



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Natural Resources

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 036

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Chair: Terry Duguid



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• (1100)
[English]

The Chair (Hon. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

I'll start by acknowledging that we are meeting on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

This is meeting number 36 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

I would like to remind participants of the following points: Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen, you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the Chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted Thursday, September 18, 2025, the committee shall resume its study of Canadian energy exports.

I would like to welcome our witness for this first hour.

From Unifor, we have Lana Payne, national president.

Colleagues, as you know, all of our witnesses have mandatory onboarding—

Claude Guay (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Jennifer needs to be let in. She's trying to get in by Zoom.

The Chair: We're trying to let one of our colleagues in.

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): There's enough of you guys.

Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): You're always trying to stack this committee.

The Chair: We'll pause for a moment, colleagues.

• (1100) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1100)

The Chair: Colleagues, we were having a good conversation about antelopes.

That is a prairie animal, Corey. There are lots of them in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Payne, welcome. You have the committee to yourself for the full hour. I know there will be some good questions, and we really look forward to hearing from you.

You have five minutes.

• (1105)

Lana Payne (National President, Unifor): Thank you very much, Chair.

Good day to all of you.

Unifor is proudly Canada's energy union, with 15,000 members working in oil and gas extraction, natural gas distribution, HVAC, electric utilities, petroleum refineries, chemical production and nuclear energy. We have members from Newfoundland and Labrador all the way to British Columbia. Our members work in production. They maintain a significant portion of the over 750,000—

The Chair: Ms. Payne, if we could ask you to pause, we're having a sound issue. Try to put the microphone at the middle of your mouth.

Lana Payne: Is it on my end? I can hear you all very well.

[Translation]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): The interpretation is working very well. The sound in the room isn't working.

[English]

Lana Payne: Can you hear me now?

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, please.

Lana Payne: That's great. I knew we would get it working sooner or later, so I will continue.

Our members work in production. They maintain a significant portion of the more than 750,000 kilometres of pipelines in Canada. They run oil and gas refineries, biofuel facilities, midstream transportation, downstream distribution, industrial and commercial use and heating and cooling infrastructure. They build and refurbish nuclear reactors for Candu Energy, so yes, you can take from this that we also bargain collective agreements with some of the biggest and most profitable companies on the planet.

Our members are operating engineers, skilled trades, technicians, heavy-duty truck drivers, control room operators, marine tank operators, nuclear engineers and scientists, and railway workers. As a union that represents the workers who stop energy infrastructure from blowing up or leaking out and who ensure the safe and efficient transport of oil, gas and energy products across this country and around the world, we support the diversity of safe methods of moving product, including but not limited to legal, commercially viable, properly regulated and well-maintained pipelines.

As Canada's largest private sector union, we support reducing export monopoly and dependency with the United States wherever we can. While this means expanding capacity to diversify exports and ensure a fair price for our natural resources, it also means that we must maintain and expand industrial capacity here at home.

Our domestic oil and gas sector is described as a money-printing machine for shareholders. Record profits in the industry were expected before Trump's war with Iran. The reason these companies are printing money is that companies in the production and export side of the industry are doubling down on what we call capital discipline. This means that they are spending as little as possible on workers and maintenance in order to maximize profits. As such, they have significantly reduced investment in new capacity and are simply running the capacity as hard as they can.

Obviously, royalties, corporate taxes and income taxes generate revenue for the government. Most recently, fuel taxes have been reduced for consumers. Energy workers, wages and jobs, though, are one of the only other ways we can keep some of that revenue in this country. I hear a lot across the spectrum that we support energy workers, but this must also translate to the shop floor. We do not see or have not seen a maintaining of the number of energy workers, even as output volumes and profits continue to increase. We are outsourcing, subcontracting to non-union work, and we have seen a lot of automation while infrastructure is pushed to its limit.

The goal of your committee is to examine how to support Canada's being an energy superpower. I want to be clear that, without domestic capacity for refining chemical and plastic production, Canada simply subsidizes the energy superpower to the south or helps economies around the world before securing our own.

Unifor has become increasingly concerned with domestic chemical production capacity. The current economy, economics, trade war with the United States and shifting regulatory environment have not supported continued investment in our downstream and chemical sectors, and that's a problem. Instead, we're losing important capacity, including with the closures of Ineos in Sarnia and Biox in Hamilton, coupled with delayed investment from Shell and Dow Chemical.

We continue to see not energy resiliency but offshoring production capacity and increased dependency on imported energy products. Meanwhile, downstream energy infrastructure is left to deteriorate, including pipelines. Both undermine our energy security and our energy superpower status.

In response, our union has launched a campaign called "Keep it in the Pipe" to call out run-to-fail strategies while highlighting the need for investment to reduce methane and other chemical leaks in midstream and distribution infrastructure. We do this by hiring and investing in energy workers, who are essential to maintaining energy infrastructure.

I will conclude by also saying that, with a renewed focus on industrial strategies in our country, which we're very glad to see, including in the area of defence, we must account for the energy inputs of these industrial strategies in order for them to be successful. This means understanding that building a stronger, more resilient Canadian economy starts with building more energy and, above all, investing in energy infrastructure and the workers who maintain it and keep it safe.

• (1110)

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Payne.

We will now go to our first round of questions and comments.

Mr. Malette, you have six minutes.

Gaétan Malette (Kapuskaing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Madame Payne, for taking the time to meet with this committee.

Whether it is in energy, forestry or mining, Unifor represents, as you said, 15,000 workers from these key industries. You're aware that last week two mills in northern Ontario shut down, affecting hundreds of workers. How can the government step up to protect well-paying jobs in the natural resource sector?

Lana Payne: Thank you for that.

I should clarify that Unifor actually represents about 120,000 workers in what would be trade-exposed areas of the economy. These include energy, forestry, manufacturing and the other sectors you named. Of those, 15,000 are in the energy sector across Canada.

There are a number of things we can do. We have to look at how we build industrial strategies to support Canadian production and Canadian jobs. We've seen a start in that regard. With respect to the forest sector, I have just been part of a task force on the forest sector with a number of company representatives. We have made, and are submitting very soon, our final document to the government in terms of how we need to first stabilize the industry. Whether it be the softwood duties we are seeing in the industry or the tariffs on softwood lumber, these things are making it very difficult for the industry to operate. We have to support, as much as we can, the supply chain of the forestry sector, from sawmills to paper mills and pulp mills.

As you've pointed out, we have lost way too much production over the last six months across our country. We have to look at how we stabilize that. This means supporting the infrastructure when we can and then looking at how we expand our domestic market for forest products and lumber. That means looking at how we match these two crises we have in our country—the forest crisis and the affordable housing crisis. If we can find a way to make sure we're scaling up in that regard, building factories and building homes as quickly as we can for Canadians in an affordable fashion, we can take some of the pressure off what we are losing now in terms of our inability to export as much as we would to the United States because of the crushing costs of these duties and the tariffs themselves.

Gaëtan Malette: Thank you, and thank you for clarifying that there are over 120,000 workers in the sectors you represent.

When a well-paying job is created and then lost in such places as, where I'm from, Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Hearst or Cochrane, what does that mean for the surrounding communities? How important are these jobs to stimulate the local economy, from your point of view?

• (1115)

Lana Payne: They're extremely important. As you probably know, our sawmill in Ear Falls was recently curtailed there and idled. The reality, particularly in smaller communities around Canada, is that this is the economic engine. When a well-paying union job disappears, it impacts the entire community. We see communities being dismantled as a result of that economic engine's disappearing. It's very concerning. It means that the workers are likely displaced and end up having to go and work in other industries, often long distances away from home. Eventually, these communities do not have the support they need for their infrastructure or their services. That is a very big problem.

We have seen this before, particularly in the forest industry in small communities across Canada. That's why it's so incredibly important that we have a national industrial plan to support the forest sector across this country and that they have access to affordable energy so that they can operate these facilities throughout Canada.

Gaëtan Malette: Thank you.

In the energy sector, the oil sector, as more experienced workers retire, are the younger workers filling up the employment gap? Is that intake sufficient to meet the labour demand of all these energy developments that we're looking forward to having?

Lana Payne: In the current facilities, you're seeing two things happening. One is a push by companies to automate, to use AI and to use advanced technology, which often displaces workers. We're not opposed to technology. I don't want to leave you with that impression. However, in order to maintain very good energy jobs in this country, we also have to make sure that we're maintaining the infrastructure and the energy infrastructure that we have. That is a critical piece, and we have been seeing a deterioration in that regard.

We would like to see regulations that enforce and make it more possible to improve the maintenance of infrastructure. This also helps us maintain very good energy jobs in the sector all across the country. That's why we've been talking about "Keep it in the Pipe", our campaign, which for sure is about maintaining infrastructure, but it's also about protecting the environment and making sure that we're reducing emissions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Malette.

