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# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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Chair: Shannon Miedema





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Tuesday, May 26, 2026

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone.

[*English*]

This is meeting 39 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

For those here in person, please remember to follow the health and safety guidelines, per the cards on the table, to prevent audio feedback incidents.

I have a couple of housekeeping pieces before we get to our business.

I would remind you that the deadline to submit written amendments to Bill C-241 is this Thursday, May 28, at 4 p.m.

I have an update on the invitation to Ms. Dawn Farrell of the Major Projects Office. She has declined to appear before this committee throughout the month of June based on her schedule. We may wish to consider some next steps on inviting Ms. Farrell again during committee business in the near future.

Regarding the approved motion for the study of the government's plastic manufacturing policy, in February, the committee agreed to hold one meeting to study this policy, and if there's no objection, we propose to schedule this, ideally, on June 11 during our regular meeting of ENVI. We could do June 18, but we're not sure if we'll still be here, so the 11th would be a safer date to hear witness testimony and invite the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature to appear.

If that is the will of the committee, the clerk will invite witnesses to appear and, ideally, would have your witness requests by this Friday, May 29, by 2:30 in the afternoon.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

Today we are discussing Bill C-241, an act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting. We have member of Parliament Tatiana Auguste here from Terrebonne. This is her private member's bill. Online, we have John Pomeroy, distinguished professor from the University of Saskatchewan, who is integral to the creation of this private member's bill.

I understand that you each have opening remarks, so you'll each have five minutes to present, and then we'll go to questions from committee. We will begin with Ms. Auguste.

You have five minutes. I do have a little card to warn you at the one-minute and time's-up marks. Don't let it stress you out. When you're ready, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

**Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.):** Thank you.

I would like to thank all the committee members for inviting me.

Madam Chair, I would like to start by saying that extreme weather events are now part of everyday life in many regions. Every year, municipalities across the country see their infrastructure weakened, their roads submerged, their soil dried out and their homes flooded.

I'm thinking in particular of my own constituency of Terrebonne, where I've seen first-hand the very real effects of heavy rains. For us, sudden rainfall events, unexpected flooding and erosion risks aren't simply meteorological phenomena. They're part of our daily lives. When the Mascouche River or the Mille Îles River threatens to overflow, it's about more than just hydrological data. It's also about families who fear losing their homes, business owners who risk losing everything and municipal infrastructure being put to the test.

This is exactly why I believe that Bill C-241 is essential. It proposes to establish a national strategy for flood and drought forecasting based on science, coordination and transparency. However, for this strategy to really work, it must be based on high-quality and consistent data. Today, each province, territory and indigenous government collects its own hydrological information using different instruments, observation networks that vary from region to region and analytical methods that aren't always compatible. These differences create silos that limit the collective ability of these players to effectively anticipate floods and droughts.

To move forward together, we need to narrow these gaps and strengthen the interoperability of the structures in place. Bill C-241 doesn't seek to centralize work or remove powers. Instead, it seeks to bring together knowledge and tools around a shared objective. This objective is to strengthen Canada's capacity to anticipate and prevent hydrological disasters.

Canada can't rely on the United States and it needs to ensure data sovereignty. If Canada wants full control over its prevention capabilities, it must have data. Today, our country still relies on data supplied by foreign organizations, in particular the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. While useful, this data has sometimes proven to be inaccurate or ill-suited to Canada's realities.

Bill C-241 aims precisely to correct that dependence by strengthening Canada's autonomy and ensuring that its decisions are based on data produced here, by Canadians. The data must be produced to meet Canada's needs. The bill proposes a co-operative model where information collected by different jurisdictions can be interconnected and analyzed jointly. That way, Canada can offer all municipalities, from coast to coast to coast, the means to respond faster, to plan more intelligently and to protect their residents.

The costs of doing nothing are already enormous. In 2024 alone, insured losses related to climate events in Canada reached \$8.5 billion. After storm Debby, the cost of insured damage in Quebec was \$2.7 billion. Millions of people had to be temporarily relocated. Terrebonne wasn't spared. Road closures, pressure on infrastructure and repeated emergency responses put a strain on the constituency's finances.

Bill C-241 provides a national framework to help better plan infrastructure, improve access to data, coordinate responses and, ultimately, save lives.

In conclusion, I would say that Bill C-241 amounts to much more than a technical framework. It's a commitment to the safety of Canadians, an investment in the collective resilience of Canadians and a concrete step for communities. We need to choose prevention over reaction, coordination over isolation and resilience over vulnerability. So much more than data and property damage are at stake. At stake are faces, names and addresses and members of Canada's communities.

I invite my colleagues to support this bill and to work together on building a Canada that's better prepared for climate challenges.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Auguste.

[*English*]

We will now turn to Mr. Pomeroy for five minutes.

The floor is yours.

**Dr. John Pomeroy (Distinguished Professor, Department of Geography and Planning, University of Saskatchewan, As an Individual):** Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Greetings to the committee members.

I'm speaking to you from Halifax, Nova Scotia, and noting that, across the country, flood and drought damages have risen dramatically and are expected to rise further as extreme weather and water events due to climate change, coupled with our growing communities and increased economy, are putting us in greater risk. Flood plains are growing, and droughts are intensifying. This is impacting many communities, industries and farms across the country. Even the Maritimes had a severe drought last year.

Our flood and drought forecasting prediction in Canada follows a historical piecemeal approach. There's a federal system developed top-down using a weather forecasting approach that is not widely shared, but some of the provinces have access to it. Each province and territory—13 of them—have developed their own systems, and none of these are interoperable. It's a fragmented approach, which has meant slow uptake of new technology and limited uptake of the more sophisticated federal system. There is a wide desire and need for common modelling frameworks, common approaches and coordinated forecasting systems.

In 2013, the floods in Canmore, Alberta—and I was there—occurred before the provincial forecast occurred, and there was tremendous damage in that community. Later in High River, again, the floods occurred before the prediction of floods. The evacuation was not orderly, and people died.

At that point, I decided that we had to have something change in this country.

Unfortunately, that was only the beginning of these massive flooding and drought events associated with wildfires in the north, with drought across the Prairies, the Maritimes and southern Ontario and Quebec, and with floods that have hit every province and territory every spring. We have come to expect it now, but we need to know where they are.

A federal-provincial co-operative system could better ensure that the limited resources and techniques we have available in Canada can most effectively support operational forecasting and prediction from co-operative, co-developed systems. My recommendation is to move towards a more coherent flood and drought forecasting and prediction framework for Canada.

This can be done by developing a national flood and drought forecasting framework to coordinate local, regional and international efforts and to enable the operationalization of state-of-the-art science and technological advances in water forecasting prediction. This should be co-developed with provinces, territories, universities, communities and first nations to be mindful of local realities and to build credibility and trust.

The national framework will need to articulate accountability and the responsibility of individuals in the flood and drought early warning chain. As well, the national framework should encourage forecasters and decision-makers to have access to a wider variety of Canadian data products while clearly communicating the authoritative forecast and its predictive uncertainty.

A community of practice is needed to facilitate co-operation amongst operational forecasters, government agencies, industry, academia and international experts. Then we will need creative outreach campaigns to build societal resilience to floods and droughts through improved communication and public engagement.

Recently, universities in Canada and federal government agencies designed a coherent approach to flood forecasting that could respect local hydrological realities while ensuring that state-of-the-art flood forecasting science and technology are made available to all decision-makers and stakeholders across the country, but federal leadership is required to implement this approach, convened with the provinces and territories, to create a truly national, co-operative flood water forecasting and prediction system.

I strongly commend Bill C-241 as a timely mechanism for gathering and coordinating our national capabilities for flood and drought forecasting. Possibly, it could be convened under the leadership of the Canada Water Agency in collaboration with Environment Canada and other agencies.

Better water predictions will improve water security, reduce flood damages, make our communities safer, improve crop yields, grow our hydroelectricity revenues and provide for better ecosystem conservation.

We face a future where others are looking at our water.

The Canadian public demands improved warnings of extreme events, and our industry and agriculture are competing in a more data-driven world. We have increasing damages from extreme water events, which can cripple our prosperity and destroy our environment and communities. Using science-informed predictions, we can support the growth of Canada's economy, society and environment. We need to implement a visionary strategy such as is contained in this bill as quickly as possible and support it as fully as possible.

• (1555)

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Pomeroy.

You said you're speaking to us from Halifax, if I'm not mistaken. I'll give you a very warm welcome to my riding and my fair city. I hope you're enjoying yourself.

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will now turn to questions from committee members.

Mr. Bexte, you have six minutes.

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

Welcome to the witnesses and Ms. Auguste. I appreciate your time here today, and your testimony.

I have so many questions. To start, since you've introduced this bill, what consultations have you conducted with agricultural stakeholders?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you so much for your question.

The agricultural stakeholders have mostly been in my riding. As well, some agricultural stakeholders in Saskatchewan have told us about the great difficulties of dryness during a certain period of time.

**David Bexte:** The Canadian Federation of Agriculture sent a letter to this committee commending the bill's objectives, but they outlined clear recommendations that they wished to be put in place for this legislation to succeed. One of the recommendations was the need for investing in strengthening national data integration of forecasting capacity. Have you looked into some of the logistics around the possible integration and what models other provinces are using now? How would that be integrated?

