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• (1635)

[English]

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

I'd like to welcome our first panel, which is related to our study of the factors leading to the recent fires in Jasper National Park.

We have with us Mr. Ken Hodges, testifying as an individual. From the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, we have Randy Schroeder, president. From the Department of Natural Resources, we have Glenn Hargrove, assistant deputy minister, Canadian forest service; Michael Norton, director general, northern forestry centre, who is online; and Dan Thompson, research scientist, forest fires, in person. From Forests Ontario, we have Jessica Kaknevicus, chief executive officer, also online.

Each witness or group of witnesses will have five minutes for opening statements.

We'll start with you, Mr. Hodges, for five minutes.

Before we start, for the witnesses who are here in person, we take good care not to damage the hearing of our interpreters, so please refrain from touching the stem of your microphone. If you are taking your earpiece off, please put it face down on the round decal that you'll find on the desk.

Mr. Hodges, the floor is yours.

Mr. Ken Hodges (As an Individual): Thank you very much for having me here to speak about the experiences that I had prior to the fire.

I'd like to just note that I'm not here for political reasons. I'm here to provide information around the activities that occurred around the Jasper fire of July 22, 2024. I'd also like to note that my experience at that time was as a registered professional forester out of B.C. Currently, I am neither registered nor am I practising forestry. Also, I'd like to note that I'm neither a researcher nor a scientist. I was a registered professional forester, which is very different.

In relation to my work, I have 45 years of forest management experience. In relation to this beetle stuff and the fires, I have fire management experience in fighting fires, from spot fires up to project fires of 40,000 hectares or more. I was responsible for approving burning plans, approving ignition of those burning plans, and strategizing in the management of mountain pine beetles, including fall and burn and working with licensees in harvest strategies from baiting and logging to harvest strategies.

I'd like to note that the beetle population went from endemic to epidemic in a very short period of time. That was a result of warmer winters and an abundance of food supply.

I was involved in strategic planning and rehabilitation of mountain pine beetle fires. I worked with researchers to assess regeneration and cone viability after the beetle attacks, including secondary structure.

My related work is really diverse and includes silviculture, recreation, timber supply, planning and tenures. It goes on and on. We can get into a lot more detail if you so wish.

I looked at it and I have my own sense of what happened. I have an evaluation for you, from my perspective.

I found that Parks Canada staff were insufficiently trained in the situation of the beetles and the fire situation that existed in the park at the time. They are park rangers; they are not trained, experienced professional foresters.

The beetle program was a good start, but it was too little, too late. That was presented by Dr. Allan Carroll in a news article in Jasper. If they had looked at B.C., talked to the province and followed its recommendation in a timely manner, it would have potentially made a bit of a difference.

Nothing was done to address the landscape of the beetle-killed timber to prevent the megafire of July 22, 2024. What was done was insignificant and poorly thought out. It did nothing to protect the town from the Jasper fire complex. Even the work done would not be enough to stop a raging fire out of the west or the south in beetle stands. The town would have burned anyway.

The FireSmart program needs to be more than just cosmetic. If a community is serious about being fire-smart, then it should do more than a cosmetic approach of just removing a few trees or shrubbery.

There was communication with a fellow by the name of Rob Moore, who was an incident commander with 39 years of experience. His comment was that the fire complex was mismanaged in the first two days of the fire, from Monday, July 22, to Wednesday, July 24. He said that the fire complex was under-resourced and underestimated absolutely to the reality of fire science. That was a personal communication with Rob Moore.

Now, some of the recommendations I thought would be very beneficial are as follows.

Reform the Parks Canada structure and mandate.

Balance the value of social, economic and environmental issues when developing any type of strategy or plan. It cost almost a billion dollars in losses in Jasper—that's the latest estimate I've heard—not to mention the cost to the people who lost their homes, which resulted in stress, depression and potential suicides. Partial logging in mixed stands, with pruning and fuel management, costs about \$500 a hectare. You can do about 10,000 hectares for about \$5 million, so you can put some value there. The question I have is, where was the \$80 million that was noted by the minister spent in relation to this fire?

Support those in the know—those who know the field and operations. Develop a plan that looks after the resources, with the communities as the primary objectives—so you can have a zonation—while addressing the balance of values to achieve ecological integrity. Have Parks Canada plans reviewed by professional foresters. The recommendation is to hire well-trained and experienced professionals familiar with the landscape in parks needing forest professional support.

• (1640)

Ensure that you have sufficient well-trained resources of staff and contractors, as well as equipment, to fight the fires. Don't depend upon provinces or others for their assistance, as they may be fighting their own battles.

Noting that there are two million hectares—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Hodges, but we're unfortunately going to have to stop there. You'll be able to share some more ideas and recommendations in response to questions. I'm sure there will be quite a few questions.

Mr. Ken Hodges: May I make one more statement?

The Chair: Sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Ken Hodges: I actually encourage the committee to join me in Jasper to look at beetle stands, burnt stands and the community. This is where foresters are and where decisions are generally made.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Schroeder, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Mr. Randy Schroeder (President, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association): Good afternoon.

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

My name is Randy Schroeder. I'm a fire chief. I'm the president of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association and vice-chair of the CAFC national advisory council.

I want to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to the first responders, including the many municipal fire services, the RCMP, sheriffs, EMS, contractors, the Alberta emergency management agency, Alberta Wildfire, Canada Task Force 2 and Parks Canada, who were all on the front lines during the incident. These brave individuals risked their own well-being to protect the town of Jasper,

assisting in the evacuation of thousands and aiding in the ongoing recovery efforts.

I would also like to extend my special thanks to fire chief Mathew Conte of the Jasper Fire Department, who displayed extraordinary leadership and resilience throughout the crisis, despite the personal loss of his own home.

The AFCA has passed resolutions advocating that the Alberta government improve wildfire management by developing a long-term strategy for the resourcing and management of wildland fire events outside Alberta's forest protection areas, and inside as well. These resolutions call for the establishment of a working group consisting of subject matter experts, elected officials and senior municipal administrators to collaborate on this strategy. We're also collaborating with our municipal associations in this advocacy.

While the resolutions focus on the areas outside of the forest protection area, Alberta ministers Ellis' and Loewen's responses led to a recent increase in resources, budget and work toward the creation of a provincial wildfire mitigation strategy, on which the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association has provided input.

The AFCA is advocating to increase response readiness with an increase in wildland urban interface teams across the province. These teams proved critical in saving the historic Jasper Park Lodge, among other infrastructure in Jasper.

Alberta's wildfire season has been starting earlier, lasting longer and affecting larger areas in recent years, creating significant pressure on municipalities and forest services within and outside the FPA. Across the province, we consistently advocate for greater promotion of public education and greater financial support of FireSmart by increasing staffing and growing the program with coordinators at a local level throughout the province, creating public incentives and so on.

On a national level, we have also passed similar resolutions through the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, advocating for accessible, combined curriculum training to provide commonality and standardization among several entities, including Alberta's wildland urban interface training guidelines, the NFPA, the IAAF, the CIFFC and local municipal agencies. Multiple curricula pose a challenge to fire chiefs, who must balance the burden of time to train a volunteer among a host of other training requirements, and provide and sustain a local service level. The lack of coordination between these training resources presents challenges in standardization and available training.

The AFCA will refrain from commenting on the incident management specifics of this incident, recognizing the complexities the incident presented. The logistical geographical challenges, topography, fire behaviour, weather conditions, multi-jurisdictional governance and differentiating fuel types, along with the diverse agencies from across the province and beyond, were challenging in every way possible. Combine that with an interface that posed the challenges of protecting a community filled with historically important but very flammable construction and numerous buildings with cedar and pine shake roofs, clad with wooden siding, built with lightweight construction and beautified with flammable vegetation in almost every yard.

It was a testament to the efforts of all on the ground that so much was saved, including all of the town's critical infrastructure.

We all have a responsibility to increase our resiliency to fire. Government agencies, fire services, businesses and residents share in a combined effort to change our collective approach and behaviour in community planning, development and design, as well as in implementing change to what is already built. It is imperative that we apply rigorous risk assessment practices, effective fire management and appropriate funding to ensure that community protection measures are in place.

- (1645)

Finally, the AFCA supports the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs' advocacy for the creation of a national fire administration. This national fire administration would serve as the nucleus of future national emergency management responses. It would be an organization entailing three types of coordination: between fire departments and federal departments on the fire, life safety and emergency management implications of national priority; between wild-fire agencies and structural fire departments at a national level; and between—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Schroeder. We're well over time. I'm going to have to stop you there and go to the Department of Natural Resources.

