuilding. By working together, results are being achieved.

Residents were able to return to Jasper within a month of the evacuation. Roadways, the Miette Hot Springs, and the Columbia Icefield were open within days of the fire in the town. Travellers are once again able to visit Jasper, and their presence is vital for the many tourism industries that cater to this clientele.

As the Municipality of Jasper works to recover and rebuild, adoption of Bill C-76 will that ensure our government is supporting Jasperites. With the current streamlining work being done, and by implementing the right legislative authorities, local knowledge and local skills will be the leaders in addressing the needs of reconstruction in the communities.

[Translation]

Thank you.

I look forward to answering your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

In passing, I'd like to welcome Mr. Soroka, Mr. Calkins and Mr. Lloyd, who are joining us this afternoon. I'm told we're starting with Mr. Soroka.

Mr. Soroka for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, this meeting is about the events that led to the fire. With nearly \$1 billion in damage, one-third of Jasper destroyed, 800 housing units gone—leaving 2,000 residents homeless out of a population of 5,000—and businesses reduced to ashes, upending lives and livelihoods, yes or no: Does the government accept responsibility for the failure to protect the people and the town of Jasper?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question.

To give you an idea of what's been done in recent years, for comparison's sake, let's look at the investments made in the final year that Stephen Harper's Conservative Party was in power. In 2014-15, \$2 million was invested in forest fire prevention. In 2022-23, we invested \$4.4 million in forest fire prevention alone, twice as much as the previous government. But we didn't stop there. Since 2020, \$6.9 million has been invested—

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Minister, if I ask a 30-second question—

A voice: —you have to get a 30-second answer.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Okay.

The Chair: No, we don't operate that way.

I know some committees do that, but we're a little more free-wheeling. It makes for a better debate.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Well, if it's freewheeling, I won't be able to get an answer.

The Chair: Anyway, go ahead, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I have two pieces of information to share. Since 2020, we've spent \$6.9 million to tackle infestations and remove dead wood, and \$79 million has been invested since 2023—

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Minister, I have many other questions.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That amount is about 30 times greater than what the previous government invested—

The Chair: I'm going back to Mr. Soroka.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: This is my next question. You have been quoted as saying, “Years of preparation, forest management,...paid off”; yet a third of the town is gone. There are billions of dollars in devastation, and 2,000 people are now homeless. You're telling me this preparation was paying off.

Minister, if this was an example of preparation and success, what does failure look like?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: If we hadn't done all that work to create the buffer zone around the town, the repercussions would have been far more significant. When I say “we”, I'm talking about Parks Canada, the Municipality of Jasper, the Alberta government and Indigenous peoples.

It's important to understand that Jasper is one of the best equipped towns to deal with this. I know it's hard for the Conservative Party to admit it, but we're facing extreme weather events that we've never seen before, whether it's forest fires, floods or tropical storms—

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: You have to keep your answers shorter, because all of my questions are shorter today.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: The chair will tell me when it's time to stop speaking.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Soroka.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I'll start off with this.

You're saying that FireSmart is a national program inspired by Jasper, and this is what you've said: “What we do around the country to protect towns and cities...was inspired largely by what we've been doing in Jasper for all these years.”

I have to ask, if Jasper is the model for towns in proximity to forests, should we expect that a third of a town burns to the ground? Is this the new national standard—that a third of a town burns and you consider it a success? Is that your new plan?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Indeed, the FireSmart emergency management program is used by municipalities across the country. What we need to do is recognize that we're facing natural disasters, the likes of which we've never seen before. We can think of atmospheric rivers on the west coast, for example, heat waves and floods in eastern Canada.

We're going to have to do more. I completely agree on that point. We're going to have to do more to better protect our cities, especially near forests, which could be affected by forest fires. The FireSmart emergency management program is used across the country. We will continue to work on improving it.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: When was your government first warned about the reality of a catastrophic fire in Jasper?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I can turn to Mr. Shepherd.

[*English*]

Landon, you were there on the ground. I could turn to you in terms of the sequence of events.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: When was the specific date of when Jasper “would” burn, not if it “could” burn? You knew that there was a lot of fuel and everything and that there was a high potential of fires. When did you guys know this?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: In fact, I disagree with you entirely. I have demonstrated to you that our government—

At the time, your party's government invested \$2 million. Our government has invested approximately \$80 million in forest fire prevention; \$2 million versus \$80 million, that's the difference between you and us.

That said, I understand that more needs to be done. I'm fully aware that more needs to be done. I'm the first to admit that. My team and I were notified as soon as an advisory was issued.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Thank you, Minister.

Former MP for Yellowhead Jim Eglinski brought this forward on the floor of the House of Commons in 2017 to the environment minister, who then said that they take this serious issue very seriously. Then, in 2018, the Jasper Park superintendent said that Parks Canada takes this issue very seriously. Once again, nothing was done. In 2018, two professional foresters wrote to the previous environmental minister saying that it is not a matter of “if” but “when” the town of Jasper will burn. Your government didn't even respond.

