



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 018

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Chair: Terry Sheehan



Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

• (1100)
[English]

The Chair (Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie—Algoma, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 18 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

We recognize that we meet on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on June 18, 2025, the committee is commencing its study of federally recognized indigenous communities without land or modern treaty.

Before we go too far, I have a budget here that we need to adopt in the amount of \$54,600. That was for four studies and a whole bunch of things, so we will adopt that. I'm sure we're going to come under that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: MP Schmale, did you have your hand up?

Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC): I did. Thank you, Chair.

In the essence of time I won't read it out, but I'd like to move my motion of January 23. I table that for discussion and potential vote.

The Chair: Jaime.

Jaime Battiste (Cape Breton—Canso—Antigonish, Lib.): It's fine with us.

I do believe the minister has reached out to the chair and said when she is available. It's Thursday morning, I understand.

The Chair: Thursday morning at 8:15 the minister will be available, so we'll have her there.

First of all, is there any more discussion on this before I call for a vote? All right.

(Motion agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Now that this motion has carried, the clerk can also try to get the other two witnesses, if they're available on Thursday. It is short notice. We may have to have them come a little bit later.

MP Zimmer, you had your hand up.

Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Yes, Chair.

We put forward a notice of motion on Wednesday, December 3, 2025. It reads:

That, in light of concerns raised in the 2024 Giant Mine Oversight Board Annual Report and by multiple whistle-blowers regarding unclear project expenditures, inadequate financial controls, slower or incomplete responses to oversight recommendations and significant long-term cost and engineering risks, the committee report to the House recommending that the Auditor General undertake a value-for-money and performance audit of the Giant Mine Remediation Project covering the period since 2015.

I've been up to the mine site and even talked to many locals and many of these whistle-blowers about the concerns. I understand from my colleague across the way, Dr. Hanley, that he has an amendment that we're, I believe, amicable to.

The Chair: MP Hanley.

Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you for raising the issue, and thank you also for being open to an amendment.

This is an important topic. I do believe there is a lot of good information as well for the public to be able to have access to on the Giant Mine remediation project.

Without further ado, I'll read the amendment:

That, given the importance of transparency and public confidence in the Giant Mine Remediation Project, and noting concerns raised in the 2024 Giant Mine Oversight Board Annual Report by stakeholders and partners, the committee writes to the Auditor General to consider undertaking a value-for-money and performance audit of the Giant Mine Remediation Project covering the period since 2015".

• (1105)

The Chair: Mr. Zimmer, do you accept that as a friendly amendment?

Bob Zimmer: Yes, Chair, we do.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The original motion as amended is in order.

I call for a vote.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll move on to the study.

On our first panel for the first hour we have, from the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Darlene Bess, assistant deputy minister, resolution and partnerships; and Danielle White, senior assistant deputy minister, treaties and aboriginal government.

From the Department of Indigenous Services, we have Ian Kenney, director general, governance branch; and Laura Mitchell, director general, lands and environmental management.

Both of you will have five minutes, and then we'll go to questions.

You can begin.

Darlene Bess (Assistant Deputy Minister, Resolution and Partnerships, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Darlene Bess. I am the assistant deputy minister responsible for the resolution and partnerships sector at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

I'm accompanied today by my colleague, Danielle White, senior assistant deputy minister, treaties and aboriginal government.

[*Translation*]

We are pleased to join you on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin nation.

[*English*]

Expanding land is an important issue for first nations across Canada. First nations can increase their land base through modern treaties, self-government agreements and other constructive agreements, settling specific claims that involve land, especially treaty land entitlement claims, where land promised under a historic treaty was never fully provided. Separate from claims, first nations may also increase their land base by purchasing privately owned land, fee simple land.

Modern treaties, self-government agreements and other constructive arrangements are important ways the government and indigenous communities can reach practical solutions to land issues. By addressing important questions, such as land ownership, coordination of law-making or shared decision-making, modern treaties and other similar arrangements can increase economic opportunities for indigenous communities and create clarity and predictability over land rights.

Canada is engaged in rights-based discussions with indigenous partners across the country. At 160 discussion tables, Canada works with indigenous partners and often with provinces and territories to identify key interests and reach arrangements that are workable for all parties. Land interest is a subject matter at 117 of these tables.

Many indigenous partners in modern treaty negotiations have a small land base, such as first nations with a reserve. Modern treaties offer an opportunity to expand land ownership for indigenous partners through the identification of treaty settlement lands, which can bring important economic development opportunities for these communities. Agreements can also include resource revenue-sharing and economic benefit-sharing agreements, predictable

shared decision-making regimes with respect to lands and resources and jurisdictional arrangements that support the coordination of law-making between levels of government, including indigenous governments.

[*Translation*]

Land acquired through specific claims or purchased as private property must go through the federal process of being added to reserves in order to obtain reserve status. This process has been widely criticized as slow and unpredictable, which has often delayed housing and infrastructure projects and limited economic opportunities.

The government has responded by speeding up the addition to reserve process, building on consultations with first nations and first nations organizations over the past few years.

[*English*]

For many years, federal policy limited landless first nations' ability to establish reserve lands, as proposals generally had to be tied to a settlement agreement with Canada.

In 2024, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada, working with first nations, made nine changes to the additions to reserve policy. These changes now allow landless first nations to submit proposals without a settlement agreement. This created a new path to reserve land for communities without reserve lands for generations, including Conseil de la Nation Micmac de Gespeg, whose reserve was established on December 19, 2025.

To conclude, reducing barriers for landless first nations is critical for both the economic and cultural development of indigenous communities.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We look forward to answering questions from committee members and participating in this exchange.

Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Ian Kenney (Director General, Governance Branch, Department of Indigenous Services): Thank you, Chair and members of the committee.

As mentioned earlier, my name is Ian Kenney. I'm the director general of the governance branch at Indigenous Services Canada. I'm joined by my colleague, Laura Mitchell, director general of lands and environmental management.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about landless indigenous communities. I will begin with the role of the department in recognizing new bands under the Indian Act, which is one reason that a first nation community might find itself without reserve land.

[*Translation*]

Indigenous Services Canada delivers and funds a wide range of programs and services for the benefit of first nations, Inuit and Métis. But, because of the Indian Act and its provisions for the reserve system and the Indian registry, the federal government has particular statutory responsibilities for first nations people.

Because program eligibility may be based on residency on-reserve, as well as on registration under the Indian Act, access to specific programs and services by a member of a landless band may vary. As a result, a study of the impacts on a member of a landless band from the point of view of programs, services and benefits is complex, and would depend very much on each specific program.

[*English*]

However, I'm happy to say a few words about the specific function led by my team, the recognition of new bands under the Indian Act.

Under section 17 of the Indian Act, the minister has the authority to create new bands and amalgamate or divide existing ones, subject to certain conditions being fulfilled. Also, under section 2, a band could be created made up of a community whose members' status has not yet been recognized.

Canada has formally recognized a very small number of first nations in recent years, most often as a result of historical exclusion from recognition, specific court decisions or claims-based processes.

While band recognition and reserve creation are related, they are separate. Being recognized as a band under the Indian Act does not, on its own, confer reserve land or automatic access to all federal programs tied to a land base. A band must first be formally recognized by Indigenous Services Canada before a reserve can be created.

Additions to reserves, or ATRs, are a vital mechanism that enables first nations to expand their land base or, in the case of newly recognized bands without reserve land, to establish one for the first time. ATRs allow first nations to plan for future growth to advance long-term community priorities such as housing, infrastructure and economic development.

The ATR process involves numerous external parties and steps, such as completing surveys, environmental reviews of proposed land, work to address any existing third party interests on the proposed land, negotiating municipal services agreements, etc. The process is proposal driven and largely led by the first nation.

In closing, the recognition of a new band under the Indian Act, while the first step in the process of reserve creation, is usually pursued with an expressed intention to establish a land base, recognizing that reserve creation is often central to long-term governance, effective service delivery and longer-term community development. It's important that we continue to support these communities in navigating these complex processes to ensure that they are positioned for stability, effective governance and long-term success.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I would like to welcome Mr. Lemire.

[*English*]

This is your study. I want to welcome you back to the committee.

We will proceed now with the first round of six minutes.

For the Conservatives, I'll go to Jamie.

Jamie Schmale: Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

A lot of the concern we hear when we meet with indigenous leaders who come to Ottawa and talk about the footprint of their nation, whether they buy land or to go through the ATR process, is that it's very cumbersome and time-consuming. There are no tight guidelines on when a decision can be expected. These are the kinds of comments we hear all the time.

You outlined in your opening remarks a few things your department is doing to speed up some of the applications that are going through, but I think it is still a problem within the department itself.

I want to relay the concerns we are getting on this side from nations themselves. I don't know whether you want to respond to that before I go on to my line of questioning, but I want you to know that it is a concern we hear quite often.

• (1115)

Darlene Bess: We've been at many conferences and consultations with our indigenous partners and have heard the same. We are really working on that.

I'll leave some time for your questions.