Mr. Danko, you have six minutes.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Payne, thank you for joining us this morning. Of course, organized labour has a very proud, strong tradition in Hamilton. Our government has been very clear in our goals to protect Canadian jobs and protect the Canadian economy. Our goal is not only to protect but also to expand, enhance and provide workers and families the opportunities they deserve for the future.

You talked about Unifor's representing 15,000 members working in oil and gas extraction. Currently, we're at record-high production limits in the oil and gas energy sector and record-high exports for LNG. These are highly trained, highly skilled, highly specialized workers.

Can you give me a state of the current workforce? Are there jobs available right now? Are those positions being filled? Is it a competitive job environment? Where are those workers being trained and brought into the workforce?

Lana Payne: These are highly skilled jobs. I've named some of the work that our members do. It's not just in oil and gas extraction; it's in maintaining the distribution pipelines, all of that work as well. We proudly represent nuclear engineers and scientists at Candu, so throughout the energy sector we have a lot of members and a variety of experience representing different types of workplaces and jobs.

We have to continue to train for the energy sector. We are seeing massive expansion in Ontario alone, for example, in the area of nuclear. It has been very good to see that being added to the mix of our energy resiliency here in Canada. This requires people to have all sorts of skills, so we have to make sure that our educational institutions are properly and well funded to support the training in the energy sector.

I go back to this other side as well. It is about making sure that we keep the facilities and the production that we have so that we can expand.

On the chemical side of things, I'm not seeing the kind of resiliency we want to see. We've lost a number of workplaces that were providing important outputs, things we use in our daily lives that we need to have. If we're wanting to build a more sovereign nation, we have to look at all of these aspects of production in our country. Our members understand exactly how important it is to be self-sufficient in those areas.

We need to examine our supply chain from across the entire energy spectrum and make sure that we're building a more resilient energy sector in Canada for the use of Canadians so that we are in all the places we can be and less dependent on the world around us. I think we all agree that the world is a very challenging place right now.

• (1120)

John-Paul Danko: Thank you.

How much more time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have two minutes and 30 seconds.

John-Paul Danko: Perfect.

I'll follow up on that, because you mentioned training and apprenticeships. Of course, our government has just launched a \$6-billion investment in training the next generation of workers in the skilled trades. We were at Mohawk College in Hamilton last Friday, seeing their training centres. There's a lot of support in the skilled trades for that.

How would your members benefit? What's your opinion of that program and the government's investment in the next generation of workers in the skilled trades?

Lana Payne: What we saw in last week's economic statement around this investment in skilled trades and in upskilling is very important, because what often happens... We've seen and we've been a big part of this when we do collaborative work with public colleges around the kinds of skilled trades we require.

For example, to give you a sense, we had a number of our members who were retrained out of the auto parts sector to work at the NextStar battery plant. We worked with public colleges to make sure that they were getting the skills they needed to transfer and transition from one area of the industry to the other.

When we talk about skilled trades, yes, it's about apprenticeships and, yes, it's about making sure that employers are investing in these apprenticeships, but as much as the government will put investments into the training side of things, we also need employers to be welcoming and have apprenticeships as part of their continu-

um of how we train workers. Often, we can see that side falling down.

Anything we can do—whether it's unions or the government—to work with employers to encourage apprenticeships across the system is incredibly important in making sure that we have a trained and skilled Canadian population.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

John-Paul Danko: My last question is on buy Canadian policies. What do we need to do as a federal government to strengthen and enhance buy Canadian to make sure that our investments in infrastructure are benefiting Canadian workers, Canadian suppliers, Canadian materials and the Canadian economy?

The Chair: Give a quick answer, Ms. Payne.

Lana Payne: I'm a big fan of buy Canadian. Let's see this in all the places in which we can do it.

We can build the new Via trains that are currently being considered. We would love to do that in our facility in Thunder Bay. We can look at the cars that we build in Canada. Governments can buy the vehicles that we build here and make sure that they're part of government fleets and municipal fleets. We build transit buses all over this country, from Winnipeg to Quebec.

Let's make sure that we're buying Canadian, using Canadian steel and Canadian aluminum to do all of that.

The Chair: Thanks for mentioning Winnipeg. Thank you, Ms. Payne.

[*Translation*]

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

Mario Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just like to take three seconds to make sure that our lovely guest can hear the interpretation.

Ms. Payne, can you hear the interpretation?

• (1125)

Lana Payne: Yes. Thank you.

Mario Simard: Thank you, Ms. Payne.

Your opening remarks were very interesting, as was the discussion you had with my colleagues. One thing stands out for me: You said that the energy sector is a money-printing machine. I couldn't agree with you more. Now, it remains to be seen what these companies do with that money.

I'd like to bring you back to a correlation you made, which I don't think we're exploring enough. What's the current ratio of workers to oil production? If you have data on that, or if Unifor has data on that, I would very much like to see it.

I'll finish my thought and then let you comment. What I understand from the big oil companies' comments, and what we're currently seeing, is that they don't want to take on the risk of infrastructure investments. It certainly gives them some flexibility to move toward automation, but if I understand you correctly, their responsibility is to invest in their infrastructure. However, they have the money. If I look at the profits from 2021 to 2024, oil companies made \$131 billion in profits. Given the current geopolitical situation, I also know very well, as does everyone else, that they're making record profits with a very high price for a barrel of oil.

I'd like you to share your comments with us. Don't oil companies have the flexibility to invest more in their infrastructure? In your opinion, is it the government's role to invest in this infrastructure?

[*English*]

Lana Payne: Thank you very much for both of those questions. I will definitely get you more data on the ratio of workers in oil production to profits, because I think our research team would love to put that together for you.

I would say that they should absolutely be required to invest in infrastructure and to maintain infrastructure. The reality is that these resources are public resources. We allow companies to explore, exploit and make profits from them. From that, we need to get a couple of things in return, which are well-paying union jobs that are safe and infrastructure that is safe, because, of course, it's really important that we keep communities safe all across this country.

Part of doing that means making sure that we are maintaining infrastructure and not allowing it to deteriorate, because this also has an impact on our environment. A lot of this can be taken care of through proper regulation and making sure that we are holding these very large companies accountable, and there is more we can be doing on that front.

We have made a number of submissions around how we can improve regulation and oversight so that, once the facilities are built, we are doing everything possible to keep them safe and to employ energy workers. The reality is, with all the automation we are seeing, we are displacing workers out of the sector. What we need to do, if that is true and technology is doing that, is to then, on the other side, get a return. I would say that second to that return is what we do with our royalty regimes in this country. How do we make sure that we are getting a fair share of the return of these profits back to Canadians and to Canadian governments so that we can reinvest them in other parts of society?

That's why you are probably hearing many commentators now talk about how oil is at a very high price. It's likely to go further because of what is happening in the Middle East, and with the U.S. war with Iran, so we have to be prepared. If the price of oil and gas go through the roof even further, how do we capture some of that to make sure that we're making things affordable for Canadians? I can tell you that, from many of the people we represent, things are very unaffordable right now, and I think it's only going to get worse.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard: Thank you.

You said a little earlier that Unifor had made proposals on how to make these companies more accountable. I encourage you to table those proposals with the committee as well. They can be added to the report at a later date.

I don't know if you have any information on this, but I would simply point out that if you look at the ownership structure of the biggest players in the oil and gas sector, it quickly becomes clear that 60% of those major companies are American-owned. It also becomes clear that, in terms of dividends over the past few years, those companies have sent nearly \$80 billion to their shareholders without necessarily investing in infrastructure. That means we're losing about \$12 billion a year collectively.

This is what I'm really wondering: Collectively, are we still winners in the oil and gas sector? Isn't there something we're missing when companies are making record profits and Canadians may not be getting their money's worth in this type of investment?

I'd like to hear your comments on that.

• (1130)

[*English*]

The Chair: You have time for a quick answer, Ms. Payne.

Lana Payne: I believe there's more we could do to capture some of the massive profits that are there. Also, if that means capturing them and then reinvesting in things that oil companies are not doing, such as renewable energy and those sorts of things, this is definitely something that I believe a legislative framework can get us to.

The Chair: Thank you.

Colleagues, we're going on to our second round.

We are going to start with Mr. Martel.

[*Translation*]

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

Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Payne, thank you for being here today.

I listened to your opening remarks. You talked about how we can help Canada become an energy superpower. How is it that, with the natural resources we have, we aren't currently a superpower?

We don't have a refinery here. We can't export liquefied natural gas to Europe. I'd like to hear your views on that. It seems to me that all of those things should have been done by now.

Today, people are saying that they want to become a superpower. What do you think about the fact that we aren't one, despite everything we possess?

[*English*]

Lana Payne: Oh boy, that is a very big question.

