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Chair: Angelo Iacono

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, colleagues.

Good morning, witnesses.

Today is meeting number 12 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format and is in public.

We have witness testimony for the first hour and committee business in camera for the second hour.

For those attending in person, please follow the health and safety guidelines for using earpieces. The guidelines are written on the cards found on the table.

[*Translation*]

The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development is starting its study on the electric vehicle availability standard.

[*English*]

This morning we are meeting with the following witnesses.

[*Translation*]

We have with us officials from the Department of the Environment. We're joined by Megan Nichols, assistant deputy minister of the environmental protection branch, and Mark Cauchi, director general of energy and transportation.

[*English*]

I see a third person—Mr. Derek Hermanutz. Is that correct?

Derek Hermanutz (Director General, Economic Analysis Directorate, Department of the Environment): Yes, that's fine.

The Chair: Great.

[*Translation*]

The Department of the Environment has five minutes for its opening remarks.

Sorry, I need to make a correction. The clerk is telling me that the Department of the Environment has 15 minutes.

Mr. Leslie, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): I have two things.

First, is that a typical 15 minutes out of our one-hour appearance? Typically, we would have one department that would have five minutes.

Secondly, in light of time, I'm curious whether we could consider not going in camera. I will be moving for us to stay in public for the second hour. Could we have a quick look around the room to find out if we can avoid going in camera, given the time constraints combined with using 15 minutes for bureaucracy talk?

The Chair: I already mentioned that last week.

What's going to happen is the extra 10 minutes will be taken off the second hour. We will extend. That's what I was planning to do, so nobody would have their time to ask questions cut short.

Branden Leslie: What about the in camera question?

The Chair: Sorry—what is the question with respect to in camera?

Branden Leslie: I'm going to be moving to stay public. Rather than you ending the first hour and suspending to move in camera, could we avoid that? It takes 10 minutes to go back and forth. Could we put the question to members around the room to see if that is going to be a motion that passes, in order to not waste more time now and/or later?

The Chair: It's not a question of wasting time or not; it's what I had already planned to do.

Branden Leslie: Are we staying in public?

The Chair: We're not staying in public in the second hour; we have committee business.

Branden Leslie: Can I move that we stay in public the second hour?

The Chair: In committee business, I have to deal with estimates, and I have to deal with the analysis with respect to the reports. That cannot be done in public. It has to be in camera.

Branden Leslie: Okay, we'll find out, then.

Thank you.

The Chair: As I informed the committee last meeting, the department has requested 15 to 20 minutes to deliver a technical briefing, after which the committee will have the remainder of the hour for questions.

You will see me putting up this little sign, which indicates you have one minute left to speak, and this means your time is up. Please try to end your sentence once I turn it around.

The floor is yours. I'll start with Mrs. Nichols.

Megan Nichols (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My name is Megan Nichols. I am the assistant deputy minister of the environmental protection branch at Environment and Climate Change Canada.

[*Translation*]

I'm pleased to be here today to provide a technical briefing on the electric vehicle availability standard and to answer any questions that the committee members may have to help inform their upcoming study.

[*English*]

I'm joined today by Mark Cauchi, director general of energy and transportation at ECCC, as well as Derek Hermanutz, the director general of economic analysis at ECCC.

In our opening remarks, we will provide an overview of the purpose of the electric vehicle availability standard, how it works and the review that is currently under way.

I'll start by saying that from a climate change perspective, transportation is Canada's second-highest emitting sector, and a net-zero future will require a transition to zero-emission vehicles over time.

Transportation emissions in Canada represented 27% of all GHG emissions in 2023, with light-duty vehicles representing close to half of those sector emissions. We have seen improvements overall in GHG performance from passenger cars and light trucks since 2019. Some of this is due to electric vehicle deployment since that time, but it's also due to overall fuel efficiency improvements in fleet performance due to other federal regulations in place since 2010.

[*Translation*]

The electric vehicle availability standard, or EVAS, program was finalized in December 2023. It was intended to work alongside a range of other policy measures led by various federal departments aimed at supporting the electric vehicle transition.

This included the incentives for zero-emission vehicles, or iZEV, implemented by Transport Canada; a zero-emission vehicle infrastructure program, or ZEVIP, implemented by Natural Resources Canada; and funding implemented by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada to support battery and electric vehicle manufacturing in Canada.

[*English*]

The electric vehicle availability standard was designed to further reduce GHG emissions from light-duty vehicles by ensuring a growing supply of zero-emission vehicles and choices for Canadians. It is part of a comprehensive plan to facilitate the ZEV transition and develop a robust electric vehicle supply chain and infrastructure. When the availability standard was published, we estimat-

ed that it would bring total cumulative GHG reductions of 362 megatonnes between 2026 and 2050. This is in addition to GHG reductions from Canada's light-duty vehicle GHG standards.

In addition to GHG reductions, electric vehicles bring health benefits and cost savings to Canadians. They reduce air pollution in Canadian communities and reduce health care costs. Health Canada analysis shows that the air pollution from on-road vehicles in Canada annually contributes to asthma, lung disease, an estimated 1,200 premature deaths and millions of cases of non-fatal health outcomes. The total estimated economic cost of on-road vehicle-related air pollution to Canada is \$9.5 billion each year. By 2050, the availability standard is projected to reduce various air pollutant emissions from light-duty vehicles, including particulate matter by 36%, NOx by 50%, volatile organic compounds by 61%, and carbon monoxide by 68%.

From a cost-benefit perspective, electric vehicles have lower operating and maintenance costs than gas and diesel vehicles, making their total cost of ownership lower than comparable gas-powered vehicles, even with purchase price differences. Their total cost is lower than it is for their gas counterparts, because of their significantly smaller fuelling and maintenance costs. Battery electric vehicles have fewer moving parts than other vehicles, do not require oil changes or engine tune-ups, and do not contain spark plugs or engine air filters that require replacement. The Canadian Automobile Association estimates that the average electric vehicle owner saves 40% to 50% in maintenance costs compared with having a gas-powered vehicle. The association also estimates that the average Canadian spends close to \$3,000 per year on gas, whereas the annual cost of electricity to power an average electric vehicle is only a few hundred dollars. In 2023, it was estimated that Canadians will save about \$36.7 billion in energy costs between now and 2050 as a result of the regulations.

• (1110)

I'll now turn it over to my colleague Mark Cauchi to explain how the availability standard works.

Mark Cauchi (Director General, Energy and Transportation, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Megan.

The EVAS requirements were implemented through amendments to Canada's existing greenhouse gas regulations for passenger cars and light trucks, which were originally published in 2010. The regulations were implemented under existing authorities set out in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. The EVAS sets annual EV sales requirements, starting at 20% by 2026 and growing to 60% by 2030, then 100% by 2035.

Canada is not the only country to have EV targets. Other jurisdictions outside—and inside—Canada also have targets. In the U.S., 11 state governments, representing 40% of the North American auto market, have EV targets and measures. The United Kingdom, the European Union and those 11 U.S. states, including California, New York and Washington state, have adopted targets of 100% EV sales by 2035. China also adopted a lower target, 20% EV sales by 2020, which has already been surpassed. Over 50% of vehicle sales in China are now electric vehicles. Norway will likely be the first country to achieve its world-leading target of 100% EV sales by 2025. Ethiopia was the first country to disallow the import of all gas-powered vehicles in 2024.

In Canada, British Columbia and Quebec have adopted EV targets. B.C.'s current target is 100% EV sales by 2035. Quebec recently announced a new target of 90% battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids by 2035.

Canada's regulations go beyond mandatory sales targets.

[Translation]

The standard includes a series of compliance flexibilities including early action credits, the ability of automakers to carry forward credit deficits by three years, credits for the sale of plug-in hybrid vehicles as well as investments in fast-charging infrastructure.

• (1115)

[English]

In essence, this means that there are multiple ways companies can comply with the regulations. For example, companies could sell more EVs or purchase surplus credits from other companies. Automakers could also use their own excess credits from previous years, including early action credits accumulated in 2024 and 2025. They could invest in fast-charging infrastructure or apply credits earned through the sale of plug-in hybrids.

The regulations apply to all companies that manufacture new passenger cars, SUVs and pickup trucks in Canada or import those on-road vehicles into Canada for the purpose of selling them to the first retail purchaser. It does not apply to on-road, medium and heavy-duty vehicles or off-road vehicles used in areas such as construction, agriculture, forestry or mining.

[Translation]

Manufacturers and importers have the option to exclude emergency vehicles. All companies have the same targets.

[English]

The regulations define zero-emission vehicles as battery electric vehicles, or BEVs, which are fuelled only with electricity; fuel cell vehicles, FCVs, which operate using hydrogen; and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, PHEVs, which can run exclusively on electricity

for a specified minimum distance before they transition to operating as hybrid vehicles using both liquid fuels and electricity.

On September 5, 2025, the Prime Minister announced a 60-day review of the electric vehicle availability standard. The review recognizes that automakers are navigating extreme market dynamics. It was launched in the context of the 2025 U.S. tariffs placed on Canadian vehicles, the resulting shifts in the automotive industry, and the related economic uncertainty.

[Translation]

The objective of the review is to ensure that the EVAS continues to reflect market realities, remains effective for Canadians and doesn't place an undue burden on automakers, while keeping a clear focus on a net-zero future.

[English]

The Prime Minister also announced that automakers' compliance obligations for the 2026 model year would be removed to help reduce the economic pressure due to tariffs. The government also announced that it would explore ways to improve Canadians' access to more affordable EVs, and that work is being led by Transport Canada. The review will consider potential amendments to the annual sales targets, including the 2035 standard, and it will explore possible additional flexibilities.

[Translation]

The 60-day review is giving Canadians and all interested parties an immediate opportunity to provide input on the regulations. The review will ensure that the standard is effective and achievable and that it supports both our climate goals and the competitiveness of our automotive sector.