I assume it's Mr. Hargrove who will be speaking.

Go ahead, please. You have five minutes.

Mr. Glenn Hargrove (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources): Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee, for this invitation. I'm grateful to be here to support this discussion on factors leading to the recent fires in Jasper National Park.

This is taking place on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

The Canadian forest service at Natural Resources Canada plays an important, ongoing role in wildland fire management. We're the Government of Canada's primary source of federal wildland fire technical and scientific expertise. The CFS delivers essential functions to support wildland fire management across the country. This includes subject matter expertise to inform government reporting and response, the delivery of tools and information for national situational awareness and decision support, leadership on national strategic wildland fire policies and frameworks, and international

engagement on wildland fire. We also work closely with other federal departments, such as Public Safety and Parks Canada.

Just days after the Jasper fire began, officials at Parks Canada requested support from CFS to study the factors that caused the rapid escalation and extreme fire behaviour taking place. CFS researchers and technicians were on site to conduct an analysis by August 1. Analysis is ongoing, and a report is in development. Research activity is concentrated on a number of aspects, including understanding the factors that contributed to the rapid ignition, acceleration, intensity and spread of the fire, its spread direction, the influence of wood killed by the mountain pine beetle on fuel consumption and fire intensity, and identifying areas of extreme fire behaviour.

There are some initial findings. Fire activity was exacerbated by conditions such as historic levels of drought, extreme high temperatures and low humidity, an abundance of dry fuels, and extreme fire-induced wind speeds that drove the fire to spread.

Wildland fire is a growing risk across Canada. Research tells us that we will continue to experience larger, more extreme fire events and behaviour in the coming years. We know that 2023 was off the charts in terms of fire activity and total area burned, and it looks like 2024 will rank second for total area burned over the last 20 years. This makes the work we are doing to transform wildland fire management more critical than ever. Programs such as the fighting and managing wildfires in a changing climate program and the wildfire resilient futures initiative are providing investments for community-based prevention and mitigation in order to build response and preparedness capacity while stimulating whole-of-society engagement that will contribute to wildfire resilience.

Through bodies such as the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, or CCFM, and the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, also known as CIFFC, we work in continuous partnership with provinces and territories to ensure we are prepared to respond to wildland fire emergencies, and to build Canada's resilience over the longer term. Utilizing our scientific foundation, this includes delivery of cost-shared federal investments for specialized wildland fire equipment and firefighting training, as well as programming, prevention and mitigation. It also includes work with the CCFM to deliver Canada's first-ever wildland fire prevention and mitigation strategy, released this past June.

I am happy to be here with Dr. Dan Thompson, who is leading CFS research activities in Jasper, and director general Mike Norton, the lead for NRCan's wildland fire risk management program. He is joining us virtually to answer any questions you may have related to our ongoing analysis of the Jasper wildfire and the work under way to increase Canada's overall resilience to wildland fire.

Thank you.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hargrove.

We'll now go to Jessica Kaknevicus from Forests Ontario.

Ms. Jessica Kaknevicus (Chief Executive Officer, Forests Ontario): Thank you.

Good afternoon, and thank you for having me today. My name is Jess Kaknevicus, and I am the CEO of Forests Ontario, a non-profit charity dedicated to conserving, restoring and growing Canada's forests to sustain life and communities.

I'm calling today from the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, now known as Toronto.

For the past 75 years, we have partnered with thousands of landowners to restore and steward their forests while providing meaningful education and community experiences. Our goal is to foster a deeper understanding of and connection to our forests. Every tree we plant is a crucial step in the collective action needed to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change and extreme weather. We are inspired to plant trees because our children and future generations deserve a world that is equitable, healthy and vibrant. While trees alone aren't the only solution, they are certainly a vital part of it.

Before delving deeper into the role of forests, I want to acknowledge the significant impact the recent fires in Jasper have had on local communities. The destruction has affected not only properties but also the long-term well-being of the people of Jasper. Fire is frightening, and losing one's home is devastating. We must recognize that a community has been deeply impacted, and they will need time to heal and rebuild.

I will start off by saying I am in no way an expert on fire. I have a background in forestry and over 20 years in the sector. I have experienced and learned from many in this field, and I am fortunate enough to have colleagues and partners who share their wisdom with me.

Fire is a natural process in the boreal forest, but last year's season prompted the public to question why these fires were occurring with such severity. There are many factors contributing to this, which I know you have discussed over the past few weeks, ranging from forest management and fire suppression to the broader impacts of climate change and the lack of resources for effective wild-fire planning and management.

As we continue to face the consequences of climate change, including unprecedented wildfires both in Canada and around the world, it is imperative that we take action. This includes creating healthy, new forests and managing the diversity and health of our existing forests.

Today, I want to focus on recovery. Our organization is committed to collaborating with our partners to ensure that appropriate forest restoration activities occur after significant disturbances such as these fires. Over the past 20 years, Forests Ontario has supported

the planting of more than 46 million trees, including through our national division, Forest Recovery Canada.

We believe that effective restoration begins with choosing the right seedlings for the long-term success of any planting project, and this starts with the seed source. That's why we emphasize the critical importance of selecting the right seeds for our restoration efforts. The trees we plant today must thrive in our current climate, but we also need to consider future conditions to ensure that our forests remain resilient. By planting climate-appropriate species, we enhance our chances for lasting success.

Forests Ontario is committed to leveraging scientific research, collaborating effectively with indigenous communities to incorporate traditional knowledge, and implementing best practices. We recognize that these elements are critical for the long-term success of any restoration project. Our commitment to collaboration and knowledge sharing ensures that we make informed decisions on the landscape.

Forest recovery is essential for us to continue investing in, as newly growing trees play a crucial role in climate mitigation by sequestering carbon. They also stabilize soils, reduce the risk of floods, build community resilience and have the potential to develop into long-lived forest products that continue to store carbon.

Much like fire prevention and management, the stewardship of our forests is a long-term endeavour. We must think beyond the year a tree is planted and focus on the ongoing management of these sites to ensure their resilience. This long-term management requires sustained investments, prompting us to adopt a longer-term perspective in all of our work.

My three recommendations today are as follows.

The first is long-term investment. Investments in our forests must be maintained over the long term. Whether for forest restoration, forest management or fire management and prevention, a one-time investment is insufficient to ensure the ongoing health of our forest ecosystems, especially as climate change increases pressures on them.

The second is the importance of restoration. We cannot underestimate the need for restoration. Forests are vital for soil stabilization, maintaining water quantity and quality, flood mitigation and providing habitat for wildlife. They also support biodiversity and ensure that communities have access to natural spaces that are crucial for mental and physical health.

My final recommendation is to integrate science and indigenous knowledge. As we work toward restoring forests, we should lead with indigenous-led practices and leverage scientific research. This approach will help us make informed decisions about the right species to plant, the appropriate methods for planting and the best practices for fostering healthy forest growth.

Thank you for inviting me today.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to the first round of questioning, which will be led off by Mr. Lloyd.

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

Mr. Hodges, in 2017 and 2018, you sent multiple letters to the Minister of Environment and Parks Canada, saying that a catastrophic wildfire in Jasper National Park was not a matter of “if”, but “when”.

In your view, did the environment minister, the government and Parks Canada take your warning seriously?

Mr. Ken Hodges: It's difficult to answer that question because I'm not a mind reader, but based on my experience, they really didn't respond well to us. They pushed back at us and said, “We've got this.” It was frustrating on our part, that's for sure.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Do you believe, with your 45 years of experience as a professional forester, that if Parks Canada and the government had implemented the detailed recommendations you had sent them in the multiple letters you sent, the conditions that led to the catastrophic fire that destroyed one-third of the town of Jasper would have been mitigated?

Mr. Ken Hodges: If they had completed some strategies around that—and they had seven years in which to do something and come up with a plan of some sort—I think they could have prevented the loss of Jasper town itself. It's just a matter of time in order to get things done, but they had plenty of time based on what actually did happen. We didn't know when it was going to happen. It finally showed up in 2024.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Some members of this committee have made the claim that it just wasn't feasible to conduct forest management practices and it was just too big of a task. Based on your experience in forestry, how long would it have taken to implement the program that you recommended to the government? How long would it have taken to make the effort to mitigate the conditions that led to this fire?

Mr. Ken Hodges: You'd throw a chunk of equipment at this if you wanted to do some harvesting. In the Bowron, in the late 1980s, right outside of Prince George, they had 400 trucks coming off the road. They can throw equipment at it to the nth degree if they want to, and if it's available, great. The other option is that if they had the window to burn, they could have done some burning and broken down the landscape. On the timelines, they had seven years to do it.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: That was plenty of time.