Jamie Schmale: Maybe I could give you a list of some who have come to us for assistance in speeding up that process. Perhaps we can have a dialogue on where certain applications are in the process and when these nations can expect an answer. I think that the most frustrating part of a lot of these applications is that nobody really knows.

We've met with nations that have said they get a response within eight months, which is quite fast. That's quite impressive. Others have been waiting years for applications that seemed straightforward. Land had been given to them by the courts or there was a general purchase that seemed quite straightforward on the surface. The length of time it takes to get that approved is turning out to be quite frustrating.

Maybe tight timelines could be put in or maybe there could be a schedule of when decisions can be made or decisions can be heard. For example, if it's not done by a certain date—eight months, a year, whatever—then it's automatically a yes. I think there should be something in your policies and procedures to assure nations that there is the possibility of a yes or a no in a very quick fashion.

Darlene Bess: Thank you very much for those comments. Yes, those are things I've heard as well. We at CIRNAC are in the process of redesigning the policy. We made some interim changes last year, nine of them, to make some of it easier. We're looking to have consultations on the policy this spring. We have some drafts going out through circulations, through a technical advisory group we use for consultation on the policy development.

In working with our colleagues at ISC, we realize that the policy alone can't change things. As you've mentioned, service standards and more frequent communication would be better. We're exploring such things as alternative service delivery models and are looking at models where we can expedite the process. We have had some success stories in some first nations. We are drawing and learning from those experiences on how we can focus everyone together, working with provinces and municipalities to avoid a lot of the back-and-forth, which is where we see a lot of the delays.

I'll pass it over to my colleague Laura Mitchell to provide a bit more information.

Laura Mitchell (Director General, Lands and Environmental Management, Department of Indigenous Services): Thank you.

It would be me you should follow up with about the specific communities. We would welcome that. With regard to your point around service standards, it's definitely something that we've been describing. The challenge that persists in the ATR process is that the federal government has only so many levers. A lot of partners are involved in bringing an ATR to completion. Those include municipalities but also third party interest holders, such as a hydro company. You also have the issue of duty to consult. We need to go out and talk to other nations that may be implicated by the creation of that reserve.

All those things take a considerable amount of time in some cases and are only so much within our control. We are looking at processes to expedite these things but also to do a better project management approach. We have new software called NATS, the national additions to reserve tracking system, which will automate aspects

of those processes and email a person, for example, if they haven't followed up in a certain amount of time.

We're hoping that as nations use that more and more and our regional colleagues use that more and more—we're pretty good with new ATRs, but with the older ATRs it's more of an issue—we'll see some of those hiccups go away. It's not an easy problem to solve. It's not a problem that a policy alone can solve. There's work we're doing with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and work we're going to need to look to do with provinces as well. We're going to have to take a very multipronged approach.

Jamie Schmale: When we're talking about indigenous people, first nations people, living off community, for example, there are organizations that represent those people, such as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. The impression I get from them is that the dialogue is not always as accessible with that department. They are often overlooked in conversations of national importance that they feel they should be part of.

Are you actively dialoguing with them on issues that affect individuals, whether Métis or first nations off reserve? Is this something that is actually top of mind? There have been meetings that they've been shut out of, locked out of, pushed away, and yet we're having a study on this very issue and a majority of first nations live off reserve. Is there some active dialogue going on?

• (1120)

The Chair: That's all the time we have. We are a little over time, but perhaps that can come out in the rest of the answers throughout the session.

You have six minutes, Jaime.

Jaime Battiste: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

During your discussion points, you talked about the importance of economic development through land and about what additions to reserve or land base means to a first nations community. I'm wondering if you can expand on that a little bit. What are some of the things we're hearing from landless bands that would help us with the economic development as well as residential areas for communities?

Laura Mitchell: I'll be candid and say that I have not had much dialogue with landless bands around economic development. My team does the additions to reserve process. Another part of the lands and environmental sector deals with economic development. I would not want to speak on their behalf.

I can say that the two programs that deliver economic development support are not residency-based. Landless bands would be eligible for economic development funding under those programs. The challenge is that they may not have a place to do economic development that would be tax-free or under their own governance and administration. That would be a question I'd want to take back to the economic development folks.

Jaime Battiste: How many landless bands are there currently in Canada that we've identified as legitimate complainants in Canada?

Ian Kenney: There are many layers to the landless band definition, I have to say, but there are three recognized bands that we know of with no land at all. Qalipu is one, as well as New Westminster in British Columbia and Wolf Lake, I believe, in Quebec.

There are other recognized bands, speaking, again, about recognized bands under the Indian Act, other first nations who do have some land, who have purchased their own fee simple land and are seeking economic development opportunities on those lands. Again, the restriction there would be that they wouldn't have the benefit of some of the provisions of the Indian Act if it's not declared a reserve.

There are a few layers of what a landless band might be, but that's generally the shape that we see right now.

Jaime Battiste: If there are only three that we recognize, I wonder if this is a problem for, I've heard of other communities saying that throughout their history, there have been a lot of problems. Let me use the Nova Scotia example. In the 1940s, there were 47 different areas where Mi'kmaq resided. During the 1940s, they created a centralization movement with the province and the federal government that took those 47 different communities and said that they were going to centralize them to two. There was an attempt during that time to remove all of the different areas. After 1960, there remained only 13 communities who were recognized by the federal government.

I've had people come to me and say, "There was a first nation reserve here, a first nation reserve here, a first nation reserve here" in Nova Scotia, but they have very loose ties to the ancestors of those communities and are saying that they should be recognized as a band.

How do we ensure that we look out for the abuses of those who would try to profit from something with their very loose ancestral connections to areas that used to have first nation communities?

Ian Kenney: The policy that we work under for the recognition of new bands can actually be fairly lengthy as well, because there is a fair amount of historical research that's done to trace individuals back to that community.

We work closely with CIRNAC on that doing historical research, but a large amount of time is dedicated to making sure that the people who will be considered the founding members of a new first nation, or registered, if it's a case of individuals who are already registered as status Indians, making sure that the connections with that particular community are in place. That is a major part of the work that's done currently.

• (1125)

Jaime Battiste: In that work, do you also reach out to the current recognized tribes or recognized bands within those areas for their input as well? I ask because a lot of times they'll say that they have no idea who these people are who are now claiming to be their family members. I'm wondering what the connection is there and what the process is.

Ian Kenney: Yes, that is part of the work, reaching out to neighbouring communities, neighbouring first nations, a newly recognized band who might have members living elsewhere among other first nations, for example. Part of the work does reach out to them to make sure they understand the process that's happening and the implications for their own community.

Jaime Battiste: Okay.

I'm good, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, you have six minutes.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, it is quite moving for me to be here with you today. As you know, I have been assigned elsewhere, but I want to take the time to thank everyone around the table. The Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Northern Affairs has been a rather exceptional committee for me over the past two years. There was a great deal of collaboration, particularly with Mr. Schmale and Mr. Battiste, whose first names I will no longer confuse.

I am, of course, thinking of John Aldag, as well as all the other participants we had, including the analysts and clerks, whom I sincerely thank. Of course, I am also thinking of all the indigenous partners who participated in our work.

This study was not a coincidence. It is close to my heart. It is an election commitment because, in my opinion, there is major inequity between communities that have reserve status and those that do not. Back home we feel that the process was accelerated and then suddenly stopped in the 1970s.

The communities that were able to sign agreements before 1970 are quite prosperous there. As for the others, they seem to have had difficulty obtaining the same privileges. "Privileges" may be the wrong word, so let's talk instead about the same organizational resources as others. My goal is to understand, to raise awareness, to invite you to give priority, for the sake of fairness, to these communities, some of which will testify during the second hour. We therefore need to promote channels of negotiation and dialogue to achieve this.

My first question is for Ms. Bess or Ms. White from the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

Is the granting of reserve status a legal obligation for the federal government, or is it a discretionary or political decision?

[English]

Darlene Bess: I think that would be a question for my colleagues at Indigenous Services Canada.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: That's fine.

[English]

Laura Mitchell: Are you talking about the actual creation of the land, creating a reserve, or the recognition of the nation?

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: It's a bit of both, in the sense that I wonder what makes one community obtain reserve status and resources while another does not. Is it a political decision made by the minister or the department? If so, who is blocking the process? If it is a legal decision, should communities such as Wolf Lake or Long Point go through the courts to advance their rights? Is that the solution?

Danielle White (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Treaties and Aboriginal Government, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs): If I may, it depends on the community's situation. In some cases, we have land claim negotiations that begin with a dispute or a claim with the department. The negotiation process applies to a community's land base. That could be a reserve.

In other cases, such as a community located north of the 60th parallel, there has never been a reserve. We have negotiated detailed claims to establish a land base for these nations. This is part of the rights provided for in section 35 of the Constitution, which include a right of access to the land. However, the process may differ depending on the circumstances.

• (1130)

Sébastien Lemire: Too often, we see these communities unable to set long-term, short-term and medium-term goals. This is often associated with a lack of commitment on the part of the federal government. It is up to the federal government to decide whether or not to follow up or hold a meeting, and this is often the case for both the minister and the department.