**Tatiana Auguste:** At the moment, there is such a wild variety of ways in which provinces deal with data concerning floods and drought. We can go from an Excel sheet on a computer to a quantum computer. The goal of this bill is truly to bring everybody together and to be able to put everybody on the same level.

Regarding integration, maybe that question can be turned over to Dr. Pomeroy. He's the weather expert here on modelling.

It is the objective of this bill to have everybody speak the same language in terms of data in order for—

**David Bexte:** You yourself haven't looked into the logistics of implementing this.

**Tatiana Auguste:** No.

• (1600)

**David Bexte:** All right. Thank you.

Such stakeholders as the Alberta Irrigation Districts Association have recommended that any national flood and drought forecasting system created under this legislation be transparent and open-source. Why does Bill C-241 not explicitly require open-source?

**Tatiana Auguste:** It was not a consideration at the time, but if it's the will of this committee, I'm really open to making the necessary changes for this bill to be good for everybody.

**David Bexte:** AIDA warned that the existing federal and provincial forecasting systems aren't easily interoperable, which you've mentioned already. Before introducing Bill C-241, did you receive any assurances from departments that Canada currently has the technical capacity to harmonize these systems?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Different provinces have different ways of working. In Quebec, we are very advanced in our flood and drought forecasting. To be able to do this national strategy, we would be bringing the expertise we have elsewhere in the country for the use of all Canadians. Dr. Pomeroy suggested the Canada Water Agency. It could also be done in other agencies that we currently have in government.

**David Bexte:** Is this a carrot or a stick to get provinces onto the program? You implied that there's a spectrum of maturity in provincial systems. Would you be implying an overarching federal system, or the best provincial system and then applying that to other provinces? I'm trying to get at the mechanics of how this works.

**Tatiana Auguste:** It's really a collaboration—a space for all provinces to bring what they have best and to see what could work for everybody. It's not about federal overreach at all.

**David Bexte:** It's not prescribed.

Do you anticipate that there will be additional costs put on provinces? In order to participate in this collaboration, will the provinces pick up the cost, or will this be a federal cost?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Since it's a private member's bill, this bill does not cost anybody.

**David Bexte:** To implement the work, somebody's going to have to do some work, which will cost.

**Tatiana Auguste:** We would have to create the strategy first and do the work. Then it would come back to Parliament. Parliament can see fit to do with it what it will.

**David Bexte:** Okay. Thank you.

I'll go back to maybe the history and understanding of how we've gotten to where we are now. Why do provinces develop their own systems in the first place?

**Tatiana Auguste:** It's because it's under provincial jurisdiction.

**David Bexte:** Environment Canada and the meteorological service of Canada have been providing national forecasting services for quite some time. Why is there a patchwork of provincial systems that have forecasting systems that would feed into that or do the same thing? Is there overlap? Is there duplication, or is it an important redundancy?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I think that's also because natural resources—which water technically is—are under provincial jurisdiction.

**David Bexte:** What about the forecasting aspect of it?

**Tatiana Auguste:** The forecasting aspect is definitely federal.

**David Bexte:** That's right. Why does one province have one system and another doesn't?

**Tatiana Auguste:** The provinces have developed their own systems over the years. I couldn't tell you why.

**David Bexte:** There's a possibility that there was some abdication by the government of federal services. They should have been doing this for a long time. They didn't, so the provinces had to backstop.

This goes to something coming soon. You spoke to the necessity of having our own data, yet it seems our own weather monitoring

systems—the Doppler radar system, for example—are facing cuts and, perhaps, reductions in service. How do we square this circle?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I'm sorry. I didn't get the question.

**David Bexte:** There have been reports that our Doppler radar system will be experiencing some cuts and reductions in service, or replaced by an AI system that may not use real data but rather start to infer in between. You spoke to needing our own data, but we're not going to be measuring any more data.

Can you help me deal with this contradiction?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I'm sorry. I couldn't speak to the actions of the government. All I can speak to are the actions we are taking through this bill.

**David Bexte:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Good afternoon, Ms. Auguste. I'm delighted to welcome you here to the committee for the first time. Our constituencies are neighbours. The Des Prairies River separates our constituencies, but I consider you a neighbour. It's always good to meet with you. As we say in French, we're fans of the Canadiens, so let's both cheer them on. I know that there isn't any Halifax team, but we should always encourage the Canadiens in any way we can.

I would also like to congratulate you on your victory. I know that it took a great deal of work. I want to congratulate you on all the work that you have done for Terrebonne. You're a wonderful young member of Parliament. It's always a pleasure to work with you.

Ms. Auguste, as you know, my constituency of Honoré—Mercier is separated from your constituency of Terrebonne by the Des Prairies River.

Can you tell us how Bill C-241 would be useful for our constituencies?

How would Honoré—Mercier and Terrebonne residents benefit from it?

• (1605)

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

This bill will make it possible to help all municipal authorities prepare flood plains, which will really help them anticipate floods and warn the public.

Bill C-241 will be extremely useful from an insurance standpoint. The costs of flood insurance are really enormous. It will help people make informed decisions about the location of their home.

**Eric St-Pierre:** Good. Good answer.

Do you know of any environmental groups or associations in Quebec that support Bill C-241? If so, can you name them?

**Tatiana Auguste:** We worked with John Pomeroy and Julie Mireille Thériault, a lecturer at the Université du Québec à Montréal, or UQAM, on the development of the bill. They shared their expertise with us.

A number of groups, including the groups listed by Mr. Bexte, also expressed their support. I could also mention Blair Feltmate from the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo, as well as a number of other experts. They were able to discuss the bill and they gave their support.

**Eric St-Pierre:** This morning, our chair and I took part in a panel discussion. We were joined by representatives from the Intact Centre. We spoke about adapting to climate change. One topic that came up frequently was the cost of flooding.

I often see this flooding issue in the borough of Anjou, which is in my constituency. Unfortunately, many basements flood during the summer.

Why do you think that Bill C-241 would be a good tool for adapting to climate change?

**Tatiana Auguste:** The bill that I'm proposing seeks first and foremost to help the less wealthy provinces, in this case Quebec.

Experts want to share their expertise across Canada. The idea is to help them reach a level where they can not only obtain good data, but also adopt new technologies to make weather predictions. New things are on the horizon when it comes to predictions.

They can then integrate these technologies and avoid falling several years behind. We're still trying to meet the minimum standards.

**Eric St-Pierre:** Good.

I asked about our constituencies, Honoré—Mercier and Terrebonne. However, why would Bill C-241 be useful in a broader sense? I'm thinking of Quebec, or even Montreal and the rest of Canada.

Could you talk about how your bill would benefit all Quebecers?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

I believe that, in a world constantly in search of new data, people expect us to know as precisely as possible when a climate-related event will take place. The goal is also to give them a certain peace of mind.

This bill is really a start. It would help all the provinces reach a good level.

**Eric St-Pierre:** To my knowledge, this bill was introduced in the previous Parliament under the number C-317.

Did it receive the support of other political parties? If so, which ones?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

In the 44th Parliament, this bill received the unanimous support of the House. I would like to see the same thing this time around. That's why I'm open to hearing about any changes that this commit-

tee could make to improve the bill so that all Canadians can benefit from it.

**Eric St-Pierre:** The Bloc Québécois supported it, along with the New Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

Did they all support it?

• (1610)

**Tatiana Auguste:** In the 44th Parliament, they all supported it.

However, in the 45th Parliament, we unfortunately lost the support of the Bloc Québécois. I hope that this committee will help lead the Bloc Québécois to reconsider its decision.

**Eric St-Pierre:** Thank you for joining us. I would like to congratulate you on your first experience with our committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. St-Pierre.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Bonin for six minutes.

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

Ms. Auguste, I would like to congratulate you on your victory and on your election as a member of Parliament. Democracy has spoken.

I'm happy to see you here. I know that our constituencies are neighbours. When you came to my constituency, we unfortunately didn't have the chance to see each other. I imagine that, when you make announcements in the future, we'll likely have the opportunity to talk on the ground.

As you know, the Bloc Québécois obviously strongly supports flood and drought prevention. We're also quite vocal about the need for the federal government to improve its climate change adaptation strategy. It has been roundly criticized, in particular by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development.

Of course, when we talk about floods and droughts, we're talking about extreme weather events. We're also likely to see more of them as your government moves ahead with the construction of new pipelines and oil and gas production.

In your opinion, does it make sense to propose a strategy to better manage floods and droughts while also building pipelines that will fuel the climate crisis and basically help increase the number of floods?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

I think that it makes sense to address a need identified by a number of Canadians and Quebecers concerning floods and droughts.

Regarding the other part of your question, I think that it would be necessary to turn to a member of the Privy Council for a response.

**Patrick Bonin:** Are you one of the 15 or so members of Parliament concerned about the government's approach—

[English]

**Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.):** I have a point of order on the relevance of the question.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin:** I think that it's in the public interest to know whether our colleague feels concerned about the current situation.

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

The concern that I want to address today relates to floods and droughts. I would like us to stay on topic.

Thank you.

**Patrick Bonin:** I can see that you might speak up, as another member did. One day, I would like others to speak up.

You said that Quebec environmental groups supported your bill.

