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• (1100)

[English]

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

Today is meeting 40 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. This is a hybrid meeting, and it's public.

If you're here in person, please keep earpieces away from the microphones to reduce the risk of injury from feedback incidents for our interpreters.

Today the committee is studying the main estimates for 2026-27. The House has referred to the committee the votes from the Canada Water Agency, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. Having previously agreed to follow up with the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature regarding our study of industrial carbon pricing, the committee has this occasion today as well. I will interrupt the meeting a few minutes before adjournment so that the committee can vote on these estimates.

Today it's our honour to have with us the Honourable Julie Dabrusin, the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature. She is accompanied by the following witnesses: Mark Fisher, president of the Canada Water Agency; Mollie Johnson, deputy minister of the environment; Terence Hubbard, president of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada; and Andrew Campbell, interim president and CEO of Parks Canada.

Welcome, everyone.

Am I missing someone?

Go ahead.

Judy Meltzer (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): I'm Judy Meltzer, an associate ADM at Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The Chair: Thank you.

Welcome to all.

As usual, we will begin with a five-minute opening statement from our minister.

The floor is yours.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature): Thank you so much, Madam Chair. It's great to see you here.

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

I'm happy to be back at committee again, this time to discuss the 2026-27 main estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada and my portfolio of Parks Canada, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and the Canada Water Agency. These main estimates are designed to protect what matters today and prepare for what comes next. That means continuing to take ambitious, inclusive and achievable action against climate change and delivering on "A Force of Nature: Canada's Strategy to Protect Nature", which was announced earlier this spring, to protect biodiversity and ecosystems, safeguarding the environment for Canadians across the country while making Canada stronger, safer and more competitive.

In today's world, climate action, careful stewardship, clean power and competitive industries are not separate goals. They're interconnected. In my role, I remain firmly focused on building on practical and durable progress. Already we've achieved an economy that's 34% less carbon-intensive than it was in 2005. The most recent national inventory report shows that emissions are continuing to decline.

We're continuing to move forward. We finalized methane regulations that will reduce emissions by 400 megatonnes. We have secured an agreement to strengthen industrial carbon pricing with a clear price trajectory, ensuring that, under the Canada-Alberta agreement, the credit market in Alberta functions effectively to provide the certainty needed to accelerate investments in decarbonization.

The clean fuel regulations are significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the country, driving tens of billions of dollars in investments across Canada. The national electricity strategy will double the capacity of our grid by 2050 and supply clean, reliable and affordable power across the country for decades to come. It also includes a key commitment to retrofitting up to one million homes. As energy costs rise, helping Canadians switch from oil and propane to cleaner and less costly forms of energy helps improve affordability.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

We're also making investments in renewable energy, low-carbon fuels and carbon capture and storage.

Let's turn to the 2026-27 main estimates before us. Starting with Environment and Climate Change Canada, its 2026-27 main estimates total about \$1.71 billion—which is around \$1.41 billion or 45.3% less than the 2025-26 main estimates.

This significant year-over-year decrease appears larger as certain sunsetter decisions will appear in supplementary estimates to follow. The department's focus remains firm—within a more disciplined fiscal framework.

In addition to what I've already mentioned, weather and environmental prediction services continue to improve in service of Canadians.

[*English*]

Pollution prevention and regulatory enforcement remain active across the country, and working with indigenous communities remains a significant priority.

For Parks Canada Agency, its 2026-27 main estimates total \$1.29 billion. That represents a net increase of \$25.5 million compared to the 2025-26 main estimates. With this funding, Parks Canada will continue protecting, presenting and managing Canada's existing national historic sites, national parks, heritage canals, national marine conservation areas and one national urban park for the benefit and enjoyment of Canadians. It will also support Parks Canada's collaborative work to advance new national urban parks, national parks and national marine conservation areas while strengthening ecological corridors and protecting cultural landscapes.

For the Impact Assessment Agency, its 2026-27 main estimates total \$109.5 million. With this funding, the agency will continue supporting timely impact assessments and decisions on major projects. It will advance “one project, one review”, in collaboration with provinces and territories. It will ensure meaningful partnership and engagement with indigenous peoples, and protect the environment by mitigating or preventing adverse effects in federal jurisdiction.

Finally, for the Canada Water Agency, its 2026-27 main estimates total \$81 million. This represents a decrease of \$3.8 million, or 4.5%, compared to the 2025-26 main estimates, which totalled \$84.8 million. With this funding, the agency will advance the development of Canada's first national water security strategy, as well as the restoration and protection of nationally significant watersheds, and continue to build a high-performing and regionally responsive organization, headquartered in Winnipeg.

I'm going to stop there, Madam Chair.

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

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We'll now go to the question period. We will begin with the Conservative Party.

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

[*English*]

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

Welcome, colleagues.

Welcome, Minister and witnesses. I appreciate your time and attendance today. I look forward to your responses.

Minister Dabrusin, you were elected in Toronto—Danforth, on an arguably very environmental platform. Were you one of the 14 Liberal MPs who signed the letter to the Prime Minister?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you, Mr. Bexte, for that question and for recognizing the fact that my community does care deeply about the environment and climate change, as I believe communities right across the country do.

I work with all of my colleagues and the Prime Minister.

David Bexte: Even though it's six minutes, my time is short. I'd appreciate it if you could be direct.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm repeating that I get to speak regularly with the Prime Minister directly about the environment and climate change policy, and I work on it directly with him. I know he cares. I care. We're working very hard to continue the fight against climate change.

David Bexte: You didn't sign the letter that is concerned about the direction that the government is going in.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Sir, I'm the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I meet directly with the Prime Minister to work on environment and climate change matters. I don't believe I need to write him a letter. I speak with him directly.

• (1110)

David Bexte: Thank you very much.

Canadians are watching as a former Liberal minister resigns and caucus members fight publicly over energy policy. Why should workers in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Atlantic Canada trust a government that cannot agree, even within itself, on whether Canada's resource sector should exist?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'll be frank. I'm not even sure I fully understood that question, but if I pulled out what I thought I understood from it, let me be clear. Our government recognizes the importance of our natural resource sector for our country and all the opportunities that it has right across our country.

I—

David Bexte: You very actively, over the last decade or more, have stymied any development or work in this sector. The “keep it in the ground” narrative is an absolutely common theme within the Liberal background.

How can you assure industry, citizens and the electorate in the parts of the country that depend on the energy industry and other extractive industries, including agriculture and fisheries, that their livelihoods—which directly contribute to, feed and support the thriving of our economy—will remain viable and thrive?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Our government has been very clear, in fact, that we are working with Canadians, for Canadians, to make sure that we're building a strong country for the future. That includes all types of projects, to be clear. It can be in the form of renewable energy. When you look at the projects that are being referred to the Major Projects Office, they would include things like a graphite mine—the Nouveau Monde Graphite—

David Bexte: I'm sorry, Minister, but you're rehashing stuff that was announced more than half a decade ago. A couple of weeks ago, the Prime Minister signed an MOU appearing to support a new pipeline to the west coast. At the same time, increasing the industrial carbon tax is projected to cost my province alone, Alberta, tens of thousands of jobs over the next few years.

When your own caucus is confused about the government's contradictory directions, how can Albertans have confidence that you will act in their interest?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: That's a really important question, so I want to be very clear. We are working collaboratively with all the provinces, and we are working collaboratively to make sure that we are building a strong country together, because that's what Canadians want. They want to see that we have a strong, sovereign, secure country. That happens only if we work collaboratively with the provinces and territories, which is exactly what we're doing.

David Bexte: Pardon me, Minister, but without a strong, thriving economy with a growing GDP that will support the aspirations of all the other programs, you're going to have none of it.

What do you make of Cenovus CEO Jon McKenzie's comments, “Capital has left Canada to find more competitive jurisdictions. Canada has ceded high-paying jobs, taxes, and royalties to countries like Russia, Iran, Iraq, and the U.S.”? This is all based and predicated on Liberal policies over the last decade or more that continue to this day.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I find it interesting that we're going back to where we've been at previous committees, which is that the Conservative Party seems to be suggesting we should be taking investment notes from Russia, which is a country against which we have sanctions. I find that fascinating.

David Bexte: That's not at all what I said, Minister.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: That's what it sounded like.

David Bexte: I said, Minister, that people and investment money are finding such places as Russia, Iran and Iraq more attractive than Canada because of Liberal policies.