In addition, there are changes in government. What we are talking about is a perspective. We can look at the last 60 years. There have been changes in government, changes in philosophy, changes in ministers. We know that there have been many such changes in recent years in the various departments associated with indigenous communities. Every year, every time, the process has to start all over again.

I was very pleased to hear that a serious process was planned for this spring and that there is a willingness to propose solutions. However, what does this mean for the government? What are the commitments? Has the minister identified a priority? Are there concrete timelines? Will funds also be allocated to these bands or communities to help them finance these very costly initiatives?

Darlene Bess: I can answer that question.

[English]

I would say that yes, this is definitely a priority of our minister. We meet with our minister every week to provide status updates on where we are not just on the policy, but on some of the other ideas that we have to expedite the process. It's definitely a priority. There are some deadlines associated with that.

There is a lot of follow-up from our deputy minister and our minister as communities reach out, but there's even follow-up when we haven't heard anything in a while. For instance, with Wolf Lake, which is one that you're talking about, we are in the process of following up to find out what their status is on their additions to reserve submission.

Laura and I are actively looking at the aging of our additions to reserve and those that have been outstanding for a long time to try to get to the root of the problem of what the issues are, and we're working with first nations communities.

I'll pass it to Laura to provide a bit more information.

Laura Mitchell: I can't speak to the process to recognize a nation, but once a nation is recognized, it's a proposal-driven process to access and add land to its reserve base. Some of the interim changes that were made make that easier for landless bands.

There is funding available. In 2021, there was funding set aside specifically to try to expedite the creation of additions to reserve funding. A lot of that went to supporting regional people to be able to work directly with nations to be able to advance those projects. We've also set aside money for nations to do things like surveys, environmental site assessments and all the things you need to do to bring land into reserve status.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

We'll go to MP Morin for five minutes.

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our public servants for coming today.

I might jump all over the road a bit. In reading some of the material to prep, I saw a statistic that said in spring of last year, I think it was from January to March, there were approximately 35 additions to reserve created. Is that correct? That's actually pretty good, in my opinion. I didn't realize it was that high.

A subsequent question is, how many have been completed since then? Is there a goal or milestone of the department to execute them? Of course, I think the department and the political bodies at will would agree that streamlining additions to reserve has become a priority, as you've indicated in your testimony.

Is there a goal to execute even more, and what are those goals?

Laura Mitchell: Candidly, our goal is as many as possible. We know how much this is a priority for nations and a priority for our minister.

This year, I think we're only at 36. That's one since your last statistic.

It is proposal driven. Because of that, we can't predict the complexity of the kind of ATRs that will come in. As you can appreciate, an urban reserve creation is so much more complex and ends up taking a lot longer than it does if it's in a rural place and there are very few municipal services or those things that are implicated.

I know that partners would very much like us to commit to timelines around doing this in a certain amount of time. My hesitancy around that is, as the previous questioner posed, that we just can't make a unilateral yes, because there are other parties implicated. Also, because there are other parties implicated, committing to service standards that we are not unilaterally in control of presents pretty serious challenges.

Our job is to be the convenor and to get out to those people and have conversations with municipalities and provinces and educate them, too, about what a reserve creation might look like in their municipality. There are a lot of examples of really great partnerships between nations and municipalities, where they both see benefit to doing this. We want to spread that good word and, hopefully, that will help to expedite some of these things as well.

• (1135)

Billy Morin: Looking back a bit, would you say there was political will to move 30 or 35 within a three-month span, as opposed to one in the last several months? Did that help?

Laura Mitchell: I'm sorry. I think the 35 is in fiscal year to date, so it's not January to March. My apologies. No, no. That would have been from April 1 of last year to January of this year, that number.

Billy Morin: I think other provinces, aside from Alberta, have been pretty successful in urban reserves, with Saskatchewan, I think, being probably the most prominent one.

You don't have to name names if it's out of line, but are you aware of the first nations that are applying? Are there any applications for Edmonton or Calgary currently under way?

Laura Mitchell: I wouldn't be able to tell you off the top of my head. I can look into that and come back to you.

I do know that both Edmonton and Calgary have followed up with my director of lands administration to have conversations about the additions to reserve process and creating urban reserves. There is interest. I don't know if there are any applications. I will have to look into that.

Billy Morin: Thank you.

The Saskatchewan treaty land entitlement I think has been a success, by all indications. No project is ever completely perfect, but as far as I know, from an indigenous perspective, from a federal government perspective and from a provincial perspective, that

TLE Saskatchewan program has actually been pretty successful since 1992.

Of course, it's bringing the province on board as well when it comes to administering and adding additions to reserve. I don't know if it's creating new reserves, but it's adding additions to reserves.

Can you give me your personal experience with that particular process? Would it be beneficial for other provinces?

Laura Mitchell: Honestly, it would be better to hear from the regional folks on those that have had implementation. I do know from hearing from them that they believe the TLE frameworks have expedited the addition of reserve lands, in great part because it's a tripartite process. You have provinces at the table participating in that and being willing to see a process through.

I know that we've completed about 52% of the land that needs to be added in Manitoba. We're at only 35% in Saskatchewan, but they have a lot of ATRs in the system. I think there are probably lessons learned there that could be replicated. I'm not familiar with the creation of the TLE framework, so I don't know what was the driver behind that. I don't know how replicable that is. I don't know what the catalyst was to create that.

Billy Morin: You spoke about regional differences, and maybe that might be the answer here, but I think I also read in the testimony of one individual who might be coming up after you that there hasn't been a new reserve created in Quebec in quite some time. Can you speak to why that would be for that particular jurisdiction?

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's all the time we have.

I'm sure you can get that answer out later or provide it in writing.

We have MP Hanley for five minutes.

Brendan Hanley: Thanks to all of you for being here and for the opportunity to ask some questions.

I'm interested in the 2024 review carried out by Crown-Indigenous Relations and ISC and maybe just a bit of a larger context in order to understand what the impetus was for that review. Clearly, they were good reasons, but specifically, what was the impetus for the review?

Perhaps, Ms. Bess, you could lead off.

I'm interested in what the key takeaways really were. After seeing some of the report and the findings, I think the process seemed to be really robust. How might you apply the learnings from this report to other areas, where maybe there's still some slower progress in moving forward on some of the key files?

Darlene Bess: Thank you very much for the question.

The long story short is that it's long and cumbersome and there are many first nations without reserve or without reserve creation. The work we're doing at CIRNAC is on policy renewal and looking at how we can make the policy more efficient and faster for first nations, but we can't do anything without hearing from those involved.

A lot of consultation work was performed over the last few years. We had a total of 180 first nation-led and Canada-led engagement activities. We generated 930 recommendations from those consultations on how to redesign the policy. As you can imagine, trying to put all of those recommendations together and meet everybody's needs is a little bit difficult.

We have this technical advisory committee that provides technical advice and perspectives to support the development of policy options, so as we're going through the process of revising the policy and directives and guidelines, we're working with them to make sure they address not all of the 930 recommendations but to try to consolidate the bigger themes there to get things moving faster and more efficiently.

One of the other things we're looking at in general is the use of artificial intelligence and digital transformation tools. We talked about communication and service standards. That would be a great way for us to get back to communities in a more timely manner versus some of the manual processes that we currently have in the departments we operate in.

• (1140)

Laura Mitchell: What surfaced through that were five thematic areas that are challenging for reserve creation. Duty to consult takes time. You need to engage the nations, and that can go well, but sometimes it doesn't go very well. With municipal service agreements, you need to have municipalities willing to provide the services on the reserve that's been created. That is a negotiation process. Third party interest ends up being quite a hurdle.

We've really focused on the implementation side on what we can do on each of those things to try and improve that process. We've entered into a consultation protocol with the Manitoba Métis Federation to try and help us smooth the way in Manitoba a little bit. We're looking at piloting some conditions that exist under legislation that we think we can do without policy change to transition instruments. We're looking at that without having to renegotiate them. Then we're partnering with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and first nations organizations to raise the profile of urban reserve creation and what that might look like.

On the implementation side, that's where our focus has been.

Darlene Bess: The other element is risk. Sometimes we have very stringent guidelines, but we have to also look at where we can manage risk in some portions of the process. That is something we're looking at as well in terms of renewing the policy and alleviating some of the burden.

Brendan Hanley: Thank you.

I know I'm running out of time, but I noticed one of the areas was alignment with UNDRIP and other like agreements. I wonder if you could comment on the influence of UNDRIP, in particular, on the policy renewal.

Darlene Bess: The consultation with indigenous organizations and our partners is a key to the success of any policy, and hearing and listening to the concerns and needs is particularly important, which is part of the UNDRIP itself. We take that very seriously and, along the way, have been engaging and making sure that voices

are heard and that we're incorporating those concerns and issues into the development of what we hope would be a better policy.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Lemire, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a document dating from 1997, which the Chief of Wolf Lake sent me, entitled "New Band and Landless Band Pressures". In 1997, a list was already being compiled of bands without a territorial base, and there were a dozen of them in Quebec and Canada. What I see is that obviously not much has changed in 30 years.