Which groups?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Sorry. I said that Mr. Bexte referred to groups, but I also said that a researcher at UQAM supported—

**Patrick Bonin:** I understood that.

**Tatiana Auguste:** —the bill.

**Patrick Bonin:** Are any of Quebec's environmental groups currently supporting your bill?

**Tatiana Auguste:** The Mouvement Mères au front certainly expressed support for this bill.

**Patrick Bonin:** Has this group formally endorsed the bill?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Obviously, between the two elections, it was a bit difficult to get things quickly. However, this group expressed verbal support at a meeting in my constituency.

**Patrick Bonin:** No other group has expressed support.

We actually want to avoid duplication. In Quebec, we protect the land. The Quebec government adopted a strategy and plan to protect the land from flood risks for the period from 2020 to 2028.

Have you seen this plan?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I haven't seen this plan, unfortunately.

**Patrick Bonin:** You have no idea about the content of Quebec's flood plan or its flood risk strategy.

Is that right?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I have a general idea, but not specifically for Quebec.

**Patrick Bonin:** How do you think a federal strategy would enhance Quebec's current plan?

**Tatiana Auguste:** It isn't a federal strategy. This would be a national strategy.

**Patrick Bonin:** It's the same thing.

**Tatiana Auguste:** No. It isn't quite the same thing.

The goal would be to have a round table. A number of Quebecers, including the researcher from UQAM, said that we should be able to not only share best practices, but also help the country. We don't live in a silo. If there are droughts or floods in other parts of Canada, we're all affected.

**Patrick Bonin:** So there would be a round table.

Why do we need legislation if your government won't make a financial commitment or doesn't have the money?

• (1615)

**Tatiana Auguste:** I think that the first step is to have legislation. Then Parliament must decide whether and how to allocate funding. As you know, we can't ask for money through private members' bills.

**Patrick Bonin:** Why do we need a bill in order to have a flood strategy?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Sorry?

**Patrick Bonin:** Why do we need a bill in order to have a flood strategy?

Why do you need a bill in order to do this?

**Tatiana Auguste:** The bill will really help to make progress on something that could be useful for everyone.

**Patrick Bonin:** At this time, what can your bill do that the Meteorological Service of Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada can't?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Canada currently has 10 provinces and 3 territories. They all do things in silos—

**Patrick Bonin:** What can your proposal do that Environment and Climate Change Canada can't?

**Tatiana Auguste:** The evidence lies in the fact that we have 13 entities working in silos. The goal would be to align—

**Patrick Bonin:** You need a bill to do this.

Is that right?

**Tatiana Auguste:** It's about speaking the same data language. This would help to explain it. I also recommend talking to Dr. Pomeroy, who is an expert.

**Patrick Bonin:** I understand, but it's your bill.

**Tatiana Auguste:** Exactly. However, he also worked on the bill. So he could answer your question, because he's a data expert.

**Patrick Bonin:** Why do you need a bill? What can't we do right now? Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Meteorological Service of Canada have expertise in this area and qualified employees.

What wouldn't they be able to do? That's what I don't understand.

**Tatiana Auguste:** It isn't about what they wouldn't be able to do. It's about getting something done together to avoid having 13 entities working in silos, as is the case right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

[English]

We will now turn to Ms. Anstey for five minutes, please.

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

Thank you, Ms. Auguste, for appearing today. We always want to strengthen legislation and to ask the important questions that Canadians might be asking of us.

I want to pick up from where my colleague left off and just ask specifically what is preventing ECCC from endeavouring to do this coordination process amongst the provinces right now. As my colleague rightly pointed out, it's within its mandate.

What do you see as the gap? Why is this work not happening, and why is this legislation required?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Right now, this legislation would be, in my opinion, the first step in the right direction to signal that we need this for flood and drought prevention. It would be great not to have 13 different ways of speaking to data and to be able to have one way for all of the provinces to communicate in order to really know what's going on.

**Carol Anstey:** I understand that, but is there a gap within ECCC that's not allowing that coordination to happen right now? If it's the priority of the government, why wouldn't it just use an existing federal department to make it a priority to coordinate amongst the provinces? That's the question.

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

I couldn't speak to a gap at ECCC at the moment, but I know that for me this legislation is about directing the conversation and directing it in the right direction. It's about stepping in the right direction and into doing the right work to help Canadians.

**Carol Anstey:** Okay. It's just a signal. It's not actually concrete.

**Tatiana Auguste:** I think the strategy will be very concrete, but having the legislation is really signalling what we need to be doing.

**Carol Anstey:** It's a private member's bill, obviously, so you can't ask for costs. Are you open to putting some assurances in the legislation that this won't just lead to a bunch of new administration, and that, rather, any costs would go to frontline infrastructure and not to an expansion of existing government departments?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

I am open to any amendment that can make this bill better and make it work for all Canadians. I think also that this bill will sit within the already existing bodies of government.

**Carol Anstey:** Okay.

I know that this is a reiteration of another piece of legislation that died in the last Parliament. I wanted to ask about your timelines. There is a sense of urgency around this issue, yet you're talking about two full years to draw up a plan and then five years to report

it. I'm just wondering in terms of the urgency conversation why there are these very long-drawn-out timelines within the legislation.

● (1620)

**Tatiana Auguste:** In terms of collecting data, you need more time to collect data and then time to work on the actual national strategy, to give the people who are going to work on it more time. I'm open to reducing the time, if you see fit, or something like that.

**Carol Anstey:** Okay. That's putting in place more narrow timelines. That's great.

You also talked about different provinces and municipalities and their different methods of forecasting. One of the things I'm faced with in my riding is a lot of smaller municipalities. My concern, of course, is that they would lack the technical capability to use sophisticated modelling data.

How would you ensure they don't get lost and are able to use these resources the same as other larger areas do?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for your question.

Through this bill, they will be able to bring the expertise from elsewhere, but it will also give these municipalities a chance to speak to their reality. Somebody that's so far away cannot speak to the reality of the municipalities you're talking about. Having everybody able to put their realities on paper and able to say what the reality of the—

**Carol Anstey:** That's just to tell their story. I'm talking more about tapping into the modelling data, though.

**Tatiana Auguste:** For the modelling data, it would be a recollecting, I would say, of a lot of the data we have and then extrapolating. For your question, if it's possible, Dr. Pomeroy could answer, since he's in modelling.

**The Chair:** We can have a short answer and then we'll move on.

Go ahead, Mr. Pomeroy.

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** Yes, I would be happy to.

For the modelling data, what has been developed in Canada is open source and open data. The transparency is crucially important, but it requires provincial interpretation, because the provincial governments manage our water resources. That means they manage the reservoirs, the dams, the dikes and the flood control structures in cities and others.

They also know their populations. In the Prairies, where I'm from, it's about sloughs spilling over and breaking grid roads. Things like this are of great concern in the very flat areas. In the high mountains, it's about how quickly water is rushing down the hill slope and carrying debris. In the lake country of the boreal forest throughout Canada, it's about the management of those lakes and reservoirs, which are often interprovincial and highly complex. That data always needs the provincial interpretation to the communities, and they have those established frameworks there.

What this is about is empowering the provincial forecasters with federal supercomputer power and federal models. Some of them are still using spreadsheets for doing some of this, with very low budgets, but this is to help them out and to bring up the standard across the country, so that we have a fit-for-purpose system across the country, which we currently do not have.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Dr. Pomeroy.

We need to move on to our next line of questioning. We'll go to Mr. Grant for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Watchorn.

[*English*]

Mademoiselle Auguste, it's very good to see you. I know how passionate you are about this bill. I know the first thing you texted me afterwards was that you wanted to get this bill through as fast as possible, and I really raise my hands in thanks for your having so much passion.

I would like to go back to Mr. Pomeroy, if I may, and talk about the flooding. It doesn't respect borders. The Ottawa River, for example, runs between Ontario and Quebec. With the absence of a co-ordinated national forecasting framework, what does that mean in practice for communities that sit within shared or interprovincial boundaries?

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** This would mean that with federal quarter-backing of how we approach this, we bring the best capabilities of two, three or four provinces, together with that federal backing, to come up with coherent forecasts and predictions.

Also, I should reiterate that most of our waters, where most of Canada's population lives, are shared with the United States. This also means relations with the United States, which are far better done for Canada-U.S. relations. It is entirely a federal concern in the United States; it is not a state concern. This is something where the federal government can bring more weight to that negotiating table with the Americans.

• (1625)

**Wade Grant:** That's a good point. I'm from British Columbia, where large flooding along the Sumas Prairie spreads across to Washington state, so I really respect that answer.

You also spoke about engagement and coordination with indigenous communities. I was at a very remote indigenous community very recently. What can you tell us about indigenous knowledge

and how that can help strengthen a national approach to flood and drought forecasting?

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** Our observations of water heights and velocities go back to about 1910, but first nations have memories about floods that go back centuries. It's an extremely valuable body of information. They've also learned how to understand aspects of weather through their traditions that give them some predictive powers, particularly amongst the elders in their communities. Bringing this information in does certainly help with the forecast for their communities, but also I think it could help with forecasts for other communities so that we really have every body of knowledge brought forward for this problem.

**Wade Grant:** Mr. Watchorn.

[*Translation*]

**Tim Watchorn:** Thank you, Mr. Grant.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Auguste, for introducing the bill today. I think that it's a very important bill. This bill is so important that, in the previous Parliament, all the political parties supported it. This must be said, because everyone sees the importance of the bill as it stands.