Mr. Ken Hodges: That was plenty of time to do it.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you.

Parks Canada has talked about the 1,700 hectares that they cleared, the controlled burns that they did. Where would you have done a partial harvest? Were the places that they harvested the best places to protect the town of Jasper?

Mr. Ken Hodges: The work they did was basically on the west and also on the northeast part, where they did some partial harvesting in the mixed stands up there. It was good work, but the question was, would it be enough? They didn't do anything to the south, to my knowledge. I think if they had done a big chunk of work...because that was the biggest area of mountain pine beetle kill there. It was a solid state right from almost Wabasso all the way right into town. It was all standing dead, pretty much. If they had done something with that down there and broken that continual fire fuel, they would have probably prevented the fire from entering Jasper town itself.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Where do the prevailing winds usually come from in the months when fire is a risk to Jasper? What directions do they come from?

Mr. Ken Hodges: They generally come from the west through the pass out of B.C., and also from the south. It depends on whether you have a high-pressure system and where that sits as well.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: In the case of this catastrophic fire, the main force of the fire came from the south. Is that correct?

Mr. Ken Hodges: That's correct, yes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: To your knowledge, was there any significant clear-cutting or any mitigation efforts on the south side of Jasper to protect the town?

Mr. Ken Hodges: Not specifically for addressing the mountain pine beetle.... The answer would be no.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: With your extensive experience with the mountain pine beetle, and not knowing what Parks Canada would have known about the mountain pine beetle, was there enough done to mitigate and clear the dead brush of mountain pine beetle that would have prevented...? We saw explosions of bark sending embers kilometres away. Was there enough done on the south end of the park? I think you've already kind of answered that.

Mr. Ken Hodges: I kind of answered that. To my knowledge, I'm not aware of any work that had been done to the south, outside of when they spent a significant amount of funds redoing the Wabasso campsite. There was major work done there.

• (1700)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: They spent a significant amount on a campsite, but not as much on actually protecting the town.

In your opinion—and you alluded to this in your remarks—you don't believe that Parks Canada necessarily has the expertise to manage forests in our national parks. Can you elaborate on that?

Mr. Ken Hodges: We had a number of meetings with Parks Canada, myself and Mr. Begin. We worked together to send letters out and see what we could do to help with our experience. We did talk to the staff, and it became quite obvious to us that they just didn't have the experience or the knowledge in relation to the issues that were facing them.

For the large mountain pine beetle, they did come up with a plan in 2016, but it was basically too little, too late on that particular aspect. I don't think they really understood what was in front of them and the magnitude of the fire that was going to blow up at them because of that.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: We've had Parks Canada here, and we've had the minister of environment here. They claim that everything that could possibly have been done to prevent this.... We had a member tweeting that all the efforts that could have been made to clear the dead brush were made.

Did the government do everything they could have done to prevent these fires from happening?

The Chair: Please be brief, Mr. Hodges.

Mr. Ken Hodges: In my opinion, I don't think they did.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

This is a conversation that needs to be had. I know there's going to be an in-depth investigation into the Jasper wildfire complex by those who were there and involved, but it's good to get an overview from you.

Mr. Hargrove, you stated that given the historical and cultural nature of some of the buildings, as well as the vegetation in the town of Jasper, it was quite a feat that they saved as much of the town as they did. I think it was about 70%. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

Mr. Glenn Hargrove: Sure. Maybe I'll start and then turn to Dr. Thompson.

The fire started roughly 20 kilometres from the community, so fuel treatments were done over time that did reduce the intensity of the fire as it approached the town. Those risks were known, as folks have discussed, and a great deal of fuel management was done in those areas.

Our field observations immediately after the fire—and Dr. Thompson can speak to that in more detail—showed that the fuel reduction treatments were effective in preventing a continuous running crown fire. There are different types of wildland fire. Some travel sort of lower to the ground, and some travel among the crowns of the trees. Those that travel among the crowns of the trees are the ones that are particularly intense and throw embers and create those kinds of risks. What the team found was that the fuel treatments that were done did have the effect of reducing that intensity and reducing the crown fire risk.

Maybe I'll turn to Dr. Thompson to add to that.

Prof. Dan Thompson (Research Scientist, Forest Fires, Department of Natural Resources): Thank you.

In some wildland fires, we observe what we call an “ember shower”. If you see a kid's trampoline or tarps in a yard, all these little spots are indicative of the embers landing on flammable surfaces that melt but don't actually combust.

We conducted observations of the fuel treatments near the railroad, on the south side of town, along the highway and, basically, between town and Whistlers Campground. I would ask for maps from Parks Canada, because we don't have those right in front of us. I wasn't responsible for mapping that. We did walk through those fuel treatments, and we did document about a 70% reduction in the frequency of trees actually burning.

The type of fire we observed while we walked through those recently burned stands was what we call “surface fire”. There were some trees that were burning, but the primary mode of that fire was to travel along the surface, without producing that number of embers. When we went to look at the tarps, both in the parks compound and in the middle of the community, we did not see that ember shower that we observed in places like Slave Lake in 2011 or in Fort McMurray. I was there after the fact in Fort McMurray, and I saw an ember shower. Despite looking in many places, we did not see the same intensity of ember shower in Jasper, despite similarly severe fire weather. The underlying drought conditions were similar.

We have the evidence, and we're happy to show some evidence that, for the 500-metre buffer around the community where there was that fuel treatment, we did not document the same ember shower. Some embers did ignite some structures, but not with the same intensity.

• (1705)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: May I ask a follow-up question?

Prof. Dan Thompson: Sure.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Do you feel that the unified command and the firefighters on the ground there were prepared to fight this fire?

I also want to ask about the nature of the fire. It was apparently a cyclone of fire, given the winds that came up because of the fire. It was very unusual.

Mr. Hodges, in some of the comments you made in the press, you said that you didn't know whether the fire could have been prevented. This was even before knowing what kind of fire it was.

Given that this was a very unusual fire that was exacerbated by climate change, I'm just wondering whether people were prepared. Did they know what to do here, and could they have anticipated what was going to happen?

Prof. Dan Thompson: I can only speak to the scientific tools that we provide to fire managers to prepare them for the situation.

One of the things that one does in fire management is track the weather and track the precipitation. In our systems of fire management and fire weather, Parks Canada, in our national public maps, did show the severe drought conditions and the acceleration of the fire from the lightning strikes to becoming a crown fire within minutes, which is what we see from the photo documentation of the fire.

That was anticipated by the systems that fire managers use every day. The fire accelerated and burned largely as anticipated given the environmental conditions.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Okay. The scientists at Parks Canada did know what was coming. You said that you did do some clearing, fuel treatments, on the south side of town as well to try to buffer and to protect the town.

Prof. Dan Thompson: NRCan is not responsible for that, but to my understanding.... I walked through the science-based fuel treatments that Parks Canada did conduct, yes.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Okay. That's great.

Mr. Hodges—

The Chair: You have only 20 seconds, but go.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Mr. Hodges, I'm just wondering about your background. From what I understand, you worked with industry to basically plan how to harvest the forest. Do you feel that you have the scientific background to be able to assess what happened during this fire in Jasper?

Mr. Ken Hodges: I have operational experience that can address that, but scientifically, I'm not a scientist, like I said. I'm not a researcher. It's operational experience that I provide.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is Madame Pauzé.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the committee, everyone.

There are many of us here today. That's great, because we want to learn and make sure we know how to respond to minimize the damage, prevent disaster and protect cities. This issue affects everyone.

Mr. Schroeder, we're here to study Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act, which will remove barriers to rebuilding the town of Jasper by streamlining the decision-making process for local elected officials. In your opinion, will this bill be enough to remove the government's obstacles to rebuilding the town of Jasper after the wildfires?

[English]

Mr. Randy Schroeder: The short answer is that more needs to be done.

On the question of whether the bill addresses it, I would say that I'm highly doubtful that it does. We need intensive collaboration, which is what we would be supporting all the way through every level of government—federal, provincial and local governments—in order to achieve the true effect that we need to, and to sustain it.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Can you identify other obstacles to rebuilding the town?

[English]

Mr. Randy Schroeder: I will say that I would not, at this point, be able to identify true obstacles other than the willingness to get together in the same room and to establish that jurisdictional boundaries can't matter in this case. We really need to make sure—

and it's in the interest of all Canadians, whether it's Jasper, Slave Lake or Fort McMurray, and there are so many more—that when these situations occur, jurisdictional barriers are removed in order to establish a true sense of public safety, especially in the recovery phase.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Right, smoke doesn't stop at a border. Smoke from the fires in Quebec ended up as far away as New York.

