



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 029

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Chair: Angelo Iacono



Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Thursday, March 12, 2026

• (1105)

[English]

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

Hello, colleagues. Today is meeting number 29 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format and is public.

For those attending in person, please follow the health and safety guidelines as per the cards on the table to prevent audio or feedback incidents. In particular, please keep earpieces away from microphones to reduce the risk of injury from feedback incidents.

[Translation]

Today, the committee is reviewing the 2025-26 supplementary estimates (C).

[English]

I shall interrupt the meeting a few minutes before the scheduled hour of adjournment, so that the committee may vote on these supplementary estimates.

The committee is meeting with the Honourable Julie Dabrusin, Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, who is accompanied by the following witnesses.

From the Department of the Environment, we have Alison McDermott, assistant deputy minister, strategic policy and international affairs branch; from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, we have Terence Hubbard, president; and from the Parks Canada Agency, we have Andrew Campbell, acting president and chief executive officer and senior vice-president of transformation.

For opening remarks and questioning witnesses, Minister Dabrusin, you know the drill with the famous cards. Welcome. The floor is yours for five minutes.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation.

I'm happy to meet with members of the committee to discuss the 2025-26 supplementary estimates (C) for Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and the Parks Canada Agency.

The spending adjustments we are discussing today are part of the government's broader effort to ensure that public resources are concentrated where they will have the greatest impact, strengthening Canada's economy, protecting nature and advancing our climate goals.

As Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, I'm focused on protecting the environment and delivering ambitious climate action while growing a strong, sustainable economy and building a healthier and more resilient Canada for all Canadians.

Environmental and economic policy are not mutually exclusive. They're part of the same conversation. Well-designed environmental policy encourages cleaner technology and more efficient ways of producing goods. It paves the way to creating new jobs and industries while reducing pollution and long-term environmental damage.

Nowhere is that clearer than the global energy transformation currently under way. It is one of the most significant economic shifts of our time. Around the world, it's reshaping how capital flows, where industries invest and how countries build their competitive advantage. The countries that succeed in this new landscape will be those that combine economic strength with environmental ambition. These are the countries that will gain jobs, wealth and security for decades.

Canada is well positioned to lead that transition. We have the critical minerals needed to power the technologies of the future, world-class scientific capacity and abundant clean electricity. We have leading researchers, innovative companies and workers with the skills to build the next generation of energy infrastructure, but leadership in the global energy transition requires deliberate policy, strategic investment and the institutions that can deliver results for Canadians.

In the months ahead, our government will continue advancing policies to support clean growth, strengthen climate resilience and protect the natural systems that Canadians value so deeply. These efforts will position Canada to meet the environmental challenges of our time and see the economic opportunities that come with them.

Let's turn to the 2025-26 supplementary estimates (C) before us. These are the last updates to the estimates for the fiscal year.

Starting with Environment and Climate Change Canada, its 2025-26 supplementary estimates (C) would increase the department's reference levels by a net amount of \$4.8 million. This includes increases such as \$2.5 million for high-performance computing operations and \$1 million to raise awareness and inform Canadians about climate initiatives.

There are multiple transfers from other departments that total a net increase of \$1.3 million. This includes \$1 million from Natural Resources Canada to support the federal contaminated sites action plan, plus there is a \$7.2-million reallocation from operating resources to capital expenditures.

[*Translation*]

For Parks Canada Agency, its 2025-26 supplementary estimates (C) provide an increase in reference levels by a net amount of \$10.9 million. This amount is compensation for the lost-revenue component of the renewal of the Canada Strong Pass for the 2025-26 winter holiday season.

Plus, there is \$22 million in internal reallocation from capital to operating expenditures to prioritize urgent, non-discretionary operating activities needed for the recovery and rebuilding of Jasper National Park.

This results in an overall increase of \$32.9 million in operating expenditures, grants and contributions, and a decrease of \$22 million in capital expenditures.

Finally, the Impact Assessment Agency is internally reallocating \$6 million to grants and contributions from operating expenditures. This transfer supports indigenous organizations in strengthening their capacity for early engagement on major projects, in alignment with the new accelerated project timelines.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to stop here. I hope this summary provides members with an overview of the 2025-26 supplementary estimates (C).

I'm happy to take questions now from the members of the committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Minister, thank you for your remarks.

We'll start with the Conservative Party for six minutes.

Mr. Leslie, you have the floor.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, hunters, anglers and outfitters are deeply concerned that they will lose their rights and, in some cases, their livelihoods if the proposed Seal River national park reserve in Manitoba moves ahead. Will you guarantee that no Canadian would be banned from continuing to hunt or fish if this proposed national park moves ahead?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The proposed national park that we're doing with Seal River is in conjunction with Manitoba. We have a very strong relationship with the Province of Manitoba. We're making sure that the people and stakeholders—and that includes the hunters in the area—are all being consulted and included in these conversations. I have had very good conversations with the Minister of Environment for Manitoba. I know that he takes this issue very seriously—

Branden Leslie: Minister, I asked if you could guarantee that nobody will be banned from hunting or angling in that area. Also, could you confirm and guarantee that no lodges or outfitters operating there now will have to cease if it moves ahead?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The project is not complete, but it is my understanding that there is going to be access, as I've been talking with the Minister of Environment for Manitoba on these issues.

Branden Leslie: You're saying today that there is—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm happy to provide you with greater detail as we move forward. The project is obviously not complete, so I need to be able to get you better information as we move to completion—

Branden Leslie: I would appreciate that.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —but I don't believe that access is going to be a problem.

Branden Leslie: Well, not believing and saying confidently, as the minister in charge of Parks Canada, that it will not be a problem, are two different things. I'd like you to do the latter.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I can say is that there's a draft consultation coming out. We are aware of the issues, and that is something that's going to be up for a conversation. I know that we are all very aware of the concerns and the issues. I'm just letting you know, and I'm happy to follow up with you again on that.

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Minister.

Has Parks Canada identified how many acres of forest require prescribed burning to reduce wildfire risk in national parks across Canada?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I have not made that assessment, but I do have Andrew Campbell with me from Parks Canada, and he can perhaps provide more detail on that.

Andrew Campbell (Acting President and Chief Executive Officer, and Senior Vice-President of Transformation, Parks Canada Agency): There is a fire management plan for each and every national park across Canada. Actually, we've been updating a large number of those fire management plans to respond to the report we received from NRCan after the Jasper fire.

Yes, we have done prescribed burn. Prescribed burn is one tool. Obviously, there are also forest thinning and removal of forest in areas close to, in and around town sites. Between all of those, we have done the work that needs to be done around towns in national parks.

Branden Leslie: Given the aftermath with the devastation of Jasper, Canadians want to know one thing, and it is just that. Whether it be prescribed burns or other management tools, is that going to be increased in parks across Canada?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'll add one thing before we go there. What happened in Jasper was devastating, so I definitely want to speak about the people who were impacted by that fire. However, a lot of the work done by Parks Canada managed to save a lot of important infrastructure there as well.

Branden Leslie: We're going to disagree on that one, Minister. We had a very lengthy study on that in the last Parliament.

Let me move on, because it doesn't sound like we're going to get any firm commitments there.

Minister, since you were made Minister of the Environment, how many times have you directly met with the net-zero advisory body to discuss its recommendations?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: In fact, if I can just let you know, I'll be meeting with them again on Friday, and I do meet with them and talk with them. I think that we will have good conversations moving forward.

Branden Leslie: I'm glad to hear that, because several members have resigned, saying that their advice was being ignored. My question is this: If you just ignore the advice of this body, why does it even exist?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I very much do not ignore their advice. They come with very important experience and very important recommendations. As I mentioned, I'll be meeting with them on Friday. We are working on how we can make it the most effective NZ-AB possible.

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Minister.

The government's own consultation report, "What we heard report—Fertilizer emissions reduction", found that many farmers warned that the target could eventually lead to mandatory limits on fertilizer use. I'm hoping you will clearly state today that the government will never impose caps or reductions on fertilizer use for Canadian farmers.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The environmental policy that I have before me is not imposing caps. We recognize very much the importance of farming. In fact, I was recently at the University of Guelph, where I was able to meet with researchers who were talking about all of the important ways that they're supporting farming and agriculture in a time of climate change. There's a lot of research

that is being done specifically on how to support farmers in this moment.

• (1115)

Branden Leslie: Your government is closing a series of research stations under AAFC, so I would disagree with that.

I will move on.

Bill C-264 has been tabled in Parliament to repeal the tanker ban off Canada's west coast. Do you plan to support that legislation as a government?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: When you say legislation, you're not referring to government legislation, so I want to be very clear about that from the first point. I will say on the—

Branden Leslie: [*Inaudible—Editor*] legislation to allow our oil and gas to move off our west coast, which it certainly cannot do due to the tanker ban? Do you not plan on acting on that?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: That is not government legislation that we put forward. We have been very clear, and continue to be clear, that if we're talking about moving forward with any pipeline, it will have to be with the agreement of the Province of British Columbia and first nations.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Dabrusin.

The floor is yours, Mr. St-Pierre, for six minutes.

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, Minister, for sharing your time with us again. You've been very generous with this committee.

Recently, probably over the last week, the Canadian Climate Institute issued an analysis that looked at the cost of industrial carbon pricing. Their analysis indicated that roughly the cost of a Timbit from Tim Hortons would be attributed to the oil and gas sector. I'm a big fan of my double-doubles from Tim Hortons, and it's very enticing that industrial carbon pricing will be quite inexpensive.

Maybe a question for you, Minister, is this: Can you comment on this recent analysis and why industrial carbon pricing has a minimal impact on Canada's competitiveness?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you for that question, and thank you for the shout-out to all of our Timbit-eating ways, which is an important part of my everyday, too.

Industrial carbon pricing, as the studies show, adds zero additional costs to the production of food. I keep repeating that, because I think it's very important to be clear with Canadians about that.

The other part about why industrial carbon pricing is so important is that it creates the incentives for industry. We hear time and time again from industry that they need that certainty, and they do look at it as creating the incentives necessary for innovation.

We hear that from industry. For example, the Cement Association has come out in favour. Frankly, at previous committee hearings, the oil and gas industry came out in favour of industrial carbon pricing. It's something that works to create the certainty that industry needs, and it does it in a way that actually creates incentives for innovation.

I will add one last piece to that, if I may, which is that it's not just about the innovation here at home. It's also about access to markets around the world. We're in a moment where we're looking for trade diversification. We know we need to do that. When we look at markets like the U.K. and the European Union, they're looking at the carbon load of products coming in by putting in place carbon border adjustments. If we don't have an industrial carbon price, that puts us at a disadvantage for accessing those markets.