Obviously, there were a lot of things we could have possibly been doing differently, but we are now in a place in which we have to do things differently. Looking at building a strategy for our energy sector across the country is incredibly important. That means building critical infrastructure in all the ways we can. I know you're going to hear from Candu Energy in your next session; that's incredibly important. We need a diversity of energy from all sources right now.

I would say to you that we are still at a place in which we import a lot of energy into Canada. We export oil and gas to the United States, and we get it back through pipelines from the United States. We have all of these pipelines running north-south rather than looking at how we make Canada itself more resilient.

How do we ensure that we're not having to import as much as we do, potentially, in eastern Canada? How do we fix these problems? This requires an assessment of how we make ourselves more secure, I would say, in Canada. Yes, part of that is exporting to more places than the United States, but it is also shoring up what we do in our own country and making sure that we're maintaining, protecting and building our own industrial capacity.

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: That's interesting.

Would you support building a west-east pipeline to reduce our dependence on the U.S. market and create 100% Canadian jobs?

[*English*]

Lana Payne: Pipelines are part of the solution. It takes a long time to build a pipeline. We need an interim strategy as well. One of the proposals that we have put forward since last year, particularly when the trade war started with the United States, is to look at how we can increase our capacity of shifting oil from the west to the east via the railway. We put a lot on the railway right now. We currently transport crude oil from western Canada to Sarnia, for example, if we do it by railway. However, we could increase that capacity, and I think that would help a lot.

There are any number of ideas here that can get us to a better place. Some of them will be interim solutions, and some of them, like pipelines, will be longer-term solutions. Some of them will also be that we have to invest in more electricity and that we have to invest in nuclear. Frankly, we have to invest in solar and wind; we have to do all of it. If we are to be an energy superpower, we can't just be an energy superpower in one aspect of the energy sector. We have to do it in all the places.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: You talk about strategy, and you say we have to build. Do you think it's possible to do that without touching the regulations? When it comes to discussing projects, it's as if we never see the light at the end of the tunnel.

[*English*]

Lana Payne: Yes, we have to build. There's no doubt about it. I mean, I see it. Sometimes the bureaucratic situation is not catching up with the political moment. We have to make sure that all of Canada is rowing in the same direction, which can be hard.

Honestly, I don't think any of us thought we'd be in the kind of crisis we're in right now in terms of this trade war with our closest ally. That has caused us all to think about things in a different way. It means that we have to, for sure, make sure that our own economy—particularly when it comes to energy, but also with regard to the entire industrial base of Canada—is being protected and that we are building our own capacity here at home.

The Chair: Thank you both.

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: Thank you, Ms. Payne.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Saini, you have five minutes.

Gurbux Saini (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): I want to talk to you, Mrs. Payne, about the forestry sector. I know there are problems in that industry, but the provincial government also has a lot to do with it. The federal government can provide some subsidies, but when it comes to the levies that the government charges on harvesting the timber.... Can you elaborate on your viewpoint on that?

Lana Payne: Yes. With respect to the forestry sector, I would say that you are exactly right. Most of the forest industry is provincially regulated. Fibre access is determined by provincial jurisdiction.

What we really need to see—and I believe you'll see some recommendations along this line—is the federal and provincial governments working more closely together to make sure that we are doing this. We need to support and stabilize the forest sector across the country, and that can't be done by just the federal government. You're absolutely correct. It has to be federal and provincial governments working hand in hand.

I would hope that we can get to that place because, honestly, we need a sustainable forest sector not just for today, but for generations to come. It is a manufacturing sector. It's important to the industrial economy of our country, and we have to get it right. We've gone through a decade of companies basically being crushed with these softwood lumber duties, and that has prevented many of them from investing in mills and plants in Canada. It has made it very difficult for them to operate. In some cases, they are losing investment all over the place. The reality is that we have to come to terms with that.

We also have to get to a place in which we are using procurement in Canada at the provincial and federal levels to use more wood products. What we have seen is almost a hollowing out of some of these manufacturing facilities. We've just had two furniture-making facilities in the province of Quebec close, basically because of what we are seeing with the United States.

How do we, as provincial and federal governments, come together to support our industrial capacity in Canada? I fear that if we don't get this figured out, it's going to be too late. More collaboration is absolutely required.

Gurbux Saini: Currently, we have 10 provincial governments, three territorial governments and a federal government. Is it not practical that we should have a minister of forests who can look after all of Canadian forestry? This is one of the biggest problems: The three levels of government are not working hand in hand. It's making it very difficult.

The second thing I wanted to ask you about is your viewpoint on the tariffs the U.S. has levied. This has been going on for the last 25 or 30 years. We go to court. We win those cases. America lobbies. They're so strong. We get some money back, and they're back into it. Can you give us your viewpoint on that?

● (1140)

Lana Payne: Yes. I believe that there are a number of things we can do to have more collaboration between provinces. It starts with having a structure. I would say that not just provincial and federal governments need to be part of that but employers and unions too. We can create a tripartite structure in which we are developing and making sure that an industrial strategy for the forest sector is being implemented and being evaluated. There are touchpoints to use so that we can make sure it's working. We can force people to come to the table to ask, "How can we make sure that we do not just preserve and stabilize this industry but transform it?" There's much that can be done.

I understand the very challenging nature of the softwood duties that we are experiencing from the U.S. We have some companies right now in Canada that are facing an almost 50% duty and then a tariff on top of that. It is almost impossible to operate in terms of that kind of environment.

The reality is, though, that the U.S. does need our lumber. They need to be able to have a supply from Canada and a stable, secure supply in Canada. It also means that we have to look at our own domestic policies within the country to make sure we're using as much wood product as we can through procurement at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, and then to look at how we can accelerate building homes in Canada so that we're at least taking care of some of that issue domestically.

The Chair: Thanks to both of you.

Colleagues, we know there's a strong connection between the forestry sector and the energy sector. We are studying energy exports. That's a reminder for both sides of the table.

[*Translation*]

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

Mario Simard: It's very good to point that out, Mr. Chair. I'll talk about forestry.

Ms. Payne, you may be aware that a proposal was made to the federal government regarding the tariff crisis. This proposal came from a joint discussion between Daniel Cloutier—who is from your organization and whom you must know—people from the forestry sector, and businesses. Basically, the government was asked to take on a portion of the countervailing duties, anti-dumping duties and customs duties, but especially the countervailing and anti-dumping duties, since that money exists at the border. I think it's over \$13 billion right now, and you quite rightly pointed out that no business can survive with margins cut by 45%. I'm still waiting for the government's response.

When we look at the role of Export Development Canada, or EDC—whose representatives were here a while ago—and when we look at EDC's reports for 2022 and 2023, we see that \$9.3 billion in all kinds of financial support was granted to the oil sector in 2022. It was more or less the same thing in 2023. That means that there's an enormous amount of fiscal capacity for the people in the energy sector, but absolutely nothing for the forestry sector, which often leaves the impression of a double standard.

I'd like to hear you speak to the critical situation that people in the forestry sector are currently experiencing.

[*English*]

Lana Payne: I know Daniel very well. He is my good friend.

I believe the proposal was a good one, because it would have allowed capital to flow into the forest sector. Companies would have had capital to invest in mills. You are probably aware that many of our mills have lacked investment over a period of time for lots of reasons. One of them is that, so much of the time, profits coming out of the industry have basically gone into these duties, and this has prevented upgrades in the mills.

On the other side of things is, how else can we support the industry? This may mean that until the industry gets stabilized and back on its feet, we have to look at the energy side of things too. Energy is a very big cost in some provinces, but not all. In some provinces, energy is a very big cost to the operations of these mills. That can be looked at. I know Ontario has done a job of looking at the cost of energy for industrial users, particularly in the forest sector, to try to maintain the sector and protect it during these very difficult times.

We should, can and must be looking at any number of things to support the forest sector, not the least of which is access to fibre.

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

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

[English]

Mr. St-Pierre will wrap us up at the end of this panel.

Gaétan Malette: Madame Payne, you're representing 120,000 workers. You've mentioned Thunder Bay, and you mentioned also Via Rail. I know that in the region where I'm at, that corridor through Sudbury, Chapleau and White River is extremely important. It's operating at very low efficiency.

What do you see for remodernizing some of the fleet of Via Rail? If we don't have jobs, we don't have much. What would this represent in the Thunder Bay region if we worked at revamping the Via fleet for workers? How many workers would that be?

Lana Payne: Thank you for the question.

As you are probably aware, we're currently in a phase in which the federal government is considering the tendering process for the second lot of Via trains. We know that our members in Thunder Bay, with their knowledge and their skills, are more than capable of building these trains. We've been a strong proponent of making sure that we build our own capacity in this country, and that we keep it and maintain it. One thing we can be doing is making sure that those Via trains are built in Thunder Bay. This will also benefit many parts of Quebec as well in terms of the engineering work.