Ms. Kaknevicus, when you're doing your studies, do people talk to you about the consequences of climate change? Is that something they're very concerned about? You've spent 10 years working in this field. What impacts have you seen over that period of time?

[English]

Ms. Jessica Kaknevicus: Yes, I would say that in my work there's definitely a lot of emphasis around the impacts of climate change, especially on our forests. Whether it's recovery or future state, there's a lot of concern for the health of the forest.

There's a lot of concern, as we heard from Glenn, around drought and around future conditions. Looking at how we restore to prepare for that future climate—looking at climate adaptation, looking at climate-appropriate species and looking at planting in the appropriate way for that future forest—is critical. I would say that it's top of mind for a lot of people who are concerned about our forests.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Are you also looking at the social and economic impacts, even just the trauma that people experience for months, if not years?

[English]

Ms. Jessica Kaknevicus: Yes, definitely. I would say that we are personally not looking at the socio-economic impacts, but we've done some research in the past on the importance of forests to overall physical and mental well-being. They provide critical spaces for people to heal, especially after significant effects and trauma and just for overall physical health. We're not directly looking at the socio-economic impacts, but we definitely have some influence there and some experience in looking at that type of data.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I have a question for those of you from the Department of Natural Resources. You said that an analysis of what happened in Jasper is under way. Is there an inquiry happening?

[English]

Prof. Dan Thompson: To be clear, we're providing documentation and analysis as a scientific organization. Words like “inquiry”.... We're basically there to—

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'm going to stop you there, because there was no interpretation, but I think it's fixed now. Please continue.

[English]

Prof. Dan Thompson: As the Department of Natural Resources, we are there to basically observe patterns of fire behaviour, quantify them and write them down. We make no inquiry or comment as to operations or anything like that. That's not our area of expertise. The role we're playing, as invited by Parks Canada, is simply to do the math behind the fire, to compute the mathematics in the fire environment.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay, but who's involved in analyzing what happened?

[English]

Prof. Dan Thompson: It's a team of exclusively NRCan scientific employees working on wildfire.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Aren't people from Parks Canada and the Department of Environment and Climate Change involved as well?

[English]

Prof. Dan Thompson: In this specific capacity, we're working with Parks Canada. They're providing us information. At this point, they are very busy rebuilding the community, so we're in contact continuously as needed, but the burden of the workload to do the documentation, the calculations and the scientific documentation falls, as requested by Parks Canada, on us.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Boulerice, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us today for this important study.

Mr. Hargrove, you said something in your presentation that struck me. People talk a lot about the cost of preventing climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but they don't talk a lot about the economic and social costs of climate change impacts, such as forest fires, droughts and floods. You said that the summer of 2023 probably had the most forest fires, but that forest fires in the summer of 2024 may have burned more acreage.

Oh, you didn't say that? Okay. I'm sorry, I misunderstood, but do you have a sense of the growing economic impact of forest fires in Canada? Is that something you measure?

• (1715)

Mr. Glenn Hargrove: Thank you for the question.

I just want to clarify that the summer of 2024 was the second most destructive summer of the last 20 years.

[English]

To your question about the costs, that's a really good way of looking at it, because the costs of doing prevention work up front are generally lower than the cost of responding after the fact.

I'll turn to Mike Norton to see if he has any stats offhand or observations that he could provide.

Mr. Michael Norton (Director General, Northern Forestry Centre, Department of Natural Resources): Thanks very much.

The data that we have on the rate of return on investments in proactive mitigation range from approximately seven dollars saved for every dollar invested up to—as some studies have concluded—\$14 saved for every dollar invested in mitigation. It is an active area of investigation to understand the business case for making investments in mitigation.

For forest fires and other areas related to climate adaptation, the evidence is really clear that mitigation is very cost-effective in the big picture.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Hodges, it has been publicly reported that you've been warning the government about the dangers of a large and very dangerous forest fire in Jasper since 2017. What was your role in the government at the time and who did you warn about the real danger of a major fire in Jasper? Who did you talk to at the time?

[English]

Mr. Ken Hodges: First off, at that point in time, I was retired from working for the government. We sent letters to the minister; it was Minister McKenna at that time. In fact, we sent two letters, and she finally responded to the second letter. We also sent letters to the town of Jasper. We also sent letters to the Fitzhugh, which is the newspaper. We also sent letters to the staff right in Jasper itself: Jasper National Park, Canadian forest service and Parks Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: You say you received a response from Minister McKenna at the time. Was that response adequate, appropriate and satisfactory?

[English]

Mr. Ken Hodges: In my opinion, when I looked at it, it kind of demonstrated their lack of expertise in the field of fighting fire and what was potentially coming at them, as well as in dealing with the beetles that existed in that area. That was my impression, and it was also the impression of Mr. Begin, who was working with me at that time.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Okay, thank you.

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

The Chair: I'm just updating the list. You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Perfect.

Mr. Schroeder, you represent firefighters. What are you hearing from your members about wildfire preparedness in Alberta? What feedback are you getting from the people you represent?

[English]

Mr. Randy Schroeder: We need more pre-emptive mitigation efforts in FireSmart in order to reduce the burden and the fuel loads in high-danger areas. We need better analysis. We need a higher degree of emphasis on public education. That pretty much encapsulates it.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: What can the federal government do to help the provinces be better prepared for these fires?

[English]

Mr. Randy Schroeder: I believe that we all have to sit down at the table. First, it comes back to the fact that we believe that establishing a national fire administration could be one of the most consequential policy instruments in the history of fire and emergency management in Canada. It will allow, from a federal perspective, recognizing, addressing and coordinating on a regular, systematic and national basis.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to the second round, but it's going to have to be a three-minute and one-and-a-half-minute round.

Mr. Calkins, you have three minutes, please.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll probably be sharing some of my time with Mr. Soroka.

Mr. Hodges, I have some very quick questions, so I think some very straightforward answers could ensue.

You said that Parks Canada should have cleared 10,000 hectares. Could Parks Canada have received a stumpage fee and actually received royalties if it wanted to? The lumber must have been valuable if Parks Canada had had a chance to harvest it.

Mr. Ken Hodges: There's always value in that timber, yes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: However, the trees are gone now because they've burned down, at least in that particular area south of town. It was a class 6 fire, and we've heard from other witnesses here that it was a ground fire. Would it be fair to say that the ground is basically sterilized now? I know I'm asking a lot, but would you presume that there is a high likelihood that it's going to take a very, very long time for natural secondary succession to replace the trees?

Mr. Ken Hodges: In some parts of it, I would agree with that. It depends on the intensity of the fire.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: You're a professional forester. You and your partner had, I'm guessing, over 90 years of combined experience when you wrote these letters. Would it be fair to say that the forest companies that could have been called in to do this could have done the work for 10,000 hectares with a reasonable amount of equipment in two summers?

Mr. Ken Hodges: You have to be careful here because you have to be in mixed stands in order to do the partial harvesting strategy. As for pure pine stands that are dead, the answer is no.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: They could have maintained ecological integrity.

Is it fair to say that Jasper is now out of the woods? Is Banff out of the woods, or is the same problem going to be there next summer if nothing is done?

Mr. Ken Hodges: In my opinion, I would agree with that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'll turn it over to Mr. Soroka, please.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): My question is for Mr. Thompson.

Did you say that there were no ember showers or no pine cones being tossed into the town?

Prof. Dan Thompson: When I said “ember shower”, that speaks to a widespread, very intense number of embers, and we did not document that. What we would have seen is a sparse shower of embers that caused single home ignitions. That's what our documentary evidence is.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: When the Prime Minister, the minister and the Parks Canada officials said that there were ember showers and pine cones being tossed into the town, were they misleading the public, then?

Prof. Dan Thompson: No. There were pine cones being launched into town. What I'm talking about is a widespread ember shower where the whole surface is covered. What we would have seen there would have been within three or four kilometres away—

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I'm sorry—

Prof. Dan Thompson: —launching single pine cones—

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I'm going to pass it over to Mr. Mazier, please.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Mazier.

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

I'd like to move the following motion:

That the committee expand its study on the Jasper wildfire by four additional meetings to hear from forest management experts, stakeholders, Indigenous communities and impacted individuals, and the committee invite the ministerial lead for Jasper, Randy Boissonnault, to appear for no less than one hour.