[English]

One in four vehicles sold in the world today is an electric vehicle, and demand is expected to continue to increase in Canada over time as upfront purchase prices come down and more vehicle choices come to market.

During the review, the government has received considerable input from stakeholders, provinces and territories and indigenous organizations as part of a comprehensive process to identify potential changes that could provide additional flexibilities and reduce costs. As the review period comes to a close on November 4, the government will consider the feedback received from automotive manufacturers, industry associations, environmental non-governmental organizations, national indigenous organizations, provinces, territories and others.

[*Translation*]

The review is ongoing until midnight on November 4. We expect to receive submissions up until that time. No decisions on regulatory changes have been made at this time.

[*English*]

We will provide an update later this year on the results of the review. ECCC will be moving to publish a regulatory proposal in the winter of 2026 for additional consultation prior to finalizing the amendments in late 2026.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We'll start with the Conservative Party.

Ms. Anstey, you have the floor for six minutes.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us here today. It's good to see some of you again.

I have a question with respect to some of the dealerships that I represent in my riding. According to a recent report, EV adoption nationwide is only 14.6%. There are 69 new car dealerships in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many of them are rural, and they are family-run businesses. They're reporting that they have these EVs just sitting on the lot, taking up space and tying up investment capital. It's threatening their viability.

I'm just wondering what assessment has been done on how many of those dealerships are being hurt by unsold EV inventory that's tying up consumer choices. What specific steps are you taking to prevent these mandates from weakening the already limited rural automotive retail network, specifically in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Megan Nichols: I would say that's exactly one of the reasons that we're conducting this review, to make sure that, indeed, the standards remain appropriate and fit for purpose, and that they are working to the benefit of Canadians and also not hurting the auto sector.

In terms of rural and remote regions, we do realize that it's important that there be other right options available for consumers that meet their needs, whether it's for long driving distance, cold weather or certain types and classes of vehicles.

In terms of the 14.6%, we've seen that go down this year. It's right now sitting at around 9%. We think that's perhaps for a range of reasons—for example, the pause to the federal incentives for zero-emission vehicle program—so there is still that upfront cost for zero-emission vehicles that is a barrier to many Canadians, even though the life cycle costs tend to work in their favour.

This is exactly the kind of thing we're looking at. We are speaking to the Canadian Automotive Dealers Association, hearing directly from the dealers association on their views about what we should be considering in the review under way.

Carol Anstey: I'm curious, because I do think EVs are right for certain consumers. Why wouldn't you just let the market determine this? Why take this from a mandate perspective? Do you not trust that Canadians, if this is the right fit for them, would make this their automobile of choice? Why take a mandate approach?

Megan Nichols: I would say that the government has always approached this from the idea that you need a suite of measures in order to promote and support electric vehicle uptake.

Carol Anstey: I understand that, but why the mandate? I guess that's what I'm getting at, because that signals no choice. That signals that Canadians are restricted. I'm just curious about the mandate component.

Megan Nichols: One of the reasons for the mandate was also that, back about five to 10 years ago, the issue was that there was not adequate supply to meet consumer demand. Consumers were having very long waits for electric vehicles. They didn't have a wide range of selections from all different types of classes and segments of the market. Part of the intention is to send a strong signal to the auto sector about the importance of bringing many models to market for Canadians, so that the right choices are there.

Carol Anstey: Yes, so now that we're in a different environment, would you suggest then that the mandate would not be necessary, given what the sector is telling us now?

Megan Nichols: We're receiving input, as my colleague mentioned, until midnight on November 4. We've had a lot of discussions, so we're hearing a range of views from across industry and from other stakeholders. We'll be taking all of that into account in terms of what options make sense going forward.

Carol Anstey: Just to build on that, I appreciated the information that you gave about the lower cost to operate. From that perspective, I don't understand why you wouldn't just allow the market to go ahead and transition. If those benefits are really that great, why does the government have to continue to take this approach?

Megan Nichols: Again, there are a range of factors. One of them is that, as zero-emission vehicle production is still ramping up globally, if Canada wants to be able to attract a good proportion of that, given our small market size, we need to use all the tools that we have at our disposal to attract them. We hear right now about new models that are coming to market that are not being made available in Canada. The standard is one way of making sure that automakers are bringing that range in place.

• (1125)

Carol Anstey: How is that going? Where are we?

Megan Nichols: Well, the targets have not actually started to apply yet, as you know, and we put a pause on the 2026 one, so we're still in early days.

Carol Anstey: Okay.

Just as a final thought, a lot of the people in my riding feel this disconnect, especially in rural Canada, with the government. They feel like there's always this top-down approach and their interests aren't being considered. What do you say to people who live in rural communities who don't like the government telling them what kind of vehicle they can drive when they feel that it doesn't suit their needs?

Megan Nichols: I wouldn't purport to tell them what to think or what to do. I would just say, again, that I think our goal is to make sure there's a range of vehicles out there to meet every—

Carol Anstey: I mean specifically as it relates to the language around mandate, I guess.

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off. I just wanted you to know where I was coming from.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Miedema, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thanks for your presentation.

You spoke about later this year in terms of compiling the results during this review. Do you have a specific plan for sharing the initial results of all of this consultation that you're doing right now?

Mark Cauchi: I think right now we're still in the review. The government has committed to make a statement before we proceed to CG1. The timing of that statement is still to be determined, but we're hoping that before the end of the year we'll be able to communicate what the results of the review have been.

Shannon Miedema: Can you talk a bit about the review itself? What was the scope or the framework of the consultation? Can you provide any more details on that?

Mark Cauchi: I'm happy to do that. The review looked at a number of issues, including the targets themselves, so the level of ambition going out to 2035 and beyond. We also explored the kinds of flexibilities we currently have in place in the regulation and whether those flexibilities should be improved or modified to allow for lower costs in terms of vehicle manufacturing and importation.

We've also looked, obviously, at affordability issues, some of the issues related to price parity in the marketplace, and the competitiveness of the industry overall, wanting to make sure that, as the

Prime Minister noted on September 5, the regulation remains fit for purpose and is effective and does not bring undue costs on industry. We're looking at how we lower costs and how we increase flexibility in the short term while still keeping a view to the net-zero targets in 2050, which are crucial for Canada.

Shannon Miedema: Is part of the review looking at the risks of continuing to pause or fundamentally slowing down this transition? Are you looking at the risk of Canada not matching its trade partners' different ZEV mandates and how we'll be able to compete on the global stage? Can you comment on that?

Mark Cauchi: That's a valuable and good question. Obviously, Canada's auto sector has to compete globally. While we're highly integrated with the U.S. automotive market, we do see an uptick in EV sales globally, in Europe and Asia in particular. That certainly is something that I think the government is taking into account. Some parties have stressed that regulatory clarity or regulatory certainty is important in the marketplace. We've heard that from some groups, notably from the charging infrastructure community, as well as from some automotive players.

We're definitely looking at all these issues. Obviously, the U.S. situation in particular and the impact of tariffs on Canada's auto sector is a really important factor there. Yes, we're looking at all of that.

Shannon Miedema: I'm thinking about charging infrastructure and the need to have highly functioning connected infrastructure for electric vehicles across the country. I used to work at the local level on the ground, at the city level. Between local governments and indigenous communities and provinces and territories, what's the role of the federal government? What policies or programs are in place to really incentivize the fast-tracking of that connected network that we're still kind of working toward today?

• (1130)

Megan Nichols: Thanks very much.

We certainly recognize the need for a robust charging network in order to support the increase of ZEV deployment. We work in partnership with provinces and territories to support that.

NRCan is the lead on that for the federal government. It's invested over \$1.2 billion to date in putting fast chargers on the road, with the goal of having about 84,500 in place.

We do also see that the availability standard provides a strong signal to private investors, so they can have certainty, as they make investments, that the demand will be there.

Shannon Miedema: Have you considered anything around the financial business case of the fast chargers?

We were working a lot with the local private sector, and there's just no clear return on investment for putting in those fast chargers. It was more for marketing or for branding, where they might be a B Corp or something like that.

Have you been thinking about how to incentivize those more expensive investments?

Megan Nichols: I would defer to our colleagues at Natural Resources Canada to provide more information on that.

Again, it is seen as a little bit of.... At some point, the market will be developed enough that it will be able to make the return on investment on those worthwhile.

Mark Cauchi: I would just add that the regulation now does incentivize level 3 charging—DC charging or fast charging—and does offer a credit opportunity there for OEMs if they would like to invest there instead of putting an EV on the road. That is an option now.

We are looking at that particular provision to see whether it needs to be modified in the context of the review. There's ongoing work there.

Shannon Miedema: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bonin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Cauchi, you spoke about the various options available to automakers to meet the zero-emission standard targets. Automakers say that the credit amounts to a \$20,000 tax. My Conservative colleagues keep saying this. However, it seems clear that this isn't the case, because other options are available.

Is it really a \$20,000 tax?

Mark Cauchi: Automakers certainly have the option of obtaining a credit by investing in an infrastructure project. However, this isn't the only option. For example, they can purchase credits from other manufacturers that have surplus credits, such as electric vehicle manufacturers.

You're right to say that this isn't the only option. There aren't any penalties here.

Patrick Bonin: Why do we never hear you, on the government side, publicly refuting the lies being spread all over the place?

Why don't you inform people that it isn't really a \$20,000 tax and that other options are available?

Megan Nichols: We've tried to get the message across, but we could certainly do more in this area.

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

Another myth claims that, by 2026, according to the current suspended standard, 20% of vehicles sold by manufacturers must be electric. This isn't true. There are other ways for manufacturers to

comply with the standard, including compliance credits, as you said.

Am I right?

If so, why don't you set the record straight publicly, on the government side, and why do you allow these lies spread by manufacturers, oil companies and the Conservatives to flourish?