First, would it be possible to provide us with a written copy of the complete list of communities that do not have reserve land or land-based status, as well as the status of negotiations with them, for the purposes of the study?

Second, I may be preaching more for my region, but is it possible to get a commitment from you, particularly in favour of the communities of Wolf Lake and Long Point? There are complicated situations, such as that of the Timiskaming first nation, where the territories are shared with the municipality. Some of the municipality's territories belong to the community, and some of the community's territories belong to the municipality of Notre-Dame-du-Nord. This is a problem. There are also issues with expansion in Pikogan. Of course, we are aware of the situations in the Kitchisakik communities, particularly that of the Lac-Barrière community in the La Vérendrye wildlife reserve.

Would you be willing to commit to concrete negotiations by the end of 2026 to regularize their status?

[*English*]

Darlene Bess: Yes, we can take that back and look into it, for sure.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you. I can guarantee my co-operation if I can play a role as a member of Parliament or as an intermediary. I would be very interested in doing so.

I have one last question. What are the challenges in negotiating with the provinces? Given that the territories are becoming Crown property, what effect does that have? Too often, I feel that this matter is used in tripartite negotiations to say that the negotiations are not progressing and that it is the fault of the third party. In the end, we return to the status quo, and the status quo obviously disadvantages communities and their members.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Darlene Bess: I'll start, and then I'll pass it to Laura.

I think there's capacity within communities to look at some of these things and understand how to approach the situation in terms of accessing and submitting an addition to reserve submission.

It's over to you Laura.

Laura Mitchell: I don't have much of a better answer, but we do try to take a project management team approach like getting the right people around the table to be able to be engaged and move the process along. In certain provinces it's easier than in others.

There is a policy in Quebec around reserve creation that's been on the books since 1982. I don't know how rigidly it's enforced, but it requires that the community have 200 members living together, that the ATR be only for the creation of housing and that the land be aligned with the population. There's a formula. Policies like that can create challenges. This is where you would need to speak to the regional folks. I don't know how strictly enforced that policy is, but it is still on the books.

Sébastien Lemire: *Meegwetch.*

The Chair: Now we go to the Conservatives for five minutes.

Go ahead, Eric, please.

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

I have one question I want to ask about a nation in my riding in northwest Ontario, Couchiching First Nation. It was promised land in the Treaty 5 adhesion way back in 1910. I know that the community, the chief and many have been working with their neighbours in Sandy Lake and with the federal government as well to have that recognition. I believe that in February last year, ISC put a work plan together on the next steps to make that happen, but it still seems fairly quiet.

I'm curious on behalf of the chief and residents in Couchiching First Nation if someone could provide an update on that.

Laura Mitchell: Is this about reserve creation? Yes, I would have to follow up with you. We can get back to you on that. I would not want to speak out of turn. We'll follow up with the region and make sure.

Eric Melillo: Thank you.

I'll give the rest of my time to Mr. Schmale, if he'd like it.

Jamie Schmale: Thank you very much.

Again, because we're talking about land and what this means, I want to quickly jump over to the Cowichan decision. The government itself, in my opinion, was a little late in submitting not only their objections but also their appeal. Now we have a question of where aboriginal title lines up with fee simple property in the Land Title Act in British Columbia. Justice Young's decision seems to put into question sections 23 and 25 of that land title system.

Given the fact that during the proceedings of what was one of Canada's largest court cases, the arguments on behalf of the Cowichan lawyers circled around land currently occupied within the limits of the city of Richmond. What outreach did the government do or the department do to inform residents that there could be some question put into their land in general over the ownership of it?

Jaime Battiste: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

This is not within the scope of the study. I don't think that, when we're talking about ATRs and landless bands, the team would have prepared to be answering questions about land title, section 35, and its impact on overlapping jurisdictions of sovereignty.

If they have an answer, I'm more than happy to turn it over to them, but this is not what they were prepared to answer.

The Chair: Are you prepared?

Danielle White: I can answer the question to the best of my ability.

Jamie Schmale: I would argue otherwise. We're doing a land study.

Danielle White: I'll start with the last part of the question first.

In 2017, in its pleadings in court, Canada suggested that landowners within the claim area be made aware of the case, but it was in the context of the court proceedings; it wasn't a separate engagement. That's why just a couple of weeks ago, in response to Montrose Properties, which is one of the private property holders in the city of Richmond who asked for their application to be added, Canada supported their application to be added to the case.

With respect to the broader decision, as you know, Canada appealed the lower court ruling at the same time as the other parties. Canada disagrees with certain elements of the court's decision, and all parties have appealed, so we do expect there will be an appeal. Further legal clarity is required to address the very questions that you raise and the broader implications particularly around private property rights.

We'll continue to work collaboratively with all of the parties to uphold the principles of reconciliation and transparency and to meet our legal responsibilities. We are remaining available for dialogue with all of the parties as the court case proceeds.

On the broader question, though, I would just point to—in contrast to the Cowichan case—the work that's been done on Haida Gwaii and the Haida title agreement that has been reached, where we've been able to reach a negotiated solution outside of the courts, resolving an important question of aboriginal title.

We continue to prefer negotiations as the way to resolve these issues as opposed to fighting them out in court. However, we will continue to defend Canada's position before the courts.

● (1150)

Jamie Schmale: On that point, I know it's still before the courts, but are discussions happening through legal channels or otherwise before it actually continues on this path?

Danielle White: I'm not aware of the specifics. Right now, most of the discussion is through the council, but should the parties want to have discussions on a without prejudice basis, Canada would entertain that.

Jamie Schmale: I recently met with residents from the city of Richmond, with members of the Richmond council as well as with the leadership within the city. They expressed frustration with the federal government, and with the province too, to be honest with you. Communication, they say, is very limited when they try to get information and try to get an idea of where the federal government wants to go with this. There seems to be no dialogue coming from not only the feds but also the province. It's getting better with the province now that they've stepped in to backstop those trying to renew mortgages in the city limits in the affected areas.

However, the claim is still that the federal government has been lax in their dialogue with the people being impacted, and that has left it all up to the city to provide this leadership or the interaction with constituents, who have a number of concerns with this. They just feel alone.

The Chair: We're way over the time allotted, so perhaps you can carry on this conversation afterward.

Thank you.

For the last slot, we have MP Lavack for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ginette Lavack (St. Boniface—St. Vital, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses very much for being here today and appearing before the committee.

Ms. Bess, in your remarks, you mentioned that reducing barriers was essential to moving forward with land acquisition and resolving all these cases. Can you identify the biggest barriers? Can you give us three to five critical barriers that we should address?

Darlene Bess: Thank you for your question.

I think Laura Mitchell is the best person to answer that.

[English]

Laura Mitchell: I would say there are five broad categories of challenges for reserve creation. I've spoken about some of them today.

Environmental site assessments were a challenge. Some of the changes that we've made with the interim guidelines have helped that. There's no longer a requirement to update the ESA if it goes beyond five years and there have been no significant changes to the land. That helps reduce some of the burden there.

For the duty to consult, we are still developing tools and things like that. That's going to be a persistent challenge; not all nations will agree on the boundaries of their territory and whose land should be added or not.

For municipal service agreements, I've spoken a little bit about some of the stuff that we're trying to do there with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It's also just templating things like creating tools that are really practical for communities to be able to use

when they have those conversations. It's letters of support from Canada saying, "We support this and, therefore, when you're engaging with the municipality, please know that Canada is aligned with your vision for reserve creation."

On third party interests, we're looking at some ability to maybe not have to replace those with Indian Act interests once a reserve is created. That can lead to long delays in reserve creation, so we're looking for some creative solutions there.

We are piloting something we have not discussed yet with the nations that we're hoping to pilot it with. I do not want to speak about it very much here just for fear of getting in front of them, but there's work at play there.

The fifth one is capacity issues. A nation may only do one reserve every 10 years. It's a skill set that takes a lot of time to learn and then you may not get to practise it very often, so we're looking at creative solutions around whether there is an external first nations organization that could come in and provide some of that capacity support to nations, so that they don't have to build up the muscle of knowing how to liaise with the municipality around negotiating those things. They'll have somebody they can go to that isn't the federal government and that they would feel confident in having those conversations with. Then that capacity could be moved around the country a little bit more, rather than trying to develop it in individual nations. We're looking at some models for that sort of thing.

Those are the five major areas of delay around reserve creation. They sound very easy to say in a room like this, but they're very difficult to deal with practically, with the number of players around the table. It is a complex process. Policy reform will help, but it's going to continue to be a complex process.

• (1155)

Darlene Bess: Could I just add to that?

I would say the other part of it is that relationships with provinces and municipalities are a key part of expediting the processes. Having working tables with the provinces and municipalities to look at those that are kind of stuck between all of these different layers of government is something we're working on as well.

In response to a previous question, we have a target of 70 additions to reserve this year. We're at 36 right now and we're getting close to the end of the fiscal year. Last year we did 67. I just wanted to put that out there.

[Translation]

Ginette Lavack: You also mentioned the implementation of new software that is starting to change things a bit in your processes. Are you considering or looking into other tools? Can you tell us a little about the progress you've made in terms of administrative efficiency?