Chair, over the last two weeks, this committee has investigated the factors that led to the Jasper wildfires. A third of Jasper burned, which resulted in nearly a billion dollars in damage, which is heart-breaking.

Since we started investigating this fire, the committee has heard extremely damning testimony that everyone should take seriously. Initially, we became aware of an email discussion among senior Parks Canada officials, which happened months before Jasper burned. In February of this year—

The Chair: Mr. Mazier, excuse me for just one second, please.

I'm going to release the witnesses, because we won't have time to finish the second round.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here and for offering their expertise, knowledge and insights, but unfortunately we won't be able to finish the second round because we have some committee business to do here.

Mr. Dan Mazier: They can stay, though, Chair. Isn't that right?

The Chair: They can stay if they wish, but the Qs and As are pretty much done, for all intents and purposes.

Go ahead, Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier: In February of this year, one official wrote, "At what point do we make the organizational decision to cancel...prescribed burns in Western Canada?" It goes on to say, "political perception may become more important than actual prescription windows." This was not a discussion about mechanical removal. We know this because, since then, more emails have been released, which show that another senior official responded to that email and stated, "I hope we don't get into a blanket shutdown." They went on to say, "It is critical to continue those kind of burns, it is how they maintain the CFB [community fuel break], and when they fall behind, it is very difficult to catch up". It wasn't just Conservatives raising concerns with this email; it was Parks Canada's very own officials.

Chair, when we found out that Minister Guilbeault was briefed multiple times on the risk of fire leading up to the Jasper wildfire, if this wasn't enough, Canadians were shocked to hear at this committee that the environment minister's department turned away dozens of firefighters who arrived on site to help. I don't care where these firefighters came from. If a professional fire crew shows up to fight a fire, to save a town and to save someone's house, you'd better let them in, full stop. The Government of Alberta also revealed that the federal government prevented them from making decisions by not allowing the province to be part of a unified command.

Today, we heard some of the most damning testimony. We heard that professional foresters have been warning the Liberal government, since 2017, that a devastating fire in Jasper was not a matter of "if", but "when". The Liberals prevent this investigation from being extended. They are proving that they're nothing more than fake environmentalists, and they are covering up the truth that is waiting to come out. Canadians deserve answers.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mazier.

We'll go now to Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses. They have mostly left, but I would like to thank the ones who are still online, as well as anybody else who's testified to this committee on this very important topic over the last couple of weeks, for their work.

For those who were on the front lines, whether they were printing pamphlets to ensure that everybody was aware of the evacuation plan, putting out fires, leading groups and making decisions or just helping out their neighbours, I want to thank them. I'm glad that this committee, collectively, is willing to provide sympathy and

gratitude to those first responders and the people who are making those decisions.

I also want to take this opportunity to express sympathy and gratitude to the family of 24-year-old Morgan Kitchen, who lost his life fighting fires in the Jasper wildfire incident of 2024. That was a true tragedy.

We heard from a lot of really important experts, frontline responders and various levels and jurisdictions of government. I think we can all accept that it's tough to talk about this stuff when Canadians' lives and livelihoods are so dramatically impacted.

However, Mr. Chair, there were also a few lines crossed throughout these meetings. I referenced one earlier regarding an email chain that was shared in one Conservative member's tweets. Thankfully, that tweet has now been deleted, but tweeting out a professional public servant's name out of context and implying that the person was responsible for some wrongdoing resulted in death threats. That can be avoided by being responsible, diligent and honest, and by just doing our jobs the way people elected us to—with integrity and without trying to overly politicize natural disasters and these types of tragedies for points.

I seek to be accountable to Canadians for every tax dollar, decision and choice made by this government, but that doesn't involve tweeting out the names of particular people, including email addresses and personal information, on social media to score political points. As I said before, that is disgusting and it is beneath any member of Parliament to do that.

It's also beneath members of Parliament to invite people to this committee who have a public and demonstrated lack of integrity. Unfortunately, I received an email—to my personal email—regarding the conduct of a witness who came to this committee, and that is the conduct of Mr. Kris Liivam. This is disgusting, but I'm going to read the tweet that was sent to me today, because I think it's important that everybody hears it so that we understand the kind of conduct this witness undertakes on their social media. In response to a tweet from somebody regarding something on a football chat, Mr. Kris Liivam posted—trigger warning, this is bad—“All women are whores. Some take the cash up front, as in this case. Others wait a few years and take your house, half your savings, and you're stuck paying alimony for years.” On Twitter, he identifies as “Albertan but not Canadian”. In the email, the person who wrote to me today indicated that they also witnessed anti-vaccine, anti-residential schools repetitive far-right tropes, conspiracy theories, and anti-diversity, equity and inclusion rants, so it doesn't stop at the offensive characterization of women. They have also demonstrated a willingness to delete tweets because they're often flagged, even by Twitter, in this one case, as “Visibility limited: This post may violate X's rules against hateful content.”

This is an honourable place. It is an honourable place to work, and I think we need to demonstrate a diligence in making sure that the people we invite to this committee don't express those types of hateful and misogynistic viewpoints on their social media so willingly.

● (1730)

It goes beyond just that, Mr. Chair. A lot of MPs on the Conservative side who have come to this committee have continually suggested that the federal government did nothing to prepare. They lead their questions by saying that Parks Canada was not prepared and that they did nothing to prepare, despite the evidence that both ministers presented—the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Environment—with respect to the massive incremental funding that was dedicated to fireproofing and fire-safing the town of Jasper and Jasper National Park over the past five years.

In front of me, the content of my question, which I was going to ask one of the witnesses before we had to end that session, is the fact that funding for the overall fire program for Parks Canada in Jasper between 2011 and 2015 averaged between \$13 million and \$14 million. Since then, under our government, it's been \$20 million, then upwards of \$35 million, then \$25 million, and then, last year, \$79 million. That was to fireproof Jasper and to save lives, livelihoods and structures.

As we heard from Parks Canada officials, certainly more could have been done. More will be done in the future, but I also looked at a map of Jasper National Park. It's over one million hectares. The fire-affected area was about 39,000 hectares, and 39,000 divided by a million is a small amount. This fire was started by lightning, not by anything else. There are lots of causes of wildfires.

Our government has invested heavily in Jasper in forest management, in undercutting, in removal and in studies. It has spent millions of dollars, Mr. Chair, as I just said—four, five, even six times more than the Conservatives did in the past.

Do you know what it is, Mr. Chair? It's an outright rejection and an unwillingness by the Conservatives to acknowledge the role that climate change plays in the proliferation of these wildfires and the enhancement of the severity and frequency of these wildfires. They won't say “climate change”. They won't acknowledge the scientists who come here to say that the reason these are getting so much worse is climate change, and the reason climate change is getting so much worse is our emissions, primarily driven by the oil sands in Alberta. They won't acknowledge any of that, so they want to blame park management.

Mr. Chair, it's disgusting. It's disgusting to try to score political points off a tragedy like this, a natural disaster like this. It's unfortunate that we can't all agree that when these non-partisan officials are doing their jobs, when they're creating these plans and evacuation routes, and when their work results in zero fatalities of civilians, that's a success. Thirty per cent of Jasper burning is an absolute tragedy, but we also know that it could have been a heck of a lot worse, and we know that if we had been investing at the Conservative level of 10 years ago, it would have been a lot worse.

Mr. Chair, to say that I'm disappointed in the Conservative side and their tactics over the last couple of weeks is an understatement. I regret that they have gotten to the point where they're inviting people of such disrepute to this committee to provide testimony. I'm disgusted that they've used the names of non-partisan officials, who were just doing their jobs—from emails that they received in confidence due to their parliamentary privilege—in social media posts. This has resulted in death threats to those public officials.

Mr. Chair, I was eager to undertake this study, because it's important. Canadians and Jasperites deserve answers. They deserve accountability. I spoke this week to a Jasperite who was involved in the unified command. They expressed gratitude for shedding light on some of these issues. They also, as a Jasperite, expressed deep disgust with the politicization of this and these meetings.

● (1735)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Not the people I'm hearing from....

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: If MP Soroka would like me to put him in touch with—

The Chair: He's next on the list.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: That's fine. If MP Soroka would like me to put him in touch with the people I've talked to, who are disgusted with the Conservatives' conduct on this committee, I'd be glad to.

Mr. Chair, we shouldn't be discussing a motion about whether or not to extend by four meetings. We should be discussing a motion to go back to the House to ask if it's okay to share the names of public servants in tweets resulting in death threats. We should be talking about a motion to discuss whether or not it's okay to bring misogynistic conspiracy theorists to this committee to spout nonsense and exaggerated claims.