How do you square that circle?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I will go back to this: It sure sounds to me as though the Conservative Party is suggesting that the best investment policies are with—

David Bexte: Liberal policies over the last decade plus have caused the capital to flee.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Foreign direct investment in Canada is up. We are doing very well. When you look at some of the most recent contracts, for example, in the construction of planes, you are seeing investment in our country that is going up.

David Bexte: Those are second-tier industries, not the primary industries that we're talking about here today involving resource and extractive industries.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Excuse me. I beg you to tell those communities in which those jobs are being created—

David Bexte: I'm not at all saying they're not important, not even a little bit. I'm saying that's a secondary industry in the classic definition of primary, secondary and tertiary industries. Primary industries generate new capital and wealth. Everything else depends on them and is predicated on them.

Liberal policies over the last 11-plus years have harmed that environment.

Thank you very much, Chair, for the time. I appreciate it.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I will tell people in my home province of Ontario that the Conservative Party says that we have secondary industries as our main workforce, but—

David Bexte: I would appreciate.... Go read your economics textbook.

The Chair: Your time is up.

Thank you very much, Mr. Bexte.

We will turn now to Mr. Watchorn.

• (1115)

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for being here today and answering our questions.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to talk about Canada's 2030 nature strategy. Nathalie Provost, the secretary of state responsible for nature, made a big announcement about protecting a scout camp in my riding where 300 hectares are now going to be protected in perpetuity. That was a collaboration between the federal government, the provincial government, municipalities and the private sector. The federal government contributed \$1.4 million to save and protect a beautiful park in perpetuity for the community, which will have access to nature.

I'd like you to tell us how the three levels of government can work together to achieve our goal to protect 30% of our lands and waters by 2030.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you very much for the question.

As you have said, protecting nature is very important for Canadians from all communities, because nature improves their quality of life and it's also important for the economy, particularly in the Laurentians. We need to continue protecting nature through the strategy.

As you have said, there are three pillars. The first pillar, and the one we speak to often, consists in protecting nature. It's very important to commit to creating new parks, but at the same time, we have to recognize the work Canadians are doing to protect the land that is in active use. One example is ranchers in the Prairies, who are using and protecting grasslands. We need to find more of these kinds of examples and recognize this work. That's the first pillar of the strategy.

The second pillar of the strategy consists in continuing to build major projects while protecting nature. This includes mapping key areas with the biggest number of diverse species at risk and areas that are carbon rich. Thus, project proponents will be told about areas where permitting would be a challenge because the areas are protected, and areas where it would be easier to carry out their projects. Project proponents would therefore have information in advance.

The third pillar of the strategy consists in mobilizing more private investment to support our nature protection work. Last summer, we advanced the Northwest Territories project finance for permanence initiative. This will protect 2% of Canada's land and 30% of lands and waters in the Northwest Territories. The initiative was funded by the federal government with public dollars and by philanthropists and charitable organizations. We are going to continue forward in that direction. With these partnerships, we can leverage public dollars to mobilize more investments to protect nature.

We don't speak enough to the very important things we have done under the strategy, especially for people in coastal communities. Examples that come to mind include measures on plastics. A lot of plastic is used in fishing, and this contributes to the issue of ghost gear. The strategy provides investment to find ways to retrieve ghost gear and ensure it doesn't end up in the ocean.

On the international front, ratifying the United Nations High Seas Treaty is also important to protect our oceans.

There are many other things that we don't talk about as much, but they are nevertheless important for communities across Canada.

• (1120)

Tim Watchorn: Thank you, Minister.

I forgot to say at the beginning that I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Grant.

Mr. Grant, I'll give you time to ask your question.

[*English*]

Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): I would like to follow up. I know I don't have much time, but you're talking about the nature strategy. Could you explain how this is going to advance our 30 by 30 commitments and how it's going to benefit future generations as well?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: It's specifically mostly in pillar one that you find this but also in pillar three. It's about how we set up protections for nature, including the recognition of OECMs, which are active working areas that are also being protected. I used the example when I was talking with Mr. Watchorn of ranch lands, such as ranchers protecting grasslands. That is an important piece of it.

It is also about how we mobilize more private funds to help with public dollars to motivate more private investments. We have a great example in the Kootenays, where we protected a grizzly bear habitat. The project included the Province of British Columbia, the local first nation and the federal government, as well as private investments. When we do that, we get to use our public dollars to advance further.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bonin has the floor for six minutes.

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

Minister, thank you for being here.

We are witnessing the biggest backsliding on climate change in Canadian history. A number of people have said so. The member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who officially walked out yesterday, has also said that your government was worse than the Harper government.

Do you agree with the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the former minister of environment, who has said that there is serious backsliding on climate change in the country?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: First, speaking about the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, I just want to say that I worked with him as the parliamentary secretary for six years—

Patrick Bonin: Do you agree with him, Minister?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I just wanted to start by saying that I have a lot of respect for his work.

Your question has given me the opportunity to speak about the progress we have made, including on the regulations—

Patrick Bonin: Minister, I'm sorry, but we don't have a lot of time.

I want to know whether you agree with him that there is very serious backsliding and that significant elements of the climate action plan have been dismantled over the past one year.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The point I was making is that we are doing important work to advance the fight against climate change. I can speak to the measures we are taking, because it's important for Canadians to hear what we—

Patrick Bonin: We know them already, Minister.

You say that Canada is doing more about climate change than a year ago. The former minister of environment has said the exact opposite, but you continue to say you're doing more.

Can you provide numbers showing that you have cut more greenhouse gas emissions with your current plan, which has been dismantled, compared to a year ago?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: This is a critical time for our country and the world, and we need to seize the moment.

If you want numbers, I can tell you that the methane regulations, which we introduced in December and which apply to landfills and to the oil and gas sector, will reduce emissions by 400 megatonnes—

Patrick Bonin: I want the overall picture, Minister.

You are the Minister of Environment and I'm asking you a simple question on the climate file. It's important to have the overall picture. I want to know whether you have numbers showing that your government is in a better position from a year ago, overall, to meet its climate targets.

The Canadian Climate Institute says that you will not get to net zero by 2050. The Pembina Institute says that the federal agreement with Alberta will lead to an additional 230 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

On your side, do you have an expert or someone who can show us that you are making progress in the fight against climate change and you are not backsliding, as these people have said? Besides your department and yourself, is there anyone, somewhere, who is saying that? Do you have any numbers that show that?

• (1125)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I had started to give you some numbers when I spoke about the methane regulations—

Patrick Bonin: I want the overall picture, Minister.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: It's going to be very hard for me to answer your questions if you cut me off every time.

Patrick Bonin: Answer the question. I want figures on the overall situation and not on methane, Minister.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I have to say that methane is one of the largest sources of emissions and we have made great progress on that front. I think that is important, but I can speak to some of the other things that we are doing.

Patrick Bonin: I want to know how about the effectiveness of Canada's climate plan overall. It is a simple question. I don't know whether you need interpretation to understand the term "overall".

Overall, can you tell us that we're moving in the right direction?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I think I've understood your question.

We released our progress report in December and submitted our national inventory in April. They contain the most up-to-date figures. We will continue to provide these analyses, but the figures we released are the most up to date.

Patrick Bonin: That means you don't have new figures, after all the announcements that have been made over the past year, that say where Canada stands now.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I gave figures from April 2026. That's the inventory. You have the inventory, and so—

Patrick Bonin: The inventory is for 2024, Minister. I'm talking to you about your action plan.

Have you not in any way assessed the impact of all the deregulation you have undertaken and the gutting of measures targeting the oil, gas and auto sectors?

Don't you have any figures on that?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: We review regulations and the work we do on an ongoing basis. What I've told you is that the latest figures are the figures we released in April.

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

[English]

We'll now turn to Ms. Anstey for five minutes.

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

Minister, as you know, I often talk in the House about government spending and its relation to inflation. It's something I hear about a lot in my riding, as it's very important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Recently, our office received the breakdown of costs. You were a signatory on this document, so I would assume that you have knowledge of it. With respect to the Canada pavilion and the government's participation at COP30 in Brazil, you attended the conference and were responsible for the expenditures.