Mr. Pomeroy, when I was the mayor of a small municipality, we had problems with bridges and culverts because of climate change. I would like to know how climate change will be integrated into the new calculations. I know that the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec uses new tables—called “Intensity-Duration-Frequency”, or IDF—to design culverts.

How will the modelling be done to enable municipalities to really benefit from this bill?

[*English*]

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** The same models that will be used for flood prediction can also be used for flood-plain prediction. The way to do that is to couple these to the climate change models of Environment Canada and then run future weather scenarios so that we see what the floods will be in 2050, 2080 and 2100 and build our infrastructure for the future, not for the past that our records present.

This is something that's essential for us to do, and the environment auditor brought it up as well that it is important for Canada. This bill actually addresses that through building that national prediction capacity.

[*Translation*]

**Tim Watchorn:** Thank you.

We all know that municipal costs rise every time a climate-related event occurs.

Ms. Auguste, will Bill C-241 include provisions for cost predictions and modelling, which would help municipalities save money by making the adaptations proposed in the bill?

Mr. Pomeroy, you can also answer the question.

[English]

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** Here's just a quick ratio. The recent economic study showed the value of water data. The economic return is 12:1, so 12 times the benefit of the cost of the data collection. One can assume a similar ratio for the information that would come from this system.

**Tim Watchorn:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Watchorn.

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

**Patrick Bonin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll summarize the conversation.

Ms. Auguste, we seem to be in a political communication film right now. I haven't heard you say what new things your bill would bring to the table that couldn't be done today by the Meteorological Service of Canada. What needs does it meet?

We aren't against the principle. On the contrary, we're saying that the government isn't doing enough, that it isn't taking the climate crisis seriously, that it's fuelling this crisis with pipelines and that it has an insufficient adaptation plan with a reduced budget. However, we don't want new structures for the sake of new structures. The Prime Minister didn't pass a bill to build pipelines with Alberta, nor to develop an auto strategy that weakens the previous climate objectives. That's the challenge.

Our time here is nonetheless valuable. I don't see why you need a bill. What you need is to obtain money and to move forward with your concern.

I would like you to tell me exactly why this bill exists. If the issue isn't resources, it's a lack of money. We know this, and you should be allocating more. Your bill doesn't bring in any money. Since it's a private member's bill, it can't.

What are the current legal and administrative barriers preventing the government from improving the meteorological services provided in Canada? What are the concrete factors?

• (1630)

**Tatiana Auguste:** Thank you for the question.

I would like to tell you that this is a private member's bill. As a member of Parliament who isn't on the Privy Council, I must use this type of legislation specifically to be able to do this. I can't speak for the government. Again, I'm not on the Privy Council—

**Patrick Bonin:** I know. I'm trying to understand.

**Tatiana Auguste:** I'm trying to tell you that this is my approach. I'm using the current tools available to me to propose a strategy that—

**Patrick Bonin:** I'll repeat my question—

**Tatiana Auguste:** This strategy will ensure consistency for the provinces and territories. These 13 entities work in silos, as we're seeing right now on the climate front.

**Patrick Bonin:** What's ultimately standing in the way of greater consistency?

From a legal and administrative standpoint, what's preventing the government from doing this today? That was my question, and I didn't get an answer.

**Tatiana Auguste:** At this time, the different provinces aren't collaborating.

**Patrick Bonin:** However, you don't need a bill to promote collaboration.

**Tatiana Auguste:** I need a bill to be able to do this type of process, because I'm a member of Parliament.

**Patrick Bonin:** However, we need—

**Tatiana Auguste:** I need to go through this process to be able to do something of this nature.

**Patrick Bonin:** Okay.

Tell your government to take concrete action instead of debating a bill that it doesn't need.

**Tatiana Auguste:** For me, this bill is very important and we need it. Some people have asked us for it. I also think that it's important to have a national strategy on droughts and floods.

**Patrick Bonin:** Okay. That's fine. I understood.

**Tatiana Auguste:** You may not think that it's important, but it's very important to me.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

[English]

We will now turn to Mr. Leslie for five minutes.

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

Thank you for being here, Ms. Auguste.

I'd like to continue on the path my colleague was on.

This bill requires Minister Dabrusin to develop a national strategy for flood and drought forecasting. The commentary has been on what might be in that strategy, but that's what this bill is. It's a plan to make a plan. It passed in the House of Commons but not the Senate. Parliament was prorogued. That was about 18 months ago. I understand why you brought it forward again.

In the bill, there is a two-year window for the minister to come back with a strategy. Given that there was unanimous support in the last Parliament, why do you think the minister hasn't brought forth a strategy of her own accord, without this legislation?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I couldn't speak to why the Minister of the Environment hasn't done such things.

It's a bill that is important to me. That's why, when I had a chance to do a private member's bill, it was one of the things I wanted to bring back.

**Branden Leslie:** Are you a member of the Liberal climate caucus? Would that be an avenue to try to get the government to take action, rather than going through the very lengthy process of reintroducing a private member's bill?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I'm sorry. I didn't catch the first part of what you said.

**Branden Leslie:** I understand there was a meeting of the Liberal climate caucus last night. I'm curious about whether you were there and whether you think it is an avenue for your own party to bring this to government, so we don't have to—again—wait however long it's going to take this bill to pass before the minister takes action.

**Tatiana Auguste:** No, I was not at a meeting last night. Thank you for asking.

I'm working on this bill out of my care for the environment and the issues my community has faced regarding floods and droughts.

**Branden Leslie:** What provincial governments have you talked to about this bill?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I have not spoken to provincial governments.

**Branden Leslie:** You have spoken to none of them.

I feel it would be useful to know what they think before a minister is mandated to create a strategy that includes them.

**Tatiana Auguste:** I didn't engage in formal conversations with the provincial governments, again because of resources—it's a private member's bill—but the bill prescribes collaboration. It's not a forced thing. It's really about what everybody's willing to bring to the table for the greater good.

**Branden Leslie:** We had the commissioner of the environment here a couple of weeks ago. He recently wrote a rather scathing report on a flood mapping disaster out of Natural Resources Canada and ECCO that has wasted at least \$11.5 million of taxpayers' money.

What are your thoughts on that report, and how would this bill potentially interact with that?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I did read the report, and I think some of the recommendations in this report would be fully or partially addressed by Bill C-241.

**Branden Leslie:** Bill C-241 says that the minister has to make a strategy. In the context of that report, how do you feel about the government buying data that's out of date, can't be updated and is going to be of no use to people anytime in the future?

• (1635)

**Tatiana Auguste:** If I could maybe come back to.... I believe the first part was about the recommendations of the report, if I'm not mistaken.

**Branden Leslie:** I'm just curious. It was a scathing report. It's related to flood and drought forecasting. How do you feel about the presentation?

Perhaps you didn't see the exchange. You should certainly go check it out. It was about the lack of information and clarity around how \$11.5 million was spent on data that's already out of date, can't be updated and is proprietary to the owner. I'm curious about your thoughts on the recommendations from the environment commissioner.

**Tatiana Auguste:** Yes, I can go through my thoughts on the recommendations.

Regarding point 24 of the report, I believe that paragraph 3(3)(c) in my private member's bill would prescribe for the possibility of developing a national system of prevention for flooding and droughts but also the delineation of actual and future plains that could be flooded. This directly comes to the objective of the bill, which is within—I'm sorry; I only know the word in French—

[Translation]

Canada-wide mapping, which is more reliable and better adapted to climate change.

[English]

**Branden Leslie:** My colleague asked you about some Quebec groups. Could you table a list of stakeholders who have publicly supported this legislation in this Parliament? One of my colleagues mentioned agricultural groups. You mentioned that you talked to somebody in Saskatchewan.

Could you table with this committee all of the groups that have publicly supported this legislation?

**Tatiana Auguste:** I could definitely table something to the committee.

**Branden Leslie:** Could you give us a few examples of who these groups are?

**Tatiana Auguste:** Yes. I have Mères au front, which is a climate-related group that is supporting this, as well as a couple of engineering associations that we've also spoken to. If you want more detail, I could table a list.

**Branden Leslie:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Leslie.

We will now go to Mr. Malette for five minutes.

**Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, MP Auguste. I'm appreciative of your time and your efforts in this regard.

I also want to make note of the fact that in the previous iteration of this private member's bill, before it failed to proceed from prorogation, it received support from all parties. Therefore, this clearly is, I would think, on the right course here.

My question now would be for Professor Pomeroy. You mentioned that forecasting systems are currently fragmented across jurisdictions. How would this bill improve coordination while still respecting provincial responsibilities and expertise?

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** First, I'll outline where we're starting from.

We, as a university group, hosted a meeting of the 13 provincial and territorial flood forecasters with the federal government to explore capabilities. They had never met each other before. That's where we're at right now. We have 13 different wheels being built independently. That coordination, the community of practice, is an immediate win on this to trade best practices and say, "Hey, this worked in Manitoba. Try it in New Brunswick."

The second point is that the federal government does not do flood forecasting. It does weather forecasting, but its models could be deployed for flood forecasting capabilities. It has not done so, so as not to tread on the provincial responsibilities under the Canadian Constitution, which are for water management and emergency aspects. That's why a bill is required to bring people together.

I think there's reluctance to put out a federal flood forecast like the U.S. would do, because it would tread on these provincial responsibilities and cause confusion. That's why it has to be a co-operative national system.