Finally, out of our top 10 trading partners after the United States, they are all putting in place measures regarding carbon and pricing carbon. This is something about how we position ourselves for the global economy and how we create the innovation here at home. It's very much a central part of how we make Canada more competitive.

[Translation]

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you.

I'll ask my final questions in French, if I may.

You talked about Canada's competitiveness, and there was recently an announcement about the new automotive strategy. Can you talk briefly about that automotive strategy? How will it help reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

Personally, what I find really important when talking about the automotive strategy is that it's a great example of how we can have an industrial strategy that's also an environmental strategy. It shows how both can be done at the same time.

As a member from Ontario, I know how important a strong automotive sector is for my province. The same applies to Quebec, where there are many automotive parts manufacturers.

If we have a robust industry to build the vehicles of the future, mainly electric vehicles, it gives Canada a strong position in the market and improves our competitiveness as an economy overall.

We know that in Europe in December, for the first time, electric vehicle sales surpassed gas-powered vehicle sales.

We also know that, around the world, one in four new vehicles sold this year will be electric.

I prefer to have these jobs created here, in Canada. This shows that our approach is focused not only on strategies to create good jobs here—often unionized jobs—but also on the environment. This is how we'll ensure that Canada's economy remains competitive going into the future.

• (1120)

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you.

I have one last question for you.

I represent the riding of Honoré-Mercier, east of Montreal. I'd say that public transit is a major concern for the residents of Honoré-Mercier. We are just north of Laval, and Terrebonne is nearby. Everyone's talking about the Alto project. It literally takes an hour and a half to go from Honoré-Mercier to downtown Montreal. We're hearing a lot of good things about Alto.

In 30 seconds, can you tell us about the positive impact of a project like Alto for residents of Honoré-Mercier, Quebec and Canada?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I think that, day in and day out, people think about how they can get around more quickly and easily, while reducing their carbon footprint. The Alto high-speed train is really something important for Quebeckers and Ontarians.

The train will serve a proposed corridor in which about 40% of Canadians live. It will provide them with an opportunity to get around quickly with a lower carbon load. I think it's a more comfortable mode of transportation when you consider all the steps involved in taking a plane. This train will give people another choice, and I think people like having a choice. It will give us more options to get from one place to another, and I think it's really a wonderful opportunity, not only once the project is finished, but also for the jobs that will be created to build it. This is a wonderful opportunity to create jobs, including once the project is completed.

It's something that can be looked at—

The Chair: Excuse me for interrupting, Minister. I was so happy with your response because Mr. St-Pierre's question was also about Laval. That's my riding, so I really wanted to hear what you had to say. Sorry for the confusion.

Mr. Bonin now has the floor for six minutes.

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

Minister, you recently presented an agreement with Alberta on environmental assessments. You talk a lot about the “one project, one review” approach. Are you prepared to have a similar agreement with Quebec to ensure that Quebec conducts assessments in Quebec?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'd be very happy to talk with Quebec. As we've said, we're prepared to work with all the provinces to reach agreements based on the "one project, one review" approach.

What do we do with these agreements? It's very clear: What falls under federal jurisdiction remains under federal jurisdiction, and what falls under provincial jurisdiction remains under provincial jurisdiction. This simplifies things for project proponents.

I always use my personal example. As the mother of a child who went to school in the public system, there were a lot of forms to fill out with the same information. What we're trying to do is make things easier.

Patrick Bonin: You're prepared to have the same kind of agreement in Quebec as in Alberta. Exactly the same format.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Yes, absolutely.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you.

Right now, the Canadian Impact Assessment Agency is studying a liquefied natural gas project. It's meeting with the proponent from Marinvest, among others. Journalists have reported that the agency is providing advice, support and the names of indigenous communities to simplify and support the investment.

Is it common practice for the agency to help oil and gas project proponents in private, before a project is even submitted or people are aware of it?

• (1125)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What we do each time is answer questions. In that way, people have the right information to decide whether or not to move forward with a project. Right now, that project is hypothetical. The project has not been submitted.

Patrick Bonin: Have you met with the representatives of Marinvest?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: No, I haven't met with them.

Patrick Bonin: Has your office met with the representatives of Marinvest?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I'm saying is that I haven't met with its representatives. It's only a hypothetical project at the moment.

Patrick Bonin: Has your office or your staff met with people from Marinvest?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I don't think so.

Patrick Bonin: Do you not know, or is the answer no?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I think the answer is no.

I also want to say that we meet with many people who have ideas about what they want to do. It doesn't mean anything if we haven't been presented with a final project proposal.

Patrick Bonin: We're told that the agency received a 20-page project. That document isn't currently available. Could you provide the committee with that 20-page document that is not available but was submitted to the agency?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What's always important is that, if you're talking to people who have project ideas, you need to make sure they have the right information about what's happening federally—

Patrick Bonin: I come back to the 20 pages. A 20-page project was submitted.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm trying to find the right wording in French.

[*English*]

Early engagement is good.

[*Translation*]

It's good for everyone. That way, they can decide whether or not it's a project they want to propose. At this time, there is no decision.

Patrick Bonin: I understand, okay.

You say there's no project, but 20 pages were submitted to the agency. Are you prepared to share them with the committee, to make them available to us?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: If someone provides the agency with information or asks it questions, it's not our place to disclose that to the public.

[*English*]

It's business information.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Thank you.

I'll move on to the approval of the Bay du Nord project. The government agreed to cover the fees related to the deepwater oil development, among other things, that are payable under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We're potentially talking about a billion dollars, which would be paid by the federal government rather than by a company.

Do you agree with that? Do you agree with the federal government paying up to a billion dollars in fees, when it should be the company paying it?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The Bay du Nord project was approved by the previous government.

Patrick Bonin: I'm talking about the fees, Minister. I know that it was approved.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The entire project was approved by the previous government.

Patrick Bonin: It's your government that said it would pay the fees. I'm trying to find out if you are comfortable with the government paying the fees—up to a billion dollars—when the company should be paying them.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I'm saying is that the project and all its terms were approved by the previous government.

Patrick Bonin: No, there wasn't—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: We work with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Patrick Bonin: Minister, I'm sorry, I will come back to the fees. It was your government, not the previous one, that said the government would pay the fees.

Will you confirm that it was indeed your government that said it would pay the fees, not the previous government?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: We're still in negotiations about—

Patrick Bonin: It was announced—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —the timelines and the terms, but we're working with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Patrick Bonin: Okay, but you're not confirming the billion dollars in fees.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: No, I'm not confirming that. I'm saying that, right now—

Patrick Bonin: Your colleague from fisheries spoke about the fees that the government paid.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I don't believe she gave any figures.

Patrick Bonin: Okay. How much are the fees if they're not a billion dollars?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm saying we're currently negotiating the terms. It's something we're discussing.

Patrick Bonin: Okay. You don't have any figures to provide regarding the amount to be paid by the government. The newspapers mentioned a billion dollars.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Newspapers can say whatever they want. I'm saying that negotiations are going on right now, and their content isn't public. However, we're working with the provinces and territories.

Patrick Bonin: Okay. In 2026-27, your department's expenditures are \$1.4 billion lower than this year. How do you explain that figure of \$1.4 billion?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Part of it comes from the fact that we eliminated the consumer carbon tax. Funds generated by that tax were included in our budget and were expended on the other side. Money was also invested in a project in the Northwest Territories, Our Land for the Future. That was a major expenditure for us.

[English]

It's a one-time expense.

[Translation]

That changed what we have in our budget.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

[English]

Ms. Anstey, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Minister, thank you for appearing.

Canadians have watched your department reverse course or walk back decisions made by earlier Liberal environment ministers. Is fixing those mistakes now a regular part of your job?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I actually take issue with the framing of that question. I don't think there were mistakes, and I think I am—

Carol Anstey: For context, though, we invited you here a while back to talk about your mandate specifically. You didn't appear on that premise. Canadians are curious and we're curious as to whether your mandate is actually to reverse those policies that previous ministers put in place.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I have been here several times. That's a matter of record, just to be clear. I don't know how many times I've been here. That's the point: I've lost count.

On the next piece, my job is to make sure that we build the strongest economy for our country, and that we do that while protecting the environment. That means fighting climate change. I'm hoping that the Conservatives are going to help us with that fight, because every day I fight to keep even an industrial carbon price, which is actually what industry is asking for.

Carol Anstey: Thank you, Minister.

Canadians keep hearing about billions—in fact, \$2.1 billion—in climate spending, but emissions are not falling at the pace that you've promised. This is a simple question. At what point does your department start measuring success by actual reductions rather than the amount of money that the government is spending?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I measure success by looking at how we are changing the way we heat and cool our homes and the way we get around. We were just talking about high-speed rail. That is actually an opportunity to get people to travel in a way that reduces emissions. We're talking about building—

Carol Anstey: On emissions, is the actual number not a part of the success, though?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: This is about reducing emissions. It's about changing, domestically, how we heat and cool our homes, how we get around and how we're reducing emissions. We have so many success stories to tell. Methane alone—

Carol Anstey: You're still not reaching the targets that your own government promised. It's a simple question: At what point does the conversation start to change to success actually being at the targets you've promised?

It's a very simple question.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The success is in reducing emissions, which we are doing. By the way, the previous Conservative government left us with emissions tracking upward and no path to bringing them down.

Emissions are going down. We are actually taking action. What we're doing is making sure that we're embedding it in our industrial policies and building the infrastructure to support the regulations to make it last.

That is what's happening in our country. Canadians want us to build our country. They want to see us build it strong. They want to see us build it well.

Again, I'm going to put it to Conservatives. Why can't they join it? It's always negative from your side. Why don't you be part of the positive building forward of our country?

Carol Anstey: Thank you, Minister.

The net-zero accelerator and the zero-emissions vehicle infrastructure program together receive more than \$500 million in those estimates. The Auditor General has already warned about the overlap between federal climate programs.

Before you spend another half a billion of taxpayer dollars, can you guarantee Canadians that none of the funding duplicates programs that already exist?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The funding that we put in place helps support businesses and Canadians in reducing emissions and saving on their energy bills.

I'll give you an example. Down at the Redpath Sugar factory, in my home city, with the Government of Ontario we went and helped to support them in changing the way they light their buildings. That made it safer for workers, which is important. At the same time, it reduced their energy bills and it reduced their emissions. These are the kinds of things we do.

I don't know why you would be talking down our making those kinds of investments.

Carol Anstey: Minister, we're in a cost of living crisis. Inflation is rising. People are concerned about the amount of money the government spends. I don't think it's an unreasonable question to ask if there's duplication in funding pots. This is an important question. That's the question that I put to you: Is there duplication among these programs, or is there a risk of that to Canadians?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: There is no risk to Canadians.