The tabled response shows that your department spent over \$467,000 on accommodations. When we drilled down into this itemized list, your delegation stayed in private, three-bedroom luxury accommodations that cost taxpayers roughly \$28,000 per unit for a two-week stay. The average Airbnb in this area is about \$70 a night—\$980 Canadian for two weeks.

I'm curious why the luxury accommodations were chosen over standard, more cost-effective options.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: If we're going to compare apples to apples, I would have done a search of the cost of accommodations during COP. They were certainly not \$70 a day during COP. The accommodations were shared, so we were trying to be as cost-effective as possible.

Carol Anstey: You feel that it was a reasonable amount to pay during this period of time. Well, that's fine. If that's the answer, that's fine. I don't know if Canadians would agree.

In addition to that, there were two private rentals that cost \$1,724 and \$1,313 per night, respectively. That, for Canadians, is a mortgage payment. Is that also a responsible use of funds for accommodations?

• (1130)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Every effort was made to find the most cost-effective accommodations during that time. You can look. The accommodations were very tight during COP.

It is important that we have a presence at COP. It was important to have us there representing Canada.

Carol Anstey: It's the associated costs, though, that I'm asking about, Minister.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I want to be clear. I want to clarify your numbers. You can compare the cost of accommodations in that city during COP to the cost today. That is not the same as what things cost during COP, with the number of people going to a much smaller city.

Carol Anstey: This was planned months in advance—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I wanted to be clear that this was the cost of accommodation. We did everything to ensure that we were cost-effective.

Carol Anstey: Thank you, Minister.

I want to ask a couple of other questions around that.

Your response also shows that the government awarded a \$433,000 sole-source contract to a company called DMDL for space design and furnishing. Can you explain why a competitive process wasn't used for a project that was planned months in advance?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I can follow up with that, but I will also say that when it came to having a space at COP, which is important and gives a real chance for engagement among industry, ENGOS and people from different governments as well—

Carol Anstey: Are you going to get back to me on why a sole-source contract was picked?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Yes, we'll get you the details for that.

Carol Anstey: You spent \$310,000, which is nearly half the total cost, on event management support through a company called MCI. I'm curious. Why does your department need to pay an additional \$300,000 to gather event proposals when you have an entire department of public servants capable of managing the schedule?

Mollie Johnson (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): We are happy to get back to you with the details on each of these elements.

Carol Anstey: Okay.

Given the affordability crisis that Canadians are facing right now, which we would certainly argue that the Liberals created, how can you justify spending \$1 million when Canadians are depending on food banks to eat? In Long Range Mountains, that money could have been put towards projects that protect communities, improve local infrastructure and deliver tangible benefits to residents, instead of funding luxury travel to Brazil.

I'm going to ask you this: Do you feel this was a responsible expenditure of taxpayer dollars?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I will say two pieces. I think it is important that we are at COP. I will point out that I travelled economy, so the luxury travel piece may be overstated.

I want to say what we are doing to support people in Long Range Mountains. If you want to talk about the Canada child benefit, by the way, the Conservatives were giving \$100 to each family whether they were wealthy or not. That was taxed. Our Canada child benefit—

Carol Anstey: With respect, though—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —is actually tax-free.

Carol Anstey: I'm talking specifically about the funds—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: That's going to families in Long Range Mountains.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Anstey. You are out of time.

Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Malette for five minutes.

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

Minister, bringing us back to more substantive matters, Canada's 2030 nature strategy commits to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, including through target 6, which I believe you're familiar with, on invasive alien species. It calls for stronger prevention, early detection, and control and eradication efforts. In communities such as mine, along the Bay of Quinte and the Trent-Severn Waterway, organizations like Quinte Conservation are increasingly concerned about invasive aquatic plants, such as water soldier, that threaten native ecosystems, recreational waterways and local biodiversity.

Minister, can you tell me what role the federal government is playing in coordinating invasive species management with provincial and local partners? Will additional rapid response supports be made available to help communities contain and eradicate these threats before they spread further?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you for the question.

This is very important for communities across our country. I have joined community members in Toronto as we've gone out and tried to curtail the growth of invasive species. As an example, we have worked with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and many biospheres on reducing the expansion of phragmites and dealing with those kinds of invasive species. I know that it's important to communities.

We work with local organizations to deliver those types of programs. I've seen it with local biospheres. Long Point Biosphere is one example that comes to mind in working directly on phragmites prevention. In your general region, you have biospheres like Frontenac Arch that do some important work. There's also working with local organizations. A lot of the hands-on work in these kinds of spaces, which we really should shout out here, is done by community organizations who know, on the ground, how to do this work.

We absolutely continue with those partnerships. One of the most important parts of all the work we do on nature protection and environment is in the area of partnerships—partnerships with provinces, partnerships with municipalities, as well as partnerships with organizations on the ground. We absolutely continue with that work. It's important work in protecting biodiversity.

• (1135)

Chris Malette: Minister, further to that, and in line with your response, the Bay of Quinte has seen decades of work, including with the Bay of Quinte remedial action plan, which was instrumental in helping to remove the Bay of Quinte, or almost delist it, from one of the five areas of concern around the Great Lakes. It was in a bad state a few short decades ago. They've been working to improve water quality and the general ecosystem health, which, of course, benefits all our communities.

Can you tell me how the federal government is ensuring that the nature strategy complements ongoing freshwater protection efforts in the Great Lakes and connected waterways in particular, such as the Trent-Severn system?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: It's kind of funny; I have two people at the end of my table who do some of that direct work. In tribute to the Canada Water Agency, they are celebrating one year of existence in doing important work on the Great Lakes. It's not just the Great Lakes. It's in the Great Lakes area specifically. President Mark Fisher from Canada Water Agency is working on a national water security strategy as well, as part of the work. I think the Canada Water Agency has shown amazing leadership in that space.

If you're talking about the Trent-Severn Waterway, Parks Canada also plays an important role, and we're working with communities to make sure we're protecting those spaces. I really want to highlight that this is work by federal agencies but that we are always working very much in partnership with indigenous nations, local communities and our provinces to make sure we get it right.

Chris Malette: Thank you, Minister. I may go a little further in the second hour with Mr. Fisher and other officials.

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

[Translation]

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

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Dabrusin, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development has said that since 1990, Canada has had the worst performance among G7 nations. This morning, the former minister of environment said that with the latest events, once again, Canada has the worst record among the G7 nations and even in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Can you name any G7 nation that has a worse track record than Canada in meeting its climate change targets?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm happy that you brought up the G7, because I actually attended the G7 meeting in Paris a month ago and the other members were telling us that Canada was a leading nation, so—

Patrick Bonin: Minister, if Canada is a leading nation, then which country is worse than Canada? That was my question.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I'm telling you is that Canada is a leading nation. I'll not name the other countries that are not. Canada is a leading nation when it comes to methane and when it comes to—

Patrick Bonin: I get it, thank you.

I'll move on to something else if you won't answer my question.

My next question—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Leading means being ahead of the others.

Patrick Bonin: Right.

Minister, you never answer questions when people talk to you about pipeline, oil and liquefied natural gas projects, and yet you say you have a nature strategy.

To what extent is your nature strategy going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Canada?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I don't agree with what you're insinuating in your question, and so I don't even know how to give you a proper answer. What I have said is—

• (1140)

Patrick Bonin: I can repeat it.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: —that we're working to reduce our emissions. I've spoken about a lot of things, but you're not giving me time to fully answer questions. If you want to speak to that, we can always talk about drilling on Anticosti Island.

Patrick Bonin: What greenhouse gas emission reductions will your nature strategy achieve?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: We are continuing to carry out analyses. Electricity will have the greatest impact on reducing our emissions. Thus our electrification strategy—

Patrick Bonin: Thus the nature strategy will not yield any reductions.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: The largest reductions will be connected to energy efficiency and electricity. We will double the capacity of our electricity grid through Hydro-Québec.

Patrick Bonin: Is it possible that your nature strategy will not achieve any reduction in greenhouse gas emissions?

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

[English]

We'll now turn to Mr. Leslie for five minutes.

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

Minister, do you believe any of the decisions you've made as Minister of the Environment led to, or at least contributed to, the high-profile resignation of former environment minister Steven Guilbeault?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I believe the work our government is doing is very important to protect nature and fight climate change. I cannot speak to—

Branden Leslie: Have you not thought about whether, if things had been done differently since you became minister, you would be losing a member of your caucus?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: What I will say again—as I said at the beginning—is that I worked directly with Steven Guilbeault for many years as his parliamentary secretary. I have tremendous respect for him and the work he has done. He—

Branden Leslie: Did he come to you before he resigned and say, “This is going to happen if you don't change course”, Minister?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm not going to speak for Steven Guilbeault. He can answer questions about his decisions on his own and do so well.