**Chris Malette:** Madam Chair, I'll be sharing my time with MP Greaves, but I have one more quick question, if I may, for Professor Pomeroy.

This bill recognizes the disproportionate impacts that floods and droughts can have on farmers in rural communities. You mentioned that you are from Saskatchewan.

Could you speak to how improved forecasting in this regard could support the agricultural sector?

**Dr. John Pomeroy:** Yes. I'm trained in agricultural engineering, so it's of great interest to me.

The farmers need to know for how long their fields will be flooded and how large an area will be flooded. If they have advance notice, they can open drains and even cut grid roads to allow flood waters to pass.

It's the same with droughts. If we can move to accurate seasonal forecasting of droughts, that's enough time for farmers to change their plans for the year. This applies in terms of what they're going to seed, what their cattle herd sizes are going to be and whether they need to store extra water in some dugouts, as well as provincial agencies, to deal with their reservoirs.

• (1640)

**Chris Malette:** Thank you.

**Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.):** Good afternoon, colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, Ms. Auguste.

Thank you for being here today.

[*English*]

Thank you for bringing forward this private member's bill, which speaks to a topic of the utmost importance to many of our communities. As the member of Parliament for Victoria my community, unfortunately, is periodically afflicted by both drought and flooding, so these are experiences with which we are intimately familiar.

In fact, in 2021, our province of British Columbia was afflicted by a series of extreme weather events that had devastating impacts right across BC. The extreme flooding in that year not only cut off my region of greater Victoria from the rest of Vancouver Island, but it was actually severe enough that it cut off the city of Metro Vancouver and the port of Vancouver from the rest of Canada. The economic and social impacts as well as the physical damage of these kinds of events are difficult to overstate, so planning appropriately really does seem to be an item of the greatest urgency for this country and this government.

That being said, could you elaborate on how a national strategy, as outlined in your private member's bill, would help governments, the provinces and other agencies to proactively protect infrastructure in the face of extreme weather events such as flooding?

**Tatiana Auguste:** The reality is that each jurisdiction manages different predictions, data collection and archiving technologies. None of them are interoperable. That means that in B.C., you have your way of looking at flood and drought, but it's not easy for you to look at the data from a neighbouring province or from neighbouring municipalities that have the same realities.

You wouldn't be able to exchange that priceless information, because you're not speaking the same language sometimes and you're not using the same models. It's really a way to help with that by being able to say, for example, "This is something we've been through in Quebec and we can help Victoria while it's going through this, because we have now learned from these experiences," but in order for that to happen, we need to speak the same language and talk about the same things.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Greaves.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Dr. Auguste and Dr. Pomeroy, for being here with us.

That concludes our first hour.

[*English*]

We are going to suspend briefly to switch the witnesses over. We'll recommence in a couple of minutes.

Thank you.

• (1640)

(Pause)

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Thanks, everybody. We are going to start up for our second hour of the environment and sustainable development committee.

We now have witnesses from several federal departments here with us to provide some opening statements and to field questions.

Welcome to all of our witnesses. I'll briefly introduce them.

We have Gemma Boag from the Canada Water Agency, Dr. Aman Deep from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Hieu Vu from the Department of Natural Resources, Kenza El Bied from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and Stephanie Lane, Doris Fortin and Guy Kuate from the Department of the Environment.

I believe we are getting five minutes of opening remarks from Ms. Fortin.

I will pass the floor to you. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

**Doris Fortin (Director General, Policy, Planning and Partnerships Directorate, Department of the Environment):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, members of the committee.

My name is Doris Fortin. I'm the director general of policy, planning and partnerships at the Meteorological Service of Canada, which is part of Environment and Climate Change Canada. I am pleased to be with you today. I am joined by several colleagues, whom the chair has introduced.

Thank you for inviting me to discuss Bill C-241 with you.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Flooding, as you know, is the most frequent and costly hazard in Canada. In addition to the significant costs incurred by Canadians—insured and non-insured costs from flooding—the Government of Canada has provided up to \$230 million annually in post-flood relief between 2016 and 2025.

The bill is being introduced at a time when Canada's governments, at all levels, are working to improve how we support Canadians' resilience and, in doing so, are improving coordination across all of our businesses to enhance the preparedness for, the response to and the recovery from flooding events.

[*Translation*]

If passed, the bill would require the Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature to develop a national flood and drought forecasting strategy in collaboration with the ministers of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Housing and Infrastructure, Energy and Natural Resources and Public Safety.

The minister will also be required to consult with provincial governments, indigenous governments and other relevant stakeholders, such as representatives from Canadian universities, civil society organizations and industry, particularly the insurance industry.

[*English*]

These consultations are key, as provinces and territories have primary legislative responsibilities for managing water resources within their territories. They are also responsible for land use and flood infrastructure. The federal government's role in this area involves supporting provinces and territories, including facilitating national coordination and providing environmental monitoring data.

For example, the national hydrological service, which is part of the meteorological service of Canada, collects, interprets and disseminates standardized water quantity information in Canada through the national hydrometric program. It does that in collaboration with all 13 provinces and territories. The program is cost-shared, which means that the federal government and the provinces and territories put money towards the program. This program basically acts as Canada's authoritative source for surface-water quantity data for use by all levels of governments and the Canadian public. The data supports flood and drought forecasting, water management and emergency response.

The Canada Water Agency—also a federal department—has a mandate for the improvement of freshwater management in Canada. Through its leadership, it fosters effective collaboration across the federal system, and improved coordination and collaboration with provinces, territories and indigenous people, to proactively address national and regional transboundary freshwater challenges and opportunities.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is the national lead for drought monitoring and reporting. It produces monthly drought assessments through the Canadian drought monitor, drawing on existing data sources, including data that the meteorological service of Canada produces from weather forecasting.

[*Translation*]

We know there are improvements to be made. Reports published by Public Safety Canada have acknowledged that there is a lack of coordination between different levels of government for flood forecasting and that few Canadians are aware of the available data, their personal risk level and the information that could help them mitigate risks.

The bill outlines specific elements that a strategy should include, including an assessment of the need for and benefits of national coordination, new investments and the application of new technologies for flood and drought forecasting. Another required element is an assessment of development opportunities for national flood and drought forecasting.

[*English*]

As proposed, the bill would also require an assessment of the need for modelling to identify properties and infrastructure at risk from floods. The federal government has taken action in related areas through, for example, the flood hazard identification and mapping program and the development of federally identified flood risk areas datasets, as well as collaborative work with academia to develop a national, open-source flood hazard model. The bill would also require preparing a proposal to establish a national hydrological and water resources forecasting service.

[Translation]

In short, through Bill C-241, the federal government will continue to play its national coordinating role to help fill existing gaps in support of forecasting, while obviously working with the provinces, territories and other relevant stakeholders in this case.

Thank you all. We look forward to your questions.

• (1700)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Fortin.

We will begin with the Conservatives and Mr. Leslie for six minutes, please.

**Branden Leslie:** Thank you all for being here.

As the sponsor mentioned, the Canada Water Agency is likely a major player in the outcome of this legislation, should it come to fruition. I'm going to start there.

The government says that more than 20 federal departments and agencies already had freshwater responsibilities prior to your existence, so what exact authority, tool or capability does the Canada Water Agency have that the other 20 do not?

**Gemma Boag (Director General, Freshwater Policy and Engagement, Canada Water Agency):** Thank you for the question.

As we said in the opening remarks, the agency has a mandate to foster coordination and collaboration amongst those departments and agencies. One of the ways we do that is by managing the federal freshwater committee.

I won't go through all of the other functions the agency has, but one of the main areas is delivering what we call the freshwater ecosystem initiatives in eight major basins across the country. The largest program is in the Great Lakes. Out east, there is the Wolastoq or Saint John River, and the St. Lawrence River. We also have Lake of the Woods, Lake Winnipeg, the Mackenzie basin and the Fraser River.

**Branden Leslie:** I'd like to come back to Lake Winnipeg after.

Recognizing that your role is about coordination, if the problem was fragmentation across federal departments, why was the solution to create department number 21 instead of simply making one existing minister more accountable?

**Gemma Boag:** In terms of the functions of the agency, one way we are trying to work on building better coordination and collaboration between departments is by bringing them together in a forum like the federal freshwater committee. Also, when we work in those major basins, the agency, for example, brings together multiple federal departments.

**Branden Leslie:** I'm still struggling to figure out what exactly you do here. ECCC still does all of the freshwater science and the monitoring. The provinces still manage water overall. Municipalities manage their local infrastructure and watershed bodies and do a lot of the delivery of programming.

Beyond the general coordination, the bringing together, meetings and maybe some branding, is it grants? What exactly do you do?

**Gemma Boag:** In those eight major basins, we deliver grants and contributions funding in collaboration with provinces, territories and indigenous partners to address significant freshwater issues that have been identified, together with partners, in those regions. Some of those collaborations are long-standing. On the Great Lakes, it reaches back a couple of decades and looks at addressing water quality issues and also restoring areas of concern in the Great Lakes. That would be an example of—

**Branden Leslie:** I'm from Manitoba, so I have some bias here. You mentioned the fact that the Great Lakes have received the lion's share of this. My understanding is that it's about \$420 million to the Great Lakes initially, yet you decided to headquarter the office, whether it falls under ECCC or whatever ends up happening now, in Winnipeg.