Megan Nichols: Of course, with the flexibilities, manufacturers can comply with the standard by selling electric vehicles at a rate of less than 20%.

Thank you for your feedback on our communications. We can always improve our communication efforts in order to clarify the actual requirements of the regulations.

• (1135)

Patrick Bonin: The EPA, Mr. Trump's environmental protection agency in the United States, has a whole web page to debunk myths and explain what's true and what's not.

Shouldn't you, the government, create this type of web page to set the record straight and refute the lies, including the lies spread by my Conservative friends, who keep hammering home false messages?

Megan Nichols: Let me just say that we can always do more to improve our communications. Once we've completed the current review and decided on the necessary changes, we must clearly inform Canadians about these changes.

Patrick Bonin: The government should avoid a repeat of the carbon tax situation, where it lost the communications battle and removed another standard. It seems that history is repeating itself with the zero-emission standard.

If we were to remove this measure, what would be the health care costs?

Megan Nichols: I'll ask my colleague, Mr. Hermanutz, to answer that question.

[*English*]

Derek Hermanutz: Regarding the health benefits, as Megan pointed out in her opening remarks, there are significant health benefits associated with the reductions in GHG emissions from the vehicle sector.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: My question is the following. If we were to remove the zero-emission standard, how much would health care costs increase?

[*English*]

Derek Hermanutz: I'm sorry, but I can't hear.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: If we were to remove the standard, how much would health care costs increase in Canada?

[English]

Derek Hermanutz: I apologize.

We did not quantify the dollar value of the health benefits, but we did show the significant reductions in PM and other air pollutants. In an extreme example, if the regulation were repealed, then it would be like—

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: You don't have any information on this topic.

Can you provide the costs?

[English]

Derek Hermanutz: Yes, we can provide that.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Do you have any figures on how a possible removal of the standard would affect the increase in premature deaths?

Can you also provide these figures?

[English]

Derek Hermanutz: We don't have that specifically for these regulations. We didn't do that analysis, but we can follow up with that information, for sure.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Thank you.

You spoke about the greenhouse gas emissions regulations. We often hear that we don't need zero-emission vehicles because light-duty vehicles are covered by greenhouse gas emissions regulations.

Normally, Canada must remain aligned with the United States. However, Mr. Trump is now backtracking completely, especially on this issue.

Do you think that we should remain aligned with Mr. Trump's United States when it comes to the greenhouse gas emissions standard for light-duty vehicles, even though he's backtracking?

The Chair: Sorry, but this will have to wait for the next round of questions, Mr. Bonin. Thank you.

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

[English]

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

How will car dealers meet their targets if they have no customers, or not enough customers, looking to buy EVs? Will they have to rely on the compliance credit system? What are the actual costs of those credits themselves, and who would bear them?

Megan Nichols: I'll try to remember all of those questions. First of all, I have a few clarifications. It's not a requirement for each dealership to meet the sales standard. It's each company. I want to make sure that's clear.

I go back to the fact that we're conducting a review right now to particularly make sure our standards are still realistic and achievable from a technology—

Branden Leslie: Have you done an impact assessment of what the compliance credits would be expected to cost in the credit market?

Megan Nichols: I'm not sure if I understand what is intended by "an impact assessment".

Branden Leslie: The manufacturer has sold 10% instead of the 20% of the incoming mandate. How much would a credit cost? Surely you've done an assessment of what those costs would be for the manufacturer.

Megan Nichols: The way the credit market works is that it's a private transaction between companies. We don't necessarily have a full line of sight into what that cost will be, because it's considered to be a private transaction. It's consumer confidence. We do sometimes receive that information from companies, but it's not something that we could divulge publicly to the committee.

• (1140)

Branden Leslie: Have you publicly made any statements regarding it costing roughly equivalent to \$20,000?

Megan Nichols: What has been said publicly is that an avenue for compliance would be to invest \$20,000 in charging infrastructure. That could hypothetically be considered the upper bound of a cost, because why would someone pay \$20,000 if they could comply at a lower rate by purchasing credits from another company?

Branden Leslie: There will potentially be a choice between a credit of up to, probably, \$20,000 and a \$20,000 tax on the vehicle. To my colleague's question, with either of these, you could have a \$20,000 fee added to the cost of the vehicle. Who is going to bear this cost? Ultimately the consumer will, won't they?

Megan Nichols: I'm not sure what is intended by a \$20,000 tax, but I would just like to say that this is exactly the kind of thing the review is looking at. Are these compliance flexibilities, such as the purchase of an infrastructure credit for \$20,000.... Is that the appropriate level? Should it be something that is reconsidered to be at a lower level? Is it something that's even effective at all? All of these things are on the table as part of the review that's under way.

Branden Leslie: Are there any Canadian companies that are currently in the seller's market of this credit scheme, or is the only seller with volume the American company Tesla?

Mark Cauchi: There are other companies selling EVs, and I'm not going to get into specifics on who is. We have knowledge of other companies that are selling credits, but I'm not going to get into which ones. I don't think that's appropriate for me.

Branden Leslie: Well, Tesla would be the obvious one. They're a completely electric company, so they would have access.

Mark Cauchi: There are other companies, as you know, that manufacture only EVs, and there are others that are doing quite well and manufacture both ICE vehicles and EVs.

Branden Leslie: Are any of them Canadian? It seems to me that Canadian manufacturers will be exporting their cash on hand to foreign companies to pay for this credit scheme.

Mark Cauchi: This regulation does not apply to the export of vehicles. Roughly 90% of the vehicles made by Canadian-based OEMs are sold into the U.S. market. This regulation applies only in the domestic realm.

We do have some companies that are based in Canada that are also selling EVs here. They all have different profiles in that regard, or different levels of success, but yes, there are some Canadian-based companies that are selling EVs here and—

Branden Leslie: Are they selling more EVs than gas-powered vehicles? That's how you gain a credit, correct?

Megan Nichols: Just to confirm, in order to gain a credit, automakers would have to.... Well, to gain a credit, you need to meet a target, the percentage target. If you exceed that target, then that counts as a credit. You don't have to sell...at least in the early years, there is no need to sell more EVs than ICE vehicles.

Branden Leslie: As it is right now, all the Canadian manufacturers are selling under 20%, and I understand there's a pause, so none of them, in theory, would have credit.

My second question is that there seems to be no transparency about this market: How will Canadians know if there's a cost to a new vehicle that's built in through this compliance credit scheme?

Megan Nichols: I just want to clarify one thing, which is that there are some other flexibilities in the early years. They're called "early action credits", and they can count towards future target-meeting.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thanks for being here today.

During your testimony, you mentioned global car sales. I believe you were referring to Asia and Europe. Can you perhaps provide any studies or reports that would substantiate some of those global trends? If so—not to put you on the spot, and you could always report back—if you could elaborate on it, that would be great.

Mark Cauchi: I'd be happy to share a few sources.

The International Energy Agency would be probably one of the key reporters on global trends. Their information is available online.

There have been a multitude of other reports done. I believe Bloomberg has one.

There's also ICCT's reporting on global automotive trends. There's a fairly wide number of sources there.

Eric St-Pierre: That would be great if you could provide the Bloomberg or IEA reports.

Would you characterize the growth of electric vehicles as incremental, or would you characterize it as exponential in terms of the growth of electric vehicles globally?

• (1145)

Mark Cauchi: Globally, I think we can say with a fairly high degree of confidence that there's been incremental growth. North America has been in a decline in 2025, but globally as a whole we are seeing growth.

Eric St-Pierre: How would you characterize it over the next five years, by 2030? What would the global market for electric vehicles potentially look like in the next few years?

Mark Cauchi: There's a wide range of forecasts, and I think it would be premature for us to speculate, given the current short-term situation that we find ourselves in in Canada. I think we're looking at a lot of modelling that's out there. There's a wide range.

For the North American market in particular, I think we need to be cautious about predictions, but we're definitely looking at this. Globally, I think there's a fair degree of confidence that we're going to see increased sales, just given the trends we're seeing in the automotive market.

Eric St-Pierre: Can you maybe comment on that? If, globally, the trends are moving in a faster direction, what does that mean for Canada's competitiveness?

Mark Cauchi: This may be a question more for our colleagues at ISED, but I'll state the obvious: Canada finds itself in a North American marketplace. Historically, we've been highly integrated with the U.S. automotive market. North America has a unique set of features regarding its automotive market. It is not like other automotive markets. North Americans tend to buy much larger vehicles than we see consumers buying in Europe and South America, for example. There are some unique attributes to the North American marketplace.

Generally speaking, I think we can conclude that—and, certainly, even the automotive sector will tell you this—electrification is viewed as an unstoppable long-term trend. The question is how fast Canada should go there and how fast we can do that in a North American market, where we have some countervailing forces, as you know, right now, in the short term.

I think it's not a question of "if"; it's a question of how fast we should transition there.

Eric St-Pierre: Earlier, we talked about co-benefits. We were talking about health care, for example.

I would love it if you could elaborate a bit on other co-benefits. I come from Quebec, where the grid is mostly renewables, and all the money goes back to Hydro Québec.

Can you comment on some of the co-benefits in terms of electrification in Canada, and say more about the play around utilities?

Mark Cauchi: Certainly, from what we can tell from the scientific data—and there were a number of studies done—the life-cycle emissions gain from EVs is pretty undisputable. I think we had, in our RIAs, about a 50% gain on life-cycle emissions—CO₂—over the life of a vehicle.

In Canada, we have a clean grid, so there have been studies out there that show much higher levels of life-cycle emission gains for Canada with EVs, so I think it's fairly well established now that there is certainly a gain on the climate side.

As Megan mentioned, obviously, some other benefits include the lower costs for households associated with lower maintenance and operating costs.

I think that competitiveness is also a consideration in that space as the world moves to clean electricity.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bonin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Nichols, you said earlier that greenhouse gas reductions are tied to the implementation of the standard.