Overall, how do we, as a country, make sure we keep our own capacity to build and manufacture? If we're to protect the sovereignty of our country, it also means protecting the manufacturing backbone of communities such as Thunder Bay. It also means we use Canadian steel and Canadian aluminum. We put all of these "buy Canadian" provisions around what we manufacture. That will employ Canadians across the spectrum, not just in building trains but in the supply chain of what's required for those trains. That is also true of how we build ships.

All of these industrial policies that we look at as a country... We need to build things. We are an industrial country. Let's make sure we keep doing that. Let's make sure we're protecting good jobs in Canada and using good, strong procurement dollars—billions of them—to put Canadians to work.

Gaétan Malette: Along the same line, but looking at the whole sector of oil and resources, how can the government provide the certainty that investors need to commit capital to Canada's energy sector to create more jobs?

Lana Payne: The reality is that Canada is a stable, secure, safe place to do business. We also have, perhaps, the best workforce in the world. These things should be important enough so that companies want to invest here. Obviously, it's making sure, on the other side of it, that these companies do not just invest here but also stay and maintain the infrastructure, which is also critically important. The fact is that we supply a lot of stability to companies that want to operate here, and we have resources. It's not as though those resources are going anywhere. If they want to make profits, Canada is the place where the resources are. Having a stable regulatory environment as well, of course, makes sense, but we have to take into account that we should get something back for that, and this means good jobs for Canadians.

• (1150)

Gaétan Malette: Northern Ontario has been struggling in many regions. The youth are leaving the regions. What would you do? How can we change that?

Lana Payne: I believe part of changing it is making sure there are good jobs there. I'm from Newfoundland and Labrador, so, MP, I understand the challenge of trying to keep people in places where sometimes we're economically challenged. Northern Ontario is also rich in resources. Whether it's mining, whether it's the ability to have skilled workers to build trains, as well as to manufacture, operate and build infrastructure, it's incredibly important that we put the resources around that being able to happen.

I would also say we need to provide strong public services for northern Ontarians. That means they should have access to good health care and good education, the same way we do in other parts of the province.

The Chair: Thank you both.

Wrapping up our first panel is Monsieur St-Pierre.

[Translation]

Mr. St-Pierre, you have five minutes.

[English]

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for allowing me to intervene in my first commentary on this committee.

Colleagues, I appreciate the opportunity to work with you.

Mrs. Payne, thank you for being here today and for the great work that Unifor does. Our government announced last December a methane emission regulation that allows for the reduction of about 72% of emissions by 2030 and about 75% by 2035. I'm curious about whether you can comment on what types of employment opportunities the methane regulations pose for Unifor members and the sector more broadly speaking.

Lana Payne: That was a good start, I would say, but we need to get to how we fix regulations to make sure that we are catching the leaks before they become leaks. That means that companies need to have a robust auditing system, and audits and inspections should be done by workers. The way that we activate the methane gas protections is to make sure that we have workers doing that work.

Right now, I would say that we are deficient in that regard, so it really becomes about making sure that the companies are doing what we expect them to do. The regulations are one part of that, but it's also about employing workers to ensure that the infrastructure is being maintained and inspected and that it's being audited. If you don't have enough people doing that, we're going to continue to have a problem in terms of the release of methane leaks into the atmosphere.

Eric St-Pierre: I have a follow-up question on that. You mentioned auditing. There are also detection services or methane mitigation technology.

Are there any lessons that Canada could learn from reducing emissions in the methane sector? How can we export this knowledge to other parts of the world? How can we seize this as an energy export opportunity for Canada?

Lana Payne: Absolutely. If we're able to develop new and better technology in this regard, then of course we would want to showcase it and sell it to the world, but the reality is that, even with the technology, you will still need workers to maintain the infrastructure. That is where I would like to see the focus, because I know what our members do every day, and I know the difference they can make here.

In many ways, they're energy workers, but when they do this work, they're also climate workers. It's really important to have people on the job to stop the leaks from happening in the first place.

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you.

Canada also has a very robust clean tech sector. Can you comment on the opportunities for Unifor members and for the sector, generally speaking, when it comes to the clean technology sector and the opportunities for us to export some of this technology globally? What kind of employment opportunities does it create for your members?

Lana Payne: I'll speak about one specifically because it's really important. It was the creation of a battery plant in Windsor, Ontario, the NextStar battery plant, which, of course, is extremely important. Yes, it's about building EV batteries, but it's also now about how we use batteries to store energy. This is going to be incredibly important for our country. It's a great opportunity for workers. We currently have 900 to 1,000 people working in that facility.

Of course, as you probably know, there is a second facility being built in St. Thomas by PowerCo. There are lots of opportunities in this regard too. It means having training programs and our public colleges aware that these are the opportunities and building the upskilling training programs that would be required to transition workers from one part of the economy to the clean tech part of our energy sector.

• (1155)

Eric St-Pierre: I have about 45 seconds remaining.

I know Unifor has been pretty involved in what's called a just transition discussion. Can you comment quickly on the impact for Canada and around the world? What does just transition mean for Unifor?

Lana Payne: We don't use that term anymore in our union. We use economic justice, I would say. How do we look at other opportunities? If automation is happening, and if other things are happening in the sector, how do we make sure that we're preparing workers to work in other parts of the energy sector?

The reality is that it doesn't mean they have to transition out of the energy sector. It might mean moving to another part of it. It might mean they're moving from being on the production side to being on the inspection side, the auditing side or support of the infrastructure side. We have to look more broadly at that rather than thinking it's just transitioning out of the energy sector.

The Chair: Thank you.

Colleagues, this brings this panel to an end. On your behalf, I would like to thank Ms. Payne for being before us and being on the firing line for a whole hour.

You may have noticed that I've allowed a lot of latitude in this particular session. I don't think we've had Ms. Payne with us before. She is obviously very involved in the forestry sector.

Ms. Payne, we have a forestry study under way that isn't completed, and I think our members took the opportunity while you were before us to ask you questions on that important sector. Thanks for your flexibility.

Lana Payne: I'm very happy to comply. Our 25,000 forestry members will be very happy that we got those questions.

The Chair: This will be part of the public record that can be used. As Monsieur Simard mentioned, we welcome briefs. We welcome additional data information, so don't be shy about providing that to the committee. With that, I thank you for your testimony.

Colleagues, we're going to pause while we welcome the next witness. We're suspended.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: Okay, we are back in session. We'll resume the meeting.

Welcome to our witness from Candu Energy Inc., an AtkinsRéalis company, Todd Smith, vice-president, marketing and business development.

We've conducted the mandatory witness onboarding test.

It's nice to see you, Mr. Smith. Welcome.

I think you were in the room when I mentioned the previous procedural issues.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments shall be addressed through the chair.

You will have five minutes for your opening remarks, and then we'll open the floor to questions and comments from colleagues.

Mr. Smith, you have the floor.

Todd Smith (Vice-President, Marketing and Business Development, Candu Energy Inc., An AtkinsRéalis Company): Good afternoon, Chair, and honourable members of the committee.

I'm Todd Smith, VP, marketing and business development, at Candu Energy, Inc., an AtkinsRéalis company. I focus exclusively on international markets for new CANDU builds. Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you here today about export opportunities for Canada's CANDU nuclear reactor technology, particularly in the context of rapidly growing global energy demand and opportunities for new CANDUs here at home.

Globally, the dominant energy challenge isn't just climate ambition; it's energy security issues caused by global conflicts and geopolitical threats, as well as rising electricity demand, affordability and scale. Population growth, industrialization, electrification, digital infrastructure and AI are driving power requirements to levels that many countries aren't equipped to meet with their existing systems. In many regions, electricity demand is forecast to grow by 50% to 100% within two decades. This creates a clear and time-sensitive opportunity for Canada's nuclear technology, CANDU.

There are four questions I want to answer for you today.

The first one is, why nuclear and why CANDU? Nuclear energy remains one of the very few technologies capable of delivering large-scale 24-7 power over multiple generations. CANDU reactors are the most unique of the six large-scale technologies on offer globally today. CANDU was designed at Chalk River, Ontario, back in the 1960s by scientists and engineers with energy security and fuel security top of mind, and it's still Canadian intellectual property today. CANDU is the only reactor that uses natural uranium for fuel, reducing reliance on enrichment infrastructure and geopolitically sensitive supply chains. In fact, it's the number one reason countries like Poland and Turkey are considering CANDU today.

CANDU has the highest capacity factors globally. CANDU units routinely operate above 90%. The top reactor in the world, with a lifetime capacity factor of almost 94% of its nameplate, is Cernavoda 2. That's a CANDU reactor in Romania.