How much total funding has been allocated to Lake Winnipeg?

**Gemma Boag:** In budget 2023, there was an investment of \$650 million over 10 years in all of the freshwater ecosystem initiatives. As you mentioned, \$420 million was allocated to the Great Lakes. The agency works to deliver the remaining funding in the other ecosystem initiatives over that period.

**Branden Leslie:** How much have they gotten at Lake Winnipeg?

**Gemma Boag:** My colleague who runs those programs is not here today, but I could offer to share the funding that has been—

**Branden Leslie:** Sure. If you could send it, that would be great.

Could you also have them send us—or maybe you could tell us today—what exactly has been improved since that money started flowing, particularly to Lake Winnipeg? Have we seen a reduction in phosphorus, nutrient-loading and algae blooms, or improved monitoring of coverage regions or any enforcement outcomes?

What I'd love to know, and what I'm driving at here, is what the measurable results are of the Canada Water Agency. It's lovely to talk about announcements of dollar values being sent to somebody to do something, but I'd love to know what's actually being achieved. Do you have anything to offer today, or could you have your colleague submit that same information in data form?

**Gemma Boag:** Yes, we could send a written follow-up with some of the results information.

**Branden Leslie:** As the agency, can you compel any federal department, province, municipality or funding recipient to change course if the freshwater outcomes are not improving, if your data shows that really nothing has changed, or as an agency, are you limited to convening those coordinating conferences and advising? Do you have any sort of capacity to compel changes when things aren't actually improving on the ground?

• (1705)

**Gemma Boag:** In those water bodies, that work is primarily done through intergovernmental agreements and interdepartmental agreements, where we work with other federal departments and agencies to, for example, set priorities or results that we're looking to achieve. Those are generally set through collaborative mechanisms. The agreements and approaches are reviewed regularly. If there was to be a change, it would likely be done through that process. It would depend in each context.

**Branden Leslie:** Given that there are 20 existing departments involved in water, if the Canada Water Agency just didn't exist tomorrow, what can you point to that Canadians would see disappear? I'm not talking about a meeting or a framework, but what would change?

**Gemma Boag:** To answer that question, I would go back to the functions of the programs that the agency does have—for example, those eight large ecosystem initiatives across the country that are delivering that on-the-ground programming. That would be the nature of the programming that the agency delivers.

**Branden Leslie:** It's handing the money to somebody else and hoping.

**Gemma Boag:** In terms of being able to summarize the current functions and programs of the agency, that is an example of what the agency's working on.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Leslie.

We'll now go to Mr. Greaves and Mr. Malette for six minutes.

**Will Greaves:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be sharing my time with the honourable gentleman from Bay of Quinte.

Good afternoon, witnesses. Thank you so much for joining us.

I'm not entirely sure whom to direct this to, but potentially it's Mr. Vu. If somebody else is better suited, please feel free to direct the question to them.

I'm wondering if you could explain, for the benefit of the committee, how it is that the federal government currently tracks key infrastructure across the country for vulnerability to extreme weather events such as flooding, drought or wildfires. Is there currently a system that identifies particularly vulnerable infrastructure? What does that process look like?

**Hieu Vu (Director General, Canada Centre for Mapping and Earth Observation, Department of Natural Resources):** Within Natural Resources Canada, we have the centre for mapping and earth observation. It's basically all the maps. We map multiple layers. That includes buildings and infrastructure.

We also work very closely with provinces and territories. We have a geospatial strategy and the Canadian Council on Geomatics, where we work with provinces and territories. We try to share standardized data to the extent possible so that the information can be bought once and reused often. Then we try to update those maps as regularly as we can for multiple purposes.

**Will Greaves:** In your view, then, if there were a system that made it easier to compare data from different provinces and territories and across jurisdictions around, obviously, flood and drought

risk, would that data facilitate measures to ensure the safety of critical infrastructure around the country?

**Hieu Vu:** Interoperability is something that we find very important. The Canadian Council on Geomatics, which is the FPT partnership, just recently published our geospatial strategy in 2025 to deal with that exact issue: how to standardize data and how to make sure that data is interoperable and that we're not overspending but spending once and then reusing the data for multiple purposes.

**Will Greaves:** Thank you.

In my remaining time, I'll quickly move to Ms. El Bied.

Thank you for being here.

One of the risks that we're obviously facing in British Columbia, as well as in other parts of the country, is extreme wildfires. Could you speak to how better mapping and data around drought might more effectively inform your team on wildfire risks?

**Kenza El Bied (Director General, Emergency Management Policy and Outreach, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** At the moment, as you know, Public Safety is the lead for collecting the data and sharing a forecast for wildfires and floods with provinces, territories and stakeholders.

In terms of drought data, that is not data that Public Safety has, but this information would definitely help us to expand our risk assessment when we will be delivering that on a seasonal basis.

**Will Greaves:** Thank you very much.

I'll pass along my time now, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Chris Malette:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, I'll direct my question to Director Fortin.

From your agency's perspective, what are the biggest gaps in Canada's current flood and drought forecasting system?

• (1710)

**Doris Fortin:** Thank you very much for the question.

At the meteorological service of Canada, as I mentioned earlier, we have the responsibility of coordinating and working with provinces and territories to collect data about water levels and flow in rivers across all provinces and territories. Because there is a division of jurisdictional powers between the federal government and the provinces and territories, the provinces and territories take this data to forecast floods in their territories—in some but not all cases. They do that with varying levels of ability. By having a more coordinated approach through harmonization, we can build on the system and learn from one another, thereby strengthening the system as a whole. That's definitely a possibility.

From the perspective of the meteorological service of Canada... You can understand, of course, that weather conditions are impacting flood and drought forecasting. Provincial, territorial and federal collaboration means we can put these different systems together so that they're interlinked. We can then take this weather information and inform provinces on what's going to happen and help them figure things out from a flood or drought perspective.

**Chris Malette:** Further to that, what would success look like five years after the implementation of this, in your estimation?

**Doris Fortin:** Success could look like a strengthened ability, in different provinces and territories, to deliver flood forecasting in their areas. I think we can advance science together in collaboration to improve some of our forecasting abilities.

I can speak from a weather perspective, for example. Forecasting precipitation is still quite challenging. By putting efforts into this, we can help improve our ability to forecast—maybe forecast with longer lead times to allow people to prepare for events coming their way.

**Chris Malette:** Thank you.

What is my time, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 12 seconds.

**Chris Malette:** I'll head back, then. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Malette.

[*Translation*]

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

**Patrick Bonin:** Thank you all for being here.

We had discussions in the previous hour to try to understand what prevents the department from simply drafting a strategy.

Would it be possible to do that without having a bill?

**Doris Fortin:** The bill acts as a catalyst to energize efforts in this direction.

**Patrick Bonin:** Could you catalyze your own efforts?

**Doris Fortin:** I think we need to catalyze our efforts together with all the provinces and territories.

**Patrick Bonin:** Do you need a bill to do that? That's my question.

**Stephanie Lane (Executive Director, Legislative Governance, Department of the Environment):** We don't need a bill to create a strategy. That falls under federal jurisdiction.

As Ms. Fortin mentioned, there is a timeline built into the bill. For example, in two years, we have to create a strategy, and in five years, we have to report to Parliament. I think that while we don't need a bill to create the strategy, a bill gives us structure and guidance as to what needs to be included in the strategy led by Parliament. That also includes requests for consultations and things like that. It provides a framework for the strategy directed by Parliament.

**Patrick Bonin:** If I were the environment minister, some things would be different, but that's not going to happen.

Let's say there's a climate emergency and it has to be done quickly. If I asked you to produce a strategy, how long would it take you?

**Doris Fortin:** What limits the development of a true joint strategy, meaning with the provinces, territories and key stakeholders, such as indigenous communities, is the time needed to engage and consult in order to come up with a strategy that has consensus.

• (1715)

**Patrick Bonin:** Then, how long would it take you?

**Doris Fortin:** It's hard for me to say at this point, because we haven't assembled all the people who will have to make the effort. I imagine it could take a year or two.

**Patrick Bonin:** Okay. Then, about a year.

I'm trying to understand the budget allocated to efforts to adapt to climate change. It's quite complicated. In the 2024-25 estimates, they were on the order of \$569 million. When I look at the estimates for 2026-27, I see only \$373 million.

Can you explain that discrepancy to me? One would expect the amounts for adaptation to increase, given that the needs are increasing.

Is this creative accounting or is it spread over time?

**Doris Fortin:** I'm not in a position to give you details on climate adaptation programs and funding. However, we can provide you with that information. Environment and Climate Change Canada can provide you with an explanation.

Some federal government programs have a limited lifespan. That may be why you're seeing those figures. There's a normal cycle of program renewal, but I don't know if that's the case here. That is one possible reason, but I would like to give you a more definitive answer to your question later.

**Patrick Bonin:** Thank you. I would appreciate that.

I'm thinking of the Canada Water Agency. Couldn't your department have done that as part of this initiative? For example, could the agency have proposed a strategy and made improvements in this area?

[English]

**Doris Fortin:** Could the agency have developed a strategy like the one that's being proposed here?

**Gemma Boag:** I wouldn't want to speculate on whether it could have developed this strategy. In terms of the functions of the agencies, Environment and Climate Change Canada works on flood prediction and Agriculture Canada works on drought prediction, so I would say that in terms of developing this strategy, those organizations could be in a position to develop a strategy.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin:** Okay.