I'm really happy you raised the part about bills and the like, because I would like to be able to remind people that I know you have raised the cost of heating and cooling in your community.

There's an oil-to-heat-pump program that's available to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians right now, on which the federal government and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador have joined together. They can look it up. I am happy to provide that information. That will help them to actually reduce their heat bills right now.

• (1135)

Carol Anstey: Quickly, because I'm running out of time, you diverted to Newfoundland and Labrador, and I wanted to ask about something specific to my riding.

Gros Morne National Park, as you know, is in my riding. I have had a lot of people within the park reach out to me with respect to

fire risk. We submitted an Order Paper question, and the information that came back was that Gros Morne National Park allocates \$5,000 annually for wildfire prevention.

Of course, Newfoundland and Labrador is highly sensitive to this. Given the risks, how can \$5,000 a year sufficiently and meaningfully reduce wildfire risk in this massive national park?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'll pass it to Andrew Campbell to answer specifically how that's used.

Andrew Campbell: Again, as with every park, there is a park fire management plan that is done for Gros Morne National Park.

I know the member is aware, but for those who aren't aware, it's a wet, coastal balsam fir forest in the area. Since 1973, and before 1973, there has not been a fire in the park.

We do work with the province, and there is an MOU between us and the province on fire reduction. We are happy to share the plan with the member from Gros Morne.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The floor is yours, Mrs. Miedema, for five minutes.

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

Good morning, Minister. Thank you for being here.

As a reminder to colleagues, if we don't spend money to invest in climate action, then we're going to be in a more expensive and worse situation with more and more wildfires going forward, so I think it's really important that we remember that and invest now to save later.

I'm really interested in this replacement of the high-performance computing solution for the Meteorological Service of Canada. The supplementary estimates for budget 2025 pledge to provide funding for the replacement of this solution.

Minister, can you please talk a little about what this is going to do to ensure Canada's weather forecasting capabilities remain up to date and how it will support long-term projections on climate change for Canada?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

The high-performance computer is an exciting opportunity for us, because it does go to how we have the most advanced computing to be able to provide that meteorological information.

I'll also point out that it has a dual use. It can work to support defence as well. It's important for the Canadian Armed Forces to have the most up-to-date information.

When people think of meteorology, they might think about how we get our weather from day to day, but there are actually other implications for aviation, transportation and our armed forces, so this is going to make sure we can better protect in all of these ways.

I was recently in Dorval, Quebec, where some meteorological services are based. They were able to run through with me how they use this information. When we're talking about predicting, as we were talking about wildfires and being able to predict what weather will be and whether there are going to be droughts or floods and these kinds of things, they can give predictions that can help us with emergency management.

As I said, when it comes to aviation, they can actually predict and are responsible for providing information to pilots as they get into our airspace about what they can expect and how to make sure they keep passengers safe.

Having this high-performance computer increases our capacity as an international partner in these areas. It helps us to keep Canadians safe, and it helps to support our Canadian Armed Forces at the same time.

Shannon Miedema: That sounds like great news.

In the estimates, there is also a transfer from Natural Resources Canada to ECCC for the federal contaminated sites action plan. I spent the early days of my career cleaning up spills from old buried oil tanks in Nova Scotia, so I'd like to talk a bit about this.

Can you give some context to the committee on this action plan and how it's going to help us to manage and remediate sites across the country?

• (1140)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: This is something that comes up a lot: How do we help to support the cleanup of these contaminated sites?

You mentioned Nova Scotia. There have been many opportunities in which the federal government has been able to help support the cleanup. It's an example of partnership between Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada in helping communities.

The transfer you're referring to is the result of a memorandum of understanding between Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada to conduct contaminated sites remediation activities at certain sites. This one, the one we're referring to in the most recent supplementary estimates (C), is for the remediation at Eureka. The fund supports the construction of a landfarm at the site for the treatment of petroleum hydrocarbon-impacted soils.

It's one example. That was really for a specific project, but it's part of a larger memorandum of understanding between Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada to be able to treat these sites.

Shannon Miedema: In Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, there's a former military housing complex called Shannon Park. We've heard about it a lot. It was chosen recently as one of the first sites for Build Canada Homes, which is really exciting. A thousand new affordable homes are going to be constructed.

Can you talk about how remediation projects through this program will help land redevelopment for housing uses, as we look to really ramp up our construction for housing supply?

The Chair: Minister, please give a very short answer. Your time is almost up.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you. It could be part of a longer conversation.

By remediating sites, we help in making sites safe again, and that's what we're working towards in remediating lands. I'm happy to have a longer conversation specifically about that.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

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

Patrick Bonin: Minister, your government has committed to protecting 30% of land and marine areas. Right now, you're up to about 15% for both. Clearly, that goal must be reached by 2030.

Groups like the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Nature Canada, Birds Canada and the World Wildlife Fund will be sending a letter to the Prime Minister this week asking, among other things, that the Canada Nature Fund be reinstated, because there will be no money left by March 31. There's nothing in the budget for that. Do you commit to renewing that fund? If so, how much will you put towards it? These groups are calling for that immediately.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Yes, and I fully understand the request. It's very important to me and our government to continue protecting and conserving nature. I know we have that deadline of March 31, and we're working on it. I don't have an amount to give you today, but I'm well aware of this issue.

Patrick Bonin: We'll be watching that closely.

The former minister of environment, climate change and nature had implemented a ban on funding in relation to fossil fuels, or had prohibited certain subsidies. He had talked about coming up with another sequence, among other things, for organizations like Economic Development Canada. Can you tell us today how much funding is allocated each year to fossil fuels in Canada? How much was it last year?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I can say is that we have \$90 billion that will go to clean technologies and—

Patrick Bonin: You're not answering the question, Minister.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —renewable energy.

Patrick Bonin: I'll remind you that the question was about fossil fuels.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: No, but—

Patrick Bonin: How much are you putting into that?

I know the other numbers. I want to know how much you invest in fossil fuels, in billions of dollars.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: To talk about numbers, I think it's important to say where the money is currently being allocated.

Patrick Bonin: With all due respect, that's not my question. My question is about fossil fuels, Minister. How many billions of dollars are you currently putting into subsidies?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I want to show you that everything you see in our budget—and you can look at the 2025 budget—are grants for renewable energies.

Patrick Bonin: My question is this. How much money do you allocate to fossil fuel subsidies? There are subsidies for fossil fuels in the latest budget. How much money are you allocating this year, as of today? Do you have a number?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: There's none.

Patrick Bonin: Does the department have a figure for fossil fuel subsidies granted in the past year? Do you have that number? If you want to reduce these subsidies, you need to know how much they represent.

• (1145)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I'm saying is that the budget contains \$90 billion in subsidies for renewable energies. That's where we're investing the money.

Patrick Bonin: Minister, with all due respect, my question is very clear: How many billions of dollars are you investing in fossil fuels?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I said is that the budget was very clear: The money is going to renewable energy and clean technologies.

Patrick Bonin: Are you ashamed to say how many billions of dollars you invest in fossil fuels?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: That's \$90 billion—

Patrick Bonin: Minister, shouldn't you be ashamed of your government?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: No.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

[English]

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

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Welcome, Minister, for this wonderful little exchange. I have to rebut a couple of the things that were said in your opening remarks and in other testimony.

I don't think industry is asking for the industrial carbon tax writ large; it's more a case of the sword of Damocles hanging over their head as the least bad option.

Related to cost-benefit analysis or the notion of it, related to your spend, you just described increased spending in Environment Canada. Similar to Agriculture Canada, has your department con-

tributed to any budget cost-saving efforts in this notion that the government wants to reduce spending by 15%?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The parts about expenditure review are in the main estimates. I believe I'll be coming back to talk with you about that shortly, because this is a place I come to frequently. I'm always happy to be back—

David Bexte: That's good, and I appreciate that, but it's the same answer that I've had lots of times—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —but as you are aware, the expenditure reviews apply across all departments.

David Bexte: At Environment Canada, have you contributed anything, meaningfully, to that 15%?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The main estimates have been released. You can see the numbers. You've used a subjective number, and you want to say “meaningful”. Look at the main estimates. We'll be back to talk about those.

David Bexte: What I'm getting at is that there seems to be a disconnect among different departments and not an equal distribution of cost savings across the departments. Agriculture Canada has closed research centres that have made meaningful contributions to farming practices and environmental impacts, as you say, and now these capacities might be lost to Canadian farmers.

I'm trying to understand the context of that and if there's balance and justification to closing these centres.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I can't comment on Agriculture Canada. I'm sure you can—

David Bexte: What is your contribution to it? What is your department's contribution to it?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —speak to Minister MacDonald about all of that.

David Bexte: Has your department not contributed to that effort?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I said that our department did contribute to the expenditure review and that all of the details are in the main estimates, which have been released and which I believe I'll be back to talk about.

David Bexte: I have one other rebuttal.

You made a statement that our potential customers look for reduced carbon load products, but I think today Europe really wouldn't care if their options are Russia or nothing from the Strait of Hormuz.

Canadian Natural Resources Limited recently paused its \$8.25-billion Jackpine project, quoting uncertainty around federal carbon pricing and methane rules. Do you acknowledge that regulatory uncertainty is directly delaying projects that would strengthen our economy, or is the president of CNRL misinformed when he says the government's carbon pricing policies have created an “economic burden for long-term growth investments”?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The first thing I would say is that we've been very clear about the industrial carbon price and needing to enhance it. If there's anybody adding uncertainty about it, it would be the Conservatives, who are fighting it every day.

David Bexte: I would beg to disagree, Minister. We're just here pointing out hypocrisy.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: You're not fighting the industrial carbon price. That's a fascinating change for me.

I would also say that if we are going to talk about the industrial carbon price and about the work we're doing to enhance it, in fact, CNRL actually came in and said they—

David Bexte: Excuse me, Minister. I'm asking about uncertainty in projects going forward that are in the national interest and policies that are impeding those from going forward.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I'm saying is that the head of CNRL came out and said that he was actually fairly hopeful about the MOU—

David Bexte: I understand that, but notwithstanding that federal policy, he's clearly stated that it is impeding this project.

There was no answer there.

It goes beyond that, in that CNRL is also a major—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I could provide more information. Jackpine actually does well under the industrial carbon tax—

David Bexte: Excuse me. It's my time, Minister.

Across the energy sector, the sentiment is not uncommon. It's quite common, and it even impacts the Pathways Plus project, which is also delayed because of uncertainty.

What needs to change to regain the confidence of investors?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Here's the thing. I would say that we are introducing certainty by being very clear about what we're doing with the industrial carbon price.