[English]

Laura Mitchell: We have looked at whether we can use AI to address the administrative backlog. Unfortunately, the way we have the data is not such that we can use it with AI systems. Some of it is handwritten or it requires a lot of analysis to get into a system, so we don't think that AI can be useful for looking at historical files.

We're looking at process automation a little bit, but that's already built into the national additions-to-reserve system that we've looked at.

The other area where AI doesn't help us, and Darlene just referenced this, is with the relationships that are so critical to the advancement of ATRs. We don't yet have AI that can help us with that, unfortunately. That's been a shortcoming, but we are certainly trying to look at how we can be creative.

As AI advances and evolves and as we become better with our digital footprint around what we have data on for reserves, we may find new avenues. We're doing what we have looked at so far and remain open to possibilities, but we think we've maximized its ability currently.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Bob Zimmer: Chair, I have a point of order.

I just want some clarity on the motion we just passed. It calls for a letter to be written by the chair and perhaps the clerk. What would be the timeline for when that letter will be issued and sent?

The Chair: I'm sorry, which motion are you referencing?

Bob Zimmer: It's the letter that the committee will write to the Auditor General to consider an undertaking of a value-for-money and performance audit of the Giant Mine remediation project. When do you expect that the letter will be issued?

The Chair: I expect it will be as quickly as possible. I'll work with the clerk and the analyst to make sure we are doing it expeditiously. We'll do that for sure.

Bob Zimmer: Thanks for the clarity.

The Chair: Thank you very much to our first panel.

We're going to suspend. We're going to do this quickly because we have four witnesses coming up.

Thank you very much.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone. This is the second round.

Today, from the Assembly of First Nations, we have Linda Debassige, grand council chief, Anishinabek Nation.

Welcome, Grand Council Chief Debassige. It's good to see you.

We also have Helen Paavola, chief of the Namaygoosisagun First Nation. I don't know if she's here yet, but we'll wait for a minute. She's probably just coming in the room.

Online, we have Chief Céline Cassivi of La Nation Micmac de Gespeg; Chief Steeve Mathias of Long Point First Nation; and Chief Lisa Robinson of Wolf Lake First Nation. They're all online.

Welcome, Chief Robinson. It's good to see you.

To the folks online, if you want to get our attention or you're having an issue, there's a "raise hand" button. Please push that.

Each of the four groups will have five minutes for a presentation.

After the five minutes, each member will have a certain amount of time in which to ask and answer questions. If you find you have more to say or if, after you leave, you think of something else, you can always provide it in writing if you want to continue with some of your explanation. That is equally considered.

Thank you very much.

Without further ado, we will begin with Chief Grand Council Chief Linda Debassige.

Grand Council Chief Linda Debassige (Grand Council Chief, Anishinabek Nation, Assembly of First Nations): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Linda Debassige. I'm the grand council chief of the Anishinabek Nation in Ontario.

Thank you for your ongoing work on land restitution. Your study provided a clear road map for how Canada can meaningfully advance reconciliation by returning lands to first nations.

That same spirit applies to the work before you today as it relates to first nations that do not have land bases and have been overlooked in treaty matters and/or national policy discussions.

While there are relatively few first nations without reserve lands, the consequences are profound. Canada often refers to these nations as landless bands. The question then becomes one of why this happened and what the implications are for the original peoples of this land.

One more likely scenario is that the Crown did not count them at the time of treaty making, as Robinson did just prior to 1850 and admitted to.

Without land, these first nations cannot build sustainable communities, support housing and infrastructure or restore the economic, cultural and spiritual foundations necessary to thrive.

Today, we see legislation like Bill C-5 and Ontario's Bill 5 that aim to fast-track access to first nation mineral resources wealth, but we're also engaged today in a painfully slow process that drags on the return of lands to the rightful owners.

Perhaps if Canada had the political will and thoughts of true reconciliation, we might just get some faster movement on the return of lands to their rightful owners.

For generations, first nations have sought to work with Canada to create clear, effective and efficient pathways to regain the lands they are entitled to, lands that were unlawfully taken through colonial policies or just a miscount at the time of treaty.

Common sense tells us that because there were no roadways back in the 1800s during the call of first nations people, there were first nations people who were missed, yet even the basic picture is unclear. Historical and ongoing research points to fewer than 30 landless first nations, but only Indigenous Services Canada holds comprehensive data. That lack of clarity reinforces the challenges and invisibility these nations experience.

Just as Robinson acknowledged his mistake in the RG10 files, ISC needs to admit its mistakes and allow access to the comprehensive data.

Addressing landlessness is not just a technical issue; it is a fundamental question of rights, justice and reconciliation. The honour of the Crown should not be an obstacle to returning the land to the rightful owners. Justice means prioritizing those who remain without land recognition or a secure jurisdictional relationship with the Crown.

Advancing legislative recognition of some groups, like the Métis, while ignoring other rightful titleholders, like Chief Paavola, is deplorable and leaves foundational injustices unresolved.

I will now hand over the remainder of my time to Chief Paavola, who is joining us virtually and is also a member of our nation.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

Chief Robinson, would you like to add to those comments in this five-minute section?

Chief Lisa Robinson (Chief, Wolf Lake First Nation): Go ahead with Chief Paavola, and I'll take my turn later.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Online we have La Nation Micmac de Gespeg.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I understand that speaking time has been divided and that this is the second part of Ms. Debassige's time. This is not a new witness speaking for a new group, but rather the Anishinabe of Ontario who will be able to continue their turn.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, perfect.

Please proceed.

Chief Helen Paavola (Chief, Namaygoosisagun First Nation, Assembly of First Nations): Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. It is an honour to join you today.

I am Helen Paavola. I'm chief of the Namaygoosisagun First Nation. We are a near band located in the Robinson-Superior Treaty territory. We are currently going through the process for recognition through the Federal Court. We submitted an application to the Federal Court in December 2018. We did that because the NBBA policy does not take into consideration near bands, the situation we find ourselves in.

We do have land and we are recognized first nation members. We are all status. We have a community that is situated.... What I find with this policy is that it does not take into any consideration that we are already a situated first nation.

There's so much more I could say, but I just wanted to bring to your attention that the policy needs to be looked at and that it really needs to consider the near bands located in Ontario itself and in the other provinces.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Chief Céline Cassivi (Chief, La Nation Micmac de Gespeg): Good afternoon. *Kwei.*

My name is Céline Cassivi, and I am the chief of the Gespeg community.

I would like to thank the committee for allowing me to testify today.

Recognition and support from the federal government are essential for communities like ours to achieve self-sufficiency and protect our culture. Today, I would like to share the story of our community, the challenges we have overcome, and our hopes for the future.

Our community has worked for several generations to obtain a reserve. Many chiefs and councils before us devoted years of effort to this without success. Their work paved the way for us to move forward today. Realizing this dream is a great achievement, as it brings to fruition the efforts of those who came before us.

The absence of a reserve for all these years has had profound consequences. Our members have had to disperse far from their ancestral lands to work or access services. This has weakened the transmission of our language, our territories, our traditions and our cultural knowledge.

Access to federal programs and funding has been very limited. Recently, our community had access to only three grant programs, while other communities were eligible for 27 such programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we received very little financial assistance simply because we did not have reserve lands. These difficulties show that the lack of territorial recognition affects our economic, social and cultural development.

Over the past few years, we have been working to prepare for the creation of our reserve. Under the new conditions, we opted for an accelerated process. We submitted an official form and followed a structured work plan. The official response arrived after about 18 months. Creating a reserve in Quebec is a rare event. There had not been one in over 50 years, which shows how important and complex the process is.

The creation of a reserve will enable our community to strengthen cultural and spiritual ties to our territory. It will ensure that our children and grandchildren can grow up surrounded by their culture and language, and access more federal programs and resources to support our social and economic development.

We recommend that the federal government continue to support the reserve creation process with accompanying programs and ensure that all communities without a recognized reserve have equitable access to resources and grants.

Our community is proud of what it has accomplished, but we still have a long way to go. We are sharing this brief so that our voice, our experience and our vision for the future can be heard and understood. We hope that the committee will be able to use this information to support all communities in similar situations.

Thank you for your attention. *Wela'liog.*

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chief.

Now we'll go back online. I apologize for the mix-up with the order of speakers; my notes were different.

La Nation Micmac de Gespeg will be next, please.

Go ahead, Chief.

• (1215)

The Chair: Next we will go to Long Point First Nation.

Chief Mathias, go ahead.

Chief Steeve Mathias (Chief, Long Point First Nation): *Kwey. Bonjour.* Good afternoon.

My name is Steeve Mathias. I'm from the Long Point First Nation, a member of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation.

I want to first welcome you to the Algonquin unceded territory where you're having this parliamentary standing committee session right now.

Winneway is where we're situated today, and we're considered an Indian settlement. We have a membership of about 1,000 on our band list, and we have around 600 members living in the community of Winneway.

We have all the infrastructure in terms of housing and public buildings. We have our school. We have our nursing station. We have our band office, our community hall. We have about 12 public buildings in the community, and we have 120-some houses.