CANDU reactors are well suited for countries such as the Philippines and other countries across ASEAN, whose grids are growing but not yet at the scale of the larger economies. CANDUs have a long operating life, at up to 100 years with refurbishments, providing decades of predictable power and price stability for the regions that they operate in.

CANDU has the unique distinction, as well, of being built on time and on budget. The Darlington refurbishment is the latest example of that performance. Earlier this year, the last of the four CANDU units was returned to service ahead of schedule and under budget by \$150 million.

The second question I wanted to address is, what markets align with CANDU?

Several regions show strong alignment between rising demand and CANDU's strengths, such as central and eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. Canada's reputation as a reliable, non-politicized

supplier is a decisive advantage in the long-term infrastructure decisions in these jurisdictions.

The third question is, what is the economic value for Canada?

CANDU exports are among the highest-value industrial exports Canada can offer. Almost 100,000 people are employed in Canada's CANDU nuclear sector. With each CANDU contract signed at home and internationally, the number of highly skilled, well-paid jobs will grow in Canada's tier one nuclear ecosystem.

Each CANDU built abroad is the start of a new international relationship, with multidecade service and fuel contracts following the initial construction. This is the experience in South Korea, Argentina, Romania and China, where CANDUs were built over 30 years ago.

Finally, the fourth question is, what enables success?

Canadian industry has the capability. What matters now is national alignment. Key enablers with the Government of Canada must include government-to-government engagement, competitive financing frameworks and long-term policy consistency. Nuclear projects begin with state-level confidence. Canada's expertise in safety, regulation and non-proliferation is a strategic asset.

In closing, honourable members, global electricity demand is rising faster than at any point since the postwar industrial expansion. Canada's CANDU technology is uniquely positioned to answer that question at home, in Ontario, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and abroad in places such as Poland, Turkey and across the South Pacific. With focused support, CANDU can strengthen global energy systems while delivering enduring economic and strategic benefits to Canada.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

We're going to move on to our first round of questions. We'll start with Mr. Tochor for six minutes.

Corey Tochor: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Smith, for being here today.

I understand that there's a new plant being built in Romania and that there are plans for plants in Turkey. Could you unpack a bit more about the supply chain that would come from Canada if those two projects were to fully ramp up?

Todd Smith: Yes. There are great opportunities for the Canadian supply chain.

Romania is currently in the FID position. We're looking toward reaching the final investment decision at Cernavoda 3 and 4. Of course, a decision was made in Romania a number of years back to build Cernavoda 1 and 2. Cernavoda 1 is now due to be refurbished, and work is under way at Candu to refurbish that plant for another 30 to 35 years. As mentioned, Cernavoda 2 is the top operating plant of the 440 nuclear plants operating around the globe today, with a capacity factor of over 94%.

Canada's supply chain is going to benefit massively. The components for these plants are largely going to come from Canada. For each refurbishment that happens, about 70% of the work will come back to Canada. That will be the case with Cernavoda 1, when we start our work there. For Cernavoda 3 and 4, we could see 70% of the components coming from Canada, which means that our supply chain, which is already the envy of many nations around the world, will grow.

With the policy certainty that comes from having the final investment decision—I hope we'll reach it later this year—there will be an opportunity for our supply chain partners, such as BWXT, Velan, L3Harris and many others in our supply chain to scale up and create even more jobs to meet the demand that's going to come from the Romania project.

Corey Tochor: That's fabulous. It could make Canada truly an energy superpower if these things come together.

You talked about financing and the importance of such. I'm old enough to remember when this government referred to nuclear as a “sin stock”. What would be effective financing options that this government should consider in Romania 3 and 4 and/or Turkey?

• (1215)

Todd Smith: I would say that hearts and minds have changed in Ottawa when it comes to nuclear. Certainly, there is an understanding that if countries are going to meet not only their net zero targets but also the massive increases in electricity that are needed, there has to be a full team Canada approach for us to win these contracts in jurisdiction.

When it comes to financing specifically, Export Development Canada was there for every previous international build in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. Export Development Canada is there for the Romania project as well. We've seen the announcements coming from EDC, and certainly EDC has been engaged in the project we're currently seeking in Poland. EDC has been engaged in the Turkey bid also.

We're actively engaged in a competition in those two countries as we work to the final investment decision in Romania. It's imperative, because with the five other actors, the technologies we see are largely supported by their sovereign as well, be it the Russians, the Chinese, certainly the U.S., the Koreans or the French. It really is a national strategy that surrounds that, which includes financing for these projects.

In each case in which EDC has been part of a build in a country in the past, be it South Korea, China or Romania, the debt that has gone into the project from EDC has been repaid in a very timely fashion as the reactor comes on board, which is a net benefit to taxpayers here in Ontario and in Canada.

Corey Tochor: Speaking of reactors, and playing up to a bit of your past experience as natural resources minister in Ontario, there's going to be a decision made by the national government. It will be forced into making a decision over heavy water versus enrichment.

Thinking back to your days and your knowledge when the SMRs came online in Ontario, or the decision that was made that uranium needs to be enriched if we are going to be this energy superpower, we'll have to enrich uranium in Canada and be a sovereign country and/or carry on with CANDU, but we're also going to need heavy water production. With your experience, which one would be the easier of the two to complete?

Todd Smith: Definitely, talks are already under way with different countries around the world, and even here in Canada, to get a heavy water supply ready.

Corey Tochor: Would we stand that up in Canada?

Todd Smith: Could we get a heavy water supply in Canada? It would mean jobs for Canadians and a reliable place to have the heavy water plant. Those negotiations are occurring now with my team at AtkinsRéalis.

Certainly, it's most important that we take advantage of the technology we built and created. Engineers, 60 years ago, had the foresight to build a reactor that uses natural uranium. You don't have to rely on another country to enrich your uranium. The natural supply of uranium is abundant in your province of Saskatchewan and a great boon to the economy of Saskatchewan.

Corey Tochor: I'll circle back to the enrichment side. For the SMRs that are being built, where do you think that enrichment should take place?

The Chair: Give a quick answer, please.

Todd Smith: That will have to come from another jurisdiction.

Currently, the largest jurisdiction, when it comes to enrichment, is Russia. The U.K. and U.S. are relying on Russian enriched fuel to power their nuclear fleet at this moment.

The Chair: Thank you, both.

Mr. Guay, you have six minutes.

Claude Guay: Mr. Smith, thank you very much for being with us today. It is much appreciated.

There is talk about the federal government having an upcoming nuclear strategy. What would you hope to see in that strategy?

Todd Smith: Yes, we are anticipating this strategy. We believe it's very important for the economy here in Canada, as well as for energy security.

Certainly, the energy ministers in the various provinces would want to make the decision when it comes to a technology. Are there other ways the federal government can help? Absolutely. It can do so when it comes to a commitment to finance these projects, through either EDC or some other mechanism. We've seen money come from the CIB as well. The details of the new wealth fund that has been created and is currently under way here in Ottawa remain to be seen.

What we're facing internationally.... Most of my work lies in different countries. The five other countries I mentioned are providing seed funding to begin prefeasibility work at sites, be they across central and eastern Europe or in the ASEAN region—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations—in such places as the Philippines and Indonesia.

As the Canadian government is the owner of the Canadian CANDU technology through AECL, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, it's very important that the federal government is there as well. We at AtkinsRéalis and Candu Energy are promoting CANDU around the world. We've seen this of late, whether it's in Poland or other jurisdictions. Your counterparts with the federal government, I believe, understand that there is a market out there. There's a significant market in which CANDUs can be exported. The arm-in-arm, team Canada approach is very important.

I understand the Prime Minister, on various occasions, speaks in bilaterals with other national leaders. He has spoken about our Canadian expertise in nuclear technology, and about CANDU. He is very supportive of the idea of building CANDUs abroad for a couple of reasons. One, it makes sense for our economy. Two, it makes sense to forge these relationships with the so-called middle powers. These relationships aren't just about building a plant and leaving. The relationships that occur when you build a CANDU plant in a jurisdiction are for 80 to 100 years, as Candu Energy and AtkinsRéalis continue to service those plants over many decades. Those bilateral relationships are very important.

• (1220)

Claude Guay: Mr. Smith, AtkinsRéalis is also involved in SMR investment and efforts.

As it relates to our systems, technology and expertise, can you help me understand the export opportunities? Where is Canada in the SMR space? Maybe you could compare and contrast. We are probably more familiar with traditional large CANDU installs than SMRs.

Do you want to educate us on that?

Todd Smith: AtkinsRéalis—and Candu—is the OEM for the CANDU technology. We're actively marketing the CANDU technology globally on behalf of the Government of Canada.

When it comes to the small modular reactor space, yes, we are an engineering firm of 42,000 people that's been based in downtown Montreal for over 115 years now. It's an engineering firm that has nuclear expertise globally. We are the architect engineer and the project engineer on behalf of OPG and GEH at the SMR that's currently under construction at the Darlington new nuclear site here in Ontario.