We are working well with the Premier of Alberta in conversations and negotiations that we're having. We have just recently talked about the co-operation agreement that's out for consultation, which is actually an example of how we—

David Bexte: I appreciate that, but it's not really answering the question, so I'll move on.

• (1150)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: It's actually directly answering the question of how we're working together, creating something—

David Bexte: It's not working, because the uncertainty still exists, and projects are being cancelled.

Minister, exactly a month ago, I discussed with officials from your department exactly how many businesses in Alberta and Saskatchewan would fall under the newly proposed industrial carbon tax threshold of 10,000 tonnes. We've had no data yet. Could you please provide that to this committee as soon as possible?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Right now, the federal system is in place. Alberta has a provincial agreement for its form of a tier system—

David Bexte: I'm speaking to the reduction in the threshold from 100,000 to 10,000.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm just saying that there's a federal system. It's the provincial system that applies in the province of Alberta. We work together.

The industrial carbon price actually creates a threshold. Companies that are over the threshold will have to pay the industrial carbon price—

David Bexte: I understand that.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —and the ones under the threshold get credits.

By the way, Jackpine was one of the ones that got the credits.

David Bexte: The threshold is being reduced to 10,000, which will capture more companies.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Mr. Fanjoy, you're on mute.

Your time's up.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): I'm sorry about that. I thought I would be taken off mute automatically. I apologize.

Minister, thank you for joining us again at the environment committee.

Canadians are concerned about affordability and climate action. While Conservatives think that these two concepts are opposed to each other, I believe they are very much connected. I'd like you to comment on how we can move towards a more affordable future by addressing climate change.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you. I will say two things in response to that.

The first is that we're making sure that we can create jobs for the economy of the future—good-paying jobs, often union jobs. That's what we need if we want to have a strong economy. That helps to make sure that Canadians earn the money they want. Canadians want those good-paying jobs. It is making sure that we are manufacturing in a way that is compatible with the low-carbon economy of the future and that we continue to diversify our trade to more countries and create more of those opportunities. That is what Canadians want to see. When we talk about building Canada, that is a big piece of how we do it right.

The second piece is about protection. We know that if we do not fight climate change, there is a cost. That's often lost in the conversation when I hear Conservatives pushing back against every one of our policies. There is a cost to not fighting climate change. In fact, Conservatives raised some of those examples when we were talking about concerns about wildfires and the like. This other piece is about how we make sure that we continue to fight climate change and take climate action, so that we are actually protecting communities from these additional wildfires and the strength and intensity of the wildfires or floods that we're seeing in our communities.

There are two parts to it, then. One part is how we fight climate change, because there is a cost. I'm just talking about the economics, but there's also a moral cost. I want to make sure that the future I'm giving to my children is a bright future. I think that's what Canadians want—clean air, clean water and a strong future. It's about how we are creating these jobs for the future in a global low-carbon economy. That is where all the dollars are going globally. It's about making sure that when we're building Canada strong, we're building it well.

Bruce Fanjoy: We've recently seen a spike in energy costs, particularly in relation to oil and gas, that has been driven by the conflict in Iran and the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz. This is impacting Canadians. Even though we're half a world away from this conflict, it's impacting Canadians in terms of the price at the pump.

However, what has not increased is the cost of renewable energy. Just last week, you were able to join me in Carleton, and we visited a terrific project here in Carleton. It's a solar farm operated by EDF Power Solutions. They have a unique partnership with a local lamb farm called Shady Creek. Perhaps you could talk about how that partnership shows that there are opportunities to combine clean energy and agriculture in rural Canada.

• (1155)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you for taking me to your community and enabling me to see this. It was a great example of how things can work so well together.

We met. You introduced me to people who were sheep farmers, who were saying that to be able to grow their herd, they needed more land, but they couldn't afford to buy all that extra land. Then there was this opportunity. There was a solar farm nearby that needed to maintain its lands, so the sheep farmers were able to expand their herd by using these lands from this solar farm. It was actually a source of money for them to be able to do this, and it was a great win for the solar farm as well, because, as I learned, sheep don't gnaw through any of the wiring or anything like that. They get closer to the posts around it.

I also learned about how this was creating good jobs in small rural communities. People don't have to leave the community they're in. They were there, working on a solar farm and staying in this rural community so that they could be close to their home farming communities. It was a really nice example of how we could bring the two together, creating renewable energy while farming, and supporting and building the strengths of rural communities.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Dabrusin.

We have a couple of minutes left, so I've decided to give every party the opportunity to ask one question.

We will start with the Conservative Party. It's a question and answer. Who will it be from the Conservative side?

Mr. Gill, go ahead.

Amanpreet Gill (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Thank you, Minister, for being here.

Regarding the proposed pollution prevention planning notice for primary food plastic packaging, an impact analysis conducted by Deloitte suggested that some food growers could relocate packaging operations to the United States if the requirements increase compliance costs.

Has the department conducted its own analysis on whether the proposed P2 notice could affect investment decisions or lead to packaging and processing operations moving outside of Canada?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I will say broadly in response is that industrial carbon pricing and the like do not increase the cost of food. Climate change does increase the cost of food, and we are seeing that we need to take more action. We are building out greenhouse infrastructure, for example, so that we're more food secure right here in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor for less than one minute.

[*English*]

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you.

Minister, last week I believe you were at a Carbon Removal Canada conference. Carbon Removal Canada is an excellent organization that I take some credit for creating a few years back, and at the conference there was an announcement on \$100 million being mobilized for the advance carbon removal coalition.

Can you quickly comment on how the work around carbon removal benefits Canadians? I know this is not CCUS. I know there's confusion there.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Canada has some really great opportunities. We have the geology for carbon removal. We have the know-how. Some of the top clean-tech companies are based here in Canada. It's an exportable knowledge that we can bring out to the world.

The announcement there was about the government being a first mover to help create more market certainty and to build out that industry. We need to move away from combustion as a country. Where that's not possible, carbon removal helps us to make that last bit, so that we can continue to reduce emissions.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Bonin, you have the floor.

Patrick Bonin: Minister, Canadians have sent us information about the Weatheradio program. According to that information, a major change is taking place on March 16, and some people won't have access to the information without LTE coverage, among other things. They'll no longer have access to information in the event of a disaster. According to some figures, 172,000 people were without LTE coverage at the end of 2024. It seems to affect many people who, in the event of a disaster, will no longer have access to Weatheradio.

Are you aware of this? Does that worry you or not?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you for the question, which gives me the opportunity to provide some information on the topic.

The Weatheradio system we had was less effective for the future. What we have now are systems that allow people to obtain the same information. Now, in terms of disasters—

[English]

We have a breakthrough.

[Translation]

In a disaster, all radio and television stations can be required to provide people with the necessary information on a daily basis. It's not just online. There's information online, but there's also information for people on the water.

[English]

There is the Coast Guard radio, and there are satellites.

[Translation]

There are two systems, and I'm very happy to provide information to everyone so they know how to access them. However, I want to assure you that, in a disaster, we require that radio stations, television stations and apps indicate that there is a dangerous situation.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, everyone.

[English]

I would like to thank the minister for her time today.

I will briefly suspend the meeting while the minister departs and we add some new witnesses to the panel.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: The meeting is resumed.

[Translation]

The committee is resuming its review of the 2025-26 supplementary estimates (C).

[English]

The committee is meeting with the following government officials from Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Kurt Chin Quee is the assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer. Welcome.

Alison McDermott joins us. She is the assistant deputy minister, strategic policy and international affairs branch. Welcome.

Also with us is Megan Nichols, assistant deputy minister, environmental protection branch. Welcome.

We also have, from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, Terence Hubbard, president, and Ian Ketcheson, vice-president for indigenous relations and corporate services, and chief financial officer. Welcome.

We also have, from Parks Canada Agency, Andrew Campbell, acting president, chief executive officer and senior vice-president of transformation, and Andrew Francis, vice-president, finance. Welcome.

• (1210)

[Translation]

We are resuming the questioning of witnesses, and the Conservative Party has six minutes of speaking time.

When the witnesses see my small card, that tells them that the member has only one minute of speaking time left. If I turn it to this side and a witness is answering a question, it means that the member's speaking time is up and the witness has to finish their sentence.

[English]

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

David Bexte: Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, witnesses. I appreciate your time today, and I look forward to what you have to say.

To Parks Canada, we had some discussion in the first hour about fire and fire mitigation. Could you tell me what specific changes have been introduced to the fire mitigation or fire management plans in parks like Banff, Jasper and Waterton Lakes?

Andrew Campbell: Thank you very much for an excellent question. I'm happy to respond, Mr. Chair.

In the past year alone, Parks Canada has taken on 44 vegetation management initiatives across the country, which are—

David Bexte: Excuse me, but because our time is very limited right now, very specifically, what changes have been introduced to Banff, Jasper and Waterton?

Andrew Campbell: Do you mean just on those three parks?

David Bexte: Yes. Very specifically, what did you learn from the failures at Jasper?

Andrew Campbell: I would not talk about Jasper as failure, so I—

David Bexte: I don't care how you want to characterize that, sir. I'm sorry—

Andrew Campbell: Mr. Chair, can I respond to the question?

Within Waterton Lakes and Banff and Jasper, we have increased, in fact, the buffer zones around each of the critical pieces of infrastructure.

In Jasper we have done mitigation efforts, and there are now approximately 2.5 kilometres of buffer zone around the town of Jasper.

Across the country, as I said, we have done 44 initiatives—

David Bexte: Thank you very much—

Andrew Campbell: Then are there are 140 hectares at Banff—

David Bexte: Thank you very much.

Are there any specific changes or implementations in Banff? Banff hasn't burned yet. Jasper has already burned.

Andrew Campbell: In Banff in the past year, we've done 140 hectares of wildfire risk reduction. There has also been the completion of a 74-hectare fireguard around the community of Lake Louise. There has been increased forest thinning around all of the pieces of critical infrastructure there, whether it's the Trans-Canada Highway, Atco or the CPKC. All of that work has been done in the past year. Hundreds of hectares have been further fireguarded within Banff National Park.

David Bexte: Is there more work yet to be done in Banff?

Andrew Campbell: In fire and forest mitigation, as forests continue to grow and as risks continue to grow, there is always redoing of some of the fireguarding work—

David Bexte: I appreciate that, but—

Andrew Campbell: —so that work will continue forever.

David Bexte: More specifically, I mean urgent work that directly leads to the upcoming fire seasons and the safety of Banff and Lake Louise itself.

Andrew Campbell: Yes. We continue to have prescribed burns within Banff this year, and we will also have some mechanical removal, particularly on the bench. There will be further fire reduction on the bench.