When we came about, we were originally located at Long Point, Kakinawigak, which is on the shores of the Ottawa River and is now known as Lac des Quinze, here in Quebec.

We were forced to relocate on two separate occasions. We were initially flooded by a hydro dam development, so we were forced to relocate upstream on the Ottawa River to Sand Point. Then there was another development. I'm going back about a century ago.

In the late 1930s, they had another hydro development project. Our ancestors took part in the construction of that little hydro power plant where they had to build some dikes upstream—seven dikes to stock up water in the winter months at the main dam. All the hard labour was provided by our ancestors to build all that infrastructure, including a 26-kilometre transmission line to provide the electricity to a mining project.

We were really impacted by this economic development back then by the industry, also to the benefit of the Crown, without any compensation, without any meaningful consultation either. We're doing some research right now, and we found some letters that were sent to the federal government in 1906 from one of our former chiefs, Chief Pier Ogoshen, who requested reserve land in 1906 prior to getting flooded. Quebec, at the time, had set aside 230,000 acres of land for reserve purposes. When the request was made, the answer was that there were 581 acres remaining out of that 230,000. We still don't have the status of a reserve here where we are now in Winneway.

• (1220)

The missionary oblates, in the early 1950s, obtained a lease from Quebec. It was two half lots totalling around 116 acres of land. They obtained those lands for religious and educational purposes. We built all those lands.

Today, I'm sitting at the administration office of Long Point First Nation. Most of our public buildings and residential homes are situated on those lands. We have engaged on more than one occasion to try to resolve the situation of my community.

The Chair: Chief, I'll ask you to finish up. Then we'll get more out of what you're saying through the testimony.

Thank you.

Chief Steeve Mathias: Okay.

I heard you mentioning earlier that if we had anything to add later, we could do that in writing. I'm on the edge of finalizing a brief that I would submit to the standing committee on this file.

Just to wrap up, it's been quite a challenge. I've been chief here for nearly 20 years, and it's very challenging to resolve this situation here because of the different policies either at the provincial level or at the federal level. I'm hoping this exercise we're doing is going to be able to facilitate things in the future.

Meegwetch.

The Chair: *Chi-meegwetch.* Thank you.

Chief Robinson, go ahead, please.

Chief Lisa Robinson: [*Witness spoke in Algonquin Anishinabemowin and provided the following text:*]

Kwey kakina, lisa nindizhinikaaz, maang dodem, mahingan sagahigan nindoonjibaa.

[*Witness provided the following translation:*]

Hi, everyone. Lisa is my name. I am Loon Clan. I am from Wolf Lake.

[*English*]

I, too, would like to welcome you to unceded, unsundered Algonquin territory.

Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

I am here today to present on behalf of Wolf Lake First Nation, a historic Algonquin nation that has been recognized by the federal government for generations, yet remains without a reserve.

This is not a new issue. Algonquin chiefs have petitioned the Crown for land for more than 200 years. Canada has been on notice for two centuries. What has changed is not the legitimacy of our request but how long Canada expects us to wait. This situation is not a result of legal uncertainty; it is the result of administrative choice.

Wolf Lake is described as landless, but that term is misleading. We are not landless. We have always had our territory, the territory that our people have occupied, governed and cared for since long before Confederation. We are reserveless because Canada has failed to fulfill its obligation to set aside reserve lands. That failure has real consequences. Without a reserve, our members are excluded from infrastructure, housing and essential services. Services without land is not a remedy. They leave communities like ours in perpetual insecurity, and the cost of that failure is paid every day by our people.

We have done everything that Canada has asked of us. We submitted claims in the 1980s, the 1990s, the early 2000s and, more recently, a specific claim in 2018. Negotiations began in 2020. Canada created timelines and systems intended to deliver resolution, yet years and even decades later, we remain without a land base.

When the systems that Canada relies on, whether negotiations or tribunal processes, extend over many years without tangible results, the process itself becomes a substitute for justice. Delaying justice is not neutral. It actively harms the people of Wolf Lake, and that harm is now irreversible. Because we were denied a land base, our

nation has been dispersed across jurisdictions. This dispersal was not voluntary. It was the consequence of policy failure.

The current generation of elders is the last with lived memory of Wolf Lake together as a community gathered on our land. As they pass, that irreplaceable knowledge, continuity and living history are lost. No future settlement can restore what is being lost through delay. At this stage, time itself has become the harm.

This dispossession has also created real division within our community. Families have been forced to live apart and to organize separately, and that division is not a failure of our people, it is the result of being denied the land that makes unity possible.

Canada knew who we were, where we were and how to act and, in other cases, it did act. We remain caught in a jurisdictional loop where responsibility shifts and nothing moves, an impasse only federal leadership can break.

• (1225)

This committee has already recognized these failures. In its 2024 report on reclaiming the land, INAN called for concrete measures to restore land to first nations and for clear pathways to resolve historical obligations. Wolf Lake First Nation is a test as to whether those recommendations will be implemented.

I also want to note a growing contradiction. The government has shown that it can move quickly when it wants to or chooses to, yet when it comes to reconciliation and providing a land base to a historic first nation, we are told the system cannot move.

I will conclude by saying that we are not asking for anything our past chiefs have not already asked for. We are asking that our elders, while they are still with us, have the opportunity to be together as a community on our land. Canada knew who we were, where we were and how to act. The absence of a reserve for Wolf Lake First Nation is not an accident. It is a choice that can and must be corrected.

The question before this committee is no longer whether the problem exists, but when Canada is prepared to act. Our nation is ready.

Meegwetch.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Robinson.

The first round will be six minutes.

MP Morin, for the Conservatives, go ahead, please.

Billy Morin: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all our guests.

I acknowledge the chiefs.

I'll start with Chief Robinson.

As I understand it, you are a recognized band with status, but you do not have reserve creation lands. Is that correct?

Chief Lisa Robinson: That is correct. We've always been recognized by Canada, and the land issue remains today.

Billy Morin: Perhaps you could get into the details, but not too much because we only have limited time. This fight has been ongoing for decades, so what is the actual excuse? I have Wolf Lake on my screen on Google Maps. Quebec and Canada are huge. Canada is the second biggest country in the world and Quebec is the biggest province in the country. Wolf Lake, as a small settlement, is minuscule. What is the excuse for not giving that to you as a reserve?

Chief Lisa Robinson: For us, it's not about policy or processes: It's about the political will to do it. Wolf Lake has been recognized by Canada for years.

In our history, we're told that Chief Petrimont came and petitioned for a reserve in the 1880s. Since then, we've gone through all of these processes. We've had early petitions to the Crown. We'd been recognized, when bands started being recognized in 1951 on formal lists. In the 1980s, we were really close, through an ATR process led by Chief Miness. Unfortunately, Canada unilaterally pulled the plug on that process. Then, fast-forward to the 1990s, when we submitted different claims, the Indian claims commission came into being. The process was rejected. Eventually, the specific claims process came into being, and that's where we stand today.

Canada has made all of these processes and decisions, and Canada can make these decisions to resolve this, to solve this land issue for the people of Wolf Lake.

Billy Morin: In a broader context, not just specifically a piece of reserve land, I'm assuming Wolf Lake gets all the same benefits of being an Indian band, which is consultation on the broader territory alongside other first nations. Is that correct? I could be wrong in my assumption, by the way.

Chief Lisa Robinson: No, actually there is.... The position we find ourselves in is still quite detrimental to Wolf Lake. We continue to be marginalized. We do not have access, as I mentioned earlier, to funding regarding infrastructure, capital projects but, also, land. We know that land is very much needed to create an economy and also to have the space to maintain our identity and culture, so for us it's a bit of a challenge.

Can I get you to restate your question again?

Billy Morin: If there were a project being developed in the traditional territory, maybe a concentric.... I'm just....

Chief Lisa Robinson: Oh, consultation is what you're—

Billy Morin: Yes. Do you still go through those similar processes?

Chief Lisa Robinson: Yes, we do. For that though we have had to fight to be included in some of those processes as well. It's unfortunate that within our territory where we're situated our territory extends on both sides of the Kichi Sibi, the Ottawa River. You also have that jurisdictional boundary, which is today Ontario and Quebec, and our recognition on one side is better than it is on the other even though it's our territory.

Billy Morin: Which side? Would the Quebec side give a little bit more recognition there?

Chief Lisa Robinson: A little bit yes, but in Ontario it's a challenge. Also, in Ontario you have other entities or groups that are also being consulted and being parts of decisions that are projects on our territory. It has huge implications in that our not receiving the proper recognition, I'll call it, of a recognized land base leaves us in limbo.

● (1235)

Billy Morin: What's the population roughly of the community nation?

Chief Lisa Robinson: It's 300 people, and that's no fault of our own. We've had a lot of our members who have left to secure housing in our neighbouring communities and to have access to more programs and services as well.

Billy Morin: I have one more question for you.

Are you a part of any tribal council?