If you want to ask me about the work I am doing, I am happy—

Branden Leslie: I'd love to talk about the consultation paper proposing changes to Canada's project approval process.

There's legislation coming at some point. I'm curious about whether you have a date as to when that could be expected. Is it going to be before summer? Is it going to be in the fall? Is it going to be in 2027? Before it's tabled, will you commit to allowing Parliament to do its job and fully review that legislation, as well as not using time allocation to push it through when it does come?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm glad you pointed out that it's open for consultation right now. I think it's very important that Canadians have a say. I would like to make sure every community knows this is happening and the consultation is there.

There will be legislation following consultations. I don't have a date because we're in consultations right now.

Branden Leslie: What about time allocation? Are you planning on using time allocation when the time comes, or will you commit, today, to not doing that and to letting Parliament do its job?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: You are several steps ahead. We are in consultations right now about regulatory efficiency. It's important—

Branden Leslie: We were supposed to move with unimaginable speed, so I suspect you are going to want to have time allocation for such legislation.

Realistically, for years, your government defended Bill C-69 to the nth degree. Now you're choosing to rewrite it again.

Is that not an admission that Bill C-69 was an absolute, unmitigated failure?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Let me be clear that the Impact Assessment Agency has done very important work, including regional assessments, by the way, which are sought after as a way of making sure we understand the cumulative impacts of projects, so we can create economic zones and do the work.

Actually, Newfoundland and Labrador is a great example of where we did, through the Impact Assessment Agency—

Branden Leslie: I appreciate that, but I'm from Manitoba, so it's a little less relevant to me. The consultation paper states, “federal laws have rules that can make regulatory processes slow”.

Since you helped write it, what specific rules did you support that have made it slow to build pipelines and mines in this country?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: If we want to talk about slow, the assessment that was set up in the Harper years was actually the slowest. We still—

Branden Leslie: What a deflection that is, Minister. Let's focus on now. You wrote the rules. You've been in government for 10 years. Your discussion paper says, “federal laws have rules that can make regulatory processes slow”.

I'm asking, what are those rules? You've clearly identified them. You put them in place. What are they?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm telling you that we are still reviewing projects under the Harper—

Branden Leslie: Do you mean Stephen Harper? What year is it?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: If you want to talk about—

Branden Leslie: What year is it, Minister?

I'm going to transition over to something that maybe you'll have some answers for. Your department is cutting the radar research program that's needed to support Canada's \$180-million radar network.

What is the total cost savings to your department for that cut?

• (1145)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: When we're talking about the services through weather radar, I want to begin with how we're modernizing the systems using hybrid models so that we can deliver better services. That is going to help with predictions and weather predictions—

Branden Leslie: We're hearing external experts, such as Jenny Hagan, who's a severe weather expert, say that these cuts will hold back the very information Canadians rely on to protect themselves, their families and the public during severe weather. Is she wrong? Is Dr. David Sills wrong? He is one of the leading severe weather scientists, and he warned that the gutting of this program is going to be a severe problem for measuring and putting out warnings about tornadoes, hail, flash floods and other dangerous storms.

Is it that they're wrong and you're right?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I'm saying that science and radar science remain fundamental to the work we're doing in meteorology. We have, as a priority, making sure that—

Branden Leslie: Will you personally guarantee, Minister, that there will be no impact on tornado detection, hail detection, flash flood warnings, blizzard warnings or severe storm warnings due to these cuts? Will you guarantee that, as minister?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I will absolutely say that we have been improving our warning systems and, in fact, increasing funds to our national alert system for Canadians.

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

We'll now turn to Mr. St-Pierre for five minutes.

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Welcome again, Ms. Dabrusin. You've been incredibly generous with your time.

We know that energy efficiency should be our “first fuel”, and the best energy is that we don't use. According to Efficiency Canada, as we aim to double our electricity grid by 2050, the energy we save from implementing energy efficiency measures “could account for more than 40% of Canada's energy needs by 2050 if we start prioritizing...policies that improve energy efficiency”.

Energy efficiency also saves Canadians money on their energy bills. It creates half a million Canadian jobs, recirculates money in all of our Canadian ridings, reduces pollution and increases our sovereignty. Frankly speaking, I know that the Bloc is supportive of energy efficiency. I'm a little shocked that the Conservatives are not even stronger advocates for energy efficiency. It really boggles my mind.

I'm curious, Minister: Can you share with us the details of our government's latest electricity strategy and the plan to retrofit one million Canadian homes?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

That is really important because, as you mentioned, energy efficiency is good for affordability and good for the environment. It's one of the strongest double wins, if I could name one.

What we have in the electricity strategy is a commitment to help retrofit up to a million homes. That's in consultation as to exactly how it rolls out, but one of the important parts is the expansion of

the oil to heat pump program to allow people who rely on propane and electric baseboard heating to have access to that program. We know that will expand coverage across our country and help Canadians reduce their energy bills. In fact, when we look at the electricity strategy as a whole, we anticipate that 70% of Canadians will see—we call this “energy wallets” but, really, it's energy savings—reductions in their energy costs because of this electricity strategy.

If I can add this, though, just because there's one piece.... It's a visuals thing. I was out for an announcement last week in coastal B.C. on the creation of a national marine conservation area reserve. I was in a small town up there, and there were heat pumps on those homes. Those are the kinds of things that people see are supporting energy efficiency and supporting the protection of the environment. I'll notice it very boldly too when I go to Atlantic Canada, quite frankly. The oil to heat pump program has had a massive impact in switching people over to a form that's going to reduce their energy bills.

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you, Minister.

I'll pass the rest of my time to my colleague, Bruce Fanjoy.

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Thank you, Minister.

I'd also like to talk about the electricity strategy. I think we have a “great news” story. The sector has reduced greenhouse gas emissions very substantially. The wins are not just about increasing affordability and achieving climate objectives but also about growing the economy with high-quality new jobs for Canadians and improving the competitiveness of our industries. Could you please elaborate on some of those additional benefits from the good work that we're doing in electricity, please?

• (1150)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

One of the parts we were proudest of—and there were many—when we put out this electricity strategy was the fact that we stood alongside the leaders for electrical workers, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who recognized that the electricity strategy also meant good union jobs, well-paying careers in building our electricity grid.

In our spring economic update, we have additional supports not just to help people to get trained and get into the Red Seal trades but to help them through the apprenticeships and the completion of the apprenticeship. This is helping Canadians right through the process to get certification so that they can be part of building Canada and get these well-paying jobs. It's a really important part of the entire project.

We're in this important moment for our country. We're going to double our electrical grid. At the same time, it creates great-paying jobs, and Canadians get to be part of building this important infrastructure for our country.

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

We still have nine minutes remaining, so the proposal is for two and a half minutes per party for a quick third round. If there is no objection, that's how we'll proceed.

Branden Leslie: What about three minutes? Three times three equals nine.

The Chair: Three minutes per...? I have 11:51. Okay, we'll do three minutes per party.

We start with Mr. Ross.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

To the minister, the news so far is about major project development in terms of fast-tracking and even pre-approvals. However, in terms of the actual environmental certificate that will be issued for a major project, which agency will be issuing the certificate?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: There are different.... It depends on how a project moves forward through the system, so—

Ellis Ross: Let's be more specific, then. Say it's designated under the Major Projects Office for fast approval or pre-approval. Will the Major Projects Office issue the environmental certificate?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: It remains a government decision.

Ellis Ross: The Canadian Impact Assessment Agency will issue this certificate.

Terence Hubbard (President, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada): For those projects designated under Bill C-5, it would be the minister responsible for one Canadian economy who would issue those decision statements.

Ellis Ross: Does that mean that it's not the environment minister?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: It's Minister LeBlanc.

Ellis Ross: Will it have any tie-in to your ministry?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I provide advice as a part of these decisions.

Ellis Ross: In that respect then, your ministry will basically not be the lead in environmental assessments. You will provide assistance, and that will be it.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: That's incorrect. We do the environmental assessments. That absolutely remains part of the work that we do.