Time and time again, you say that you take very seriously how our forests are going to be protected and towns are going to be protected, but there's been no action. Does the government accept responsibility for the failure to protect the people of the town of Jasper, yes or no?

[Translation]

The Chair: Please give us a very brief answer, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: In fact, roughly speaking, we've invested 40 times more than the Stephen Harper government in forest fire protection in Jasper.

The Chair: All right.

Mrs. Chatel, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I find it quite incredible to hear the Conservatives talk about forest fires and how catastrophic they are. Indeed, given global warming and the fact that you Conservatives are not proposing any climate measures, you'll have to get used to it, because there will be a lot of forest fires, and many towns and villages will burn down. That's why it's important to have a climate plan. If you want to know the concrete repercussions of years of inaction, here they are. So, wake up.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Chair, since I've never used the interpretation system, I don't know how it works, and my colleague would like to know.

The Chair: I've stopped the clock.

[English]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Can someone explain how the translation system works? I never use it, so I don't know how it works.

[Translation]

The Chair: Oh, yes, it's all new. They've changed the equipment, and even I've...

[English]

No, we're stopping it.

Come on, Dan, come on. That was a nice try.

[Translation]

Can you hear me in English now? That's perfect.

Please continue, Mrs. Chatel.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Shepherd, I'd like to learn more about what happened on the ground, that is to say, the conditions before the fire.

What were the normal conditions compared to the conditions just before the fire?

• (1735)

[English]

Mr. Landon Shepherd (Wildfire Incident Commander, Jasper National Park, Parks Canada Agency): The conditions leading up to the ignitions on July 22 were quite extreme. It was drier, with a longer period of dry weather than we had experienced for the last several years when we had quite extreme conditions. It was over 20 days since the last significant rain event was recorded at any of our weather stations, and strictly speaking, it moved into almost the 99th percentile of dry conditions for Jasper, so all fuels were available to burn under those conditions.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Can you explain to me what happened on the ground, concretely, and what you and your colleagues did?

[English]

Mr. Landon Shepherd: When the first of four fires were reported, it came from a member of the public, and it was near the TMX pumping station for the pipeline. The call came in because it's right beside the highway, and we actually had our fire duty officer on scene within minutes of that report. Within minutes of that report, that fire was already growing significantly, and it moved into the tree canopy, which made it very difficult to suppress.

We had a helicopter dispatched, also within minutes, that was able to start bucketing, and crews that were able to start work on that fire. Despite the fact that there is a highway and a railway keeping the sides initially somewhat contained, the fire grew under quite strong winds to the point that the bucketing wasn't sufficient.

Air tanker support was requested from Alberta, and they were not able to assist. They desperately do want to assist. We work quite closely with the Alberta wildfire service and the B.C. wildfire service, and they weren't able to assist because they were very busy with wildfires. Some fires had lasted since last season. It's really hard for them too when they're asked to help and are not able to provide that. However, they combed the province, and the tanker groups either were already engaged in protecting communities or were smoked in and not able to lift off.

My colleague in Edson, whom I had initially reached out to, then petitioned B.C. to see if they had any tanker groups that could come to assist, and they also were in a similar state. They had a tanker group in Castlegar that would have been able to fly towards the coast but could not come east towards us and assist. That was unfortunate for that one fire.

While we were engaged with that fire and were working to keep people safe on the highway, which is right beside where that fire started, we got reports of two other fires. It turned out to be three other fires, about 30 kilometres south of the community. We continued to engage on the fire that was close to the community and was affecting traffic. We worked both to stop the flow of traffic and to turn people around who were headed into harm's way, and we also tried to secure that fire so that we would have a passage along that road and then could get information on what was happening to the south.

Because of how rapidly it was growing, the next obvious thing was that there are campgrounds immediately north of that north fire, and we started evacuating those campgrounds when it became apparent that we weren't going to stop the head of the fire, even with having resources—

● (1740)

The Chair: Thank you. It pains me to cut you off, because it's very interesting to see how things unfolded. However, there's a six-minute time limit.

We'll go to Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Indeed, everything you are telling us is impressive. Your experience is very broad.

However, other people and other experts have experience. Earlier, my colleague Mr. Soroka mentioned the study by Mr. Begin and Mr. Hodges. They have submitted their work to Parks Canada's Jasper superintendent, Mr. Fehr. I'm sure there's a lot of expertise at Parks Canada, but the work of these people, who have 40 years of expertise, was convincing. They said, for example, that it would only take a “30-30-30” day, as they called it, with 30% humidity, a temperature of 30 degrees Celsius and winds blowing at 30 kilometres an hour to start a fire. I think that illustrates the dangers quite well.

The superintendent of Jasper Park says he's looking to improve procedures; it seems to me there's some important and interesting expertise here from these two researchers.

Do you think that contributions and expertise from outside the federal Parks Canada Agency could be better integrated in the future?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: In fact, I've said it many times, but the work we do, whether it's in Jasper National Park, Banff or elsewhere in the country, is done in partnership with other collaborators.