David Bexte: Thank you very much.

What percentage of Jasper has been rebuilt so far?

Andrew Campbell: Approximately 50% of Jasper's housing currently has approved plans for rebuilding.

• (1215)

David Bexte: Thank you.

Reporting in 2025 stated that the residents rebuilding are facing delays due to strict soil contamination testing and permitting. I get the soil-testing requirements, but on permitting, what accelerated permitting processes by Parks Canada are being done to allow rebuilding to happen quickly?

Andrew Campbell: I'm happy to tell the member that there are zero outstanding permits currently existing.

David Bexte: Very good. Thank you for that.

Andrew Campbell: All of the soil has been remediated, we are very pleased to say, and we actually have been working with the Red Cross in putting in types of social supports for individuals—

David Bexte: That goes off topic from what I'm interested in, I'm sorry—

Andrew Campbell: —in order to help the people whose homes have yet to be rebuilt. Those are social supports.

David Bexte: I understand that, but 50% of the homes haven't been rebuilt yet. What specific policy changes have been introduced to improve permitting?

Andrew Campbell: That's an excellent question again. There have been increased.... In fact, the builders association of Alberta said that the rebuilding, permitting and streamlining of permitting that is being done in Jasper should be "a model" for the rest of the country—

David Bexte: I don't need the commentary or hearsay.

Andrew Campbell: That's not hearsay. That's specifically the quote from the individual.

David Bexte: I understand, but I want specific changes to policy. What changes has Parks Canada introduced to its permitting practices to accelerate permitting?

Andrew Campbell: We have increased the number of staff who are doing permits. Again, there are zero permits outstanding. At this point, we have also looked at being able to adopt an accelerated permitting process for housebuilding.

I don't know whether you've been involved in housebuilding, Mr. Chair or other members, but there are about 5,000 decisions that everybody has to make. We have taken on and streamlined that process so that there is an accelerated process. I would say it's the envy of the rest of the country. If anybody has ever been involved in homebuilding, as I have as a home builder before I started with the government—

David Bexte: Thank you very much.

Andrew Campbell: It's 20—

David Bexte: I have one final question. This is very—

Eric St-Pierre: I have a point of order.

David Bexte: This is my time, and I take some exception to this.

Eric St-Pierre: I have a point of order. Could we kindly ask the witness to finish his sentence? It's just a question of tone, please.

David Bexte: Can I comment?

We're wasting time. I have one final question.

The Chair: I'll let you ask it. He can respond, and that's it.

David Bexte: Have you received specific media training by the Government of Canada to avoid answering questions?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Andrew Campbell: No, I have not received—

David Bexte: Thank you very much. That's my time.

Andrew Campbell: —any type of media training to avoid answering questions. All of my media training was actually done in 2010.

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

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Eric St-Pierre: I would like to point out that the role of parliamentarians is to have a certain demeanour and to maybe watch our tone when we're invited to speak with witnesses.

I very much appreciate that there are eight witnesses here today. Thank you for taking your time. I'm going to take a less aggressive tone.

If you will allow it, I'll ask some questions in French, because I'm a member of Parliament from Quebec.

[*Translation*]

In other words, I work a lot in French.

I'll ask a few questions with a slightly more diplomatic tone, and the witnesses can respond.

My first question will be for Mr. Campbell, from Parks Canada Agency, but the other witnesses may all answer if they wish.

A 2025 survey showed that 99% of Canadians believe that nature is essential to Canada's identity. The Canada strong pass is an affordability measure you're very familiar with that does a lot to make nature more accessible to many Canadians. We were talking about communication a moment ago. Do you have a communications plan to promote this excellent program?

Andrew Campbell: Absolutely. Everyone who watched the Olympic Games probably noticed that there was a lot of advertising for Parks Canada and the Canada strong program. We have plans for more advertising as well. We're still working with Destination Canada to advertise to Canadians and tourists outside Canada.

• (1220)

Eric St-Pierre: Perfect. Thank you.

I have a follow-up question for you or your colleagues, Mr. Campbell.

Last week, in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, the Secretary of State for Nature, Nathalie Provost, announced about thirty new habitat projects for endangered species for 2025-26. Can you quickly give us an overview of the common benefits of this type of project? How do they benefit Quebec and Canada?

Andrew Campbell: I'll respond on behalf of Parks Canada. Obviously, Parks Canada has the advantage of providing more protection to endangered species in a number of national parks across the country.

These programs also involve Environment and Climate Change Canada. Ms. Shannon may be better positioned than I am to answer the question.

[*English*]

Tara Shannon (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment): I'll respond quickly.

Last week's announcement was for about 31 projects to protect species at risk across the country. It's a long-standing program that we've had in place. They are small initiatives, but they are community- and place-based. We see that, through these initiatives, there are really good, targeted outcomes for species at risk.

[*Translation*]

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you.

I have a question for you, Ms. McDermott.

[*English*]

Feel free to jump in.

[*Translation*]

In January, 80 projects from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities were announced in Newfoundland and Labrador. Can you tell us about the positive impacts these projects will have in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the rest of Canada?

[*English*]

Alison McDermott (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and International Affairs Branch, Department of the Environment): These are broad investments being made under the national adaptation strategy as a means of supporting community resilience to climate change. It is being done in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities under the green municipal fund, which is investing over \$530 million in adaptation projects through the local leadership for climate adaptation initiative. That is the broader program.

On the specific projects in question, I don't have a lot of details in front of me. However, we could share that there was a recent announcement in relation to some of these. They will bring benefits to support activities on the risk identification assessment and mitigation for municipalities in a lot of regions of Canada.

I'm happy to follow up on Newfoundland, if that's of interest.

Eric St-Pierre: Yes, that would be great if you could provide any examples from Newfoundland or Alberta so that my colleagues can see the great work that's being supported across Canada.

Mr. Campbell, on the previous questions, you had a hard time responding. I can give you 30 seconds, if you want to fully elaborate on some of your responses to my colleague's previous questions. You seemed to struggle a bit, for some reason.

Andrew Campbell: Yes, maybe I'll comment on those who have not yet rebuilt in Jasper.

We have been working with the Red Cross for social supports. The other thing they did was to go out with us to ask individuals why in fact they have not rebuilt. About 40% of them have had trouble obtaining quotes from builders to meet the conditions of their insurance. Another 25% of them have had trouble with their insurers to date. Therefore, the majority of issues that still exist within Jasper are between private individuals and their insurers.

We are working to see what we can do to assist with those, but certainly, from a permitting perspective, that no longer seems to be the issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

[Translation]

Mr. Bonin, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Patrick Bonin: For the team from the Department of the Environment, I'd like to talk a bit about the spending cuts in the 2026-27 budget. I understand that the grants have been cut by about \$700 million as compared with the 2025-26 budget. Has the contribution to the Canada Nature Fund actually been cut by \$286 million in the budget?

• (1225)

Kurt Chin Quee (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Environment): Thank you for the question.

[English]

Yes, there is a decrease in our grants and contributions funding from 2025-26 to 2026-27. This is for two main reasons. One is the sunset of several temporary initiatives. Some examples of—

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: My question is this: Is the spending for the Canada Nature Fund actually being cut by approximately \$286 million?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: The reduction for the enhanced nature legacy fund is \$381.8 million.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay. That money was available before this year, but it's not there this year. Is there nothing to replace it?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: I think the minister alluded to this as well when she was here speaking. This is a sunsetter. It's one of our sunset initiatives. It's normal in any fiscal year for a number of initiatives to sunset. There's a regular process to seek renewal through the Department of Finance, and we have a number of decisions pending.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

Are there other amounts allocated to achieve the 30% protection target by 2030? There was \$300 million, but that's no longer in the budget. Is it being replaced by something else?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: The funding is not being replaced at this time. It is sunset. However, we do have other funds within the nature program to support nature initiatives.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

Compared with the approximately \$300 million dollars you mentioned, how many millions of dollars are being invested overall in these other initiatives? From what I understand, it's a smaller amount.

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: I don't have the details in front of me for those particular items. We'd have to get back to you—

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: However, it's less than \$300 million dollars, isn't it?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: I don't have the details in front of me on those items, but—

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Will you be able to provide that for us?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: Yes.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

I thought I saw a cut of 60%, or \$147 million, in contributions to support the low carbon economy fund for 2026-27. Is that correct?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: Yes, there is a reduction in our low-carbon economy fund. This is a fund that is being phased out as its funding cycle concludes, as the government is shifting focus to other areas, such as investment tax credits for clean energy. This actually represents one of the department's comprehensive expenditure review reductions.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: When do you expect to publish the departmental plan with more detailed explanations about the expenditures related to the votes for 2026-27?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: I believe all of the departmental plans are expected to be tabled quite soon. They're tabled by the President of the Treasury Board on behalf of all departments.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: What do you mean by “quite soon”?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: I don't have those details.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

Will you be able to provide us with a response at a later time?

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: I believe it's quite soon.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Will it be in 15 minutes or 15 days?

Andrew Campbell: They are supposed to be tabled today.

Patrick Bonin: Okay, thank you.

Andrew Campbell: It will most likely be in a few minutes.

Patrick Bonin: The 2025-26 departmental report states that there are initiatives that will be ending between 2025-26 and 2027-28, including enhanced nature legacy, Canada's international climate finance commitment and the chemicals management plan.

Which ones have already ended, and when will the others end?

• (1230)

[English]

Kurt Chin Quee: There would be a list of a number of initiatives. It would be easier if we provided a list in writing to you.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Can you confirm that Canada is ending its international climate finance commitment?

[English]

Alison McDermott: One point of precision to add is that, as Kurt noted, many of our government funds are sunseting. That's something that happens to funds every year. Typically, at this point in the cycle, those reinvestments or extensions have not always been confirmed or announced, and they certainly have not been supplied.

While there are some reductions that are occurring as a result of deliberate decisions not to renew, in other cases there are renewal decisions that are still in the process of being made. It would probably be better to wait a bit into the next year before summarizing all of the—

Kurt Chin Quee: That's correct. Any decisions that would be taken on those sunsets or renewals would appear in future estimates processes.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

Mrs. Anstey, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Carol Anstey: Thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming.

I think you probably know the direction I'm going to go in with the Parks officials. Thank you for appearing. I'm pretty passionate about Newfoundland and Labrador, where I come from, and Gros Morne National Park.

I wanted to dig into this a bit more, because I get an overwhelming number of inquiries about this. Do you think the \$5,000 you're allocating to wildfire management in the national park is sufficient? There are 1,805 square kilometres of park and several communities. Do you believe that's sufficient?