Ellis Ross: You will not issue the certificate to the building Canada....

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: We do the environmental assessment. That's how, by the way, it works even today. We provide the environmental assessment.

Ellis Ross: I understand that, but the Major Projects Office for pre-approval or fast approval will be the lead. It won't be your ministry that will issue the certificate.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Maybe take one step back. What we're doing and the work that's happening through the Impact Assessment Agency, for example, is through co-operation agreements, which is where the vast majority of projects will be. We have co-operation agreements with almost all the provinces now. It's one project, one review. That's where the vast majority—

Ellis Ross: No, I'm not talking about co-operation. I'm talking about the ministry's responsibilities. That's well laid out already in legislation and regulation, and everybody understands that currently it is the Canadian Impact Assessment Agency that takes the lead and issues a certificate, but right now, I'm seeing this turning into a three-headed beast. You talk about the Major Projects Office's being the designated agency to fast-track or pre-approve, but then there's a different ministry that will issue the certificate.

My understanding now is that the Major Projects Office will take the lead, but they will use the resources that are currently there under the Canadian Impact Assessment Agency for the resources to assess a major project for fast approval.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I don't fully agree with how you set that out. I see that our time is up, but what I will say quickly is that, first of all, most projects are going to be under the co-operation agreements we've set up with provinces, but for the ones that do get referred to the Major Projects Office, there is a process. We provide the environmental assessments, and we will have a rigorous process to make sure that the environmental process and regulations are fully reviewed and accorded with.

• (1155)

The Chair: The time is up, Mr. Ross.

We will now go to Mr. Greaves for three minutes.

Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, colleagues.

Thank you for joining us today, Minister. It's a pleasure to have you with us, though I am sorry that our meeting today has started with questions from our Conservative colleagues opposite who are, to put it mildly, factually challenged and more or less pretend that the province of British Columbia doesn't exist and hasn't benefited from enormous investments in the resource sector over the last 10 years.

As you're well aware, Canadians across the country supported the public acquisition and construction of a \$35-billion pipeline to support the Alberta energy sector. We've seen the largest private sector investment in Canadian history in LNG Canada, which is now moving towards phase two. Frankly, the members opposite shouldn't need any reminding from me about the LNG that B.C. has been developing over the last decade. It's frustrating to have this be the context of your meeting, when it's very clear that British Columbia has helped lead the country in the last 10 years in terms of building out our natural resource and energy sectors.

Having said all that, it's also true that the government is clearly committed to helping to preserve and conserve our incredible natural environment in British Columbia. Recently, members of your team representing the Government of Canada, along with the Government of British Columbia and Coastal First Nations, announced a historic milestone to establish a national marine conservation area reserve on the B.C. coast. This is an incredibly exciting announcement as we move towards our 30 by 30 targets for conservation in this country.

I wonder if you could please speak to how this new agreement and the conservation area will help to protect Pacific salmon and help to support our coastal economies and coastal ecologies going forward.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you for that question.

The signature we got to do last week in Klemtu for the national marine conservation area reserve was a really important moment for our country and for the province of British Columbia. This agreement was signed by six coastal first nations, the Province of British Columbia and the federal government, which all worked together on this reserve. It is very important, because it will help with the protection of whales and many different kinds of fish, as well as with other wildlife.

To be clear, though, there will be the continued ability for commercial and recreational fishing in the national marine conservation area reserve. They will go hand in hand. What we will see is sustainable fishing in that area. That's really important as a way of life to the coastal economy. We're seeing both work very much hand in hand. It was a very beautiful moment to see how we can all come together to do great things.

I know my time is up, but I have one last thing. I want to reiterate the size, because it's so massive. The area that was protected is one and a half times the size of Banff National Park, and it's larger than Prince Edward Island.

Will Greaves: Thank you, Minister.

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

[Translation]

You have the floor for three minutes, Mr. Bonin.

Patrick Bonin: Minister, there is a committee on environment that has several Liberal members. Have you met with any members of the committee and if so, how many times?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: You're talking about a caucus, and as you know, caucus matters are confidential. However, I can say that I work with all my colleagues and with all members of Parliament. I

would also say that it's very important for our government and our party as a whole to continue the fight against climate change and to protect the environment.

Patrick Bonin: It's not a caucus. It was in *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Le Devoir* yesterday.

Did that committee give you any recommendations?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: As I said, you're talking about a caucus. Committees are the committees we have here. I can't speak to caucus matters, but I can say that we work with all members of Parliament all the time.

● (1200)

Patrick Bonin: Your proposed amendments to environmental assessment would potentially make it possible to exempt pipelines and other major projects from impact studies, create economic zones that would make it possible to grant project approval prior to any environmental assessment and allow construction projects to start before impact studies have been completed.

Do you know of any other developed country that does that?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: When we talk about mapping areas that are better protected—

Patrick Bonin: No, that is not what I'm talking about, Minister. I'm talking about project approvals and starting construction activity well before impact studies have been completed.

Do you know of any other developed country that does that?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: When it comes to our proposed regulatory changes overall, they are still at the consultation stage, but—

Patrick Bonin: What country does that, Minister?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: Overall, there are a number of measures, but there are other countries, including—

Patrick Bonin: What country does that?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: I was going to say that.

Listen, it's a set of things that are at the consultation stage, but several countries, including the United Kingdom, have similar things.

Patrick Bonin: Does the United Kingdom allow the construction of pipelines, for example, to start before completion of impact studies?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: No, I said there were a number of measures in this set of regulatory changes that we have proposed and which are at the consultations stage. Some countries have some of these measures.

Patrick Bonin: Okay. I understand that according to you, no country authorizes construction activity—

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: That is not what I said.

Patrick Bonin: Can you name one country that does that? You do take a close look at what is being done around the world.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin: We have run out of time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: That ends our hour, colleagues. I'd like to thank the minister and the witnesses very much for their time today.

I will briefly suspend so we can switch over to the next set of witnesses.

Thank you very much.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1210)

The Chair: Colleagues, we are going to commence our second hour on the main estimates. If everyone could please quiet down and take their seats, it would be much appreciated.

I'd like to begin by welcoming our witnesses. We have many a witness today on the main estimates.

From the Canada Water Agency, we have Mark Fisher and Gemma Boag here with us, and Carmelle Barnabe is online.

From the Department of the Environment, we have Mollie Johnson, Judy Meltzer, Kurt Chin Quee, Alison McDermott, Tara Shannon and Cecile Siewe.

From the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, we have Terence Hubbard, Patricia Brady, Charles Vigneault and Bram Sepers.

From the Parks Canada Agency, we have Andrew Campbell and Andrew Francis.

Welcome, everybody. Thank you for spending time with us today.

We will go directly into our line of questioning.

We will begin with Ms. Anstey for six minutes.

Carol Anstey: Thank you.

Thank you to all the witnesses for appearing.

I know the officials are following up with some information in relation to my previous line of questioning, so I wanted to follow up with a couple of other things.

In the response, the travel costs are still being reviewed for compliance and are still subject to reconciliation. It's been six months now. November 2025 was when the conference happened.

Is there a chance that these costs will exceed \$1.1 million?

Kurt Chin Quee (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Environment): I apologize. I don't have those details. We'll have to confirm them with you.

Carol Anstey: Okay.

Can you table those final expenses with the committee?

Kurt Chin Quee: Yes, absolutely.

Carol Anstey: Okay. Thank you.

I wanted to ask some further questions of Parks Canada.

As you know, I have a large park in my riding. I had some questions for you previously when you appeared with respect to ATV access within the park.

We've done a considerable amount of work on this file since we've met with the municipality, as well as Parks Canada officials, and we've come to a standstill. One thing that often happens within the communications is a circular conversation. It just keeps going. We don't get anywhere in terms of a solution.

Currently, the proposal that we've been discussing is that the RCMP does not issue tickets for ATV use on this 1.3-kilometre section of road. We're wondering if the park wardens would follow the RCMP's decision on that and allow ATV use in this section of the park.

• (1215)

Andrew Campbell (Interim President and Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): That's a very specific question, Madam Chair. We will certainly get back to you with the response to that.

The last time that I was talking to the superintendent about this item, we were also looking for the provincial ministry of transport to weigh in about ATV use on the road.

Carol Anstey: Okay, thank you.

I wanted to follow up, because you gave your commitment, and you said you were very familiar with the park.