Mr. Chair, the conduct of the environment committee over the last couple of weeks has been deplorable. For that reason, I'm going to vote for the study on the Jasper wildfire to conclude. I feel that we've sought accountability from officials and from ministers, we've heard from firefighters, and it's time to get to the report.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Are you calling for a vote?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Yes. We can vote on the motion.

The Chair: Right now I have to go to Mr. Soroka, because there's been no call to adjourn debate or anything.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Are you adjourning debate?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: No, I wasn't adjourning debate on the motion. I would like to vote on the motion.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go to Mr. Soroka, Madame Pauzé, Mr. Lloyd, and then Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, Mr. Godin, and welcome.

[*English*]

Mr. Soroka, the floor is yours.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm kind of astounded by what my colleague Mr. van Koeverden is saying. I have many people in Jasper who are very concerned, because they know that minimal amounts of fireguards were done with fire-smarting. Unbelievably, they say that \$79 million was spent last year on fire mitigation in Jasper. Well, I mean, that's a part of the study that I think we really need to look at. If you spent \$79 million, some people got awfully rich off that. If you start clearing out a forest for \$79 million, what are you doing it with, tweezers or something?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Is that another conspiracy theory?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I have the time to speak.

The Chair: I can pause this discussion at any time. I don't want to do that, but if there are going to be interruptions and disorder, then I'll have to do that.

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

The Chair: Yes. It has to be a point of order.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I get heckled all the time. If they're going to dish it out—

• (1740)

The Chair: That's not a point of order.

Mr. Soroka has the floor. Then it goes to Madame Pauzé, Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Soroka, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's what the problem really comes to. My people in Jasper are saying that they're very concerned about the northwest. If there wasn't enough fire-smarting done in the south and one-third of the town burned, what are the odds, then, when the next fire comes from the west? They feel that there wasn't enough done. How are they going to be secure, knowing that they're going into the 2025 fire season and that they're potentially going to be burned out? That's something we really need to get down to. How are we going to protect the rest of the town? We've already lost one-third, and 2,000 people are homeless. We don't want to start rebuilding structures only to find out that they'll potentially be burned down again. That's my concern. If we don't really get down to the meat of it...

It's not necessarily... I don't want to place blame on anybody, to be perfectly honest with you. I want to get down to the facts. What can we do to make sure this doesn't happen again? Everyone is looking at it as, "Yes, Jasper was bad, but we protected it." That's great, but what about Lake Louise? What about Banff? What about Canmore? We have other areas that are right in the national park or adjacent to a national park that are in the same kind of situation. If they've managed the forest the same way in Banff as they did in Jasper, is Banff now up as the next place that's going to burn?

That's what I think everyone is really concerned about in Alberta, in the mountain park region. Are we doing the best we can to protect the communities? I don't think that's the case. If you can honestly say that we did everything possible and one-third of the town still burned, well, I don't believe we did everything we possibly could.

We heard from different people on the fire management. We heard from different people on forest management. I think what this really comes down to is forest management and making sure that we are actually managing the forests properly. When you have huge amounts of fuel sitting there—essentially, dead trees from the mountain pine beetle kill—it's like gasoline. When you fire-smart within—

The Chair: Excuse me for interrupting you, Mr. Soroka.

I want to let the committee know that I've cancelled the second panel. The witnesses who were online have been told we won't be going ahead with the second panel.

Go ahead, Mr. Soroka.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: As a point of clarification or a point of order, Mr. Chair, is this motion reducing the number of meetings we're going to have?

Just to be clear, the motion was not put forward by the Conservatives during committee business, but rather during a meeting when we have witnesses who prepared, out of their own time, to join us and provide testimony. It has now been cancelled, because the Conservatives don't know how to manage their time during the meeting.

The Chair: Well, I'm not going to attribute blame to anyone. We will reinstate them.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: We need to inconvenience our witnesses because of the timing of this motion. It's absurd.

The Chair: Call it what you wish, but they were advised they will not be giving testimony.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I'm seeking accountability.

The Chair: They will not be giving testimony today. We will reinvoke them.

We will not have one less hour of hearings on the finance study. We'll just have to make it up at a later date. I've cleared the decks so we can have a full discussion on this.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, what's the point of order, Mr. Mazier?

Mr. Dan Mazier: It's just a point of clarification, actually.

What we're debating here is this:

That the committee expand its study on the Jasper wildfire by four additional meetings to hear from forest management experts, stakeholders, Indigenous communities and impacted individuals—

The Chair: This has been read before, Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier:

—and the committee invite the ministerial lead for Jasper, Randy Boissonnault, to appear for no less than one hour.

That's what we're discussing.

The Chair: Mr. Mazier, that is not a point of order.

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

It seems I need to clarify—

The Chair: Clarification is not a point of order.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Well, I'd like to make a point of order to say that it's clear to me that, by bringing this motion forward during—

An hon. member: That's not a point of order.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: You're wasting our time, Conservatives.

The Chair: I am not the greatest expert on procedure, but I know that is not a point of order.

Mr. Soroka, the floor is still yours.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Are you sure I can go on before anyone else interjects? Okay, I'll try.

I was talking about forest management. We were saying how the mountain pine beetle had a devastating effect on the amount of fuel that was sitting there. That's what really caused Jasper to burn—the high, intense flames. It was miles outside of town, and once it got to that intense fire, there was nothing stopping it. Absolutely, they are right. I am not disputing that.

The point, though, is this: If we had done better forest management in close proximity to the townsites—I'm talking about five or six miles away—to clear out a lot of that deadfall, there wouldn't have been that continual fuel, always coming with that same mass of fire. That's where our problem lies. We didn't do a better job of forest management.

Yes, let's not deny that it was dry, or that it was a hot summer. What are we doing to minimize that? All I'm hearing is, "Well, you can't do much because that's just climate change. That's it. There's nothing else." Well, that's poor management, as far as I am concerned. That's all it comes down to, just stating a quote or putting a little tweet out there. That is not proper fire management.

Is Mr. van Koeverden making another point of order, or is he just rambling there?

• (1745)

The Chair: No, I don't believe so.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I just wanted to make sure, because I heard some rumbblings over there. I wasn't certain if it was his stomach, or if he was just being a pain.... No, forget that. Anyway, I like the smile. I'm glad I made you laugh.

That's where I think we need to continue to study a bit more. There are other witnesses who need to come forward, so we can see what we can do to make sure this doesn't happen again. We need to make sure our communities are safe. It's not only in the mountain national parks region, in Jasper and Banff. We need to make sure that any community in close proximity to a forest that is managed by Parks Canada or the federal government—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is this a point of order?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I need a clarification.

The Chair: A point of clarification is not a point of order.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I'd still like to know something. We had witnesses, but what are we doing right now?

The Chair: We're debating Mr. Mazier's motion.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: We want to hear from the witnesses.

The Chair: We're debating Mr. Mazier's motion. The witnesses were excused.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Why? So we can learn more about Jasper?

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Mrs. Chatel. At least, I don't think it is. Anyway, we'll see.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I just want to remind you that you asked the member if she had a point of order. That is not a point of order. I therefore invite you to continue.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Soroka, you have the floor. Please continue.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Okay. I'll keep going as long as I possibly can until the next interruption.

[Translation]

The Chair: You know we have to end the meeting at 6:30, because we don't really have the resources to go past that time.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: What I'm saying is that I would like to get more witnesses and get a better understanding to make sure that we protect our communities that live not only in Jasper but, like I said, in Banff and in Lake Louise—

The Chair: I just want to pause for a second. There's too much noise around the table. I know that members sometimes want to consult with staff, but we have to do it at a low volume.

Mr. Soroka, go ahead.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I got to 30 seconds before you interrupted again, but that's great.

My point is that we need to make sure we are doing proper forest management to protect our communities. That is all I'm trying to say. With this motion, we can dive a little deeper into things and make sure that it's done properly.

We have a lot of people who are still very concerned about whether or not their home, which survived this fire, will survive the next fire that's coming from the northwest or straight from the north. They know that fire-smarting was done. No one's disputing that. The question is whether it was done well enough and whether it was done far enough back. I think the answer is pretty self-explanatory: If one-third of the town burned, it wasn't.

That's the thing. What is Parks Canada going to do to make sure that we have proper forest management to protect the rest of the town of Jasper and the people in Jasper?

With that, I will pass it over to the next speaker.

[Translation]

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

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm seeking consensus. We could hold two meetings, including a two-hour meeting with indigenous communities and impacted individuals we haven't heard from. Then, we could have a one-hour meeting with just Mr. Boissonnault, who was recently appointed as the ministerial lead for Jasper, and find out how he sees the future.