Let's take Jasper as an example. For almost 30 years, we've been working to prepare the town for forest fires. In terms of the buffer zone, we've worked with the municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada, the Government of Alberta, and indigenous peoples. So there's a lot of input coming from outside.

There's a lot of expertise at Parks Canada, but we also work with many partners to try to reduce the risks. It's important to understand that we can't eliminate forest fires, floods, or heat waves in Canada. What we have to do is try to be as prepared as possible.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: What I understood from what these experts said is that they wanted to give their research to the Parks Canada Agency, but there was no collaboration. Parks Canada refused to give the researchers a copy of its intervention plan, saying that everything was fine. In my opinion, there was clearly a lack of cooperation with people who had over 40 years of expertise.

I'm going to talk about another area where people would benefit from talking to each other. I'm talking about the drought monitoring map for Alberta, which is produced by the provincial government. For Jasper Park, it says “Stage 1 - Monitoring and Observation”.

On the other hand, the federal government's Canadian Drought Monitor indicates abnormally dry regional conditions.

How is the reconciliation between data from provincial and federal analyses done, even though you've told me there have been links between municipal and provincial levels? Also, how often is this mapping updated?

It seems clear to me that while Alberta says it's monitoring the situation, the federal government finds regional conditions abnormally dry.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As you can understand, the federal government's objective is obviously not to impose or dictate its own standards and ways of doing things.

There's a partnership, there's an exchange of information and collaboration. Secondly, the criteria are not necessarily the same from one level of government to another. Data analysis is not necessarily the same. It's true that we were perhaps more concerned about the situation than some governments were. I think—we heard it earlier—that these were pretty extraordinary conditions in terms of low precipitation.

First of all, there wasn't much snow in this region last winter, and there was little precipitation in the spring. Indeed, certain conditions were in place. A buffer zone had already been created, but you can't change a region's weather conditions to bring rain or...

Ms. Monique Pauzé: No, of course not, but this is the kind of reconciliation that may be missing between the data from the provincial analyses and the data from the federal analysis.

How often is the mapping updated?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Together with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, we're working to sign federal, provincial and territorial agreements on adaptation; we'll be able to better share our information. We'll also be able to work more effectively together to better prepare Canadians to cope with the effects of climate change.

Work is more advanced with some territories than others, but I will tell you that, in this regard, all the provinces and territories and the federal government want to work together. The federal government can do some of it, the provinces can do some of it, and so can the municipalities, but it's by all of us working together that we can get there.

● (1745)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Let me make one last comment about the work and the lack of coordination, or the lack of openness about taking into account what experts have said. Mr. Ken Hodges, a forester, had this to say: “If we don't reduce dead material in the forest, we run the risk of a fire similar to the one in Waterton [National Park].” In 2017, a fire caused by lightning destroyed 30% of this national park, and forest firefighters took two weeks to bring it under control.

There are specialized researchers at Parks Canada. In fact, there are researchers in every government department, but there are also researchers outside the government. The lack of coordination between the two groups, and the lack of openness to sharing data, means that we're not making any headway. There will be more and more unfortunate events due to climate change. Therefore, data exchange should be more and more frequent.

The Chair: All right. Your speaking time is up.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I don't know if there was a question there, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No, Ms. Pauzé herself said beforehand that it was a comment.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Okay.

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here, Minister.

I have to say that when we heard about what was happening in Jasper, those of us in Alberta were heartbroken. I know I couldn't sleep that night.

I texted my colleague—the MP for that area—that night. For many of us, Jasper holds an incredibly special place in our hearts. I was married in Jasper. In fact, I was in Jasper in May, celebrating my 23rd wedding anniversary in one of the cabins that has now burned down. So many of us taught our kids how to ski there. We learned how to camp there. We hike, we canoe and we cherish those Rocky Mountains probably more than anywhere else in our province.

I'm glad I get to be here and ask you some questions.

While this tragedy was unfolding and Albertans were watching and so worried about what was happening to our beloved Rocky Mountains and the people who live and work there, there was a lot of confusion about who was in charge and what was happening. There was a lot of blame going around. Danielle Smith and the UCP were very clearly blaming the federal government. There was blame going both ways. Albertans didn't have a clear view of what was happening or why it was happening the way it was, and whether everything had been done properly.

I'm aware that Premier Danielle Smith cut the wildfire management budget by \$30 million. I am aware that the NDP and my colleague Richard Cannings have been asking, for some time, to have a national wildfire force.

Minister, what do you say to us, the people of Alberta, who watched as we lost a third of our cherished Jasper townsites? Think about places like Lake Louise and Banff. Think about other national parks. How do we know the challenges we saw in Jasper aren't going to be repeated in future in other beloved cities and towns in our province?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I've been talking to the mayor of Jasper on a regular basis, but I was talking to him the day before. At that point, some of the fire had started, but it was under control.