Andrew Campbell: I am familiar with the park.

Carol Anstey: Thank you.

Andrew Campbell: There's \$7.2 million we're investing in the road that was announced yesterday.

Carol Anstey: Sure.

Also, we talked about the spruce budworm, and you were going to give us more information with respect to how much deadwood was in the park. We have constituents asking, with respect to communities that are directly in the park, if they will be able to go in, get this deadwood and use it for firewood.

Andrew Campbell: As you know, there is an agreement with residents in the area to take firewood and do some forest thinning. We are looking at how we can extend that. Those discussions are under way. Certainly, we will get back to you as we conclude those.

Carol Anstey: Okay, you'll follow up with me. That's great.

I also have a question with respect to a road that's been cut off for residents to use within the community of Port au Choix. It's Barbace road. It's an area in which residents like to go out and spend time in their vehicles. Some of the seniors talk about being able to access it, as they did for many years. Currently, they aren't allowed to have any access in this area. I'm just curious about whether this is something we can look at.

Andrew Campbell: I'll need to get back to you on that one. Public safety and health always come first in all the decision-making that we do, so if there is some reason that we don't have it open at this moment.... Obviously, as you know, there were affected areas from the previous storms, and I know some of the roads have deteriorated in that area. I don't know for a fact that this is one of them, but we will get back to you with that information.

Carol Anstey: Okay, that's great.

The other thing that I get asked a lot about is the opening and closing dates of Parks Canada, and I guess this would probably apply nationally as well. As you know, our area depends heavily...from a tourism perspective. We have multiple stakeholders reaching out to the office on a regular basis with respect to.... They come to see the icebergs, and those often are there much earlier than the park is opened. We're curious about whether there are discussions or whether there is any way to extend these dates so that we can maximize the number of people we can bring into the park.

The Chair: Give a short answer, please. The time is up.

Andrew Campbell: Gros Morne National Park, of course, is open access all the time. It's some of the other facilities that we would have.... From a facilities perspective, we try to do it when we have the most visitors. If there are visitation changes, as we've seen in some other parks, we will set hours and make seasonal changes based on that.

Carol Anstey: Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I find this obsession by the Conservatives on costs to be fascinating. It raises a question or makes me wonder about how much it costs to fly MPs from Newfoundland, Manitoba or Alberta to Ottawa every week. I also think of Poilievre's Stornoway residence when he wasn't even leader or wasn't even an MP.

Anyway, I'll start talking about real issues instead of focusing on distractions.

[*Translation*]

I will be sharing my time with my colleague Bruce Fanjoy.

I have a question for Ms. Mollie Johnson.

Some of the concrete tools that our government can put forward under the national electricity strategy include investment tax credits for clean electricity.

Could you speak to the role of these tools and tell us whether they will result in reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the country and build up Canada's economic sovereignty vis-à-vis the United States?

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mollie Johnson: Thanks for the question, and thank you for not embarrassing me too much when I dumped water all over my colleague. It was a great start for the day.

There are a lot of things, as we look at our opportunity to move forward as we build Canada, and electrification is going to be critically important. There are the regulatory tools that we have, but then there's thinking about what is going to incentivize people to build more, to make energy more affordable for Canadians.

The first thing is about building the energy infrastructure in place and across Canada so that Canadians and businesses have access to more clean, low-cost energy. Let's talk about small modular reactors, interties and a number of those big infrastructure pieces. That doesn't happen on its own. It happens in partnership with different jurisdictions, and that's been a big focus of the work that's been happening.

It also happens because businesses decide to make those decisions and because of the big suite of measures and investments that have been happening, the investment tax credits for electricity and a number of other pieces, ensuring that Canada has the right corporate tax rate in place to incentivize direct investment. Those are all part of the big package that is going to get people to move.

The other part of the equation, as well, is this: What is going to help consumers get to where they need to get in order to make the choices to connect to a clean electricity and clean energy system? When we think about that, there is the approach to ensuring that there are more zero-emission vehicles. We want to have the clean electricity system that people plug into and drive clean electric vehicles. It's the same thing for retrofits. Retrofits are about what the house looks like, how it is plugged into an energy system and, equally, what the envelope looks like so that we have the right kind of energy system as well.

It all comes together into a suite, and it's structural. My hope is that we look at all of these measures together. It's sort of what sets the baseline rule, and it also asks this: What are the things that we're building together to get us to that next step?

Eric St-Pierre: That's great. Thank you.

I'll pass my time on to my colleague, Bruce.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you.

My question is for Mr. Fisher from the Canada Water Agency.

Canada is blessed with so much water. One of the challenges is that it's not always in the right place at the right time. We experience droughts and floods as a result of extreme weather events and climate change.

Can you talk to us a bit about how the Canada Water Agency is helping to prepare Canadians for greater resilience with respect to our water?

Mark Fisher (President, Canada Water Agency): Through you, Madam Chair, thank you for the question. It's a good one.

It is true that many Canadians look at Canada as a water-abundant country, but there is a different story. Of the fresh water that we do have that's available, 60% flows north, away from 80% of the population. As you indicated, there are certainly regional differences in terms of water availability and water quality. Front and centre in the Canada Water Agency's work is working with provinces and territories, indigenous partners and local groups to restore and protect nationally and regionally significant freshwater ecosystems. Through our policy work, we're also working on and committed to developing Canada's first national water security strategy. This will really allow us to look at those more variable and uncertain futures and make sure that the federal government, as well as many partners, has an eye on that future and how we put the right policies and programs in place to make sure—to your point—that we have sufficient water available where we need it and of the quality that we need to service a variety of ecological and socio-economic needs.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you.

The water security strategy will address having water where we need it. What about flood risk management? Is that within the scope?

Mark Fisher: I know earlier in the week there was a robust debate and discussion on Bill C-241. It's a bill that hasn't passed the House yet, but we know it's certainly an issue that's top of mind for Canadians. As we develop the national water security strategy with many partners, floods, droughts and other issues will come up in that context. We certainly see an opportunity for synergy among those strategies if that bill is passed. We look forward to having that discussion in more detail depending on where that bill goes.

Thank you.

Bruce Fanjoy: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fanjoy.

[Translation]

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

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Yesterday, my colleague the member for Honoré-Mercier was quoted in *Le Devoir*. He said that he wanted more data before he could say that Canada has failed to meet its greenhouse gas emission targets. However, his government's "2025 Progress Report on the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan" shows greenhouse gas emissions are projected to reduce by 21% to 28% by 2030, which is way below the 40% to 45% target.

Ms. Johnson, are the data released by your government showing this trajectory and which indicate that we are not on track to meet our greenhouse gas emission reduction targets by 2030, reliable?

• (1225)

[English]

Mollie Johnson: I'm sorry. Are you asking me if the information that we put out as the Government of Canada is unreliable? No, we put out reliable information.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

Thus, right now, as per the 2025 report, we're not really on track to meet our target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Is that correct?

[English]

Mollie Johnson: You can read the 2025 report. You've read our 2026 NIR. It shows where we are making progress in moving toward our objectives. The government is committed to delivering on our 2050 objectives, and we're continuing to do that work, as the minister said.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Have you assessed the impact of government decisions on greenhouse gas emissions within your department? I am thinking, for example, of the methane regulations; changes to the clean electricity regulations; the deferred, watered-down industrial carbon pricing; and the pipeline with a capacity to move one million barrels a day.

Are you carrying out internal assessments on how this will impact the country's emissions trajectory?

[English]

Mollie Johnson: We provide ongoing analysis and advice, as we do on all things. There's a distinction between that and the modelling and reports, such as those that we put out in December and the NIR. As you well know, being very well versed in this topic, there are interactive effects, there are complexities and—as you discussed with the minister—that global number is really important. We have work to do as a number of these decisions are modelled and put together. We really do have work to do. Right now, we're working on taking what has been happening in the decisions made over the past period of time and putting things together so that we can come forward and deliver a comprehensive modelling.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: You're saying that you have done some analyses. Can you share them with the committee? I gave some examples, but—

[English]

Mollie Johnson: I'm happy to share the information we have.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

I take it you will provide us with information on the various reduction measures that have been changed in relation to the emissions reduction plan. Is that right?