Why would it be useful or necessary to set up a new government organization that would operate in parallel with the Meteorological Service of Canada?

**Doris Fortin:** You want to know why the bill suggests that a national service be set up.

Is that correct?

**Patrick Bonin:** I want to know why it would be useful or necessary, when we already have the Meteorological Service of Canada.

What can't you do that a new structure would do?

**Doris Fortin:** I can't really speak to the specifics of the member's bill. She was with us earlier and presented the bill to you. However, I think the purpose of the bill is to assess the extent to which setting up such a service would be useful or not. The bill doesn't necessarily mention setting anything up, as I recall.

To answer your question about what is preventing us from doing that right now, there is the division of powers between the federal government, the provinces and the territories. At the federal level, the Meteorological Service of Canada currently manages the program that collects data on watercourse levels and flows. However, the provinces and territories are responsible for making flood forecasts in their jurisdictions, as I mentioned at the outset.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

[English]

We will now go to Mr. Leslie for five minutes.

**Branden Leslie:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to move over to Ag Canada. In the context of this bill, which is seeking to have not only a drought strategy, at least, but a moisture or a flooding strategy, it seems as though the government's drought policy itself is a bit backwards. We're prepared to create a bureaucracy that predicts drought, while we are simultaneously cutting our agricultural research science that helps farmers survive it. Could you help square this circle for me?

**Dr. Aman Deep (Director, Science and Technology Branch, Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food):** Thank you for the question.

As part of the comprehensive expenditure review, I think, for agriculture, our focus was to reduce the overhead and to minimize the impact on the science capacity, to the extent possible. With that in mind, there is no impact on the capacity we used to monitor

drought, and we will continue those activities within our current programming. That's why—

• (1720)

**Branden Leslie:** Are you going to guarantee today that none of the seven research station closings that are happening, one of them in my hometown, will delay the development, the testing, the registration or the commercialization of any drought-resistant seed varieties?

**Dr. Aman Deep:** No, I have said that it's the capacity linked to the drought monitoring, per se. It's the specific group that produces the Canadian drought monitor. That capacity has not been impacted.

In terms of sustainability, we will continue to work on developing those drought-resistant varieties. We will continue to work on soil health and improved water retention. We'll also continue to work on—

**Branden Leslie:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but specific crop breeding, field trials, water-use efficiency trials and drought adaptation projects are specifically being cancelled as part of this. That's what's being cut. That's why it's at direct odds. Sure, we can predict the drought, but if we're not helping our farmers develop drought-resistant wheat seeds, for example, it seems to be very much at odds.

**Dr. Aman Deep:** I would like to highlight that we will continue to have capacity in crop and horticulture breeding. We will continue to have capacity in soil health and management. Sometimes when we close a site, it doesn't mean we will close all the programs. Some of the programs are being consolidated and relocated at our other centres—

**Branden Leslie:** Again, the relocation is the problem. The purpose of multiple testing zones is to have different climatic zones, different moisture conditions and different prairie climates. That's the entire purpose. You take a seed through development and make sure it can be grown everywhere. The greatest outcome of this is AAC Brandon, the largest wheat commodity grown across Canada.

I just don't understand how this will increase our drought resilience in any way, shape or form.

**Dr. Aman Deep:** We do recognize that local conditions matter. That's why we will continue to have those 17 centres across Canada going forward as well. Wherever there is a need to do research within the local community, we will continue to partner with our partners in academia and private organizations. That's what we have already been doing.

**Branden Leslie:** Do you accept that having fewer research stations means fewer scientists working on those locally adapted trials and variety developments that directly impact the drought- or moisture-resistant seeds?

**Dr. Aman Deep:** As I have said, I would like to highlight that for crop breeding and production, we will continue to have strong capacity across Canada, including—

**Branden Leslie:** We're the government; just trust us. I struggle with that.

I'll go back to the Canada Water Agency with my last question.

What benchmarks can Parliament use to judge whether the Canada Water Agency is delivering value for money? Again, what are those targets, timelines and outcomes that should determine whether or not as an agency you are succeeding? If that's something you want to provide in writing, I'm more than happy to hear that too.

**Gemma Boag:** Certainly, we will provide that in writing.

**Branden Leslie:** With that, Madam Chair, you're probably aware or have heard about the CBC story of 14 Liberal MPs writing a letter to the Prime Minister—

**Chris Malette:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

**Branden Leslie:** —about the government abandoning all sorts of environmental policies, so I would like to table the following motion.

**The Chair:** Hold on one moment, Mr. Leslie. There's a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Malette.

**Chris Malette:** I fail to see the scope of this line of questioning as it refers to Bill C-241, Madam Chair. I question the relevance.

**Branden Leslie:** I'm about to table a motion.

**The Chair:** Continue, Mr. Leslie.

**Branden Leslie:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I was saying, we have probably all heard the news about 14 Liberal MPs writing a letter to the Prime Minister about the government abandoning all sorts of environmental policies.

I would like to table the following notice of motion for future consideration:

That the committee request that the Office of the Prime Minister provide, in both official languages, an unredacted copy of the letter reportedly sent to the Prime Minister at the end of April 2026 by 14 Liberal Members of Parliament concerning environmental policy, clean electricity regulations, climate change, and the government's credibility, as reported by CBC/Radio-Canada in the article titled "14 Liberal MPs pen letter to Carney raising concerns over environmental backslide," published on May 22, 2026; and that the letter be provided to the clerk of the committee no later than seven days following the adoption of this motion.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Leslie.

We will continue with our questioning.

I will turn to Mr. Watchorn and Mr. Grant for five minutes.

**Tim Watchorn:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you again to the witnesses for being here today.

I'd like to mention that it's MP Grant's birthday this week.

**An hon. member:** Happy birthday.

**Tim Watchorn:** I'm glad to share my time with him—this week.

We were speaking about the importance of the private member's bill. I'd like you to elaborate a little bit on how the private member's bill will not force but will make sure that the departments all get together and establish a strategy to make sure that flood prediction and drought prediction are better served in the provinces and municipalities.

• (1725)

**Doris Fortin:** I can start on that.

The private member's bill proposes a specific timeline to develop a strategy and report on the results of that. In doing so, it galvanize efforts across many federal departments, which we've discussed. It also galvanizes efforts and collaboration, building on things that already exist and that we're already doing with provinces and territories, and shines a light on the necessity to work together in achieving the goal of the private member's bill.

**Tim Watchorn:** Great. Thank you.

In the first hour, Dr. Pomeroy specified how the computing power and the expertise that's around the table on the federal level can help the provinces and municipalities have better adaptation and therefore save costs. Can you give us a couple of examples of how the federal input is going to save money for everyday Canadians?

**Doris Fortin:** I'll give two examples.

One is very closely linked to the meteorological service of Canada. We have a number of scientists as well as expert meteorologists who run models and predict future weather conditions. Our models are very sophisticated and well recognized around the world. We run these models on a supercomputer, so we have access to a supercomputer. We're able to bring different models together and link them to each other so that we can make that link between weather and water, which I mentioned earlier.

I'll also mention the example that was discussed previously at this committee, which is the flood hazard identification and mapping program that was led by NRCan. I'll turn to my colleague to provide details. Certainly, the work that NRCan did included bringing together provinces and territories. From the meteorological service of Canada, we lent our expertise to support the development of those flood hazard maps, which are engineering quality and can then be used by provinces and territories to make decisions about where they want to invest and where they want to build or not.

**Hieu Vu:** With the flood hazard information and mapping program, the funding there has provided enough resources and collaboration. We have agreements with every province and territory. Through that effective collaboration we were able to create over 450 maps to date. That impacts over 516 communities. These communities now have engineer-level maps they can use to take decisions on their adaptation investments.

We're only partway through this program, which runs out in 2028. We are projecting by the end of the program that we will have over 1,100 communities with this level of flood mapping information to make decisions with.

**Tim Watchorn:** Thank you very much.

**Wade Grant:** Thanks, Mr. Watchorn. Once again, thanks for acknowledging my 32nd birthday. I really appreciate that.

I know I only have a short time, Ms. Fortin.

I live in British Columbia. I'm in a metropolitan area, but there are large swaths of B.C. that are rural and remote towns, and first nations as well. We know that indigenous communities are becoming increasingly essential to environmental policy.

Can you speak to how the department is increasingly approaching indigenous engagement and co-development in its current work?

**Doris Fortin:** Unfortunately, I can only say that the department is doing so. I work in the meteorological service of Canada, so unless one of my colleagues wants to chime in here, I don't have a specific example. We are co-developing. Perhaps my colleague from the Canada Water Agency can speak to their engagement of indigenous communities and people.

**Gemma Boag:** Thanks, Doris.

Yes, in reference to those eight freshwater ecosystem initiatives that we have across the country, my colleagues who deliver those programs work closely with indigenous partners in those basins to look at "on the ground" actions to improve freshwater quality and freshwater health. That includes working with them on indigenous knowledge systems and how we can bring that to bear on the issues in those water bodies. That would be one example. We have others. It's an important part of the work.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

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

**Patrick Bonin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The environment commissioner's report on the federal adaptation action plan notes that there are major problems with it and that it needs to be improved.