Most people thought we could manage it. Then the winds started picking up. We went from winds that were about 30 kilometres an hour to winds that went between 120 and 150 kilometres an hour, I believe. The conditions changed very rapidly.

You talked about lives being impacted in Jasper. Mr. Shepherd, how many Parks Canada employees live in Jasper? How many of them have been affected?

Mr. Andrew Campbell (Senior Vice-President, Operations, Parks Canada Agency): We have 500 employees who live in Jasper, along with their families. Two hundred of those have lost their homes or accommodations.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: They care deeply and we care deeply about what happens. I talked about a buffer zone of 1,700 hectares that was created over the years around Jasper. I believe it's about 2,000 hectares around Banff. Because of climate change, we will have to re-evaluate those and probably create larger buffer zones.

Ms. Heather McPherson: A national firefighting force, perhaps....

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You've heard the Prime Minister say, "Well, we have Parks Canada. That is a federal forest firefighting force." Could we do more? We've invested a lot, since the budget last year, in more forest firefighting capability, federally. I spoke about the investment we've made specifically around Jasper in the last few years, which is close to \$90 million—

● (1750)

Ms. Heather McPherson: I will interrupt you. Sorry. I do know that you have already given us some of those numbers. I don't want to make you repeat yourself.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I guess for the people living in Alberta, we're wondering if this will be sufficient, considering that climate change means that this will happen more and more regularly. Will we be able to respond to this as fast as we need to? I think most people would say that although the budget happened in the spring, the forest fire happened in the summer and it didn't seem to help the people of Jasper. I would just reiterate that for you as well.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I don't think—

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have one other question that I just really quickly wanted to—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: There are no magic solutions—

Ms. Heather McPherson: Just one second—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —to adapting to climate change.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I understand that.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You understand that. Okay. Good.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm not saying that we aren't going to have forest fires, but I do think that the response to those forest fires has to be stronger, to be honest. I do think that the collaboration between the provincial government and the federal government was wanting. Those looking in saw confusion and fights.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I disagree with that.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Whether that was just on the news is one thing, but that's what Albertans saw.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It's one thing for what Premier Smith said. If you talk to the forest firefighters who were on the ground, whether you were a Jasper firefighter or with the Alberta government or with Parks Canada, they weren't like that. Mr. Shepherd could talk about that.

Ms. Heather McPherson: The communication was not strong for those in Alberta. It was a very difficult time for many of us.

I have one really quick question that I want to get in before my time runs out.

One of the challenges we have is that Jasper is a tourism city, of course. A lot of people make their living off tourism. We know that many of them were not able to have sufficient hours to access the EI system. This is a real challenge for workers who, by no fault of their own, are no longer able to work.

My colleague Blake Desjarlais and I have written to your government. We have not received a response. Is there any chance or any attempt being made to ensure that those people who have been affected by the fire in Jasper will be able to access EI?

The Chair: This will have to be very brief. We're at six minutes. You can take 10 or 15 seconds or maybe answer that in another round.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I'm the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I will certainly raise your point with Minister Boissonnault, who's responsible for EI.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to our second round.

This is a five-minute round, and it's Mr. Lloyd who's leading it off.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming here.

I think the only thing I can agree with you on here is that they were brave and heroic firefighters who were fighting on the front lines. Once this fire started, I don't believe there was anything they could have done to have stopped it, just because of the intensity of this fire.

You've come in here, Minister, with quite a lot of bravado. You've talked about the great job your government has done and about how Jasper is the most prepared town for a fire, yet one-third of the town was allowed to burn down, with nearly a billion dollars' worth of damage, and 2,000 people are homeless.

Do you have any humility, Minister? Is there any admission that your government could have done more to prevent this fire from destroying one-third of the town? What could you have done, Minister?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It's quite ironic that your party, of all parties, would be talking about that when you oppose systematically—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Don't deflect this, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —every measure we put in place to fight climate change—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: You knew.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —or even to adapt to climate change.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: You didn't take action for nine years.

The Chair: Just a second, Mr. Lloyd. We're not in question period here.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You oppose everything that—

The Chair: Can we just pause for a second?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes.

The Chair: Let's just calm down and have a meaningful exchange.

Where were we? Were we at your answer or your question? I'm sorry. I was talking to Mr. Morrice.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I'm here to listen to the minister right now.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I find it incredibly ironic that your party, of all the parties in the House of Commons, would be asking these questions when you oppose both the measures to fight climate change and the measures to adapt to climate change. Climate change is a reality. You may dispute this and your party may not recognize this—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Your measures failed to protect the town of Jasper.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —but it's real. We won't prevent flooding—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: You are not showing any humility. You're not giving Canadians any solace.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —and we won't prevent forest fires—

The Chair: This is not about humility and modesty. We're not going to get into that.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I'd like to move on to my next question.

The Chair: Yes. Please do. Thank you.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you.

Minister, in 2017 and in 2018, in multiple letters sent to your predecessor, Catherine McKenna, who was minister at the time, Ken Hodges and Emile Begin, forestry scientists, warned your government that Parks Canada was not capable of preventing this fire and that the actions they had taken to date were not capable of preventing these fires. They said it was a matter of when, not if.