Can you send us the supporting documents so that we can see all the details of your calculations?

Megan Nichols: Yes. I can certainly send them to you.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you.

I'll come back to the issue of the greenhouse gas emissions standard for light-duty vehicles that you referred to. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the standard is designed to align with the American standards.

In 2026, what will remain of this standard, given that Mr. Trump is scrapping everything and rolling back these regulations? What will remain in Canada?

Megan Nichols: We're keeping a close eye on the situation in the United States. If we don't change anything, the standard for 2026 will remain in place in Canada, even if the United States eliminates all its standards.

If the United States were to implement what it announced, Canada would need to decide how to proceed with its own standard.

Will we keep the standard as drafted in 2026? Will we make it more stringent in the coming years? We'll need extensive analyses before making a decision.

• (1150)

Patrick Bonin: If Mr. Trump backtracks, which he's clearly doing, do you think that Canada should stay aligned with the United States?

Megan Nichols: It isn't my place to decide. Of course, we must keep cutting emissions from light-duty vehicles.

The government must decide whether to maintain standards that apply only in Canada or to take a different approach.

Patrick Bonin: Overnight, the government removed the incentives for the sale of electric vehicles.

Do you see a correlation between the decline in sales and the end of federal subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles?

Megan Nichols: As I said, we've seen a drop of about 9% in electric vehicle sales in 2025.

We believe that this stems from a number of factors, including the suspension of the incentives program. However, we must also take into account the tariffs issue and the current situation in the United States.

Patrick Bonin: Minister Joly and former minister Freeland, I believe, said that the government would reinstate the incentives.

Given that the government suspended this program, people have reportedly delayed purchasing electric vehicles and decided to wait for the reinstatement of incentives.

In your experience, do you think that people are waiting for the reinstatement of incentives before purchasing an electric vehicle?

Megan Nichols: I don't want to speculate and try to guess how Canadians will behave. However, we've heard that this is likely why some consumers have decided to postpone their decision.

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

Regarding the decline in electric vehicle purchases, in your opinion, what percentage is directly related to the fact that Canada no longer offers incentives?

There has been a decline, but is it a decline of 5%, 10% or 50%?

Megan Nichols: I would say that we've seen a decrease or suspension of incentives at the provincial level as well. The suspension of the federal program alone probably didn't cause the decline in electric vehicle sales.

We must also consider the current situation in the United States.

We haven't yet obtained the data needed to assess the percentage of sales driven by the federal government's decision.

Patrick Bonin: If we remove the zero-emission standard, do you think that fewer models would be available and fewer affordable electric vehicle models would be available to consumers?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry. Your time is up. Thank you.

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

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Welcome, witnesses. Thank you very much for being here today.

We've heard a lot of rhetoric on both sides of this issue. I'd like some, maybe, hard stuff for a moment.

Have you done any good electricity demand forecasting for the next five or 10 years? Can you provide that data?

Mark Cauchi: Yes, provincial system operators, as you know, do demand forecasting for the provinces.

David Bexte: Specifically, I mean including the EV mandate requirements.

Mark Cauchi: That's right. In our RIAS, we did do electricity system impact forecasting, so—

David Bexte: How recent was that?

Mark Cauchi: It was 2023; that was the last—

David Bexte: Did that include any of the potential grid requirements with the new economy, AI, data centres, etc.?

Mark Cauchi: It probably preceded that data centre push.

David Bexte: Do you plan to update that?

Mark Cauchi: That is part of our review and what we go to [Inaudible—Editor] to assess.

David Bexte: Okay, I'm going to go rapid fire with this, so be succinct.

The additional cost of—

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Rapid fire is fine, but when we have two people talking at the same time, it's hard for the—

David Bexte: It's hard for the interpreters. I appreciate that.

The grid build-out related to that.... Do you capture that in terms of the cost to the consumer for the EV mandate?

Mark Cauchi: Derek, maybe I'll turn to you on that.

• (1155)

David Bexte: Can you quantify that? How much per unit is the grid build-out required by the EV mandate going to cost the consumer?

Derek Hermanutz: When we do the analysis, it's an integrated analysis, so it takes into account increased electricity demand. We do model the provincial system, so we would have an idea of how that would affect rates in each province.

David Bexte: Can you tell me how much per unit—just the transmission cost? Can you provide it?

Derek Hermanutz: I don't have that in front of me, but I can provide it to the committee.

David Bexte: Thank you.

By imposing the mandates, Canada is risking.... Well, Canada is pushing. The most recent narrative is that Canada is pushing vehicle production south to the U.S. Has the department conducted any economic analysis on how the regulations have hurt domestic auto manufacturing? Do they reflect the reality of today, and are you going to update that forecast?

Megan Nichols: I would just clarify, Mr. Chair, that the mandate does not apply to manufacturing in Canada. It applies to vehicles sold in Canada. Ninety per cent of our manufacturing goes to the U.S., but we will be looking at all of this as part of the review.

David Bexte: I understand that, but manufacturing is leaving, isn't it? We have plants closing, jobs.... There are the billions of dollars that are put into the battery plants, and nothing is happening, is it? We're not going to build anything.

At the same time, we have domestic companies—like Edison Motors, which is building diesel hybrids that are not necessarily plug-in hybrids and that are far more efficient than what the equivalent market is—having a great deal of difficulty bumping into EC-CC to get their product approved to even develop.

Where does the department sit on this?

Megan Nichols: Could the member just clarify which item he would like the department to weigh in on?

David Bexte: Weigh in on all of them.

I would like to know, first off, if you know how much you're hurting manufacturing. What is the cost to manufacturing, and how many jobs do you think are going to flee the country?

Megan Nichols: The mandate does not apply to manufacturing. It applies to sales.

David Bexte: I understand that, but it's the consequence of the mandate. Manufacturers are ceasing operations and transferring operations out of the country.

Megan Nichols: At this point, we do not have any evidence to show that this is due to the electric vehicle availability standard.

David Bexte: Tell that to the thousands of people who are out of their jobs.

We'll go to the hybrid diesel-electric.

Mark Cauchi: On that point about Edison, these regulations don't apply to Edison, just to be clear.

David Bexte: Absolutely. That's my point.

They don't apply, so they cannot get approval to develop their hybrid diesel-electric.

Mark Cauchi: No, I don't think that's correct.

I don't want to get too much into the Edison issue, because I don't think it would be appropriate, but those are the on-road regulations for air pollution and the heavy-duty truck regulations.

David Bexte: It's ECCC. It's the same department.

Mark Cauchi: This is not the EVAS, just to be clear on that point.

David Bexte: It doesn't matter. You're not letting these local innovators evolve into something that might be useful because it's a ground-up development.

We've heard lots of talk about the mandates being a strong signal, and the strong signal is sending manufacturing out of Canada.

Are you quantifying at all the EV credits that are being paid domestically?

The Chair: I'm sorry about that. The time is up.

We'll go to Mr. Fanjoy for five minutes.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you, witnesses, for joining us today.

In your testimony, you talked about the lower total ownership costs of EVs. You talked about the lower cost of maintenance and the lower operating costs. I believe I heard that, on average, a Canadian passenger vehicle requires 3,000 dollars' worth of gas per year compared to roughly \$300—or a few hundred, I think, was your term—to energize an electric vehicle.

Those are compelling differences. I think the market—the long-term trend, as was referred to—is going to see Canadians take advantage of those advantages.

As the world transitions toward electrifying transportation, what are the consequences for Canadians if Canada lags the world in this transition?

Megan Nichols: I think there are a few consequences. One, as the member has pointed out, is that Canadians will potentially miss out on the benefit of lower costs. Even though the upfront purchase price of electric vehicles is still higher, that is expected to reach parity with conventional vehicles in the future, so the cost benefits to Canadians are only going to increase. That's one potential risk.

The other is the ability of Canada to attract a wide range of these vehicles, so that Canadians will have choice. I think that's really a key element of the transition.

Thirdly, I think it's just making sure that our domestic sector can continue to benefit from the zero-emission vehicle transition, and that we can be a leader and not a laggard in this space.

• (1200)

Bruce Fanjoy: How does Canada's approach to electric vehicles compare to those of the U.S. and the European Union? How does that alignment support our competitiveness?

Mark Cauchi: As I mentioned in the opening statement, we see that a number of U.S. states—New York, California, Washington state and others—have set their own targets at the state level for electric vehicles. At our last calculation, that was representing roughly 40% of the market. There are about 11 states roughly that have put in place their own targets.

Obviously, the U.S. government has announced its intent to repeal its existing greenhouse gas regulations for vehicles, so our assumption is that those measures will disappear, although no final rule has been tabled in that regard from the U.S. government. We're waiting to see the outcome of that, as Megan mentioned. That's the situation in the U.S.

The European Union has EV targets. The United Kingdom has EV targets. China has EV targets. Other jurisdictions do as well.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you.

As we've often seen in the past, geopolitical events and wars in other parts of the world can dramatically change the price of gas here in Canada and make life less affordable. Inflation related to oil and gas also impacts affordability.

Does electrifying transportation insulate Canadians against inflation that they would otherwise pay for via fossil fuels?

Mark Cauchi: There is quite a bit of literature on global oil and gas prices.

We do see quite a bit of volatility, historically, in oil and gas prices. Domestically produced electricity has had more price stability than globally set oil and gas markets. I think that's a fair assessment.

Derek, you're probably better to speak to this point.

Derek Hermanutz: Megan mentioned the \$36.7 billion in net energy cost savings over the period in the analysis we did in 2023. This will need to be updated, of course. That net savings was the result of an increase of costs on electricity of \$63.3 billion, but it was offset by \$100 billion on fuel savings over the period for Canadians.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, we have Mr. Gill for five minutes.

Amanpreet Gill (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Thank you.

In rural and northern Canada, people rely on long distance travel. In harsh conditions, how will this mandate protect their mobility and safety?