Andrew Campbell: The \$5,000 was around a very specific question. There is a group that works within Gros Morne National Park on our resource conservation side. The resource conservation staff actually do work in that area, and it would be in their regular budget in the regular budget process.

Above and beyond that, in the last year, we did another study, which was the \$5,000, to look at the impact of the spruce budworm and what had happened with the deadfall in the forest.

Carol Anstey: That leads in to my next question, so I'm glad you brought that up.

It looks like a tinderbox. Are you aware of how many acres are covered in deadwood within the park?

Andrew Campbell: Off the top of my head here today, no.

Carol Anstey: Could you get that for us?

Andrew Campbell: We could, for sure.

Carol Anstey: Okay.

That's the concern. It's everywhere. I don't know if you've been to the beautiful park—

Andrew Campbell: I have.

Carol Anstey: —but it totally looks like a tinderbox.

There was also an internal audit or evaluation of wildfire preparedness, but there hasn't been one conducted in Gros Morne since 2022, according to your response. Of course, as you are aware, the spruce budworm and the deadwood are now immense within the area. Why haven't you done a formal review since then, obviously knowing this is an issue?

Andrew Campbell: We do the reviews and periodic updates to all of the plans based on what the wildfire risk situation is at the time. Although the deadfall trees appeared, they are actually still carrying a lot of moisture. That was found through the analysis that was done in the last year.

Again, there are areas of the country where we have a set, limited amount of resources, and there are areas of the country where we need to do more of those. As you all know, Terra Nova National Park, for instance, was under higher threat and risk in the past year, so that would be a higher area of priority.

Carol Anstey: We just have to hope nothing happens.

Andrew Campbell: We're also working with the province. As I said, we have a provincial memorandum of understanding with the province in order to be able to look at the province as a whole from a risk mitigation perspective. Their study and their work have said it isn't as high a risk as it is in other areas that we need to put our resources towards.

Carol Anstey: I'm going to shift gears a bit, because I get a lot of park inquiries.

There is an area within the park—I don't know how familiar you are with it—

• (1235)

Andrew Campbell: I'm very familiar with the park.

Carol Anstey: —between the south boundary of Glenburnie and the McKenzies Brook road. Residents have repeatedly reached out to our office about ATV use on this 1.3-kilometre section of road.

There is an agreement that was signed back in 1973, but as you know, ATV use back then wasn't as predominant. A lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador use their ATVs to access their cabin areas or go berry-picking, and Parks Canada does not allow them to use their ATVs on this section of road. Local RCMP know the importance, and they don't issue fines, but the Parks Canada people do, so a lot of people reach out, wondering if there can be some sort of adjustment made, given the realities of rural people in this area and what they use their ATVs for now. It's very important to them.

Andrew Campbell: Certainly, we're always open to having that discussion.

As you know, within the agreement, there are certain prescriptions of not permitting certain types of things, but we're always open to discussion. We meet with the snowmobile association, and we meet with—

Carol Anstey: I know you've made allowances there. Do I have a commitment that we can further this conversation?

Andrew Campbell: Certainly, with the superintendent, we are happy to have that conversation, yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Shannon Miedema: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks so much to all the witnesses. I know that none of us would be here if it weren't for all of the hard work of our bureaucracy. As a former local government bureaucrat, I very much appreciate everything you do.

I'd like to talk a bit about the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes park, which is adjacent to my riding of Halifax. I'm a very strong supporter of parks. I also have an environment and climate background. I'm really excited about this. It would be Canada's newest national urban park, similar to the Rouge park in Toronto. It could be as large as 255 hectares and would provide essential conservation land, as well as recreational opportunities for the residents of Halifax and visitors.

It was initially conceived with the support of the Province of Nova Scotia and the Halifax Regional Municipality. Are the shared responsibility and joint funding still intact today? How are ECCC and

Parks Canada working with the province and the municipality on next steps for the project?

Andrew Campbell: I'm happy to respond that we continue to work with both the municipality and the province. Also, of course, a great partner on this is the Mi'kmaq nation.

As we move forward, we're also working with a lot of civil society organizations. We are in daily conversations with all of them, I would say, in still looking at how we continue to move forward this initiative of a national urban park in Halifax.

Of course, there are a lot of considerations that every layer of government is looking at. There are transportation networks. There are the existing pieces of legislation that protect some of this land. We are needing to look at how all of that will work together, but things continue to move forward for the establishment of this project.

Shannon Miedema: Would you have any idea on timelines and who is driving the moving forward of the project? Is it the federal government? Which level is really driving the project to success?

Andrew Campbell: Parks Canada is the project leader on that. I will say that we are all driving it forward, because a lot of people want to see this happen. Unlike those who are asking questions, Mr. Chair, I am not elected, and I don't get to make announcements on dates and timing. Perhaps that would be something that's better to ask your colleague, the minister.

Shannon Miedema: Excellent.

I'm also really excited about the prospect of Wind West. I think it's going to be game-changing for Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada and really contribute to Canada's clean energy future. I know that it's still early days and we're in the regulatory planning stages, etc. The call for bids is currently open.

I have a few questions about how it's moving along. Can you provide details on what type of coordination is taking place between the Impact Assessment Agency and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator for the environmental assessments of the project?

• (1240)

Terence Hubbard (President, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada): As you noted, it is still early days for the project, but we have been working in close co-operation with the Province of Nova Scotia and the offshore energy board for some time.

A lot of the work started with a regional assessment on offshore wind that we carried out in collaboration with both of those partners. It was completed about a year ago now. It informed the province's decisions and the board's decisions on prospective wind energy areas that will be moving forward through their land tenure process.

We've also been working very closely with the Province of Nova Scotia on a co-operation agreement in terms of environmental assessments moving forward, and we have long-standing co-operation, through the joint management approach, with the offshore board. We will be working in tandem in leveraging the wealth of information, evidence and data through the regional assessment to streamline individual project assessments as they move forward and continue to look for opportunities to support that sector.

Shannon Miedema: Was that co-operation agreement signed with Nova Scotia, or is it still to be signed?

Terence Hubbard: Nova Scotia is still to be signed. I think the public comment period closed last Friday.

Shannon Miedema: Okay, so it's moving along. Excellent.

The Wind West major project involves actually...

Oh, I am out of time.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Bonin, you have the floor.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to address the representative from the Canadian Impact Assessment Agency.

Some media outlets have reported that [*Inaudible—Editor*] Marinvest concerning a liquefied natural gas project. A newspaper mentioned that a 20-page document had been submitted. Can you provide that document to the committee, obviously with the necessary precautions to safeguard trade secrets, so we can review it as a committee?

Terence Hubbard: I'm aware of the document. We would need to review the restrictions because it's not an agency document.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you.

A global treaty on plastic pollution is currently being negotiated. Is there any money in the budget for the management of plastic in general or in relation to that treaty?

If you don't have the answer, I'd ask that you send it in writing. Otherwise, I'll lose my two minutes of speaking time listening to silence.

Megan Nichols (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): I don't have the exact details on hand, but currently, there is money for plastics policies until the end of 2026-27.

Patrick Bonin: Okay. You can send us that in writing.

Finally, I'd like to share a short list of demands. I know documents will be available today, but they don't include many details.

First, can you provide a list of the department's programs, grants and contributions that will be ending this year, and a list of those that will have less money than they did in the 2025-26 budget?

Next, can you provide a list of the subsidies allocated by the federal government to fossil fuels? We're unable to obtain that infor-

mation. There may be subsidies you consider inefficient. There was a policy to reduce those subsidies, or at least an intention to do so.

Finally, I'd also like to have details about budget cuts associated with the removal of the consumer carbon price. I'd like to know whether that has an impact on your expenditures. I'm thinking in particular of the fuel charge.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

• (1245)

[English]

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

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to return to the proposed Seal River Watershed national park in northern Manitoba.

My question is this: Given that the minister was unclear, who will decide which activities will be permitted, and who will have access if the park is created?

Andrew Campbell: I'm happy to respond to that question.

As the minister stated, we are still in the consultation phase. Part of that consultation phase, at the end of it, will be the creation of an establishment agreement. Normally, in that establishment agreement between first nations rights holders, the province and ourselves, some of that will be established.

On that, as well, obviously, we meet with anybody who has a current land tenure either within the area or not. You asked earlier about lodges and lodge owners; they will be part of that process as well and part of that establishment agreement process.

Branden Leslie: What does that timeline look like?

Andrew Campbell: That would be a question better asked of the minister, just as—

Branden Leslie: We don't get answers that way.

Andrew Campbell: However, I will give the answer that I can give on the timing.

Certainly it is our intention to continue to move forward quickly on Seal River with the province. The province has its own consultation process that will soon be out, which also will impact the timing on that.

Branden Leslie: In that space, Mr. Campbell, federal disclosures show that your department has provided more than \$7.7 million to advocacy groups promoting this proposal, including the Seal River Watershed Alliance and the Audubon Society. At the same time, we've heard from local tourism operators, hunters and anglers that they have not been consulted yet. Why is there this double standard? Also, is that funding that's currently allocated, that \$7.7 million, going to be continuing into next year, or is that also ending with the supplementaries?

Andrew Campbell: There will continue to be some of that funding, because there are multi-year contribution agreements with some of that funding.

On the Seal River Watershed, that group is primarily the first nations in the area, and part of our agreement with them.... They are the ones who brought the project forward, and part of our establishment with them is to provide some capacity funding in that way. However, yes, from a formal consultation perspective, certainly the Manitoba federation of hunters, anglers and wildlife will get an opportunity, the same as everybody else.

Branden Leslie: I certainly hope that comes to fruition.

Now, nearby is Wapusk National Park, which was established a number of years ago. Licensed hunters were excluded from that area, despite earlier assurances from Parks Canada at the time of implementation.

Is there a risk that that's going to happen in this new park, too, if it moves ahead?

Andrew Campbell: Wapusk National Park was done under the different sort of regime of consultative processes of earlier national parks.

Again, it will be part of the negotiation of the establishment agreement, and we will be listening to all concerned groups as this moves forward, including, I will add again, the lodge owners who are in and around the park area.

Branden Leslie: Thank you.

I'll move south, to Clear Lake. Will boaters be allowed back this summer?

Andrew Campbell: We are still in the final stages of discussions with the Clear Lake association, with the seven first nations and with the Métis. We are hoping in very short order to have a response out.

Branden Leslie: I certainly hope it is a positive one, because people would like to regain access to that.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'd like to pass my remaining time to Ms. Anstey.

Andrew Campbell: If we can.... That was almost a question—not—around—

Branden Leslie: You can submit it to the committee, please.