I would also suggest that these additional meetings take place after the meetings already on the schedule we voted on last week.

That's my proposed amendment. I know it's substantial.

• (1750)

The Chair: Are you proposing an amendment to the motion?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, now we have to debate this amendment.

If I understand correctly—

[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier: Can we just have a short recess to get it all down in writing?

The Chair: Sure. That would be great.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1750)

(Pause)

• (1805)

[Translation]

The Chair: If we have it in English, can someone send it to me? In the meantime, I'll take a moment to explain where we're at. There were negotiations—

[English]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Are we waiting for the amendment to be printed or to be given to us before we carry on?

The Chair: It will be sent around to everybody in French and in English.

While we're getting ready to send it, I want to review where we're at to make sure that we're all on the same wavelength.

You'll get this in writing in English and French in a few minutes. Basically, all we're doing with the original motion is changing “four additional meetings” to “two additional meetings”. Also, we're specifying that these meetings will be on October 21 and October 23.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Could I make a subamendment to that, then?

The Chair: Why don't we wait until everybody has it in their inbox?

The problem is that I have Mr. Lloyd, Mr. van Koevorden and Mr. Soroka before you, Ms. Taylor Roy. Your chance to make a subamendment is in four speakers.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Okay.

The Chair: Can you tell me, just out of curiosity, what the subamendment is? I might be able to slip it in there somehow.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Yes. My subamendment would be to say that these two meetings proposed by Madame Pauzé make sense, but I think they would make a lot more sense after the inquiry that's being undertaken right now for the Jasper wildfire complex. Multiple parties are involved in this: Parks Canada, the Alberta government, emergency management teams and indigenous people.

The Chair: Are you arguing against the amendment?

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: No. I'm just saying to wait until the experts on the ground—

The Chair: Your subamendment would be to wait.

• (1810)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Yes, that would be my subamendment. It's just the dates. Let's wait until the inquiry is under way or complete. That's all.

The Chair: I don't think you'll get agreement on that, but we'll see.

The amendment has been sent around in French and English.

Essentially, it's very simple. We're changing the motion by changing "four additional meetings" to "two additional meetings" and we're specifying that these meetings should be on October 21 and October 23. Also, we're saying that Minister Boissonnault and his officials must come for two hours.

[*Translation*]

Is that right, Ms. Pauzé? Have I understood correctly? First, you propose replacing the four additional meetings with just two additional meetings.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes.

The Chair: Second, you specify that these meetings must take place on October 21 and 23.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes.

The Chair: Finally, you also specify that Minister Boissonnault, accompanied by his officials, must appear for two hours.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Usually, a minister appears for one hour, and their officials stay in the room for the next hour. To me, it's the same—

The Chair: Right.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: So we won't keep the minister for two hours. We'll do what we usually do.

The Chair: We'll do what we usually do.

Do all members of the committee understand? Those are the proposed changes, and they're pretty straightforward.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd, did you want to speak to the amendment? I mean, if everyone's in agreement, we don't have to speak that long. I'm not telling you what to do, but I'm just saying that time is running fast, if we want to get this passed.

Go ahead.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess if everyone is in agreement, then I'll cede my time.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. van Koeverden, are you good?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I appreciate the effort for expediency, but given that we have a subamendment on the floor—

The Chair: We don't have it yet.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I'll cede my time, then.

Or I could just run the subamendment, if that's quicker.

The Chair: You can if you wish.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Okay. I'll run the subamendment.

The Chair: What's the subamendment?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: The subamendment is that we just remove the provision for dictating that the time of the meetings should be October 21 and October 23, the reason being—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have a point of order.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Could I finish?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have a point of order.

The Chair: He's making a subamendment.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I was led to believe by you, Mr. Chair, that there was agreement to move forward with this subamendment. Now the Liberals are changing it to say they have a new amendment they want to bring to the table.

That's why I ceded my time.

The Chair: No, I'm sorry if I gave you that impression. I'm going in steps. I didn't know exactly what the subamendment was. I'm sorry that it wasn't clear, but can we just...?

Basically, you're saying that you're not in agreement with the 21st and the 23rd.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: We can't vote on an amendment if there's a subamendment being considered. The subamendment needs to be heard.

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead and explain your subamendment, and we'll vote on that.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: The subamendment is just that.

First of all, the analysts will be able to submit or at least get to work on the Jasper fire study, which has concluded now, if no additional—

The Chair: There's no report coming out of this.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: My rationale was that this work could commence now, if we consider a follow-up meeting once the inquiry is under way, the personnel is in touch, some work has been conducted and we have new experts.

The reasoning for MP Soroka wanting additional meetings was very sound. We want to make sure that any effort to mitigate future fires in Alberta and certainly across Canada is undertaken. We'll have more information after the inquiry is conducted. My recommendation is that we come back in a couple of weeks, when we have more information. Perhaps then we can put out a call for some additional witnesses. Right now, I don't think the witnesses who have been imagined up have been located.

I think we should go to the sustainable finance study and then come back to this when we have more information.

The Chair: Basically, if you're looking at the amendment that's been proposed, where it says that these meetings take place on October 21 and October 23, your subamendment is to say that these meetings take place.... Can you give me a phrase?

• (1815)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: It would be "once the inquiry has commenced".

The Chair: Okay.

We can debate this subamendment, or we can just go to a vote on the subamendment.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I would like to speak to the subamendment.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thanks.

I think we all have the same aim, which is to get to the bottom of this and make sure that all the precautions were taken and that this doesn't happen again.

I think the witnesses we've had so far have shed some light. It seems to me that if there is a joint investigation being done by the federal and provincial governments, the agencies, the firefighters, the town of Jasper and everybody who's on the ground, they're going to have much more insight into what happened and what should be done than we do at this committee. I have no problem with us providing oversight or making recommendations, but it seems to me expedient to let the experts and the people who were there do the work, and then we can ask questions about that. Bringing in other witnesses like the witnesses we've had.... Some of them have been excellent, but I just feel like we're not the experts. People on the ground who lived there were very concerned about their homes and about their town.

This is going on. I feel like it's the job of a committee to provide oversight, but not to do this investigation, which is looking into the events that led to the wildfire spread, assessing the response strategies, and identifying potential improvements in managing such incidents in the future. It's also looking at the environmental and economic impacts of it, and there are efforts to review the effectiveness of the firefighting strategy, the coordination between federal and provincial agencies, and the long-term recovery plans.

For us to go ahead with more meetings on this without this information, which is going to be undertaken at great expense to taxpayers, being provided to us, I feel is irresponsible. Why don't we wait until this has at least commenced and perhaps has had some progress? Then let's resume for a couple of meetings to review or to assess what they're saying, rather than bring all the same people here.

That's my point. I'm speaking in favour of the subamendment.

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, I think you want to speak on the subamendment.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Yes. Thanks, Chair.

I really think Monique has a good idea there, that indigenous people weren't involved in our discussions. Having chaired other committees, I know that we do need a little bit of runway to get indigenous people identified and get them headsets or have them come to us. That can also take a while, depending on where they're coming from, to say nothing of saying to a minister that we need them in two weeks on this date. I mean, realistically, that might.... We can invite him, whether he can make it on that date or not. I think with some of this, we need to have the clerk help us with getting the witnesses on site on time.

If we finish the sustainable finance study, at least then the analysts can do their work on the sustainable finance study, and then

we can pick this up. I don't think it's an unnecessary delay. I think it's more out of respect for the clerk and for the witnesses we have to get here.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I'll speak very briefly, as I know we'd like to get on with the vote.

Something I thought of when Mr. Longfield was speaking is that we've heard a lot from witnesses over the last couple of weeks about how the expertise of indigenous people in doing prescribed burns ought to have been more adequately considered and utilized. Finding those experts, people who are familiar with northern Alberta forests and with how to do prescribed burns in a traditional first nations manner—perhaps somebody from the indigenous guardians group, which is doing very well—would be great.

Finding the right person is more important than simply finding a person. I don't think we should be aiming to check an indigenous box on this study. We should be seeking to find the best possible witness in that regard. That individual is out there. I want to make sure they're available. I really want those recommendations to be sound and well considered from the correct individuals.

The Chair: If I understand correctly, the subamendment is to change the wording “take place on Monday, October 21, 2024, and Wednesday, October 23, 2024” to “take place after we have completed the finance study”. Is that it?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: What I said was “once the inquiry has commenced”, because there's an inquiry on the way.

● (1820)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: We need to look at it, I think, so maybe after it is finished.