Megan Nichols: That is certainly something we took into consideration in designing the availability standard. For example, we have made sure to include plug-in hybrid vehicles to be considered as zero-emission vehicles under the standard. Plug-in hybrids have both the electric capability as well as traditional gas motors, so they can provide that extra backup that could be required for some Canadians.

Similarly, we see that even though range can be reduced in very cold weather, with the rapid technological improvements that are happening in this technology, that range will only improve. We see very high rates of electric vehicle uptake in other cold countries, such as Norway, where it's currently at 90%. This is another reason the availability standard increases the sales standards over time, recognizing that it will take time for those technological improvements to happen.

• (1205)

Amanpreet Gill: Do you believe Canada should force the same vehicle rules on rural Canadians as it does for downtown Toronto, Vancouver or Calgary?

Mark Cauchi: Our regulations are national applications. I appreciate the point that in rural communities, charging infrastructure in particular may be a concern.

That being said, when we look at the data, average Canadians do not travel more than 17 kilometres a day in their commute. The EV range now more than covers that.

I appreciate the comment that long travel maybe a concern in rural communities. For that, as we mentioned, PHEVs and existing conventional vehicles are able to handle that.

Amanpreet Gill: Will Canadians pay more for vehicles under this mandate, yes or no?

Megan Nichols: It's hard to give just a yes or no answer. Right now, the upfront price is higher, but over the life cycle of the car, Canadians will save money.

Amanpreet Gill: I would like to share my time with my colleague, David Bexte.

David Bexte: Thank you.

I'd like to follow up on a question. You indicated that 17 kilometres a day is the average Canadian commute. That goes directly to my colleague's question about the difference between the life of rural Canadians versus downtown Toronto. My commute was 100 kilometres one way, when I was working as a professional. This is not the same environment at all.

How are these mandates going to affect the supply of the appropriate variety of vehicles in order to supply the market of consumers who live in rural and remote regions in Canada?

Megan Nichols: Right now, the range of vehicles is continually improving. We're seeing over a 400-kilometre range in some cases. Again, plug-in hybrid vehicles, which have the gas engine as well, are part of our electric vehicle availability standards, so there will be a wide range of choices for consumers.

David Bexte: It's a wide range of choices, but are they choices of adequate capabilities, ranges and capacities?

Megan Nichols: Yes.

David Bexte: You're impacting this in a very negative way for that particular demographic, because you're impacting the manufacturers, and the supply is not going to be there.

I would like to go back to the diesel hybrid question, because I think we got off track here. The diesel hybrid does not seem to be accepted or included in your EV standard equivalent, and that is a local Canadian domestic innovation. Why is that?

Mark Cauchi: I think you're referring to HEVs or conventional hybrids. I don't think there's a country that classifies HEVs as ZEVs, as zero-emission vehicles, because they are largely combustion vehicles.

David Bexte: They are plug-in hybrids, but they just have a different battery capacity and maybe not the arbitrary range designation. Is that correct?

Mark Cauchi: Plug-in hybrids are eligible under the regulation.

David Bexte: With the range capacity, though, they have to have a certain range. This particular product, then, serves a very important market niche. It has basically been developed, but it's not included, and there's no apparent avenue to include it. Why is that?

Mark Cauchi: Edison is not captured by this regulation, as it is not subject to the regulation.

David Bexte: However, it doesn't qualify under these regulations either.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You're welcome to send the response in writing to the clerk, if you prefer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Miedema, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Shannon Miedema: Thank you very much.

We talked about communications. We all have a strong role to play in communications. I think about that a lot, in terms of climate communications and how we can myth bust. There is a very loud lobbying effort happening across Canada, and there are a lot of counter-currents to climate and environmental progress. I'd like to use a bit of this time, then, for myth busting.

Can you please share some of the myths around electric vehicles, the review and the EVAS that drive you the most crazy, and what the actual truth of that myth is? I know you can do it.

• (1210)

Mark Cauchi: Obviously, this is an industry in flux. This is a product that's evolving. Certainly, a couple of things jump out at me.

On life-cycle emissions, as I mentioned, I think that one in particular is a concern. There's ample evidence to suggest that life-cycle emissions are lower from zero-emission vehicles. I think that's intuitive, but it's also borne out by various studies, including in Canada.

Range has improved quite a bit. I know people are still concerned. Range anxiety, in particular, has come up during our review, and it remains a preoccupation for those who don't want to buy an EV. That's a legitimate preoccupation and concern. On the other hand, we've seen pretty steady improvements in range in EVs, and the technology continues to get better.

Is it where it needs to be? That's a fair question. Certainly, given what we see in terms of how much people actually drive in a day, generally speaking, and with the improvements in range, that certainly would be on my list of things.

I'll leave it with those two, but others may want to raise more concerns.

Shannon Miedema: Are there none?

Megan Nichols: Going back to the intersection with our domestic manufacturing sector and making that distinction, it's not a mandate on manufacturing. It's a mandate on sales. This is an important distinction that sometimes gets lost.

Also, there's one that we've been circling around at this meeting, in terms of choice for Canadians. Part of the purpose of the standard is to improve choice for Canadians and to make sure that there is a wide range of electric vehicles that can meet the needs of all Canadians. It's not meant to take choice away; it's actually meant to increase choice.

Shannon Miedema: I will share my time with Mr. St-Pierre.

Eric St-Pierre: I appreciate your comments about some of the myths.

One of the myths I often hear is the cost of an electric vehicle. I've owned an electric vehicle since 2018—about seven years—and I'm always amazed. It cost me a bit more up front. That was seven years ago, and batteries have gotten much better since. The costs have decreased. A lot of cars, globally, are a lot cheaper. We often look at the sticker price, but I'm always amazed by the annual savings I'm seeing. I know my Conservative friends love cost savings. I'm paying very little annually on electricity consumption.

I'm curious about whether you can speak to the total cost of ownership.

Would you say that owning an electric vehicle over the lifespan of a vehicle is cost-competitive or even cheaper than owning an ICE?

Megan Nichols: For the total cost of ownership, it absolutely is.

For example, we see that charging a car can be as low as \$10. Across the country, this tends to be five to 10 times less than the cost of fuelling up with gas. As we mentioned before, maintenance costs about 40% to 50% less.

I think the question is, how long does it take to see payback for that period of upfront cost? One thing we've seen over the last couple of years is that price parity for the upfront cost isn't happening as quickly as we originally thought it would. That's a key thing for us to be taking into consideration as we look at how to amend the standard.

Eric St-Pierre: Very quickly, in five seconds, can you comment on the impact of tariffs from our neighbour to the south on the EV industry?

Megan Nichols: It's challenging, because things are changing so often. I would defer to colleagues at Innovation, Science and Economic Development to give you a more robust answer on that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bonin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to talk about the most advanced countries in the world for electric vehicle sales. These countries offer the widest selection of vehicles, including smaller models. They have implemented the equivalent of a zero-emission mandate.

Is that right?

• (1215)

Mark Cauchi: I believe so.

Clearly, where the government has implemented significant measures to promote these vehicles, things are going well.

That said, a wide range of measures have been put in place. For example, Norway has introduced a tax credit. There are also standards for reducing CO₂ emissions. I'm thinking in particular of the European Union standards. China has introduced a subsidy for scrapping old internal combustion engine vehicles.

Patrick Bonin: Could we reach and meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets in the transportation sector without the standard?

Do you believe that we could reach our target with the current requirements?

[*English*]

Megan Nichols: If we were to remove the standard, would we meet our net zero target? I think that depends on how we use other levers at our disposal. We can do it through purchase incentives, which could be very costly. We could wait for the market to catch up, but that might take more time.

[*Translation*]

According to our calculations, it would be difficult to achieve our objectives. However, as I said, other measures are available. We could use the other measures more intensively to compensate for the cancellation of the standard. This would mean having to make other choices.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

This puts an end to the questions.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their testimony today.

Branden Leslie: Mr. Chair, just before the end, if I could move again—

The Chair: I'm not finished.

Branden Leslie: Go ahead.

The Chair: The witnesses are excused.

We will suspend while we proceed in camera to consider committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

• (1215) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1245)

[*Public proceedings resume*]

The Chair: The meeting is resumed in public.

Mrs. Miedema.

[*Translation*]

Shannon Miedema: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move the following motion:

That the committee invite the Honourable Julie Dabrusin, Minister of Environment and Climate Change to appear for two hours before the committee to outline and discuss her mandate and priorities, including supplementary estimates B.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'll open the floor to debate.

Mr. Leslie, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, we support the minister's finally coming. I believe it's been 48 days since she was first asked to appear. This will make the fourth appearance invitation—pending—so obviously I don't have a lot of hope that it will happen any time soon. Her schedule must be incredibly busy if she cannot make an appearance.

In terms of the specific nature of the motion that was moved, it is not clear to me that it is for two hours. If we are going to be coming to discuss two separate topics, the minister should be appearing for one hour on the supplementary estimates. Typically, that meeting is flanked by officials, because the minister is often unable to answer specific questions about the contents of the supplementary estimates. My concern is that we are trying—due to her lack of willingness to appear and be accountable before this committee and before Parliament—to merge two separate issues into one meeting.

If we are going to be very clear, I'm happy to amend the language of the motion, such that it is the minister appearing on supplementary estimates for the first hour and there is a second appearance on her mandate and priorities, which was the one that was passed 48 days ago. Because the government has not released the mandate letters for various specific ministers, we have no idea what she might think.

It's a great opportunity to combine, but it needs to be very specifically clear that this is two appearances. That would now wipe off half the invitations. I would love to find out when the minister may be able to be scheduled on the two remaining invitations in the very near future as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Eric St-Pierre: Maybe I'll get a clarification from Mr. Leslie.... Are you suggesting that the minister come for a total of two hours? Is that your recommendation?