We're also, through our U.K. office, working with Rolls-Royce and the small modular reactor in the U.K. South of the border, we've been working with X-energy. We've been working with Natrium as well, which is the Bill Gates reactor. We have global expertise, and each of our offices around the world is working on small modular reactors.

When it comes to the BWRX-300 small modular reactor from GVH that's being built in Ontario right now, certainly when that reactor gets exported globally there will be a benefit to Ontario and there will be a benefit to Canada, but it's nowhere near the benefit that will come from building CANDUs abroad. We talked about some of the numbers. Building, let's say, a stand-alone CANDU unit in an international jurisdiction will have a massive multi-billion-dollar impact on GDP here in Canada. Yes, there will be an impact from the SMR, but that technology and IP rests in the United States. It will be subject to export controls and all of those things.

There is one Canadian technology, and that's the CANDU reactor. If we're looking to get the biggest bang for the buck and see the biggest impact in our country, then there's no question that CANDU, with 96% of its components being manufactured in Canada, will have a massive impact. I'm glad to see that the federal government understands that.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you both.

[*Translation*]

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

Mario Simard: Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith, is the interpretation working?

Todd Smith: Just a moment. I'll put on the earpiece.

Mario Simard: I'll give you time to do so, yes. The chair will then start the clock, I'm sure.

Technically, you should be able to hear the interpreters. The clerk will lend you a hand. The voice of an interpreter is always more interesting than the voice of a guy from the regions.

[*English*]

Todd Smith: There we go. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: Kénogami French is better when it's translated.

I didn't want to give you the impression earlier that I wasn't listening to what you were saying. I was looking for a graph that we received as part of a study the committee did on clean electricity, a graph that shows price comparisons. I remember the disproportionate cost we could see when we looked at the cost of wind energy, solar energy and hydroelectricity, and when we then looked at the cost of nuclear energy. I remember a completely disproportionate cost to produce one megawatt.

People are skeptical that nuclear energy is clean energy, but I don't want to get into that debate with you. However, I have always stayed a bit skeptical about the costs associated with generating nuclear energy. I'm currently reading articles in which I see that the Chinese are managing to make very quick progress with storage strategies.

The problem with wind or solar energy is that if it isn't paired with a storage strategy, it isn't the most efficient. We're dependent on the winds and the amount of sunshine. Maybe that issue will be resolved. I get the impression that the disproportionate costs of nuclear power may no longer be justified at that point.

I'd like to hear your comments on that. Could you perhaps reassure the members of the committee?

Todd Smith: Thank you for your question.

[English]

It's very important to compare apples to apples in this situation. When we're comparing nuclear to wind and solar, we're comparing baseload power, which is there 24-7, to an intermittent source of power in wind and solar. You're absolutely right. We used to call storage in Ontario the holy grail, and there wasn't enough storage.

We analyzed the different forms of electricity at the Independent Electricity System Operator in Ontario, both when I was the minister and when my successors and predecessors were in that role. What we did when we were comparing the cost of wind and solar with that of nuclear was ensure that we were adding storage to the cost so that we could compare a firmer supply. Even then, it's not the same as having nuclear, which is there 24-7.

The other thing about nuclear is that, when it comes to a land-use perspective, you're talking in many cases.... I'll use Bruce Power as an example, approaching now seven gigawatts of electricity coming from a relatively small piece of land on Lake Huron. You would cover thousands of acres of land if you were to use wind or solar to provide that same electricity. At the end of the day, that electricity would still be intermittent and not reliable. It's very important, when we're comparing nuclear with other forms of electricity, that we are comparing stable supplies.

When I was the minister of energy in Ontario, we brought in new forms of electricity and a procurement for storage as well. At the end of the day, when nuclear was compared to wind and solar paired with storage, they came out relatively the same at about nine and a half cents or 10¢ per kilowatt hour.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: I don't entirely disagree with you on that. Let us compare apples to apples. Everyone is aware that solar and wind are forms of intermittent energy, whose storage costs and storage efficiency are advancing extremely quickly. I'm not an expert, but that's what I see in the literature I'm able to read. I don't think it's in Quebec's interests to get into nuclear energy, because the costs are high. Our reservoirs are a huge battery that enables us to manage that intermittency. When I look at the technological advances we have made simply in the electrification of transport, I think it's entirely possible that, over the next 10 or 15 years, we'll have storage technologies at an acceptable cost that can give us some security in terms of intermittent energy.

When I look at nuclear energy, I see high costs, but I also see waste management, which is very important. Isn't there a point at which the calculation of costs and benefits could swing against nuclear energy, and it becomes—perhaps because of certain advances—a less appealing technology? We'll have to be ready to manage the waste and maintain these facilities, which do require a lot of maintenance.

I don't know if you have any projections on that or any analysis that you can share with the committee.

● (1230)

[English]

Todd Smith: It's important to understand the economic benefits that come with nuclear as well. I touched on them earlier, but you're talking about 100,000 jobs currently in Canada's nuclear sector. These are well-paying jobs.

There are some jobs that materialized from the Green Energy Act in the province of Ontario, for instance, but those jobs didn't stick around very long. To be frank, those energy installations, be they wind or solar, won't last nearly as long as the nuclear projects that have been built, that will be built into the future and that will have a stable return for ratepayers over the 80 to 100 years that they will be in existence.

The other piece when it comes to storage of waste.... In the price per kilowatt hour in Ontario—and I focus on Ontario because that's where most of the CANDUs are in Canada, although we have Point Lepreau in New Brunswick—a chunk of that is designated to deal with the spent fuel and waste from the nuclear facilities. That will be spent in building a deep geological repository for which there is a willing host community, in Ignace in northwestern Ontario, with the first nations' support as well. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization is busy working on that project.

The Chair: Thank you both.

[Translation]

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

Richard Martel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Smith, I appreciate nuclear power as a form of energy. First, I find it reliable. There's no need for water; there's no need for wind.

I have a question for you. Why do people in Quebec have a negative perception of nuclear energy? It seems to me that it would be a good complement. With everything that's coming, it seems that we're going to have trouble meeting electricity needs.

I don't know if you can answer me, but people in Quebec are extremely against it. I don't know if that has changed, but I'd like to know what you think about all that.

[*English*]

Todd Smith: Well, there are members around the table who might have a first-hand reason for that, other than me. I live in Ontario, and I grew up in New Brunswick. I do know that there were two nuclear plants at Gentilly, in Quebec. They were CANDU plants that provided reliable electricity to the people of Quebec.

A few weeks back, I was a guest speaker at an event with Investissement Québec in Trois-Rivières, and many members of the nuclear sector from Quebec were there. In spite of the fact that there are no longer operating nuclear plants in Quebec, there are still a significant number of companies that provide components and expertise to CANDU reactors globally.

I wasn't part of any decisions that were made back in 2011 to close the plants at Gentilly, but I know there was a serious impact on jobs in the Trois-Rivières region and in other parts of Quebec as well.

The other thing is that—and this is just me as a former Ontario energy minister talking—Quebec has been very fortunate for decades to have abundant hydroelectric power. The opportunities to continue to build hydroelectric are diminishing, so it's very important that Hydro-Québec and whatever the Government of Quebec looks like later this fall really take a good hard look at nuclear. I believe there is a place for it in Quebec.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: That's interesting.

Mr. Smith, Nova Scotia recently lifted its ban on uranium exploration and mining. If Quebec were to decide to lift its moratorium on nuclear energy, what do you think would be the potential economic benefits for the province and its workers?

[*English*]

Todd Smith: Are you asking about the province of Nova Scotia or Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: I'm talking about the province of Quebec.

[*English*]

Todd Smith: There would be a significant impact on Quebec. The more we see CANDUs being built across Canada, the more the economy will begin to flow from east to west. Uranium from Saskatchewan will make it to the east coast. It already has at NB Power at Point Lepreau, and they just signed an MOU with the

Government of Ontario to explore the small modular reactor that's being built at Darlington.

I believe there's also potentially a nuclear play in Saint John, or just outside Saint John at Point Lepreau, for another Enhanced CANDU 6 reactor that could support not just the power needs of New Brunswick but also Prince Edward Island, Quebec and potentially Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

I know that the federal government is interested in looking at this pan-Canadian approach to electricity, and I believe that strategically locating CANDUs across the province does make sense because it provides that baseload 24-7 power that is so necessary to have a functioning, reliable grid.

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: How many additional CANDU reactors could be deployed in Canada by 2035 if the approval processes were simplified?

[*English*]

Todd Smith: It's not a simple answer, and 2035 is a pretty tight timeline. It takes about five to six years to build a CANDU reactor if we receive approvals. There have to be environmental assessments and certification at the sites. That takes about two years. You can do the math.