Chief Lisa Robinson: We are. We're part of the Algonquin Nation Secretariat, which has been involved in a lot of these processes that the AFN has been involved in, and Canada as well, in terms of developing this policy. However, with that effort I don't know if things are really going to come to fruition. I hope they do, but there's been a lot of involvement through our tribal council as well that has supported us in this work and to making sure that we're doing everything to move forward.

Billy Morin: Thank you, Chief.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Billy Morin: How much time do I have?

The Chair: Go ahead, you have some more time.

Billy Morin: I want to go Chief Paavola.

I was curious about whether your situation correlates with Chief Robinson's where, and correct me if I'm wrong, you are recognized status Indians with band title but just landless. Is that correct?

Chief Helen Paavola: Our first nation is unrecognized federally as of yet. We are going through the process through the courts. We did try to go through the policy and the policy just doesn't work. It was just one thing after another. Canada kept coming back with other things they wanted from us. My first nation, my members, we are status Indians and we do have a situated community. We are not landless.

Everything the chief said before me is stuff that we're dealing with. Consultation is really hard. We can't really get into other projects that are happening around us because we're constantly being.... It's just hard because we're not recognized federally by the government yet.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chief. You'll be able to answer some more questions as we go along. We're just a little over time.

Next for six minutes we have Philip, please, for the Liberals.

Philip Earle (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you witnesses.

I'm going to direct my questions to Chief Céline Cassivi.

Thank you, Chief, for the brief that you submitted and the brief that you gave us today.

My attention was drawn to a portion of the written brief that I have in my package, which talked about your wanting to tell the committee about your experience and your band's experience, and the multigenerational consequences of not having a reserve. I look at multigenerational as youth, adults and elders.

I would like you to break that down and tell us more about the impacts of this journey, or the impact the journey has had on your youth, your adults and the elders.

[Translation]

Chief Céline Cassivi: There is one very important issue that the Gespeg community is working very hard on: we have completely lost our language. Not a single member of the community speaks Mi'kmaq. We have lost our culture as well. We have about 2,000 members with status, but in the Gespe'gewa'gi territory, in Gespeg itself, we have about 800 members. There is a diaspora and people are scattered all over the place, so it has been difficult to preserve our culture. It is a daily challenge to reclaim our culture.

We are a recognized community, but we did not have reserve status. We obtained it in December 2025. It's really an achievement for us. We were part of the fast-track process with a reserve creation proposal form. It's very positive for Gespeg.

• (1240)

[English]

Philip Earle: Thank you.

Your community has been on this journey for 16 years. You arrived in December 2025 at the conclusion of your community being recognized. To help us when we write our report, could you tell our committee about some of the experiences you have had on the 16-year journey to be able to see improvements in this regard?

[Translation]

Chief Céline Cassivi: The people who came before us, the former chiefs and councils, worked very hard. They were accompanied by lawyers. The answer was always the same: We were told that we belonged to the Listuguj community, which is the neighbouring community. We are part of Gespe'gewa'gi, in the Gaspésie. There are three Mi'kmaq communities, and we were told that we were part of Listuguj, but Listuguj is four hours away from us. So,

for us, it didn't make any sense. So, year after year, term after term, each chief worked to create a reserve.

Then, about a year and a half ago, we heard that there was a new process and that we could fill out and submit a form and get guidelines to help us through the process. So we decided to try this process and figured we had everything to gain. We went ahead with it. It was extremely rigorous work. We assigned people to work on this full time. Finally, after a year and a half, we got a positive response.

[English]

Philip Earle: In an earlier session with the Government of Canada representatives from both CIRNAC and Indigenous Services Canada, we heard about some particular criteria within the province of Quebec. The community must have 200 people and must be largely established to develop housing.

Is there anything unique you may have learned, as in being recognized both by Canada—you've described that—and by Quebec, that may be of interest to our committee?

[Translation]

Chief Céline Cassivi: I don't understand the question.

[English]

The Chair: You have just a bit of time left.

Philip Earle: Okay. We'll leave it there.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for six minutes.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Kitchi meegwetch to all the witnesses. Their presentations had a very powerful impact. Indeed, hearing this testimony was one of my objectives in proposing this study.

When the election campaign was launched, on the first day, I went to Lisa Robinson's office. For your information, the community office was donated by a chief who preceded Ms. Robinson by several generations. The community therefore has its own building. It was not financed by any government funds whatsoever. This is evidence of the fact that this community has, all in all, been abandoned. I do not think that word is too strong in the circumstances.

On that first day, I also visited the office of Lance Haymond, whom the committee knows well, and I visited the office of Mr. Mathias, from the Long Point community. I wanted us to talk about this commitment on the federal side to try to speed things up. One of the things that shocks me....

My question is for you, Ms. Robinson. What is the status of your discussions with the government currently? Are there any formal talks under way with a view to recognizing reserve status or some equivalent form of territorial recognition? Where are you at right now?

[English]

Chief Lisa Robinson: As I stated earlier, in terms of us at Wolf Lake, we entered into negotiations in 2020. Since then, we've been engaged in Canada's process. It is the most recent process that I'm more familiar with. I know the chiefs before me had different processes, which I mentioned, in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

This current process of negotiation has been challenging. When I entered into these negotiations, we received a mandate letter from the former minister, Carolyn Bennett. In her letter, she referred to a comprehensive process for the people of Wolf Lake. However, in the negotiation, it is far from comprehensive.

Since then, we've had Minister Miller, Minister Anandasangaree, and today we have Minister Alty. Also, a departmental split happened. We have CIRNAC and ISC. When we talk about reserve creation, we know that we need to involve ISC, but some of the messaging I get is like ping-pong. Who do we talk to?

A political mandate to do the right thing is needed for the people of Wolf Lake, for us to have justice and to resolve this issue.

• (1245)

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: This political ping-pong game puts you at a disadvantage. It inevitably preserves the status quo.

I would also like you to tell us about your relations with the Timiskaming community and the neighbouring community of Kebaowek. I can attest that they are excellent. The Timiskaming community was even willing to cede some territory. Obviously, this is up to you. You may need to hold public consultations with your members to decide whether or not to accept this territory. However, I just want to say that in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, and particularly in southern Témiscamingue, we and the government of Quebec want to welcome you as a community with formal territory. What is the biggest obstacle for you right now?

[English]

Chief Lisa Robinson: What is putting the brakes on? It's just the political will of Canada, as I've stated time and time again here.

I do appreciate your comment regarding the relationships with Wolf Lake. We have had discussions with our neighbours, our sister community at Kebaowek and the municipality, as well. We also have a fairly good relationship with the local MRC. Those are key, but at the end of the day, it's not.... Policy and administration.... That is what has bogged us down. It's those changes that were made unilaterally that continue to keep us in the situation we are in.

I don't have any solutions, but Canada really needs to decide what it is going to do. What is Canada going to do for us?

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: Maintaining an ongoing dialogue is essential in this context.

Mr. Mathias, *kwei*. Can you also tell us what's preventing the establishment of reserve status for you? We know that many things have moved forward, particularly when it comes to indigenous policing. You testified about that before this committee a few weeks ago.

What's the roadblock right now, in your opinion?

Chief Steeve Mathias: *Kwei*. Good afternoon, Mr. Lemire.

What's the roadblock? I think a number of things explain why we find ourselves in this situation today. A number of aspects were developed without involving community members or the band council. That created fairly complex situations for us.

There's also the issue of surface area. Under a provincial policy, there is a formula that determines the number of square kilometres allotted. In our case, we were entitled to 9.5 square kilometres. However, that number is based solely on residential needs. We told them that we also want to build an economic base. We don't want to create a ghetto. We really want to ensure the long-term survival of the community. We want to provide a true economic base. Geographically, Winneway is not right next to a highway. You have to get there, and we're somewhat isolated in the forest. So our economic base would be access to land and natural resources. That is one of the major issues. There was even an attempt to propose—

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

We have to go to the next one. We're over time.

We have MP Schmale for five minutes.

Jamie Schmale: Thank you very much Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses.

Sometimes, in the order of the committee, you look at the agenda and think it would be nice to have the department officials after this panel, because we could go to them and ask the questions. We could say, "Hey, you're hearing the testimony. What's the response?" Unfortunately, they went first.

In my original line of questioning, I mentioned nations that we on this side of the House meet with quite often. Usually, the ATR process is one of the top three on the list of discussions we're having.

I would never name a nation in a committee setting like this without their direct permission, but we have a lot of concerns about the process and the timeline. Part of my questioning in the first round was around there being a lot of applications that seem on the surface to be quite straightforward and should be quite easy to approve. What I'm getting from you, Chief Robinson, is that it seems pretty straightforward. You want the ability to set up and start your path forward, and right now we're still waiting.

We had another chief just a second ago talking about nine square kilometres, I believe. In the scheme of things, that seems pretty small and reasonable, especially, as my friend Mr. Morin just pointed out, since it's still Crown land at the end of the day, due to the legislation that's been put in place. The fact is that we continue to have hurdle after hurdle, and this slow process—again, as I pointed out in the first round—for applications that seem straightforward.

I know you've answered many questions on this. I know there are other barriers. It's just overly frustrating. I don't really have a question on this, and you've added a lot, but if you want to respond, fire away. However, I have questions for the grand council chief beside you.