Branden Leslie: I'd take the minister every day. If we can get her here for two hours.... I'd take that any way at all.

I'm just happy that the government's actually willing to send her here. I think that is a great leap forward: her willingness to potentially come and face tough questions regarding the budget that's to be unveiled tomorrow.

Yes, I hope we can have two separate meetings, given that we have four outstanding invitations for the minister to appear. In one of these, we just had one hour of witness testimony from the officials at ECCC, who were not listed in the invitation to appear before this committee. The minister was the one who was listed.

I'm sorry, but may I—

The Chair: Thank you.

I have to go to Mr. Bonin, because you replied to him about a question he asked you, but I had Mr. Bonin on the list. I was just going to let you say a bit, but now you're saying more. I'm sorry, but I have to be fair.

Mr. Bonin.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly agree with having the minister here. We've reached a point where La Presse is calling the Minister of Environment and Climate Change the invisible minister. Her presence would be greatly appreciated.

I also agree with the idea of inviting the minister for two hours. We have two different and significant topics to discuss.

I would be grateful if we could quickly reach an agreement on this matter.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Leslie, do you have anything to say?

Branden Leslie: Before I move an official motion, perhaps we could do it collegially, without having to force the government to clarify the motion.

Does this mean the minister would be appearing for one hour on supplementary estimates B, or A—whichever one we're at—as well as a second hour specifically...? Ideally, those would be full hours, because I know, at times, we can have long suspensions in between hours. I would like to have an assurance of two full, separate hours on the same day, as per the invitation, for her to appear on her mandates and priorities.

The Chair: Mrs. Miedema.

Shannon Miedema: May I ask for one minute, please?

Thank you.

• (1250)

The Chair: We'll suspend.

• (1250) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1251)

The Chair: Go ahead.

Shannon Miedema: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are willing to accept a friendly amendment to actually specify two hours in this motion, vote on it and be done with it. That would be perfect.

The Chair: Is there debate? All those in favour?

I'm sorry.

Branden Leslie: Mr. Chair, have we passed a friendly motion, or are you just trying to move to a vote on the motion as written?

I think we need to outline first, or are we just...? I want to be very clear on what the motion asking the minister will be. I'm not comfortable going to a vote just yet. I'm happy to make a specific language amendment at this time to make clear what we are voting on. Is that acceptable to everybody?

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Miedema.

Shannon Miedema: Yes, the proposal is to put in “for two hours” to the motion, and that's it. Then we vote on that. If that's an amendment to the motion, and it's not friendly, and we have to vote on that, then just please give us the advice.

The Chair: Is there unanimous agreement to what Ms. Miedema has stated?

Go ahead, Monsieur Bonin.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: I agree.

The Chair: Good.

[*English*]

Is there unanimous agreement to what Ms. Miedema has stated?

Branden Leslie: I think, just to clarify Mr. Chair, it will say “to appear for at least two hours before the committee”?

Shannon Miedema: For two hours....

Branden Leslie: Would “to appear for two hours before the committee” be accepted as read?

Yes, we are okay with that.

(Amendment agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bonin, you have the floor.

Patrick Bonin: I'll proceed to the vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any further debate?

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

Go ahead, Monsieur Bonin.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Chair, we're currently facing a quite worrying situation with regard to the Port of Montreal's Contrecoeur expansion project. Work will soon begin in the critical habitat of the copper redhorse, an endangered species.

I moved a motion because, apparently, no notice had been given of this work and no public consultation had taken place. Clearly, no comments had been received, even though the copper redhorse is involved.

I would like to move the motion, which I sent to the clerk, to ensure that officials from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the Montreal Port Authority come to speak about this issue. Urgent work will begin shortly.

The Chair: Mr. Bonin, could we postpone this until Thursday?

That way, I could give the analysts time to comment on the progress of the study that we completed last week.

We could obtain instructions regarding your proposed study.

Is that okay?

• (1255)

Patrick Bonin: Unfortunately, if it were only up to me, I'd have no objection. However, we're talking about a species at risk that is endemic in Quebec, namely the copper redhorse. Its habitat is at risk of being disturbed any day. That's why I think there is a need to move quickly on this issue.

The Chair: Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor.

Eric St-Pierre: May I ask that we suspend the meeting for two minutes so I can reread my colleague Mr. Bonin's motion?

The Chair: Mr. Bonin, did you send out the motion?

Patrick Bonin: Yes, the motion was sent out.

The Chair: Could you please read it?

Patrick Bonin: I can read it right now, if you like.

That the committee invite the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the Montreal Port Authority (MPA) to appear jointly for at least two hours to testify about the environmental assessments that were conducted as part of the Port of Montreal expansion project in Contrecoeur, particularly with regard to the public consultation requirements set out in the Impact Assessment Act and the obtaining of a permit under the Species at Risk Act authorizing compensatory measures in the essential habitat of the copper redhorse in the Verchères Islands;

And that the Committee hold this meeting no later than November 17.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Miedema, go ahead.

Shannon Miedema: Thank you.

I have a question for my Bloc colleague about this.

I understand the issue and the time sensitivity. I'm wondering why you think that this forum, the environment committee, is the proper one, because of the time sensitivity. I'm wondering if it could even meet the time restraints if it's a study that's done in this committee. Is there some other avenue that might better serve the situation? Have you thought of other avenues?

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: The government's obligation to post a public notice and invite the public to provide comments is set out in subsection 86(1) of the Impact Assessment Act, which obviously falls under the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's jurisdiction—and certainly this committee's.

We're also talking about species at risk protected by the Species at Risk Act, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and, again, this committee.

Urgent action is required. We're talking about a species at risk whose habitat is threatened by construction work. The Species at Risk Act does not appear to have been obeyed.

[*English*]

Shannon Miedema: Can we suspend, please, to see it in writing?

The Chair: We'll suspend.

• (1255) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor.

Eric St-Pierre: I have a question for my Bloc Québécois colleague.

I'd like to address the issue of urgency. In your motion, you ask that the meeting take place no later than November 17. It is now 1:04 p.m., and the meeting ends at 1:30. We meet again on Thursday, but we'll be heading back to our respective ridings next week. That doesn't leave us much time.

Can you explain why the situation is urgent?

Patrick Bonin: First of all, officials from the Montreal Port Authority and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada can surely make themselves available for an hour. The meeting would take place via video conference.

The urgency involves the habitat of the copper redhorse, an endemic fish found only in Quebec. Very soon, work will be carried out that could harm the copper redhorse's critical habitat. The planned work is completely contrary to the Species at Risk Act.

Many questions have been raised. Why is this happening? Why was there no public notice or consultation?

Hence, urgent action is required.

• (1305)

Eric St-Pierre: Can you be more specific on the timeline?

I understand the issue of urgency. My neighbour and I have the same problem near my riding, in Pointe-de-l'Île, near Rivière-des-Prairies. It involves a public beach. However, I know that my neighbour—your colleague—does not consider this to be an urgent issue.

I'd like to better understand the timeline for the planned work at the Port of Montreal. Will it begin in December, or next year?

Patrick Bonin: From what I understand, the Port of Montreal is now preparing the necessary facilities for the work. Work could begin as early as tomorrow. That is why the situation is urgent.

It's not the same situation as the beach you just mentioned. We can discuss that another time. I am referring to imminent work that could begin without notice or public consultation. The situation must be clarified.

This is about the survival of the copper redhorse.

Eric St-Pierre: Has the work already started?

Patrick Bonin: The Montreal Port Authority has obtained the permit. If it hasn't started yet, work could start tomorrow. The Montreal Port Authority is ready to begin the project and would like to proceed quickly. The project was proposed as part of your government's Bill C-5, which aims to build Canada rapidly.

Things must be done properly. The project is currently raising major concerns. So it's worth clarifying the situation here. A number of groups are also very concerned. The copper redhorse has no voice. So we must defend it and speak on its behalf.

[*English*]

Shannon Miedema: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

From my current limited experience of what happens at committee, I would say it happens very slowly. It's done well, but it's slow. If there's a risk of it starting imminently, I really think there are other avenues that could be pursued first, because of this urgent situation. Other conversations could be had and other tactics used. I really don't understand why this would be the avenue of choice if it could actually start any day and there's this risk.

Can you comment on that?

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: The committee is sovereign. We can call officials from the Montreal Port Authority and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency—both federal organizations—to quickly clarify the situation.

It's a simple and effective way, and I don't see any other way. This is part of our committee's mandate, since the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is responsible for both the Species at Risk Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

[English]

David Bexte: Thank you, Chair.

I would just like to say that we support this motion. I think, if there are other avenues, they should be pursued in parallel.

This is something that goes to the process on how the government works. In something that's urgent and emergent, and it's evolving with these new Major Projects Office procedures and how they're starting to roll out.

I would like to add an amendment that “and that the committee further invite Dawn Farrell, CEO of the Major Projects Office, to provide a briefing and overview of the office's operations and procedures before the end of November 2025.”

The Chair: Can you please explain how your amendment falls within the scope of the motion?

David Bexte: This project that's under study falls under the Major Projects Office. As the CEO of the Major Projects Office, Ms. Farrell should be able to clearly inform us on their procedures. Under Bill C-5, it was fairly clearly articulated, or at least the intent was, that this sort of thing wouldn't happen, that rules and procedures and species at risk.... These issues would not be circumvented.

We want to know what the processes are that are going to mitigate that. Go to the horse's mouth and get the best information possible from the leadership.

• (1310)

The Chair: Reread your amendment.

David Bexte: Indeed. Thank you, Chair.

It is to add at the end, “and that the committee further invite Dawn Farrell, chief executive officer of the Major Projects Office, to provide a briefing and overview of the office's operations and procedures before the end of November 2025.”

The Chair: Is there debate on this amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. St-Pierre.

Eric St-Pierre: I have a question of clarification for my colleague from Bow River, Alberta.