[English]

Mollie Johnson: As I said, on a measure-by-measure basis, that's not how we operate. We really look at these things from a global perspective. On an individual...we talk about them, but we don't have them modelled in the way that I would expect you are looking for them.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: I'm having a hard time keeping up with you, because you're telling me you look at these things from a global perspective, but to do that, you need to have each of these individual measures, don't you?

[English]

Mollie Johnson: Yes, but as you were saying earlier when speaking to the minister, there's a distinction between the global number impact and trajectories to get to 2050 versus the individual measures and interactive effects. When we put out our information and share our information, we need to make sure that we are credible in talking about where we're going on our path to 2030 and 2050, so that's the work that we have to do.

As an example, with the update to industrial carbon pricing, there are a number of decisions that still have to be made jurisdiction by jurisdiction on the implementation of the benchmark. That will all impact what it's going to look like and the impact it will have on the emissions going forward. We need to know this to understand the impacts going forward, and the details matter.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

I would be grateful if you could provide us with whatever information you are able to share.

Minister LeBlanc has announced some regulatory adjustments and amendments, including some that will transfer the responsibility of analyzing pipeline projects from the Impact Assessment Agency to the Canada Energy Regulator.

What implications does that have on the Impact Assessment Agency?

• (1230)

Terence Hubbard: Thank you for the question.

Some of the proposed changes are outlined in the discussion paper. The goal is to find ways to make the process more efficient, not to cut back on environmental obligations.

For example, environmental assessments for pipelines will still be carried out, but the assessments will be done by the Canada Energy Regulator.

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

Does the regulator have the skill sets to carry out impact assessments?

I see my time is up.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

[English]

I will now turn to Mr. Ross for five minutes.

Ellis Ross: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to start with Ms. Johnson, please.

The minister was just here talking about the agreement that was signed in my riding, by the way, in Klemtu—or Kitasoo. The older name is Kitasoo. He was talking about a conservation land agreement. It's quite interesting. One of the provisions speaks about open-net fish farms. Kitasoo has had a fish farm for the better part of 30 years.

In the context of this agreement, is the idea of the fish farms provision to continue the phase-out under Canada's plan to June 30, 2029, or is it to renegotiate fish farms in the context of Kitasoo's fish farms?

Mollie Johnson: I'm going to pass this over to my colleague, Mr. Campbell, on the basis that it's a Parks Canada lead.

Andrew Campbell: I was up in Kitasoo Xai'xais on the weekend and had the opportunity to talk to many people within the community through the chair. One thing we are looking at within that area is being continued by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It would continue to have that relationship with Kitasoo on the licensing of the fish farm, so that will also continue to go forward. The regulations that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has in place remain the same.

There was an agreement, and I just start from a—

Ellis Ross: The plan is to continue the phase-out to June 30, 2029.

Andrew Campbell: The plan is to continue to work through the process that they have with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Ellis Ross: That's regarding the phase-out. Okay.

In that respect and in that decision, consent wasn't a big term back then, but now it is. Will Canada be pursuing consent from Kitasoo to phase out fish farms by 2029?

Andrew Campbell: I think it would be more appropriate if you had that question go to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and certainly that would be better—

Ellis Ross: Is this not a conversation for the agreement itself, the conservation agreement?

Andrew Campbell: That is within the conservation agreement, both within the indigenous protected and conserved areas agreement among the six nations—not between the six nations and the Government of Canada—and the agreement between the Government of Canada, the Government of B.C. and the six nations. There is an element of that which, again, comes back to the unfettered regulation of the Minister of Fisheries to continue that.

Ellis Ross: Thank you.

I'm trying to understand the process in terms of fast-tracking or pre-approving a major project, especially a linear project that goes across provincial boundaries, and I didn't really get a good answer yet, even though this is the third kick at the can.

Really, when we're talking about the fragmented process that we have now between the Major Projects Office and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, we still don't understand how aboriginal rights and title interests get addressed on a one-year approval process under the Major Projects Office. Does that timeline coincide with the consultation and accommodation of aboriginal rights and title for those affected first nations along a pipeline, for example?

Terence Hubbard: Thank you for the question.

We'd maybe start with responding to your question about the process itself. It's a multi—

Ellis Ross: I get the process, and when I say “third kick at the can”, I mean that I still haven't had an answer on the process.

I'll leave that aside and try to decipher what the minister said, but in the context of aboriginal rights and title between the Major Projects Office, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and the new first nations hub they're proposing, will the timeline for consultation and accommodation of aboriginal rights and title coincide with a fast-track approval or a one-year approval term for approval of major projects?

• (1235)

Terence Hubbard: The government has been clear about its commitment to continue its efforts to consult nations through these processes.

Ellis Ross: Let me give you a scenario. There's a pre-approval of a project, but you haven't completed the consultation and accommodation. You don't have the consent yet. Does the pre-approval still stand even though you haven't completed the rights and title consultation and accommodation process?

Terence Hubbard: That initial decision under Bill C-5 would include and be informed by consultations with indigenous peoples as part of that government decision on whether a project can move forward.

Ellis Ross: Yes, but isn't that the chicken before the egg? You're talking about pre-approval, but you haven't completed the consultation and accommodation. You don't have consent. In that context as well—

The Chair: Mr. Ross, I'm sorry. Your time is up.

Did you want to do a quick response to Mr. Ross?

Terence Hubbard: As I mentioned, the government would consult on a certain amount of information that's required to support its decision on whether a project can move forward. That would be followed up with further consultations with impacted communities on how best to develop that project to avoid as much as possible any impacts on rights, as well as to mitigate and potentially accommodate any impacts further downstream as we get into those details. It's built into the process.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now turn to Mr. Watchorn for five minutes.

Tim Watchorn: Thank you, Madam Chair. This time, I will do my best to share my time with MP Grant.

We had a great conversation, Mr. Fisher, just before the meeting started, and a bit of it was about groundwater. I'd like to talk about groundwater. As you know, in the last 20 years, a lot of municipalities have transferred their drinking water systems from surface water to groundwater. I'd like to know how the agency is going to approach the water safety of groundwater, which is capital in my region, and how you guys are going to try to make sure that is taken into account in the strategy.

Mark Fisher: Through you, Madam Chair, thank you for the question.

Natural Resources Canada, as you know, is the federal department responsible for the day-to-day management and science with respect to understanding groundwater in Canada.

As I mentioned in the context of floods and droughts, we expect that groundwater will come up in many ways as part of our consultations and discussions around the development of a national water security strategy, and we expect that it will come up with our provincial and territorial partners. I don't want to prejudice the outcomes of those discussions, but we know that it will be a front-and-centre issue for many Canadians. It is the largest source of fresh water in Canada, and we need to understand how that might change over time as we draw more from groundwater.

Tim Watchorn: I have one last question for Mrs. Johnson. My region depends a lot on the winter for our economy. I met with a group called Protect Our Winters. I don't know if you know them. They're made up of advocates and Olympic athletes who are trying to make sure that we'll be able to ski for the next few years in our region and in Canada overall. How is our strategy, let's say, on methane or gas reduction going to help us maintain our economies in places where winter is super important to us?

Mollie Johnson: What a great question. Thank you very much. I'm a big fan of the winter.

I may pass it over to my colleague Judy Meltzer, who has really been leading a lot of our work on methane, to talk about how this is a significant and important part of our climate change-reduction activities.

Judy Meltzer: That's right. We're really pleased.

Addressing methane is one of the most effective low-cost strategies to address climate change. Of course, action on methane regardless of where emissions are from is going to make a significant impact in addressing climate change, both in the near term and the longer term. In December, the government released what are, frankly, fairly world-leading enhanced methane regulations for oil and gas, as well as landfill methane. Those are going to drive significant reductions in methane and are a key part of a broader set of measures, investments and strategies to tackle climate change. Those methane regulations provide a lot of flexibility and pull forward Canadian technologies for abatement of methane, which we're a world leader in doing. We're really excited about the regulations and negotiating equivalency agreements with provinces.

Thanks for the question.

• (1240)

Tim Watchorn: Thank you.

I will pass my time to Mr. Grant.

Wade Grant: Thank you Mr. Watchorn, and thank you all for being here.

Mr. Campbell, we heard earlier about the signing of a national marine conservation area reserve agreement last week between the federal government, the Government of British Columbia and the Kitasoo Xai'xais, Nuxalk, Heiltsuk, Gitxaala, Gitga'at and Wuikinuxv nations. I saw the great turnout there.