Why did Parks Canada fail to take the actions necessary to prevent this devastating wildfire?

• (1755)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I respectfully disagree with the characterization of your question.

Andrew, I'm wondering if you want to talk about this. I've spoken about some of the things Parks Canada has done. Do you want to add a few things?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: Yes.

Through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, of course, Parks Canada gets a lot of support and uses a cross-Canada, government-wide, federal-provincial standard of how forest fires are fought and what information goes into that. That centre—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I'm going to have to cut this off.

The Chair: Why? It's a—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It's going quite slowly.

The Chair: Well, go ahead with your next question. It's your time.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: In 2018, Minister, your own superintendent of Parks, Alan Fehr, went on CBC and said that fire was not something that they were concerned about. He claims that your department did its homework to protect Jasper.

Do you stand by the words of your superintendent? Was fire not a concern in Jasper National Park? Did you do your homework, yes or no?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Since that interview, \$86 million was—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Did you say six million dollars?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It was \$86 million.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Was it for Jasper National Park?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes, some of it was for Jasper and some of it was for the other national parks—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: That was for all across the country.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —in Alberta.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Compared to the \$2 million—

The Chair: Mr. Lloyd, excuse me, I'm going to stop the time.

I like robust debate, and I have no problem with that, but please let the minister answer the question so that we can find out the truth or an approximation of it.

Go ahead.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Since that interview was done, \$86 million has been invested compared to \$2 million when you were in power.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: That's false, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That's the truth.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: In 2020, your government announced \$6.9 million over three years for Jasper National Park. The Alberta Forest Products Association, in an open letter in 2017, said it would take \$85 million to protect the park, yet your government only invested \$6.9 million over three years.

The proof is in the pudding. A third of the town of Jasper burned down, and you're here at this committee bragging about a \$6-million investment. It's not nearly enough, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You're mistaken, it's \$6.9 million for rhododendron infestations, to which \$79 million must be added. So it's wrong to say it's only \$6.9 million when \$79 million has been added.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: That gets to the crux of my point.

Why were thousands of hectares of dead pine beetle-infested trees allowed to be in close proximity to the town of Jasper—thousands of hectares?

Your government says that you have removed 1,700 hectares since 2014, but in a 2022 report, your own department said that they only removed 1.6 hectares of whitebark pine.

There are thousands of hectares of dead pine beetle trees in the vicinity of Jasper. Why were these allowed to stay there when they represented a serious threat to the town? All of these experts knew it. Why didn't you remove them?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: There were 1,700 hectares that were removed, about 17 square kilometres, which is about eight times the size of the town of Jasper, just to put it in perspective.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It's a park of a million square hectares

Mr. Andrew Campbell: That's correct, but a lot of that park is not in the town. We can all agree to that, I'm sure. Within that, you had a large buffer zone.

Landon is the vegetation and fire specialist out of Banff.

On top of that, there's a large.... I don't want to just call it a sprinkler system. It's a high-powered sprinkler system that protects the town. It goes up 12 metres in height and protects a large area of the town.

The Chair: I'm sorry; I'm going to have to cut it off here. We're way over time. Anyway, it's very complex, I know.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you for your professionalism, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to Parks Canada for being here.

Mr. Shepherd, thank you for the incredible work you've done on behalf of Canada.

Minister, briefly, could you describe the governance around this issue? You mentioned adaptation. Forest fires are increasing, and climate change is going to continue that trajectory for decades while we fight the crisis that we're in with climate change.

I've heard in the House that the increased cost on pollution we're putting in place to try to bend the curve on climate change didn't stop the forest fires.

Could you talk about the governance that we're putting in place, the trajectory that we're trying to change and how we're working with firefighters, with national parks and with provincial and municipal counterparts?

It's hard to paint that picture in a few minutes, but if you could start on that, then I'd like to go over to Mr. Shepherd about some of the operational details.

• (1800)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: There are some in the House of Commons from the Conservative Party who think that there's an on-off switch for climate change on a wall somewhere, or some fairy dust we can sprinkle on this. There used to be a time when the Conservative Party of Canada believed that hard things were hard.

For example, former prime minister Brian Mulroney helped the world agree to the Montreal Protocol on ozone depletion in 1987. Scientists estimate that by 2070 or 2080, the ozone layer will have recovered from decades of abuse. It will have taken almost a century.

Climate change is not something that's going to be stopped overnight. It's going to take years and years of hard work, something that they're incapable of even understanding, but that's what we're doing and that's why we're deploying all those measures.

Yes, emissions are at their lowest level in 25 years. We've never seen greenhouse gas emissions in Canada go down unless it was because of a financial crisis, an economic recession or COVID. Now they are going down; they are 8% below 2005 levels, and they will continue going down.

I don't want to take up too much time. Perhaps I can pass it over to you, Mr. Shepherd, to talk about some of the inter-agency co-operation we have with Alberta, the town of Jasper and others.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Shepherd.