Carol Anstey: Mr. Chair, pursuant to the notice of motion that I tabled on February 25 pertaining to the net-zero advisory body, I would like to move it at this time.

Would you like me to read it into the record?

• (1250)

The Chair: Yes, please.

Carol Anstey: I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite former members of the Net-Zero Advisory Body, Simon Donner and Catherine Abreu, to appear for one hour;

That the committee request the production of all briefing materials, memoranda, analyses and formal advice provided by the Net-Zero Advisory Body to the minister related to emissions reduction targets, sectoral pathways and interim milestones, and that such documents be provided to the committee within 30 days of the adoption of this motion;

That the committee request documentation of all expenditures incurred in relation to the Net-Zero Advisory Body since its creation in 2021, including but not limited to travel, hospitality, venue, catering and administrative expenses, and that such documentation be provided within 30 days of the adoption of this motion.

This even came up several times today in speaking with the environment minister. It's very relevant to the work of our committee, and I think it's an important meeting to have.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The notice period has been respected. The clerk tells me it was distributed February 25.

Mr. Eric St-Pierre.

Eric St-Pierre: Could we release the witnesses and suspend momentarily while we retrieve this motion? There have been a lot of motions distributed recently, so I'd just like two or three minutes to find this.

The Chair: Is it the will of the committee to suspend?

Witnesses, you're free to go. Thank you very much for your time.

We'll suspend.

• (1250)

(Pause)

• (1300)

The Chair: The committee has resumed.

Mrs. Miedema, go ahead, please.

Shannon Miedema: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for the time to review the motion in detail.

I know that, for staff, the idea of 30 days to be able to produce that volume of materials is causing concern. I'm wondering if we could think about this. I think the preference would be to eliminate the timeline, to say "in a timely fashion", or to at least have the same standards as an ATIP request or something like that. I think 30 days might be problematic. I'm wondering if we could consider saying that for both the second and third paragraphs, where it says everything has to be done "within 30 days of the adoption of this motion".

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Leslie, go ahead.

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sure on our side we would accept a friendly amendment of 45 days, to be in line with an OPQ response.

The Chair: Mr. Fanjoy, you're good to go.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you.

We seem to be on another fishing expedition, Mr. Leslie. You'll be pleased about that.

I'm wondering what is gained by producing all the expenses in great detail of the net-zero advisory board. These are subject to the usual checks and balances, including auditing. It seems like an unnecessary waste of time for this committee. If there's a desire to have the witnesses attend and speak to their experience, that's one thing, but I think the focus should be there and not on all this extraneous data that is readily available anyway.

No one here is asking for the Conservative Party to provide detailed expenses on travel and hospitality for their recent leadership review in Calgary. It does cost money for people to do work. We understand that. Let's keep the focus on what can be productive and what is simply a fishing expedition.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fanjoy.

Mr. Leslie, go ahead.

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Despite all that, I think it's entirely reasonable. We did hear from the minister today that she expects that next week, I believe, she'll be meeting, for what sounded like maybe the first time, with the board, which has been significantly reduced in size. I think it's entirely reasonable—for a board from which apparently the co-chairs allege that they had to resign because their opinions were being ignored and not listened to by this government as it continually rolled back its own environmental policies aimed at achieving its own environmental targets—that we ask for a reasonable set of information.

I appreciate the friendly idea from our colleague across the way to expand that to 45 days and allow it to be in line with an Order Paper question to provide the details. It's most important that they appear for one hour. I think having the two people who were in the media discussing their departure from this advisory board is a great opportunity to understand why that happened and for the government to be able to better understand how the body can be a functioning body that provides reasonable advice to the minister.

As environmentalists on this committee, I would have to assume that you couldn't find a reason to disagree with having a functioning net-zero advisory body.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1305)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Leslie.

Eric St-Pierre: It brings me a lot of joy to hear my colleague from Manitoba say that he's an environmentalist on this committee.

Thank you for admitting your passion for the environment and for this committee.

I may be going back to fishing. I'm looking at my colleague from Newfoundland, who I hope one day will invite us to her beautiful province to actually go fishing, rather than on fishing expeditions in this committee. Maybe I digress.

I have a question about the intention. I'm going to the third paragraph. I think that's what my colleague from Carleton was alluding to earlier with the use of the word “fishing”—no offence to Alberta. There are fewer lakes. I'm on an island, so I can literally go fishing in Rivière des Prairies. I digress again.

David Bexte: It has the best fly-fishing in the world.

Eric St-Pierre: That's another question. You might not want to eat it.

My question is about the intent of getting the documentation around expenditures for travel, for hospitality, for venue, for catering and for administrative expenses. What are you trying to get with that? Second, maybe it's a dumb question, but isn't that information already public, or should it be public?

I'd like a response as to what you are trying to get from that third paragraph, if I may.

The Chair: Mr. Bonin.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Chair, I would agree to align the number of days with the access to information request time frames. That's an amendment that my colleague wants to propose later. I see that it's okay with you. I have no issue with transparency. I think we're here to ensure that. It's a matter of facilitating access to the documentation. Some people call it a fishing expedition; I call it transparency and accountability, so we can do our work properly.

However, I would propose an amendment. In the first paragraph, after “to appear for one hour”, I would specify the date—

The Chair: Excuse me, I have no objection to your moving your amendment, but an amendment has already been moved. It should instead—

Patrick Bonin: I didn't know that it had officially been moved.

[*English*]

The Chair: No, it wasn't moved. We're still on that amendment, so we can't bring forward another amendment to the 45 days. That's what we suggested as an amendment, and I don't have any conclusion to that.

[*Translation*]

There is already an amendment to propose a period of 45 days, but we haven't voted on that amendment. Before you move your amendment—

Patrick Bonin: Okay. We'll vote on the amendment proposing a period of 45 days.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mrs. Miedema.

Shannon Miedema: On a point of clarification, if it's a friendly amendment, do we still go through the process of voting on it?

The Chair: Yes.

Shannon Miedema: Okay, then I propose the amendment of changing, in both paragraph 2 and paragraph 3, the number of days from 30 to 45.

The Chair: We have on the floor now an official amendment.

Is there any further debate on that amendment?

All those in favour? All those opposed?

(Amendment agreed to)

[*Translation*]

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

Patrick Bonin: I propose the following amendment. In the first paragraph, after “Simon Donner and Catherine Abreu, to appear for one hour”, I would add “on March 26”.

• (1310)

The Chair: Mr. Bonin, the clerk informs me that the House is not sitting on Friday, March 27.

Patrick Bonin: My proposal is that the witnesses appear on March 26.

The Chair: If we're sure that the committee will meet on March 26, we can proceed. However, we have heard that March 26 might be treated like a Friday. I'm not sure of that yet.

Mr. St-Pierre, you have the floor.

Eric St-Pierre: I have a comment on my colleague's amendment. It's my opinion. There have been other motions, for example the one from the Bloc Québécois on the industrial carbon tax. There's some urgency to move on that. I have a bit of a concern about the schedule. Today is our last workday of the week. We'll then spend a week in our ridings. After that, we'll come back and have two committee meetings. Then, we'll return around mid-April. I thought there was some urgency with respect to the industrial carbon tax. This may be a question for my colleague about the urgency of having these witnesses appear on March 26. Is it realistic? Can you tell us why it's important for it to be on March 26?

I'm asking given all the other motions that have been put forward and all the other things we need to work on. I'd like to hear your point of view on this.

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

Patrick Bonin: The new schedule that was sent to us includes a meeting on the carbon tax on March 24, with witnesses.

On March 26, we'll discuss the effectiveness of and potential improvements to the 2030 emissions reduction plan, which refers, among other things, to the much-talked-about net-zero advisory board. Based on that schedule, I think representatives from that board could be brought in on March 26, and that would allow us to get a better understanding of their role in relation to the emissions reduction plan. I see no problem with the schedule.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mrs. Miedema, you have the floor.

Shannon Miedema: We have a backlog of work in this committee. We saw how slowly things went on Tuesday this week, and we have a lot of priority work already planned and scheduled. I think we need to triage what is critically important here. The minister herself said that she's meeting Friday with the net-zero advisory board.

I just need to clarify that the size of the board has not diminished; there are just vacancies, so it's not, Mr. Leslie, a shrunken board.

I really don't understand why we would want to keep throwing things into our very full calendar. We're not going to get these reports out and these studies done that were the work proposed by the other parties. I'd like to throw it in ahead of completing the work we're doing now. Starting the industrial carbon study makes absolutely no sense to me, and I reject the notion of scheduling it for March 26.

The Chair: Mr. Fanjoy, the floor is yours.

Bruce Fanjoy: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree. We have these motions that keep being dropped. It seems that their intent is ultimately to prevent us from getting to work that we've already committed to working on. As has been noted before, we have a limited number of committee days in which to address the work we've committed to. We have an ERP study that we have to continue to work through and finalize. I think we're creating distractions that are preventing this committee from doing the work we've already committed to.

In principle, I'm not against having witnesses attend at some point in the future, but dropping things in at the last minute that suddenly become our top priority does not strike me as good practice.

• (1315)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fanjoy.

Go ahead, Mr. St-Pierre.

Eric St-Pierre: I might want to add to that, because there was a motion for the water study, which is a comprehensive 400 pages or something, and we have the ERP study, which we're making some progress on, but a lot more work is required. Does this push us back? Are we going to be here over the summer? I'm still trying to understand the urgency of March 26, which is literally the next meeting.

From a policy perspective, I think the industrial carbon price, as the Canadian Climate Institute has said, is one of the most effective climate policies for this country. Whether we agree on it or not is another issue, but I think it's a really important piece of policy. It's a piece of policy that our government is taking very seriously. It would be very informative and provide really important analysis and recommendations. I'm wondering.... We are delaying work on the industrial carbon price for something we can study at a later point, but is it urgent? It's almost a question of priorities.

This is more of a comment, but I'll leave it there.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Mr. Leslie and then Mr. Bonin.

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do appreciate the clerk's highlighting the challenges. If we sit on a Friday, we can't sit during question period, I don't believe, so we'd have to move our typical slot. It's perhaps more complicated. I like the idea of having a date, and I appreciate my colleague's proposing it. I'm not sure if that's necessary. I'll leave that to him if he has any comments.

What I find interesting is the nerve that seems to have been struck here. There have been apparent efforts to filibuster the environment committee over the invitation to the one co-chair and the other member who have resigned from the net-zero advisory body. The minister was clearly frustrated earlier by being asked questions about this topic.

I'm just curious as to whether we can expect the committee to stop filibustering this, get to a vote and let the members of this committee decide whether or not they want to invite these witnesses and ask for these documents in an effort to provide the full transparency that taxpayers fully deserve.