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: Mr. Smith, what are the main regulation and policy barriers that would currently stand in the way of a quick deployment?

[*English*]

The Chair: Give a quick answer, please.

Todd Smith: There are many, and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission would be best placed to answer that question, but access to water is certainly one, as are the environmental assessments that would have to be done.

[*Translation*]

Richard Martel: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Hogan, you have five minutes.

Corey Hogan (Calgary Confederation, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Smith, for being here.

As you noted in your opening remarks, the world is looking for secure energy sources. That need has certainly accelerated because of the war in Iran. I was looking at some stats today. China makes up 80% of the photovoltaics market. In one month, their exports of photovoltaics jumped from 34,000 megawatts to 68,000 megawatts, to give you a sense of how much the world is looking for secure sources right now. I think that illustrates the global anxiety we see.

I personally believe—as I think most energy voices believe—that our energy demand challenges require an “all of the above” approach. That certainly includes nuclear, and Canada is a tier one nuclear power.

We've heard from many witnesses that one of Canada's strengths is stability, and we can provide secure energy sources. You said that success begins with state-level confidence and that we have a reputation as a reliable, non-politicized supplier.

Can you expand on that for this committee?

Todd Smith: Sure.

I agree wholeheartedly that now, because of the geopolitical events that have been occurring, there is a demand for stable electricity supply. This dates back to 2022 and Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, which created a sense of heightened insecurity across Europe and other places as well. Stability and certainty are key.

When I was the minister in Ontario, the CEO at Bruce Power, Mike Rencheck, would always say that it's imperative for us and for our incredible supply chain that we have across Canada to have the certainty, from government and from policy makers, that these projects are going ahead.

These projects don't happen overnight. There's careful planning that goes into ensuring that you have the proper cadence, building the human capacity that you're going to need to build and operate the plants, as well as giving the supply chain the time it needs, especially for long-lead items—some of the larger components in the reactors—to be built on time to meet the day that they're supposed to go into the ground.

Canada excels, and really is a bit of a unicorn globally, at building on time and on budget, but that all stems back to certainty from government. Completing the refurbishment project at Darlington, a nearly \$13-billion project, ahead of schedule and under budget is very rare with most of the other nuclear companies globally. It all starts with policy certainty from government.

• (1240)

Corey Hogan: Being steady and stable is probably even more important in this sector for ephemeral reasons. Nobody wants to see chaos in the nuclear space. It creates general anxieties in an environment in which sometimes there are anxieties expressed about what could happen, what might happen. Of course, we've all heard horror stories and seen challenges.

It seems to me that there are three broad buckets of nuclear export opportunities. One is electricity, that baseload power, which is largely confined to the continent. You've talked more about the technology and the knowledge opportunities, I think. For the purposes of our report building, can you expand on that technology and knowledge transfer opportunity? You talked about 70%, for example, of a new reactor coming from the Canadian supply chain. What are we talking about there? What does that look like?

Todd Smith: It's not just the components that would come from Canada; it's the engineering services that would come from companies like AtkinsRéalis and other partners that we have in the sector,

such as Kinectrics and Laurentis Energy Partners. That would be the engineering piece.

One thing that is a strength in Canada is our regulator. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is seen as one of the top regulators on the planet when it comes to regulating nuclear energy assets. It's very important for the CNSC to be locking arms with the Government of Canada, with AtkinsRéalis and Candu as we work to build these reactors around the world.

The other piece of it that's also really important—when we're in places like the Philippines and Indonesia, for instance—is where the workers are going to come from to build these plants and operate them. It's key that we are working with our partners in the supply chain but also working with our partners in post-secondary education. We have an organization called UNENE, the University Network of Excellence in Nuclear Engineering. It took me about five years to learn what that acronym meant.

We have a number of Canadian schools that are active in the UNENE space. As a matter of fact, UNENE in Romania has partnered with all nine of the post-secondary institutions in that country to ensure that they have the level of human capacity they need. These types of partnerships are crucial.

The Chair: Thank you both.

[*Translation*]

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

Mario Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Smith, you talked earlier about a comparison between nuclear, wind and solar power with storage. If you had any information to table with the committee on that, it would be very timely.

You're a former minister, so you understand when we talk about everyone's well-calculated interests. An Ontario minister calculates Ontario's interests and does so very well. A Quebec politician calculates the interests of Quebecers, and that goes without saying too. I don't get the impression that what the federal government is going to invest in clean electricity—and in nuclear power in particular—will benefit Quebec. Let me explain.

Quebec's situation is unique. Right now, our problem is managing peak demand. If it becomes easier to manage peak demand, Quebec will be able to provide enough energy to electrify the transportation fleet. If we can manage peak demand, we may even be able to export more hydroelectricity to Ontario. I know that's part of Hydro-Québec's plans.

Seeing these people on the ground who are implementing highly developed solutions for managing peak demand, I get the impression that Quebec's future lies more in that direction. It may be different for Ontario, but I think there's a form of competition where—us as well—we want to get our share of federal funding to succeed in doing that.

We share the same goals. It's the common good. Still, maybe our interests diverge a bit on this. I'd still like to hear what you have to say about the possibility of having more interconnection between Quebec and Ontario.

• (1245)

[English]

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds, Mr. Smith.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: I'm sorry.

[English]

Todd Smith: Wow, okay.

It's really important to have the interconnections, absolutely.

It's important to note when any of the comparisons of wind, solar and nuclear would be available through the Independent Electricity System Operator in Ontario, and we can make sure that it happens. Ultimately it is up to the government in each jurisdiction. We are a confederation, and sovereignty, when it comes to energy decisions, lies with the provinces to make those decisions that are best.

I would note that, especially this winter, Ontario gas plants, in many ways, were meeting the peaks in Quebec because of the freeze-up that was happening in the hydroelectric system.

We do have strong interties. We had relationships that were created—when I was the minister and previously under the former Liberal government in Ontario—to trade more with Quebec as well. That's certainly the goal of the federal government.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

We'll go to Mr. Tochor for five minutes, and then we'll be wrapping up with Ms. McKelvie.

Corey Tochor: Mr. Smith, I'd like to go back to the history of CANDU and the work that was done at Chalk River and throughout Canada. Can you briefly highlight some of the importance of the work and the development of CANDU?

Todd Smith: Yes. We were part of the Manhattan Project until Canadian engineers, scientists and the government realized that the goal was to build an atomic bomb in the United States. At that point in time, our Canadian engineers and scientists focused more on building clean, stable and reliable energy at home that could be built using the fuel from our country while building the components in our country.

One component that I haven't mentioned here today is the production of medical isotopes, which are crucial not just to Canada's health system but to the world's. There's a tremendous opportunity in front of us. That work continues today at Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and AECL in partnership with our teams at Candu to develop these medical isotopes that are a by-product of the heavy water design created many years ago at Chalk River. This has continued to evolve into larger and larger units, such as the Enhanced CANDU 6 and the units that we see at Darlington today.

Corey Tochor: Is the Monark the sixth-generation reactor that you spoke of?

Todd Smith: The Enhanced CANDU 6 is an evolution of the CANDU 6. It's the gross 750-megawatt reactor. It's net 720 to 725 megawatts. The Monark that currently exists in Darlington is about a 900-megawatt facility, and those are roughly the same units that are operating at Bruce Power.

Corey Tochor: On the next version of the Monark, there was a public ask for funds from Canada. Where is that development? If that goes ahead, where would that development come from?

Todd Smith: It would come from our teams at AtkinsRéalis, which have been funding this project over the last number of years, to ensure that we had a gigawatt-scale reactor as well on offer.

What I would say is happening right now is a lot of international interest in the enhanced CANDU 6, because it fits into grids in places like the Philippines, Indonesia, Poland and Turkey that maybe don't have as robust an electricity grid as we have here in Canada.

That 750-megawatt reactor, which is available today, is what they want and what we've bid into the competitive processes that we're in right now.

Corey Tochor: During your submission, you said that Canada is a tier one nuclear ecosystem.

In your view, what would cause Canada to lose that status?

Todd Smith: There are a few things.

Not to build CANDUs in Canada would be a terrible decision that would create lots of questions around our CANDU technology.

We are very fortunate to have this technology, and we are also extremely fortunate that it's as unique as it is. That offers elements that no other reactor offers—from the natural uranium fuel to the medical isotope production and the tier one nuclear ecosystem and regulator that we have here in Ontario that's so well regarded globally, the stable partner that we are here in Canada.

There's a tremendous opportunity for us to build out this export opportunity. Any other decision would be detrimental to this program in Canada. It is a CANDU supply chain. I just want to reinforce that. The 100,000 people who work in this country right now in nuclear are Candu employees, either directly or indirectly.