Why not address the current shortcomings rather than set up something like a national strategy?

Couldn't we address that in the national adaptation strategy, for example?

**Doris Fortin:** Thank you for the question.

You're right, there are a lot of gaps right now. I also believe there are gaps in terms of our ability to make flood-related predictions in the provinces and territories.

Earlier, I mentioned the flood hazard identification and mapping program, which you discussed in committee a few weeks ago. The program is part of the broader national adaptation strategy. Flooding is included in that.

In the national adaptation strategy, one of the key systems is resilience to natural disasters. It's an intrinsic part of the national adaptation strategy.

**Patrick Bonin:** The environment commissioner also mentioned that bilateral, federal, provincial and territorial action plans had to be prepared in connection with the national adaptation strategy. He emphasized the fact that there was no bilateral, federal or provincial action plan. That is, in fact, one of his main criticisms.

Should that be a priority, since we're talking about working with the provinces?

**Doris Fortin:** Unfortunately, I don't have any information on that particular issue. I could provide you with information in writing at a later date. I would also suggest that you talk to my colleagues inside the department, who are leading the delivery of these programs.

**Patrick Bonin:** The commissioner's report came out in June 2025. A year later, you're telling us that no progress has been made despite the commissioner's criticisms. He said that there was no action plan at the provincial and federal levels.

**Doris Fortin:** I didn't say that it hadn't progressed.

What I told you is that I don't have that information on hand at the moment.

**Patrick Bonin:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

[*English*]

We're now going to Mr. Ross.

Go ahead.

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** We'll then go to Ms. Anstey.

Ms. Fortin, when we're talking about consultation with first nations on the water initiative we're talking about here today, "consultation" is a term that's being thrown around very loosely nowadays, but it has two definitions. One is per section 35 of the Constitution and the pursuant jurisprudence. One is just a basic general notification: "Hey, what's your opinion?"

What form of consultation and what definition are you going to use when you consult over 600 bands in Canada about water?

**Doris Fortin:** I cannot tell you what the bill has in mind for the definition of consultation. I can't speak to that because it's a private member's bill.

**Ellis Ross:** Is it a question that's being entertained right now, though?

I don't want first nations to be misled in terms of a formal consultation accommodation process—as per the Haida court case of 2004—as opposed to something of just getting some type of comment from 600 bands, say, by email, fax or letter. That is not consultation as per section 35.

If you can get back to me with an answer, that would be great, too.

**Doris Fortin:** My colleague Stephanie will add something here.

**Stephanie Lane:** Just for clarification, are you speaking to the consultation that would be required by the bill in the preparation of the strategy?

**Ellis Ross:** Yes.

**Stephanie Lane:** The Government of Canada definitely respects its obligations under section 35 of the Constitution to consult.

**Ellis Ross:** This will be under the guise of the jurisprudence that actually supports section 35. Will it be that kind of consultation?

**Stephanie Lane:** What I would suggest is that the section 35 obligation arises when there is a potential for there to be an effect on rights.

• (1735)

**Ellis Ross:** That's right.

**Stephanie Lane:** I think the development of this strategy and the elements that are enumerated for the strategy speak to the creation of a strategy. I'm not sure, and we would have to look at it in more detail—

**Ellis Ross:** That would be great if we could actually define that, so first nations aren't misled. That would be great if you can provide the committee with an answer.

I'll turn the time over to Mr. Bexte.

**David Bexte:** Thank you very much colleagues.

Welcome, witnesses. I appreciate your time today. Time is short, so we're getting close to the end.

I would like to speak a little bit about the agriculture side, but this bridges over so feel free to chime in. Recently at the agriculture committee, there's been a lot of discussion regarding business risk management. I'd like to have an understanding of how or if improved forecasting, as we're discussing here today, could reduce long-term federal liabilities under disaster assistance programs by improving preparedness.

**Dr. Aman Deep:** Thank you for the question.

As part of the strategy—if enacted—I think there is a provision about having more engagement and a better assessment of gaps and opportunities. That could help us to have a better system for forecasting and drought. Currently, Ag Canada has those programs, the BRM programs, but I would say that it's still too early to determine

how that would have an impact on our BRM programs and what we need.

**David Bexte:** This is what we're getting at. We've already said here today that Ag Canada is responsible for drought forecasting and ECCC for flood forecasting. There's some relationship, but specifically, ag business risk management is mostly concerned with drought forecasting. I'm really interested in what you might have there, if you can inform us some more.

That leads us to our next question. Has Ag Canada quantified the economic losses to producers that could be caused by insufficient forecasting?

**Dr. Aman Deep:** I just want to highlight that the BRM programs are not only specific to the drought. They are linked to the other emergencies.

**David Bexte:** Agreed, but we're within the context today of drought forecasting.

**Dr. Aman Deep:** I think it could provide more information if you have better forecasting or enhanced forecasting systems, but—

**David Bexte:** You haven't quantified what that impact would be yet.

**Dr. Aman Deep:** No, not at this point.

**David Bexte:** Okay. I guess that answers my next question. How would the department measure success, and is a national forecasting strategy improving resilience or not?

**Dr. Aman Deep:** Absolutely. To me, for example, as part of the bill, if enacted, there is a provision to develop a strategy and then report on it. As part of that development, I think we will be working on what those measures would be. It's still too early to know what those concrete measures are.

**David Bexte:** Nothing is built at this time.

Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bexte.

Last but not least, we'll turn to Mr. Bains for five minutes.

**Parm Bains (Richmond East—Steveston, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today. I feel like I've had the opportunity to work with each of your departments.

My hometown, Richmond, British Columbia, is technically below sea level. It has a pretty robust diking system and pump stations. I've had the opportunity to bring a lot of support from government programs into the city to continue protecting it. Richmond is made up of 22 islands, and this includes the YVR, the airport. It includes an industrial island, Mitchell Island, where there are lumber mills. A considerable amount of logistics takes place there. It's part of our 16 communities that make up the largest port network in the country.

It also has the largest commercial fishing harbour and brings in 100 million pounds of seafood annually. It's 110 million pounds now, with seafood, fish and crab. Just the harbour itself generates over \$220 million for our region in economic output. For us and for Canada, it's an important region.

My question may be for anyone, but I'm looking at Dr. Deep. Agriculture is also 50% of the area I represent. We have the largest cranberry producers. We have blueberries, and we have dairy. Anything with respect to this framework is extremely important to this region.

Maybe I can ask each of you to weigh in—I'll begin with Mr. Vu—on how this framework will help ensure the economic supply chain and the corridors. Quite frankly, a lot of the corridors are made up of water, with the mighty Fraser River there, the working river. Can you talk a bit about how the supply chain routes and the infrastructure will be protected through this framework?

• (1740)

**Hieu Vu:** Thank you for the question. I can't really speak to the bill or the framework, but I can tell you what we are currently doing and how we are collaborating with British Columbians.

We work very collaboratively with B.C. We have a cost-sharing program with them for flood mapping. We have over 11 projects with them. We've already completed 11 maps that impact 81 communities. We are targeting to have maps to support over 60 communities. As well, every time there is a flood, Natural Resources Canada provides support to first responders in every province. Since 2018, we've provided 39 emergency flood maps for first responders in B.C.

We've heard from our colleagues in British Columbia. We did a survey in 2025 to better understand how the collaborative work is progressing. B.C. has highlighted the importance of the partnership. They would likely continue working on floods but at a reduced pace without continued federal support.

**Parm Bains:** Explain that. Is it a reduced pace because of federal support? Do they not have money?

**Hieu Vu:** The FHIM program goes to 2028. It ends in 2028. Flood maps expire. Ideally, they would be renewed every five to 10 years. As the funding runs out, work will need to be continued. About half the provinces have said that they question whether or

not they can continue. The other half have said that they would continue but at a reduced rate without the FHIM program.

**Parm Bains:** I'm curious. Do you work with MDA Space at all? It's also situated in Richmond.

**Hieu Vu:** We do, yes.

**Parm Bains:** Is that for the geospatial things you spoke about earlier?

**Hieu Vu:** Yes, we work very closely with them in the geospatial space. We work very closely with the Canadian Space Agency from the satellite perspective, and with Natural Resources Canada from the ground station perspective. A lot of our geospatial data comes from satellites and technology from ground stations and remote sensing. We partner quite heavily with the private sector to make sure we are up to date.

**Parm Bains:** Are you familiar with the region I talked about—the Fraser River? Do you consider that a supply chain corridor?

**Hieu Vu:** I am, definitely.

**Parm Bains:** Dr. Deep, maybe I'll get the agricultural piece from you.

**Dr. Aman Deep:** Absolutely.

In terms of our current programming, we release the Canadian drought monitor data monthly to provide information on drought. We collaborate with partners, including the Province of British Columbia, but there is always the potential to do more. Our scientists are working on looking at new technologies to further enhance monitoring and forecasting in order to help the sector.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bains. The time is up.

Thank you very much to all witnesses for their time today. We really appreciate it.

That concludes our meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 28. We're going to meet with Minister Julie Dabrusin on the main estimates. We also have the occasion to follow up on the government's recent announcements regarding carbon pricing, as per a previous motion in this committee. Minister Dabrusin will come for the first hour, and senior officials will come for the second hour.

Thanks very much, everybody. We are done.







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