[*Translation*]

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

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with my colleague's remarks. I think it's obvious that our colleagues on the other side don't want to have these witnesses appear before us. However, they're witnesses who decided to leave a board that was set up and that seemed very important to the government. It was the co-chair of the organization, a highly renowned climatologist, who decided to leave.

Our colleagues don't want to hear from these two witnesses and they don't even want us to adopt this motion. I don't think that is consistent with their alleged desire to accelerate the fight against climate change. I think we should move to a vote.

I thank the clerk for informing us about March 26. If this date is a problem and needs to be changed because the Thursday ends up being treated like a Friday, obviously, we can just remove the date without any problem.

I won't propose an amendment to Mrs. Anstey's motion to set a date, because there's a bit of confusion about whether that date would work. Let's adopt the motion and get to the crux of the matter. I know my Liberal colleagues would prefer we didn't. They clearly want us to waste our time talking about a motion, instead of hearing from very relevant witnesses who are highly renowned in Canada. It's very surprising to see my colleague act this way.

The Chair: I'll leave it to the clerk to direct us on the issue of March 26, since there is still some confusion.

Mr. Clerk, you have the floor.

[*English*]

I'll let him highlight that date, please.

The Clerk of the Committee (Leif-Erik Aune): I don't have the text of the motion adopted by the House in front of me. However, the wording is essentially that when the House adjourns on Thursday, March 26, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, April 13. I'm going to double-check this, but the motion does not prescribe that the program for Thursday, March 26 be a Friday program. As a result, question period would not interfere with the committee's usual meeting time of 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Thank you.

• (1320)

The Chair: We go back to the drawing board.

Mrs. Miedema.

Shannon Miedema: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have deep respect for the net-zero advisory body, and I happen to know Ms. Abreu very well.

Similar to my comments earlier this week, if we were going to invite two former members of the board, why would we not also invite some current members of the board to get a more fulsome picture?

However, I'm going to talk now about not just being an MP but also being a representative of a coastal community that's already living the reality of a changing climate, because this is the environment and climate change committee, and when you—

The Chair: A point of order is being raised, Mrs. Miedema.

Branden Leslie: During the commentary, could you define filibuster for us?

Shannon Miedema: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Miedema, the floor is yours.

Shannon Miedema: [*Inaudible—Editor*] invent filibustering, Mr. Leslie? I don't know.

When you represent a coastal riding, as many of my colleagues know, even across the table, you're not able to treat climate change as a theoretical debate or a distant future problem. The environment drives our economy and shapes our culture, and it increasingly threatens rural, urban, coastal and central communities alike through extreme weather events.

In Nova Scotia, we're not waiting for climate change to arrive, because it is already here. We saw it in 2022, when hurricane Fiona tore through the Atlantic provinces. It destroyed homes, devastated our coastlines and left communities in the dark—literally. I saw it first-hand in my riding of Halifax in 2023, when the Upper Tantallon wildfires forced residents to abandon their homes and filled our skies with smoke. We see it in the historic flash flooding that washed away roads and infrastructure, and in the rising sea levels that threaten the very foundation of the Halifax peninsula.

Let me be super clear about this. The science is settled. The debates over whether climate change is real and over whether human activity is the primary driver have been over for decades. The work of this committee is to advance action on climate and the environment. The global scientific community is unequivocal. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is unequivocal. Our own Canadian scientists are unequivocal.

In Nova Scotia, our provincial climate risk assessments paint a very stark picture. By 2050, we're looking at significant temperature increases and a severe rise in extreme weather events. We're expecting an increase in relative sea level of up to a metre by the year 2100. That's going to devastate our coastal communities, which should concern many members of this committee.

Our oceans are warming, becoming more acidic and losing oxygen, which is a direct threat to our vital fisheries and marine ecosystems. We're even facing new and emerging threats to our fresh water quality because of heavier rainfall and warming lakes, which is also a problem for many members of this committee—in fact, all of them. We all depend on our freshwater resources for our very survival.

To stand in this committee or anywhere in this country and attempt to cast doubt on any of these facts is irresponsible. It's failing to fulfill our collective duty to the Canadians we were elected to protect. To try to interfere with the good progress this committee is trying to make across its approved studies and witnesses who have been invited is also irresponsible.

The science is settled, and it's past time that our political discourse reflected that reality, which brings me to the core of why I'm speaking to this now. If the science is settled and the impacts are devastatingly clear, why haven't we taken all of the necessary steps to address the climate crisis? Sadly, the answer lies with our political institutions. Too often, the fight for our planet is derailed by cheap political plays and hyperpartisanship. Climate change is the greatest existential threat of our time, yet it's routinely reduced to a wedge issue, or we just play little games that waste time in committee meetings that are intended to be very serious. It's seen as a tool to score cheap points in the polls, rather than as a crisis demanding a unified, national response.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Shannon Miedema: I am red because I am worked up, dear colleague. We have something like 1,000 motions interfering with the due process of this committee, and I am very unhappy about it, as I have indicated many days in these past months. We see progress stalled by manufactured outrage, by short-term thinking that prioritizes the next election cycle over the next generation, and by the deliberate spreading of misinformation.

The atmosphere does not care about our political stripes. Wildfires don't check the polls to see if a riding leans blue or leans red. The storm surge that floods our coastal communities doesn't ask about party affiliation. Unfortunately, we've seen this dynamic play out even at this very committee.

At a time when Canadians are facing record insured losses from extreme weather and communities are rebuilding after fires, floods and storms, Conservative members choose to cast aside many wit-

nesses their own party invited and waste valuable committee time with these motions. Witnesses are invited, taxpayer dollars are spent, staff time is used and witnesses invest their time in preparing and coming, and we need to stop derailing our planned calendar.

What makes this especially concerning is that committee time is one of Parliament's most limited and valuable resources. Witnesses clear their schedules, experts prepare evidence and communities across Canada look to this table, expecting serious study and constructive recommendations so that we can actually move forward in a good way together. When that time is redirected towards motions that don't advance our current study, it undermines the very purpose of committee work.

• (1325)

Canadians dealing with rising insurance costs and repeated climate disasters deserve better than procedural distraction. At a time when insurers are withdrawing coverage from high-risk areas, when municipalities are struggling to finance adaptation infrastructure and when families are questioning whether their homes will remain insurable in the years ahead, our responsibility is clear. This is why we are trying to move forward with the work of this committee and get everything done that we need to do.

We should be hearing from emergency managers, climate scientists, housing experts and financial institutions about solutions, not revisiting debates designed to stall progress. Healthy disagreement strengthens democracy, but obstruction disguised as study weakens public trust. Canadians can tell the difference between good-faith scrutiny and tactics intended to run out the clock.

You can laugh, but this is important. We can't keep doing this. This is my way of telling you that we cannot keep doing this. If this committee is to meet the seriousness of the moment, we have to remain focused on evidence-based work: work that helps communities adapt, reduces risk and protects Canadians from the economic consequences of climate change.

The opposition has wasted valuable committee time by proposing other meaningless studies, like the one on single-use plastics. This is an issue that has already been extensively studied by Parliament. The single-use plastic ban is a landmark achievement of this government, and it presents a significant step in stopping pollution and building a cleaner economy.

Canadians expect this committee to focus on climate resilience, disaster preparedness—

[Translation]

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

[English]

Shannon Miedema: —industrial carbon pricing, protecting homes and livelihoods—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mrs. Miedema. I'll give you a second to breathe.

Mr. Bonin has a point of order.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: We've all understood that our Liberal colleagues are filibustering. You haven't mentioned how much longer we have interpretation services. Clearly, our Liberal colleagues want to take all their time to avoid a serious debate of the motion.

The Chair: I was expecting someone to ask. You are free to ask the clerk. I've already taken that step. The resources are available until 1:30 p.m.

Patrick Bonin: Perhaps our colleague could stop and we could get down to real business.

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

[English]

Shannon Miedema: Every hour spent relitigating settled ground is an hour not spent helping communities prepare for the next wildfire, the next flood or the next storm. When politicians use climate policy as a political football, it's Canadians who pay the price. It's farmers who lose their crops, it's families who are losing their homes to wildfires and it's small business owners who can't afford the rising insurance premiums. If we don't act now, it's the next generation that will inherit a world that is less stable, less safe and less prosperous.

We also need to recognize that moving past this gridlock is not just an environmental imperative. It's an economic one. The global economy is transitioning. The race to a net-zero future is on, and countries that lead the transition will secure the jobs, the investments and the prosperity of the 21st century. If we allow partisan bickering to slow us down, Canada will—

Branden Leslie: On a point of order, I was wondering if we could seek clarification on how long we have resources for and if this planned filibuster will take us into the backroom-deal, organized majority by the Liberal government to hide transparency from Canadians.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to share with us how the time is calculated, being that it's a bit confusing with what you see on the net and the hour that is attributed to services. He will clarify the time slots: when they begin and when they end.

[Translation]

Mr. Clerk, you have the floor.

Are you comfortable speaking in French? That way, Mr. Bonin will understand better.

• (1330)

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The interpretation services can provide their assistance for two hours and fifteen minutes of the meeting, not counting suspensions. The meeting began at 11:03 a.m. and the suspension lasted about 13 minutes. If my calculation is right, interpretation services can be available until about 1:30 p.m. That's the information I've just received.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

[English]

Branden Leslie: What happens now, then?

The Chair: It's 1:30. Since we no longer have any interpretation services, we can't go on.

Branden Leslie: Is the meeting suspended or adjourned? I'm just curious as to whether this filibuster to avoid transparency is continuing tomorrow....

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned, or....

Branden Leslie: I'm curious about the procedural....

The Clerk: Strictly speaking, the meeting adjourns at the will of the committee. From time to time, and usually, if ever we see the chair adjourn the meeting directly, at the usual time of adjournment, it's because the chair observes that there is implied consent among the members.

I hope that answers your question, sir.

The Chair: We have no services. There's no interpretation as of right now, so I can't go forward. We need to have interpretation.

Branden Leslie: I understand that. When there's not consent in that scenario, what happens?

The Chair: Do you mean consent to continue?

Branden Leslie: I mean consent for adjournment. We're not at the normal time, but we're running out of resources.

The Clerk: In my role, I advise the chair and all members on matters of procedure and administration, and I capture the decisions of the committee.

Branden Leslie: Perhaps I could offer a friendly idea in which the government members might come to their senses over the break week, and I would move to adjourn this debate.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but there's no further discussion, so the meeting will be adjourned.

Branden Leslie: There's no consent, though. I still don't....

The Chair: You can't move a motion, because we do not have any resources. We do not have interpretation.

The meeting is adjourned.

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

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

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

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

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

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