The Chair: Okay, so it's “after the inquiry is completed”.

What's the formal name of the inquiry?

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: It's the investigation into the 2024 Jasper wildfire complex.

The Chair: Okay, so it's “after the investigation is completed”. That's what we're voting on.

Are we ready for a vote on this? We're voting on changing “October 21 and 23” to “after the investigation is completed”; I don't have the exact wording.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are they investigating it themselves? No thanks; that's a hard pass.

The Chair: Wait a second. I'm just trying to summarize what the amendment is.

If we want to debate that even further, I can add people to the list, or we can vote on it.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Let's vote on the subamendment.

The Chair: Do we want to vote on the subamendment? Okay.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We're back to the original amendment. We had Mr. Soroka and Ms. Taylor Roy on the list to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Soroka, do you still want to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: No.

The Chair: Ms. Taylor Roy, do you still want to speak to the amendment, the one that mentions October 21 and October 23?

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Yes, I do.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: This is simply to say that I think we've raised concerns that we may not be able to get the right witnesses or the witnesses who have been requested for those dates. In the past, the government has been accused of delays or whatever. We're saying right now that it's unreasonable to ask indigenous witnesses who are experts in this area to come by that date, and likewise for the minister and the officials, since he has just been appointed to this position and has not even started to look at this issue.

My concern is, once again, that these dates are going to be put out there and perhaps the clerk can't get the witnesses by then. Why are we setting ourselves up for this? I don't quite understand. I mean, maybe it's another political game. I'm not sure, but I think it's unwise to do so.

The Chair: Mr. Mazier, go ahead.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Chair, I just wanted to make sure this is clear. I want to fully condemn the comments that my colleague referred to. None of us were aware of these comments, and we fully condemn these unacceptable statements. I also want to say that death threats are fully unacceptable in any form. No one should be subjected to this behaviour. I know this because I have received death threats myself.

I just wanted to make sure this was on the record, Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: It's noted.

We have the amendment to the motion. We have to vote on the amendment.

I just need some guidance as your chair, because Ms. Taylor Roy, and maybe it was Mr. van Koeverden as well, raised an important point. What if we can't get the required witnesses by the 21st and the 23rd? What do you want me to do?

Mr. Dan Mazier: We'll cross that bridge when we get there.

The Chair: We won't have another meeting until the 21st.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Start phoning.

The Chair: Okay, fine.

Is it on the amendment, Mr. Lloyd?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to address the concern that you had.

We have numerous witnesses who are ready to come, including a fire expert from Treaty Six First Nations, who can testify on these things.

• (1825)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Leslie.

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

It's convenient that the people who knew they were going to put this motion on the table have witnesses in their back pocket.

The Chair: That's not a point of order.

An hon. member: Can we just have a vote?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: But I'd like to speak to the motion.

The Chair: Do you want to speak to the amendment?

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Aren't we in the middle of a vote?

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Can I go first?

The Chair: Yes, you were on the list, sorry.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Yes, thank you.

I would just point out to my colleague that the motion as amended was brought forward by my colleague from the Bloc, so it's not exactly an in-the-pocket witness we have, but we happen to know a lot of stakeholders who are very concerned. That's why we need to investigate this further.

In terms of the timeline that this could take, we have a break next week. We have 12 days. We've had witnesses turned around in three days, and it happens on a regular basis.

I think we should get the right people in here in terms of first nations, and I think that although the minister is new, his schedule should be fairly clear. He should have the obligation, and, as the minister responsible now, he should be here on the 23rd as requested by this committee or be held in contempt of Parliament.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, I'm just reminding everyone that we're getting pretty close to the end of the meeting, if you want to deal with this before the end of the meeting.

Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I call for a vote.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Absolutely nobody is recommending or suggesting less accountability from officials or from ministers, as has been insinuated by my colleague's words around contempt of Parliament on something that hasn't been passed yet. Mr. Chair, the suggestion that anybody wants less of a thorough investigation, or less fulsome consideration of what could be done in the future to better fireproof our constituents, is quite frankly absurd.

What I call into question is whether or not this motion, in the last meeting before the Thanksgiving break, is more political games from the Conservatives or a genuine effort to get more information. Unfortunately, what we've seen are some pretty shady witnesses brought forward by the Conservatives, some people who really should not have been given a platform at this committee. If that's just going to continue—

Mr. Dan Mazier: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Dan Mazier: On relevance, I want to know if the member is voting against the motion to bring more witnesses.

Are you going to vote against it?

The Chair: That's not a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

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

I will communicate through the chair, as is required of me under the standing orders of this committee.

I will strongly disagree that any effort to ensure that the right witnesses come to this meeting and that we do not just check a first nations box to say, "Yes, we consulted indigenous people in this study"...which I think is gross and something that has been done before that we could probably avoid. We need to ensure that we have the right people come, to adequately protect people from wildfires in the future, given the over-proliferation of them. I'm not afraid of saying that they are made worse and more frequent by climate change.

It's not something that you'll hear from the Conservatives, ever. They just want to continue to tabloidize this issue and score political points on the back of this tragedy. When you just google "Jasper wildfire investigation", the first five things that come up are the Facebook pages of Conservative MPs saying, "Breaking news: The testimony that we've heard on it..." They're trying to use this American-style political game to tabloidize a tragedy, which is reprehensible, Mr. Chair.

That's what we should be talking about, the conduct of bringing disreputable people to this place to provide testimony that is clearly false. When you just look at the facts, it's the opposite. There is a complete abdication and avoidance of talking about climate change, which makes these events more frequent and more—

Mr. Branden Leslie: I have a point of order.

I'm curious about the relevance to the amendment we are about to vote on.

The Chair: I don't want to attribute motive, but clearly Mr. van Koeverden is certainly not in agreement with the amendment, so I guess he's expressing that disagreement.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I'll wrap it up, Mr. Chair. I'll cede the rest of my time to you.

The Chair: We have Mr. Longfield on the amendment.

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I think you left a question on the table for us. If the clerk isn't able to get the witnesses for the 21st, what do

we do for the meeting that we're going to have on the 21st, given that we're not going to be seeing each other between now and then?

We've just released some witnesses from the finance study. If we're not able to get witnesses for this, with all of the good efforts that will go into it, maybe we could just have that as a fallback and see whether the witnesses we released today would be available on the 21st. We'll try to get witnesses here for the 21st to satisfy the motion.

• (1830)

The Chair: I'll go to Mr. Boulерice.

Apparently, I would have some latitude as chair. If we found that we couldn't find any witnesses for the 21st or we had only one witness, I wouldn't go ahead. I have the latitude to say no, I'm not going to go ahead, because I only have one witness and that's a waste of a meeting, or we're not getting the most out of the meeting. There is some flexibility that the chair has. I can read the room. Maybe we don't have to get too technical on the language there.

Go ahead, Mr. Boulерice.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulерice: I hope we can vote on Ms. Pauzé's amendment as soon as possible.

However, I'd still like to point out that I would have liked to discuss the motion moved by my colleague, Laurel Collins, about the contaminated wharf in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. I think this is an important issue. The wharf belongs to Transport Canada. It is heavily contaminated by lots of chemicals. Maybe we can talk about that at another meeting.

The Chair: We talked about it yesterday, and we're trying to find an opportunity to study Ms. Collins' motion. We haven't forgotten.

Let's go to Ms. Taylor Roy.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I just want to ensure that all parties have a chance to get witnesses, to bring them forward. I think there have been a number of very good witnesses. I think the Bloc and the NDP have had some very good witnesses, but I question some of the witnesses who have been brought forward. I think we want to have balance. Just because one party has already engineered who their witnesses are going to be, knowing they were going to introduce this, I think the same opportunity should be given to everyone else.

I don't suggest that we go forward if the only witnesses available are witnesses the Conservatives have already lined up, knowing that they're going to be giving one point of view. I would ask that we all have a chance to bring forward witnesses and make sure that witnesses are coming from every party, not just the one.

The Chair: I would suggest that parties submit their witnesses by Friday at 4 p.m.

We've run through the speakers list on the amendment. Can we vote on the amendment? Okay.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

[*Translation*]

Now that the amendment has been adopted, let's go back to the motion as amended.

I had a speaking list, but Mr. Long is telling me he no longer wishes to speak, and, although I wouldn't want to point out his absence, Mr. Godin is not here.

[*English*]

Ms. Taylor Roy, do you have anything more to say? Okay.

[*Translation*]

We can now vote on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0) [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1835)

The Chair: I guess we can end the meeting now.

The meeting is adjourned.

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