• (1250)

Corey Tochor: Along with the importance of the export licence and export potential, we have grave concerns about what's happening at the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories with the all-American-owned companies taking over.

This should scare anyone who's following nuclear or works in nuclear. The Liberals have outsourced the management of Chalk River, which developed CANDU and does work on other reactors and nuclear industries. Where that hurts us in our export capacity is that when American-owned companies touch that work, it requires, potentially, an export licence to be signed by the White House.

We saw this when South Korea wasn't able to export their reactor, because there was a component that was designed by American companies. That is the grave concern we have. Prime Minister Carney has outsourced to all-American-owned companies instead of, I believe, to your company—AtkinsRéalis, which was managing the Canadian laboratories beforehand. Going forward, we wouldn't have had the concerns we have now, if the Liberals continue down this path of letting this all-American group—

The Chair: We're over time, but I'll allow a quick response, if Mr. Smith would like.

Todd Smith: Yes, all I would say is that we're confident. CANDU is Canadian IP through AECL, and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories are our partners. We have a very good relationship with AECL and CNL to export CANDUs globally.

The Chair: Thank you for that brief answer.

Ms. McKelvie, it's over to you for five minutes as we wrap up this panel.

Jennifer McKelvie (Ajax, Lib.): As a member of Parliament from Durham, I know that our community is very fortunate to benefit from both the energy that comes out of the nuclear sector and the jobs. Thank you to AtkinsRéalis. I have toured the facility, and when I walked in, my first question was if I could...and their answer was, of course I could trip the fake reactor.

Thank you for that. It's always fun to press buttons in a place in which you shouldn't be able to.

My question for you is around next-generation nuclear and the work that AtkinsRéalis is doing.

I was wondering if you could speak to some of the opportunities, because we're talking about export here today. Of course, you can export the technology, you can export the energy, but I think there are some things that you can do adjacent to these reactors, including the production of hydrogen and the production of medical isotopes. Could you speak to that economic opportunity as well?

Todd Smith: It's good to know that you tripped the reactor on the simulator at Candu and not the one at Darlington, in your riding. That would be a totally different story.

There are many side benefits to the CANDU technology. I've talked a bit about the medical isotopes, which, I should point out, are currently a \$3-billion opportunity but globally, into the 2030s, are expected to be a \$30-billion opportunity. The more CANDUs that we build, the more opportunity to produce things like cobalt-60, lutetium-17, molybdenum-99 and antimony-125, which

are used in treating different forms of cancer and creating theranostics.

One of the by-products of the CANDU reactor is tritium. Tritium is also in high demand as things continue to evolve in the world of fusion. OPG, in your riding, has just announced a partnership as well. I forget exactly the name of the company, but I know it's creating a centre of excellence for fusion at OPG Darlington, and tritium will be a big part of that. There is a component to the CANDU by-products that used to be considered waste that is now actually of high value.

There are many opportunities that come from a CANDU reactor, so thanks for pointing that out.

• (1255)

Jennifer McKelvie: Thank you.

It is Stellarix that is going to be part of the fusion centre. It is interesting, because it will be able to use some of the products that come out of CANDU into that reaction.

Aside from the new opportunities we have in that completely different technology, how important is it that we really focus on one technology and on doing it well? Is there an economy of scale? For example, we've benefited by having the same CANDU reactors in Pickering, in Darlington and up in Bruce. Is there the ability to exchange expertise, parts, a more stable supply chain? What are the benefits that come from going all in on one technology?

Todd Smith: It is our sovereign technology too.

It makes total sense when you are seeing the benefits of having your own indigenous technology and sharing the lessons learned, not just from Bruce Power to OPG, which is happening every day, but Conexus, which is the former CANDU Owners Group and is sharing lessons learned from the CANDU fleet globally. There is also the research and development that's happening at Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, in Chalk River, and the work that AECL is doing.

As I mentioned earlier, this is a CANDU ecosystem that we have created here in Canada, with 100,000 jobs. I can tell you that with the backlog of work that we currently have at Candu, we have been on a hiring spree. There are the refurbishments that just wrapped up at Darlington, as well as the ongoing refurbishment at Bruce Power; the refurbishments that are coming on the Pickering B side; the potential new reactors at Bruce C; potentially 10 gigawatts of new reactors at Wesleyville, in Port Hope; the possibility of New Brunswick and another Point Lepreau; the Cernavoda 3 and 4; the refurbishment of Cernavoda 1; the refurbishment of Qinshan plants in China; and Wolsong in South Korea. We've gone from 1,000 employees two years ago to 3,000. That's a 200% increase.

That's not just happening at Candu. This would be happening in the supply chain and our other partners across the nuclear ecosystem.

To me, it makes a thousand per cent sense to move forward with the CANDU technology. It is our technology in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McKelvie.

Thank you, colleagues.

A big thank you to Mr. Smith for his testimony today.

Colleagues, I think you'll agree, the voice of experience shone through today. I don't know about you, but it perhaps gives me a little hope that there's life beyond politics.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith, again. As Monsieur Simard always says, we welcome briefs, additional information, and have really appreciated your testimony today, so thank you very much.

It was a good meeting, colleagues.

I have a couple of things before we break.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, May 7, when we will proceed with drafting instructions for the report on the energy export study. The analysts have put together a document to help with the drafting instructions, and this will be circulated by tomorrow, I believe. You may remember our last report, in which they put an excellent frame in front of us, and of course, we were free to add, subtract, multiply. We can look forward to that.

With regard to the motion inviting Gregory Ebel, president and CEO of Enbridge, to appear before committee, the clerk has been in contact with Enbridge representatives and has been told that, while Mr. Ebel is unavailable before the summer, they would be willing to send senior members of the company. Would that be acceptable to the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: No.

[English]

The Chair: It's not acceptable.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: No. I spoke with Mrs. Stubbs about this last week, so—

The Chair: Excuse me. I have to wait for the interpretation.

Mario Simard: Maybe before we have that discussion, I would wait to see Mrs. Stubbs again. I spoke with her about this last week, and she told me that it might be acceptable. I told her that, similarly, when we want to hear from a minister, we don't want to hear from the parliamentary secretary. I'm not saying that as an insult to Mr. Guay or Mr. Hogan. We want to hear from the minister.

Similarly, when we ask to hear from a CEO, I find that it doesn't bode well that he would prefer to have someone else fill in, especially since what prompted us to invite him were statements that he made himself.

Personally, I would prefer if we could hear from him as a witness.

• (1300)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that, Monsieur Simard.

Go ahead, Mr. Guay.

[Translation]

Claude Guay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also spoke to Mrs. Stubbs. When she communicated that to me, I told her that, on our side, we were okay with the CEO being replaced by his senior executives.

Perhaps you would like to talk to Mrs. Stubbs. That seems to be what Mr. Simard is indicating. We support this, if the other parties agree.

Mario Simard: I would like to add one thing, Mr. Chair.

I think we would be setting an important precedent. When a committee sends an invitation and votes on a motion, it isn't so that the person invited can shirk their duties and get away with proposing other witnesses. For that reason, I would insist on letting the CEO know that we sent him a friendly invitation.

The committee is independent. It can make its own decisions. Now, if we accept this, any business leader will be able to say that they have a busy schedule and that they can't come and meet with us. They'll be able to get out of it that way.

A lot of federal government money is invested in oil and gas infrastructure, and one of the main players doesn't seem to believe that it's up to the private sector to invest in that. I want to hear from him, because this witness is very relevant to the study we're conducting. I don't want to hear from people who work with him. It's him I want to hear from.

I think we would be setting a troublesome precedent going forward.

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

[English]

Gaétan Malette: I have the privilege of not understanding everything, but the ultimate goal here is to have someone who will give us answers. Sometimes, the person who passes it on to the person who will give us the answers is more important.

The Chair: Colleagues, I'm at the will of the committee, of course.

I see Mr. Guay and then Mr. Hogan.

Claude Guay: Mr. Chair, we're doing a study. The study is related to energy exports. If the gentlemen being proposed by Enbridge are officers of the company, which I suspect they are, they stand with their CEO. As far as I'm concerned, I would find it interesting to hear their point of view.

Corey Hogan: My comments are very similar.

I think it's useful to hear from Enbridge for the export study, regardless of who they send, as long as they send somebody who can

provide answers. I'd also note that if we're dissatisfied after that, there are always remedies available to this committee.

It doesn't necessarily sound as though there's the consensus you were searching for, Chair. Maybe this is something we should discuss on Thursday.

The Chair: Colleagues, can we do that? It might give us an opportunity to speak with the vice-chair and see what we can work out.

I will say, colleagues, that on your behalf, I sent a strongly worded letter. Thank you, Mr. Clerk, for helping me draft that.

Why don't we bring it up again on Thursday?

Thank you.

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