I'm watching you listen to our conversation. We are not here to blame you or your staff. The work you're doing is incredible. We need to know more details.

As we look forward to what next year and the year after that will look like, what are we learning operationally? How can we further support the work you're doing on behalf of Canadians?

Mr. Landon Shepherd: At our local, regional, provincial and interprovincial levels, we were able to operationally have a very tight co-operative relationship.

I'm sorry to hear that this wasn't being communicated, because it really meant a lot to have the support from British Columbia and Alberta, just as we supported them in some of their really hard years: in 2021 in B.C., last year in the Northwest Territories and Alberta, and again this year in Alberta. We're going to have to keep doing that; it is functioning and working.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: It was mentioned earlier that the budget had money in it. The budget was passed in the spring. The budget then has to be implemented, and people have to be hired and equipment has to be purchased. Where are we in that process of investing?

We have the fall economic statement coming up and we have another budget coming up, so I think it's a good time to talk about what progress we are seeing in terms of implementing the budget and what we need to look at for next year.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: We began the implementation because we have had a long train of funding that we have put in place in Jasper. We have had a long train of getting prepared and getting those resources on the ground.

One of the things we always have to consider is how we get people trained all across the country. We've put new programs in place in order to do that training. We have new centres in Banff that we have invested in.

As for having more equipment, there is more equipment, as I was saying, like high-powered sprinkler systems that were protecting the town of Jasper. There have been lots of implementation efforts made.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Pauzé, go ahead.

• (1805)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Is my speaking time two and a half minutes, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, exactly.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Shepherd, thank you very much for going out there. Mr. Campbell, I don't know if you were there also.

I'm reminded of the thought of a firefighter who was present at the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. Years later, he was still reliving the scene. It's like post-traumatic shock. I imagine that's what happened to you too, after seeing a town burn down. It was a beautiful city; I know, I've been there. I want you to know that you have my full sympathy, and I thank you for being here to talk about it again.

Minister, I'd now like to talk to you about climate change and, of course, the federal government's strategy for dealing with it. In this case, Jasper was the one that burned down. What will be the next town or park to burn?

In July 2023, you said the federal government's strategy had three phases. The first was to suspend Canada's international assistance to the fossil fuel industry. The second was to end inefficient hydrocarbon subsidies. By the fall of 2024, you were to unveil your plan to phase out public funding of Canada's fossil fuel sector. Here we are, fall is here. When will we be able to see the plan that was promised in July 2023? Also, what is the third phase of the plan?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You're right, there were indeed three phases. The first phase, in 2022, was about suspending international funding; the second phase, in 2023, with the help of the NDP, was about eliminating direct government subsidies; and the third phase is about public funding.

You say, quite rightly, that we're committed to doing this by the fall of 2024. Well, it's early fall. We're working with agencies like Export Development Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada to put these new measures in place.

I would like to remind you that we are the only G20 country committed to eliminating these fossil fuel subsidies. None of our other partners has done so to date.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: You surely know, Minister, that I don't really believe in the "effective subsidy, ineffective subsidy" tandem. We know that increasing oil and gas production invariably increases greenhouse gas emissions and disrupts the climate. This production is at the heart of what causes forest fires. But if less is asked of the oil and gas industries, all other industries will have to do more.

What happens when oil and gas production increases greenhouse gases?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we don't have time for a reply. We've really gone over the two-and-a-half-minute mark. Perhaps Ms. McPherson will ask the minister to answer Ms. Pauzé's question. We often do that here at the committee; we help each other out.

Ms. McPherson, you have the floor.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

[English]

It is very difficult for those of us with two and a half minutes, and I'm going to ask some very, very quick questions.

First of all, since I have you here, Minister, you will know that one of the biggest threats to the Rocky Mountains right now is coal mining. It was in your mandate letter that you would stop thermal coal exportation, and that has not happened. In fact, it has increased. It is a risk for the people of Jasper and for all of Albertans and should be for all Canadians.

Can you explain why that hasn't been done, why none of those steps have been taken and why none of the alignment in protecting waterways from selenium has happened?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Well, you will know that we are the government that has legislated to phase out the production of electricity through coal. It was we who did that—

Ms. Heather McPherson: It was actually Rachel Notley from the Alberta NDP who started that process.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Actually, in all fairness, Ontario started a long time before Alberta did. I'm from Quebec, so I'm not taking sides here.

Second, our commitment for the export phase-out is by 2030. We're working on it. We're in 2024. We still have some time ahead of us.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Your plan is to continue to just increase the exportation of thermal coal until 2030? That's our strategy, is it?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Our plan is as committed: to phase it out by 2030.

Ms. Heather McPherson: You would want to start decreasing that.

Anyway, I'm going to go on to the next question.