Can you comment on whether the Contrecoeur project in Quebec has already been approved by the Major Projects Office, given the sense of urgency?

David Bexte: I understand that it's on the list. Everything is evolving very quickly.

That is the nature of our questions. How are all of these rules working, and how is all of this coming about in the way it is? That's the source of ambiguity, or the lack of clarity. We want clarity.

Eric St-Pierre: If I understand correctly, it hasn't been approved, but it may be approved, or it's moving in that process? Is that what you're suggesting?

David Bexte: Yes, I am under the same impression as you are, then.

The Chair: Ms. Miedema.

Shannon Miedema: My understanding of the major projects on the list is that they're trying to go as fast as they can. I think all parties want movement as fast as possible, done in the right way, because of the situation we're in as a country.

This is a stretch in terms of being within the scope of Monsieur Bonin's motion. We've had Dawn Farrell in front of committee in weeks past. She has a lot to do. She's running a whole team now. I feel like this is a bit out of scope.

Again, I'm not sure this qualifies as an emergency when the project is undergoing its initial vetting process to ensure it hits all of the criteria that are required within the act to be a nation-building project.

The other thing is that we've just had members opposite vote against a motion because our agenda is so full going out past December that there's not room to even consider new motions, so I don't feel like this is quite a fair situation. I don't think we should be putting this forward at this time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. St-Pierre.

Eric St-Pierre: If I may, Mrs. Farrell was here two weeks ago; you can probably count the days on both hands. When she was here, she testified that she had been in her position for only 39 days. She's probably been in the position for 49 days or 50 days now. What additional information are we going to get from that handful of days?

I'm raising the same questions as my colleague, especially given the fact that we're talking about the agenda being packed and we can't add anything else. Then we conveniently vote against my motion, and suddenly there is time and it must be urgent and it must be before December 17.

I just want to highlight those contradictions from my colleagues from the Conservatives and the Bloc on that.

The Chair: Mr. Fanjoy.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate that we're addressing an amendment, but what I'm seeing is scope creep when what we have is a very particular issue that has some urgency.

I assure my colleague from the Bloc that, on this side of the table, we care very much about species at risk. I do think that this matter would be better dealt with outside of committee at this point. That doesn't mean the committee can't revisit the same issues in a timely manner, but I do think the urgency requires some alternative approaches that can get the port authority and other relevant people together with the government and other parties who are involved in this major project.

I would like to see it dealt with that way. I think it's in the best interest of protecting a species at risk.

• (1315)

The Chair: Mr. Bexte.

David Bexte: Thank you, Chair.

I think one of the big differences in this case is that we have a very specific case to deal with. Last time the CEO was here, we were talking in broad generalities, but in light of that, I call to put the question.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Bexte, but you can't put a question.

David Bexte: Can I not put the question to the committee and call for the vote?

The Chair: No. Until there's debate, you can't call for the vote.

Is there anything else to add?

Mrs. Miedema, go ahead.

Shannon Miedema: My understanding is that Fisheries and Oceans Canada is working to speed up approvals for the Fisheries Act authorizations, so that we can build major projects faster and without delay but not without adhering to all of what is in the Fisheries Act to make sure that we're aligned with it. That work is ongoing right now when it comes to major projects, such as Contrecoeur.

It may be worth even conversations with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and other departments, for that matter, about issues such as endangered species.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is there any further debate?

Mr. St-Pierre.

[*Translation*]

Eric St-Pierre: I'd like to ask my colleague a question to clarify something.

The English version of the motion refers to

[*English*]

the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

[*Translation*]

I'm wondering if it might be more appropriate to talk about the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. I'm not trying to correct you, but we should check that. There may be a jurisdictional issue.

I'm new, and I'm trying to better understand. I have my doubts, and I just want to make sure that, if we are to call witnesses, we call them from the right agency. We shouldn't be calling them unnecessarily.

Patrick Bonin: We are indeed talking about the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

Eric St-Pierre: In that case, your motion should be amended to make it clearer.

Patrick Bonin: I completely agree.

The Chair: We're now debating Mr. Bexte's amendment.

Mr. St-Pierre, if you like, you can move a subamendment.

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you. I will move the subamendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: You can do it now, Mr. St-Pierre. You can go forward with that if you want.

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you for allowing me the time.

I'll bring the subamendment. I'm glad that my colleague agreed with the assessment.

I'll bring a subamendment to replace the words, "Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency" with "Impact Assessment Agency of Canada". That will be my subamendment.

The Chair: Could you repeat that, Mr. St-Pierre?

Eric St-Pierre: Yes. I'm sorry. We're getting these motions quite last-minute.

It's to replace the words "Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency" with the words "Impact Assessment Agency of Canada".

The Chair: That is out of order.

Clerk, can I have you explain it?

• (1320)

The Clerk of the Committee (Leif-Erik Aune): For reasons of scope, the subamendment must relate to the amendment. The only section that you can further amend is the section that Mr. Bexte proposed in amendment. Mr. Bexte proposed adding to the end of the motion to invite Dawn Farrell, the CEO of the Major Projects Office, to appear and provide a briefing before the end of November 2025.

Eric St-Pierre: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that scope.

I would just like to ask if I can get Mr. Bexte's amendment in writing. I would love to be able to see that, and ideally in French, too.

David Bexte: Were you able to copy it down?

The Clerk: I took notes in my own shorthand, sir. I understand that your amendment was to add to the motion, not to delete any words but to add, "and that the committee further invite Dawn Farrell, Chief Executive Officer of the Major Projects Office to appear and provide a briefing before the end of November 2025."

I took that note in shorthand.

David Bexte: Sure. We can send that in.

The Clerk: We will just have to get it translated. Wait one moment, please.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Have you received the text, Mr. St-Pierre?

Eric St-Pierre: Yes, I received it in both French and English. Thank you.

The Chair: Very well.

Mr. Fanjoy, the floor is yours.

[English]

Bruce Fanjoy: On this motion to include Dawn Farrell, I think Conservatives have made it clear that they would like to have the CEO of the Major Projects Office here on a regular basis. She's been here recently and will be here again soon, at some point.

I think what we're witnessing right now.... The future of the copper redhorse fish, which is a recognized endangered species, should not be subject to one person's schedule to come and appear before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

I oppose this amendment, simply because it will delay conversations that need to happen more promptly. I'd like us to go in that direction.

I'd be happy to hear further debate.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor.

[English]

Eric St-Pierre: I'd like to thank the clerk for drafting this very quickly, and for your patience in all this.

I have two quick questions for my colleague from Bow River.

First, you say “invited to appear”. It's a question of for how long. Could you speak to the length of the appearance?

Second, you say “provide a briefing”. I'm curious about what you mean by “briefing”. Is that a study? Is it a note? Can you describe your expectations a bit more as to the briefing? I'm sorry. These are clarification questions, but I feel language matters.

Thanks.

• (1330)

David Bexte: Sure.

To respond quickly, it's a briefing in the style to which the committee has become accustomed: Come and speak to the questions that are posed. A typical segment would be an hour. I'd love to have her here for two hours—for the whole day.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Kronis, the floor is yours.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): To respond to Mr. Fanjoy's point, this is a species at risk. When it comes to protecting species at risk, we should be using every tool at our disposal.

One of those tools is the committee, so I support the motion.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): I'll be supporting this motion as well. We must do everything we can to protect endangered species.

[English]

Shannon Miedema: If it really could happen tomorrow, as Monsieur Bonin says, this committee is not the right tool for an injunction around the potential risk to an endangered species. It's 100%

not the right tool. I think there are many other tools that could be explored.

In terms of the amendment, Mr. Bexte, you said in your response that it's typical of what we do in committee, which is to answer the questions we ask. I don't consider that to be a briefing.

If you really want Ms. Farrell to come and talk specifically about this issue, I think that something would probably have to be prepared around that, with details. She may not know the answers, because she is probably really high-level, with a big machine under her. I can envision it occurring as it did in the past visit, when questions were asked on all kinds of things about major projects, climate, Canada, etc.

I would encourage a refinement of the language or a reconsideration that this is potentially out of scope for this motion.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bexte, please.

David Bexte: When we invite people to committee, they're always invited in context. They have five minutes of prepared time ahead. They can prepare appropriately for the context. That's good enough. Answer the questions at a high level. That's exactly what the committee is asking for.

There's a species at risk. This is important.

More importantly, we need to ensure, as this new reality or potential reality evolves, that we understand how this process is going to work and how all of these moving parts are going to interact. That's the nub of what we're getting at. There is an urgent issue that we can use as a case, and that's how we should proceed.

The wording stands in the amendment as proposed. That's it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. St-Pierre.

Eric St-Pierre: Given that we're already in early November, the week will soon fly by, and we'll be quite busy in the following days. When we do come back, say, at the end of November....

I have a question for the other emergency motion. We're studying the EV availability standard, which was brought forward by the Conservatives. If we're suddenly rushing this...your amendment and bringing in Dawn Farrell, how would that impact the other study that the Conservatives have brought? Can you speak about that scheduling and the timeline?

We have a study your party has called very urgent, studying EVs, and now there's this other motion that's also very urgent. How do we balance these urgent demands that are coming from your side?

David Bexte: It's quite possible. Just navigate it.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Miedema, if I may, I have something to say before giving you the floor.

First of all, I see that it is 1:35. We should ask ourselves whether we should continue this debate.

Second, the study we started today was already scheduled for November 17. If we want to add more meetings, we'll have to cancel all the meetings that were already scheduled for the 17th. In addition, notices have already been sent out for that date as well as for subsequent meetings.

I'm just concerned about what the clerk has to do.

[English]

It's to undo and redo and undo again. Let us be conscious of all of this.

I leave the floor now to you, Ms. Miedema.

• (1335)

Shannon Miedema: Again, I would just say that this isn't an emergency. This project is not happening yet. It is to adhere to environmental regulations and legislation as they currently stand. There are organizations to consult with, like Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Impact Assessment Agency, to have conversations with if there is a concern. It could potentially even be staff at the Major Projects Office.