Chief Lisa Robinson: It's not an easy answer. These processes that were created....

First of all, I want to state that we're not facing legal uncertainty. I want to make sure that we understand that. Ultimately, it's Canada that has the authority to create a reserve, and it's exercised that for other Algonquin communities as well. However, the unresolved status with which we find ourselves is actually an administrative barrier. Right now, we're asking for that clear political direction.

In terms of these processes—I'm just going to speak here—in the 1980s, we were close. We had site selection. We had land and there was a momentum of hope for the people of Wolf Lake. I remember being a little girl when those consultations were happening. There was excitement, thinking we would be situated together as a community, with my grandparents nearby. That was unilaterally stopped. The plug was pulled, and we don't know why. Fast-forward to the earlier 2000s, and we were promised an expedited process. I have reports here—these are from 2000—about the reserve acquisition process.

There's a long history of these colonial processes that have stopped this and taken from us, and it has to change. What I'm asking of this committee is to do that work.

Jamie Schmale: I'm pleased to say that the director of lands and environmental management has stayed at this committee. She is behind you, and was on the previous panel. I don't want to put her on the spot or anything like that, but she committed to looking into any files that we have outstanding.

My recommendation, through you, Mr. Chair, to Ms. Mitchell, is that this is one we can have a dialogue on after the committee and dive into a little more.

• (1255)

Chief Lisa Robinson: The processes that were promised [*Inaudible—Editor*] supposed to be fast-tracked and expedited. Today's term is “comprehensive”. They are far from it. I just want to share that too.

Jamie Schmale: Thank you. That's very helpful.

Grand Council Chief, we were talking about the lands issue as well. You said in your opening remarks that without land, you can't create sustainable communities, or something to that effect. I was writing it down. It may not be exact, but I think that's a reasonable summary.

I went on your website. I googled your nation and “news”. What popped up on the page, with a picture of you, was that your nation has declared yet another state of emergency over public safety. I don't know if you want to talk about that. I link this to land because you need land to create a sustainable community, but you also need public safety. It's hard to grow if people are afraid.

I don't know if you want to comment on this in particular, but it popped up right in the first Google search.

The Chair: You're actually over the time by quite a bit.

If we could get something in writing, I think that's an important thing to do as well.

Thank you very much.

Next we have MP Battiste.

Go ahead, please.

Jaime Battiste: Thank you for that.

Chief Robinson, thank you for your testimony today.

Also, thank you, Sébastien, for bringing this to light. We hadn't understood when you brought this up to us what you were getting at. I see now what challenge you're talking about.

I'm going to ask you some very quick questions where I'll need very quick responses, because, as parliamentary secretary for Crown-indigenous relations, we've sped up the ATR process based on factors. We've done 39 ATRs since May 2025.

I think we're on the right track, and I want to help you get on the right track, so if I ask some questions very quickly, I need some very quick answers. I have five minutes to do this.

Have you passed a band council resolution that identifies the specific addition to reserve and defining the exact boundaries you're looking for?

Chief Lisa Robinson: We are not in negotiations and we are not that far along in our process in the community. We have had community engagement and we have a general idea, but part of my—

Jaime Battiste: Can you give me the general idea?

You have 300 members in your community. I assume they all are living in different places. If we're trying to fast-track something to get to a land base for 300 people, what is the ask? That's the first step. It's having an ask and then allowing for the rest of the steps. What do you believe is a reasonable ask to get this through?

Chief Lisa Robinson: To back it up a little here, too, to get to that number we've had to do a community study. It was a battle for us to be able to think of future generations, because it's not just about us here today. It's about the future. As you heard from the leadership who have been here, too, it's not just about creating a reserve for housing. You need to have land to have an economy. That's what this is all about in the end—

Jaime Battiste: I understand all that. I just want to get you to the fast track. We're talking about the process here.

Do you have provincial government support to create a boundary for this reserve, and is it in writing?

Chief Lisa Robinson: I have spoken with Quebec. They are waiting for us to resolve the issue with the federal government first.

Jaime Battiste: The federal government needs to know the exact boundaries, and you haven't determined those boundaries or passed a BCR outlining the first step of additions to reserve. Is that correct?

Chief Lisa Robinson: At this point, yes, but we are ready to do that work when—

Jaime Battiste: It feels like we're at the first step here in terms of identifying, but you're saying that it's the process of the federal government. On the second part of that process, do you have in writing the neighbouring communities and municipalities that are supportive of this as well?

Chief Lisa Robinson: At this point, no.

Jaime Battiste: Okay.

I have many more questions, Chief Robinson, but here's what I'm going to say. I don't agree with what's going on with this 200 years of waiting. You've been in this process since 2020, and I'm the first one asking you these very specific questions in order to fast-track this. I will work with your MP, with whom I have a great relationship.

Let's figure out how we can get this in place so that we can get to that place. As you know, it requires some work from the communities on the BCR, but after 200 years of waiting, I think we can figure out how to get this done and give you the best information possible with the folks behind you to get this done, and to at least make some progress on this with the steps we have in the additions to reserve process.

• (1300)

Chief Lisa Robinson: I certainly hope so.

Jaime Battiste: Okay.

The Chair: We have MP Lemire for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Robinson, do you have anything to add?

I got the impression you had some additional information to provide.

[*English*]

Chief Lisa Robinson: Well, the ask from Wolf Lake is basically still the same with all of our leaders. It is to have that secure land base and that proper recognition, because today we continue to be in limbo without it. The time is now, and we're ready to do the work, but what we need is the direction and the political will of Canada to get us to where we need to be.

On these processes, like I said, we've been involved in them numerous times. We've been told that things were going to be expedited and fast-tracked. That has not been the case. We are looking for a comprehensive process to do this, as was written in the mandate letter that was provided, and to enter into negotiations. Yes, there's not much I can say on the negotiation front, but the political will, as you know, has to be there.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: What are your expectations of the federal government in terms of next steps? What recommendations would you like this committee to make as well, in order to help you?

[*English*]

Chief Lisa Robinson: I actually will be submitting a written brief as well with some of those recommendations. I'm specifically looking at the report and the follow-up to the 2024 report regarding land and restitution and resolving these historical claims. I will also include in there more information on the Wolf Lake perspective in a written brief.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

In closing, I do want to acknowledge the courage that you and the chiefs around this table have shown. We know that this concerns many other communities across Quebec and Canada. They may be fewer in number and less visible, but they're facing realities, and the goal is precisely to be able to ensure that their situation is equitable and that they can also thrive as communities.

Kitchi meegwetch to each of you for your remarks.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We have a hard two minutes left, because of the technical difficulties. Those will go to MP Schmale.

Jamie Schmale: Thank you, Chair.

Like Mr. Battiste, I wasn't sure where we were going with this study, but now that this comes out it actually makes sense. It also shows that the work we do here in Ottawa can impact the area on the local level. I want to congratulate Sébastien for putting this study forward.

Grand Council Chief, on the question I asked before, fire away.

Grand Council Chief Linda Debassige: Thank you for your question, MP Schmale.

Within the Anishinabe nation, we have 39 communities. Of those, 25% have declared states of emergency, and 100% of them are challenged with the continuous delays of government, just as described here today in this particular study. It's very relational. Canada continues to demonstrate its dereliction of duty and dismal display of honour of the Crown, to be frank. Provinces and municipalities are third parties that Canada gives more rights to than original title holders.

That being said, it's very similar to the states of emergency by our communities relating to Public Safety Canada, first nations policing legislation and the failure of Canada to recognize first nations and their ability to create laws for safety. Our communities on the lands are being riddled with drug dealers from larger metropolitan areas, who continue to take advantage of our most vulnerable people.

Again, first nations policing legislation has been here since the nineties. My friend, Chief Paavola, has actually been in a court for her community's band status since the 1900s. They only recently provided their application for mandamus in the courts in 2018, and that's as a result of the continuous delays demonstrated by the Government of Canada, of not recognizing who the original people were. It's very interrelated. There are so many correlations that can be ascribed to that, and I'd be happy to put that into a brief for the committee and further describe those correlations as they relate to ATR.

• (1305)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

To all our presenters today, thank you very much for sharing your knowledge.

Go ahead, MP Lemire.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I may, I would like to add that I don't think there will be any other meetings that will deal directly with this subject. However, the depth of the testimony, I think, still provides the guidance they have for us. I did sense a sincere commitment on the part of officials to move things forward.

I think we could immediately instruct the analysts to begin drafting this report. It may not necessarily be the largest, but it may be particularly relevant. We need recommendations from the committee so the report can be made public as soon as possible. Then we can follow up on these steps and show that there is also a willingness on the part of parliamentarians to move forward.

I would therefore suggest that we begin drafting the report as soon as possible. I will also offer suggestions for potential recommendations that I will send to the analysts through you, Mr. Chair, or through the clerk. Does that suit you?

Thank you.

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

[*English*]

Today was a good day, and we will be getting that report done expeditiously as well.

Thank you, everyone, and have a great afternoon. *Chi meeg-wetch.*

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>