As I mentioned earlier, Danielle Smith, of the Conservative government in Alberta, has cut firefighting supports by \$30 million. Did the federal government have to contribute in order to make up for that shortfall? What was the cost of that?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As you rightly pointed out earlier, I've stated some of the amounts of money we've invested. Obviously, the federal government can and should do a lot on that, but we can't do it all. It's important for provincial governments and territorial governments to step up to the plate as well. It is sad to see some governments not doing that.

• (1810)

Ms. Heather McPherson: One of my concerns is that we know the Government of Alberta has failed to support the firefighting initiatives in our province. They've also failed to spend the money on cleaning up wells. They've also failed to protect the mountains from coal mining.

What's the federal government's role when the provincial government fails to do anything possible to protect the environment in one of the provinces of this country?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We're doing a lot. In fact, I don't think you could find a time in our history when so many different measures have been deployed to protect the environment, to fight for climate change and to increase conservation in this country.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Certainly there have been lots of announcements.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go now to Mr. Calkins.

Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister, you were asked earlier a very specific question by my colleague Mr. Soroka about when you were first briefed about the gravity of the situation, of the potential for a catastrophic fire in Jasper National Park, including the Jasper townsite.

When?

I want a date, Minister. This is something that would stick in the memory of somebody. If you were about to lose a heritage site park, you would know when you had that conversation. When were you briefed?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I started by getting briefing notes. As I said earlier, I spoke to the mayor of the town even before the situation deteriorated in Jasper. I don't have the dates in front of me, but they can certainly be provided. I don't have my calendar in front of me, but I started talking to the Parks Canada people even before the evacuation. As I was saying earlier...

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: After you had that meeting with the mayor, and after you had those conversations, did you direct your staff at Parks Canada to accelerate their fire preparedness for Jasper, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I don't know how you view the work of a minister, and I'm not sure you understand what it means. It's not the minister's job to micromanage 4,000 Parks Canada employees and tell them to do a job they already know how to do. I'm not a forest fire professional. Neither are you, but my role...

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Your job is to tell him what the policy is. The policy comes from the top, Minister. The tone comes from the top—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: My role is to give them...

[*English*]

The Chair: Please let the—

Mr. Blaine Calkins: The tone comes from the top, Minister. I know very well how it works, Minister. While you were planning your next escapade to jump off the CN Tower and trespass on the premier's house—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I was there on the ground.

The Chair: I'm stopping the time. I mean, this is going south.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Conservatives do not own outrage and anger at what happened this summer. For the Conservatives to come here and berate the minister in this fashion is disrespectful, particularly because we have Mr. Shepherd here.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, I don't care what the debate is and who's saying what, really. I just want to keep it civil and—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Respectful and on topic...

The Chair: Well, we sometimes go off topic. If the minister is asked the question, I would like for him to have the chance to respond succinctly.

I found your tone was getting a little too aggressive, Mr. Calkins, to be honest with you.

Anyway, let's start again.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: That is untrue, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Well, we could debate that until the cows come home, I'm sure.

We're not going to start over. We're going to resume the clock and see how it goes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: There is no indication, Minister, that Parks Canada has significantly changed its fire preparedness policy in any way, shape or form in the matter of prescribed burns for fire prevention.

When I was a warden in Jasper—that's what I did in the nineties when I worked for Alberta Parks and Parks Canada—I could see what was happening with the parks policy. I could see the removal of the roads for fire suppression.

The policy shifted, and it hasn't changed one bit. The pine beetle came along and changed the entire landscape. You have the ability, Minister, to change the policy and to set the direction and tone. We had the Excelsior fire in 2015. Residents were worried. They came together. Experts from B.C. came. There was all that work done in collaboration with the Government of Alberta. Everybody said they were ready.

The fire chief in Jasper National Park was asking for more trailers for sprinklers. They were asking to update the water systems. They were asking the residents, 200 of whom came to a town hall at the fire hall, asking to remove that deadfall. You claim you've spent millions of dollars, yet you've only removed a couple of hectares of this stuff. This is dead, standing pine. It's the driest, most easily burnable and hottest-burning wood there is, and you've done nothing. There is nothing here.

However, I have this: I have a response from Jonah Mitchell to Melanie Kwong at Parks Canada that says, "At what point do we make the organizational decision to cancel planned prescribed burns in Western Canada? As more and more media articles raise public concern...public and political perception may become more important than actual prescription windows."

This is what your organization is doing. You're not giving them the direction. That lies with you, Minister. You're responsible for that. When are you going to take responsibility for the billion dollars' worth of damage that happened in Jasper? Everybody knew this was coming. You were told—yet here we are, with a billion dollars' worth of assets burned down and our beautiful Jasper National Park, where I used to work, lying in ruins.

• (1815)

The Chair: Why don't we give the minister a chance to answer?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: First of all, a lot has changed since the time you worked at Parks Canada. A lot has been done since the 1990s. You mentioned sprinklers. My colleague, Mr. Campbell, talked about the investments that made it possible to install sprinklers. You mentioned wood that had to be removed. We've done that, either through preventative fires or mechanical removal.