I agree. I think this would completely derail our scheduled plan and the witnesses who have been invited. It would slow down the Conservative study that has just begun today. I really think that there are better avenues to consider.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is there further debate?

We're voting on Mr. Bexte's amendment.

(Amendment agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: The amendment is adopted.

We are resuming debate now on the motion as amended.

Go ahead, Monsieur St-Pierre.

[Translation]

Eric St-Pierre: Mr. Bonin, you mentioned that a number of groups in Quebec were concerned about the Contrecoeur project. One group in particular was mentioned on your social media—SNAP Québec.

Can you name all the other groups that are concerned about this and have taken a public position?

Patrick Bonin: My honourable colleague is quite familiar with environmental groups in Quebec. I invite him to contact them.

Personally, I am in contact with the Centre québécois du droit de l'environnement, or CQDE. This organization is recognized, and it is quite concerned. My colleague can also contact Nature Québec and Eau secours, two organizations that are no doubt concerned as well. There are also national groups.

In my opinion, there are already enough groups, and those who specialize in the matter are clearly saying that the situation is worrisome. I invite my honourable colleague to take greater ownership of this issue, because urgent action is required. Currently, his government is not taking action.

Eric St-Pierre: If I understand correctly, you're saying that CQDE, Nature Québec and national groups have publicly expressed concerns about the Contrecoeur project.

Is that correct?

Patrick Bonin: Several groups have spoken out publicly. This issue has been on the table for several years. I can name Eau secours, Fondation Rivières, Greenpeace, Nature Québec, the Quebec Environmental Law Centre and the Société pour la nature et les parcs, among others. That's already quite a few.

Eric St-Pierre: Did this start several years ago or just recently?

Patrick Bonin: It's been a number of years.

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mrs. Miedema.

Shannon Miedema: I would really like to better understand why this is an emergency. I am now confused.

Is the motion asking for a study, or is it just to have this one meeting with Dawn Farrell? What are we actually asking for? What is going to happen?

Mr. Bonin, what is the impact of what we are asking for? If you could respond, that would be great.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: At the risk of repeating myself, I would say that work could start on the site tomorrow. Your government issued a permit. It put this project on the list of national interest projects set out in Bill C-5. That allows it to override the Species at Risk Act and move forward, despite all the legislation that was put in place over the past few decades in Canada.

Urgent action is needed. I've heard that the copper redhorse was at risk. I saw that environmental groups were calling for an investigation and a suspension of the permit and that work could begin at any time. If that's not the case, prove it to me.

If there are other ways to avoid endangering the species, so much the better. Let's explore them. We must do everything in our power to clarify the situation and protect the copper redhorse, a threatened species found only in Quebec. It doesn't live anywhere else in the world.

This committee's role is very specific, and this falls within its mandate. We have a responsibility here, and I expect this committee to live up to its mandate to protect this endangered species.

• (1340)

The Chair: Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor.

Eric St-Pierre: I'd like to clarify one last point.

My colleague knows the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement—or BAPE—a little better than I do, given his experience.

Has the organization been approached about this issue?

Does it have a specific role to play in this project? If so, what is it?

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Chair, time is running out. I don't know where my colleague is going with this question.

BAPE falls under the jurisdiction of the Province of Quebec. I will therefore let the Government of Quebec do its job. The federal government's project falls under the responsibility of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. The federal government did an impact assessment, and 302 conditions were issued. Some of them pertain to the copper redhorse. Those conditions have still not been met. Potential irregularities could have irreversible effects on an endangered species.

I therefore invite my colleague to contact the Government of Quebec if he wants more information about the BAPE. We're talking here about the federal government's role, and that role is not currently being fulfilled.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any further debate?

Mrs. Miedema.

Shannon Miedema: My understanding is that when there is a project proposed, all of the legislation that applies is applied and considered. If there is a species at risk involved, the departments look at what the potential impacts would be on that species at risk. They look at the potential mitigation measures and options, so they can balance the project with the potential risk to the environment, to the species at risk, and others.

That is what is at play right now. That is our current legislation. That is the work of these departments. I still don't understand what this committee can contribute to this process.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor.

Eric St-Pierre: I move a subamendment to add a witness, an official from the Quebec government's Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement. That official would be called for 30 minutes. It's a matter of clarifying that situation and seeing what the impact would be at the provincial and federal levels.

This involves adding the words “Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement” as a witness.

[English]

That's my amendment.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Chair, we're talking about a project that was authorized by the federal government. The Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement has no place in these discussions. The current problem has nothing to do with the Government of Quebec.

We're really talking about the federal government, the Montreal Port Authority and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

I don't understand what my colleague is getting at. I'll cut to the chase. I move that we vote on the motion.

The Chair: The clerk would like me to clarify one point. The committee can invite anyone, any organization. However, it is important that they be in Canada.

Mr. St-Pierre, did you have your hand up?

Eric St-Pierre: No, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Could the subamendment be read?

The Clerk: If I understand correctly, Mr. St-Pierre, you're moving that the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement be added as a witness.

Is that correct?

Eric St-Pierre: That's correct.

The Chair: I will open the floor to debate on that subamendment.

We can't go to a vote, because there's debate on the subamendment.

Patrick Bonin: I have no comment. I'm ready to vote on this subamendment.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any further debate?

Bruce Fanjoy: Can we see the amendment in writing in English and French, please?

The Clerk: I don't have it. If I receive it in writing, I'll be happy to distribute it. I'd be happy to prepare an English interpretation and distribute that to the members if they need it.

• (1345)

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Bonin, you have the floor.

Patrick Bonin: This subamendment is being proposed by the government members, and they are the ones who should have this information. For our part, we don't need that information in writing. We'd like to go to a vote.

The Chair: Mr. Bonin, you have to understand that I can't force a vote as long as there's a desire to debate. That may not be the case for you, but there is a desire to debate the subamendment on the other side of the table.

So I can't continue to be asked to call the vote. I can't do that as long as there's debate.

Patrick Bonin: I understand, Mr. Chair, but I don't see any debate.

An amendment was proposed by my Liberal colleagues, who clearly want to buy time.

No one has anything to say about this amendment, except the ones who moved it.

If they have no questions on their own subamendment and no one has anything to say, we normally just go to a vote.

The Chair: I hope you remember your words, because one day it will be the other way around.

I'll ask the question, then.

The clerk advises me that we cannot go to a vote, because we're still debating the subamendment.

[*English*]

Is there further debate on the amendment from Mr. St-Pierre?

Bruce Fanjoy: Is that the one that we haven't received in writing?

The Chair: We're all members of this committee. The amendment should be presented in writing in both official languages.

The Clerk: Do you want me to prepare the written version?

The Chair: Yes, because one day it's going to be on that side, and I won't be able to proceed if it's not bilingual. This is to be fair to both sides.

• (1345) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1354)

The Chair: We are resuming debate. The clerk has advised me that the amendment of Monsieur St-Pierre has been written, translated and delivered.

Mr. Fanjoy.

Bruce Fanjoy: I would like to propose an amendment, that we remove the last sentence of the motion from Patrick: "that the committee hold this meeting no later than November 17".

The Chair: You can't propose an amendment until the first amendment has been taken care of, meaning debated and voted on.

Going back to the amendment that Monsieur St-Pierre moved, it has been translated and distributed. Is there any further debate on that amendment?

Monsieur St-Pierre, it was your amendment. Can you read it, so we can come to the end of it and proceed?

• (1355)

Eric St-Pierre: Yes. We add the words, in English, "and the Office of Public Hearings on the Environment".

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now we will focus on the motion as amended.

Mr. Clerk, can I ask you to read it, so we can get clarification as to what we're concentrating on now and maybe go to a vote after that?

The Clerk: Yes, sir.

That the committee invite the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and the Montreal Port Authority (MPA), and the Office of Public Hearings on the Environment to appear jointly for at least two hours to testify about the environmental assessments that were conducted as part of the Port of Montreal expansion project in Contrecoeur, particularly with regard to the public consultation requirements set out in the Impact Assessment Act and the obtaining of a permit under the Species at Risk Act authorizing compensatory measures in the essential habitat of the copper redhorse in the Verchères Islands; that the committee

hold this meeting no later than November 17; and that the committee further invite Dawn Farrell, chief executive officer of the Major Projects Office, to appear and provide a briefing before the end of November 2025.

Thank you.

The Chair: Bruce.

Bruce Fanjoy: I would like to propose an amendment that we remove the last sentence from the motion, as a practical matter.

Thank you.

The Chair: Can you refer to the words you want to delete?

Bruce Fanjoy: I want to delete "that the committee hold this meeting no later than November 17".

The Chair: Is there any debate? Is it understood?

[*Translation*]

Is everyone clear on the proposed amendment?

[*English*]

Is there no debate?

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We're resuming debate on the amended motion.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Last week, the clerk sent an email about general considerations for drafting reports as well as instructional themes.

I will give the floor to the analysts so that they can guide us on how to proceed and give us all the details about the report they will soon be preparing.

Sarah Yakobowski (Committee Researcher): Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

• (1400)

[*English*]

We work at the will of the committee and are grateful for a chance to quickly outline an approach to report drafting that has worked well for this committee.

Now that the testimony has concluded for the emissions reduction plan study, we assume the committee would like a report to be drafted. Members can now guide the preparation of the report that will be tabled in the House.

As Mr. Iacono mentioned, there was an email sent from the clerk. The type of drafting instructions—they're typically offered verbally—would be topics to emphasize in the report, particular witnesses or briefs that members would like reflected, and then recommendations, which are typically directed to the Government of Canada.

The Chair: We will suspend to go in camera, so we can give the analysts time to share their thoughts with us.

We'll take a couple of seconds.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

Thank you very much.

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