All these things have been done, but I'm the first to recognize that we need to do more to protect ourselves from climate change, unlike the Conservative Party, which is burying its head in the sand, pretending that climate change doesn't exist and that it has no effect on Canada.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 45 seconds left, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: What do you have to say about this memo? Why is your staff talking about cancelling prescribed burns for the sake of media optics? Has this ever been brought to your attention, Minister?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: As both of those employees work directly for me, I'd love to take this question.

In fact, what they were doing was looking at the difference between prescribed burns and mechanical removal.

We're in communities. We'd just had the mayor of Fort Smith and the council talk to us and say they weren't comfortable with prescribed burns. We'd just had Banff talk to us, and they weren't happy with prescribed burns. We had articles coming out all across the country.

I think a good thing for people to do is to look at the different options they have. Two of my managers were saying, "Do we do prescribed burns, or do we do mechanical removal?" It was not that there would be nothing done. It was a choice between mechanical removal and prescribed burns.

You can take these things out of context, which they have been, but that was what the conversation was about.

The Chair: I will go now to Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here, and to the minister and to Parks Canada, and especially to Mr. Shepherd, for being on the ground and helping to fight this.

I'd like to direct my questions to you, because there have been a lot of accusations thrown around and a lot of negativity concerning

what happened. I was wondering if you could talk a bit about the co-operation on the ground. How did you and the individuals actually there fighting these fires feel about what had happened and what you were able to do, and how did you feel about the level of preparedness when you came in?

Mr. Landon Shepherd: Thank you for the question.

I'm very happy to talk about some of the things that did go very well with respect to the Jasper fire.

It started with the safe evacuation of about 20,000 people in a very short period of time. That was conducted by a community that is only 5,000 residents itself. We were able to safely get that many people out of harm's way. It helped us to prepare for being able to manage the fire and to protect critical infrastructure and 70% of the town. My team and I are incredibly proud of being able to pull that off with a fire that was, as I said, unprecedented.

The problem with that term is that all of the fires that I've been going to in the last five years—in British Columbia, in the Northwest Territories, in Alberta—are all unprecedented for those areas, and our jobs are getting harder.

I do want to take the opportunity to shout out that I certainly do enjoy working with a lot of different specialists because I don't approach fire or these levels of events or landscape management with a sense of ego, like "I have everything figured out". It really is important to rely on other specialists and other experts.

I know that some professional foresters were referred to earlier. We actually do go to a lot of professional foresters for assistance with wildfire risk reduction work. We do collaborate with them. We didn't collaborate with those two individuals who obviously were very interested in offering their services, but we do work with a lot of specialists all the time.

• (1820)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you, Mr. Shepherd. I appreciate that.

It's good to hear the level of collaboration on the ground, because a lot of this has become very political, trying to score points.

It's interesting to hear Mr. Calkins talk about the fact that everybody knew this was coming. Clearly, we see the increased investment that was made by the federal government. The minister referred to \$86 million versus, I think, a few million dollars that had been made previously by the previous government.

Why do you think that the provincial government decided to reduce spending on firefighting when it seems that everyone knew that this was coming?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question.

I don't think we want to put Mr. Shepherd in a position to answer this question.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Okay.

Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Frankly, I can't speak on behalf of the Alberta government, but the fact is that all levels of government, whether they're municipal, provincial, territorial or federal, will need to invest more in adaptation to help us prepare for climate change.

Federally, about \$10 billion has been invested since 2015. It sounds like a lot, and it's obviously a lot of money, but the reality is that we will need to invest even more to help Canadians and our communities be better prepared to face the impacts of climate change.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you.

While the need for spending dollars on adaptation is clear, we clearly also need to continue with investments in mitigating the increase in these extreme events. It seems that there's more opposition to the programs we put in place to try to mitigate some of the increase in the buildup of greenhouse gases and therefore the climate change we're seeing—

The Chair: I'm going to have to stop you there, Ms. Taylor Roy. We're almost at the end. We have only a few minutes left. The notice says we end at 6:30.

Mr. Morrice has asked if he can get unanimous consent to have five minutes. Are we okay on this side?

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): No.

The Chair: I'm sorry. We don't have unanimous consent, Mr. Morrice.

Mr. Dan Mazier: We are going to 6:30, right, so I'll have another round?

The Chair: No, we don't have another round. We have five minutes left. We can't have another round.

• (1825)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Can we have two minutes each, please?

The longer we talk—

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Perhaps I could finish what I was saying.

The Chair: I'm sorry. No, that five minutes was up.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Okay, fine.

The Chair: I don't see a round with six people when there are five minutes left. That's my sense as chair. I don't see it.

Mr. Dan Mazier: We were just willing to give it a try.

A voice: Give Mike—

Mr. Dan Mazier: No. Why would we give up our turn? As opposition, I am sure we have lots of questions.

The Chair: Practically speaking, there's no time for another six-member round of questioning

The option is we stop now or we give Mr. Morrice five minutes to ask a couple of questions. We don't have unanimous consent for that, so I'm going to stop the meeting now.

The meeting is adjourned.

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