Could you elaborate on the potential of this model? There's no one-size-fits-all model, but would this model include agreements with indigenous peoples based on mutual collaboration moving forward?

Andrew Campbell: One of the things Parks Canada has been most proud of—including me as part of its leadership—is indigenous stewardship.

First, I will say that today is my 35th anniversary with the Government of Canada, so I have had a bit of time to talk about this.

When we look at what we have done from an indigenous stewardship perspective and what went into that agreement, the underlying agreement was actually between the six nations first. That is fairly extraordinary from a conservation perspective. They first put in place an indigenous protected and conserved area. Both the provincial and federal governments then brought in federal and provincial law set on top of that to give it further protection.

As we have looked at this at Parks Canada, I think this model of collaboration is the way forward for Canada. That's why we have put in a lot on the cogovernance side, and every place that we have across the country that is managed by Parks Canada will have a plan of indigenous stewardship by the end of the next two years.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I will now turn to Mr. Bonin for two and a half minutes.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've not had time to do so, but I'd like to express my appreciation to public servants, who mean well and work hard—I have no doubt

about that—and have been thrust into a situation where the government has taken a major turn on climate change. I want to recognize that.

Environment and Climate Change Canada's 2026–27 departmental plan shows that Canada's national adaptation strategy is one of the initiatives with significant decreases in funding or that will sunset in 2028-2029.

Is this strategy going to be renewed?

[*English*]

Mollie Johnson: We are working on our plan. I believe that at our last appearance we shared the list of the sunsetters that were coming forward, so you have that information. As part of our due course, we look at a series of those. We will be proceeding through our regular federal processes, and adaptation is one of those pieces. We continue to see a huge opportunity and need for the work on adaptation moving forward.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Is there a date?

[*English*]

Mollie Johnson: If I could control those things, it would be delightful. We're continuing to do our work in due course.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: A look at the numbers on Environment and Climate Change Canada's funding through the GC InfoBase tool shows that the department's budgetary expenditures for climate change adaptation will decrease by around \$532 million in 2026-2027 compared to 2024-2025, when they were much higher. They were \$569 million and will decrease by \$37 million.

Could you explain this spending reduction?

Mollie Johnson: Thank you for your question.

[*English*]

I see my friend Kurt desperately looking through the numbers. I don't want to waste your time. Perhaps we could get back to you with the details on that in writing.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Okay, thank you.

When will the progress report on the national adaptation strategy be issued?

I believe that according to the departmental plan, it will be this year.

[English]

Mollie Johnson: Yes, we are working towards that. I believe it was in 2019 when we committed to coming out with a national adaptation strategy this year.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Okay.

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

[English]

We are now going to Mr. Leslie for five minutes.

Branden Leslie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Have all decisions under the expenditure review now been finalized?

• (1245)

Mollie Johnson: I'm happy to turn this one over to my colleagues afterwards.

We have finalized the decisions and are in the process of implementing them. It's a three-year process, and we are on track for delivering on the first year.

Branden Leslie: Could I get you to table the full expenditure review with this committee? That's the cut list, not the summary. It's the exact programs that have been cut—the dollar amounts cut, the locations that have been affected, the positions affected and whether each cut affects science, forecasting, enforcement, regulations or grants and contributions. What exactly are they aimed at? The trouble with the main and supplementary estimates is that this is grouped together. It's very difficult to understand what's actually happening until some stakeholder comes out and says, “Wow, this is gone.”

I would love it if our committee could see, in detail, what all these changes are. Would you be willing to table that, now that decisions have been made?

Mollie Johnson: I'm not trying to be cagey by any stretch of the imagination, but I would like to make sure I'm considering the people and programs involved—those sorts of things. Perhaps I could get back to you on how I can respond to that.

Branden Leslie: Okay. Was that a commitment to try, at least? Do you understand what we're aiming for here? I'd love to know what exactly is done, and not just a grouping of.... “One fund has now been reduced by over \$7 million for the next three years” doesn't mean anything to anybody.

Mollie Johnson: Absolutely. I completely understand.

I also think there is a challenge regarding the perception of, or views on, what has happened and not happened. I think we have a shared interest in being very clear about what the impact of decisions is, why they have been made and what the opportunities are as we go forward.

Branden Leslie: I hope you take the opportunity to explain why a change in funding isn't going to make a consequential difference. It's an opportunity to highlight why these changes are being made.

Mollie Johnson: I share your view.

Branden Leslie: Thank you.

I'll move over to the discussion document on the major projects side of things.

I assume that there was a lot of homework done as to why these changes are now being proposed. Is that correct? You tried to understand what exactly needs to change in order for the Impact Assessment Agency to enable projects to be built.

Terence Hubbard: Yes. There are ongoing efforts to continue to improve our approach and processes, as well as ongoing engagement and consultation to support these. This is a product of learnings.

Branden Leslie: The discussion paper says that major projects would often take more than five years to receive the federal decisions needed to begin construction.

I'm curious about the evidence that led you to a timeline of five years.

Terence Hubbard: I can't speak to the specific timeline in that paper. Presumably, it's some sort of averaging of the time it's taken both proponents and governments to review projects.

Branden Leslie: I recognize that I have you a little on the spot, but I hope you would be willing—if I send in some written questions that are more specifically about the analysis done in the lead-up to this discussion—to table responses with this committee.

Terence Hubbard: We would be happy to work with colleagues.

Branden Leslie: That's awesome.

More generally, I suppose, I'll go back to ECCC.

If the government is proposing these reforms now, is it safe to say that it's been accepted that the status quo is not working, in terms of building major projects in this country?

Mollie Johnson: Reflecting on that question.... We are spending a lot of time thinking about the difference between the “what” and the “how”.

The “what” is environmental protection—the things we have obligations, as a ministry, to do. That's not changing.

As for the “how”, there's a lot of opportunity to improve how we do our business. We're thinking about improving how we permit, how we work with our partners and how we can be more efficient and effective. We have some opportunities there.

The protections themselves—the “what”—remain core.

Branden Leslie: I appreciate that.

The paper proposes giving cabinet limited power to exempt specific projects from the Species at Risk Act jeopardy test. What problem is the proposed exemption trying to solve?

Tara Shannon (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment): The jeopardy test requires a scientific assessment on whether you can fully mitigate the impacts on a species—its recovery or its survival. There are two tests under SARA. I could provide you with more detail, but I won't, because I know you have limited time. It is essentially a valve whereby, if you can't meet the jeopardy test after pursuing a number of these—you follow the mitigation hierarchy, you avoid, you mitigate, you take all measures—it would allow, in an exceptional circumstance, the potential for a permit. Again, it's a theoretical situation. We've never seen that.

• (1250)

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

We'll now turn to Mr. Malette for five minutes.

Chris Malette: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will be sharing my time with MP Greaves—I promise.

My question is for Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Fisher, the estimates for 2026-27 include a transfer payment to the Canada Water Agency of about \$42 million in support of freshwater stewardship. Can you share with us examples of some of the projects funded in the freshwater ecosystem initiatives, for instance, or in any of these initiatives?

Mark Fisher: I'll start with the question that you raised to the minister about the area of concern in the Bay of Quinte.

Chris Malette: I'm glad you circled back to that. Thank you.

Mark Fisher: You may know that there are a total of 43 areas of concern that are shared between the United States within the Great Lakes basin. Twelve of them are Canadian, and five of them are binational. The Detroit River is a great example.

The Bay of Quinte is one of those areas of concern. As you know, we've been tackling it for a very long time. I'm pleased to say that we've completed all actions with respect to the beneficial use impairments, which is very positive. I'd say most actions have been completed. Then we'll move into assessing the recovery of those impaired ecosystems and putting that on a pathway to delisting. That's one concrete example that we're doing through the freshwater action plan.

As you know, in budget 2023, the government announced \$420 million over 10 years to really try to accelerate that work. Restoration is a big part of that, in addition to looking at how we're tackling toxic and nuisance algae throughout the system, looking at coastal resiliency and working with our indigenous partners to make sure that they're more directly engaged with Great Lakes stewardship and governance. Those are some examples in your own backyard of how we're putting that investment to use.

Chris Malette: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

I yield my time to Mr. Greaves.

Will Greaves: Thank you very much, colleague.

Good afternoon to our witnesses. Thank you for joining us today.

My question is for Mr. Campbell and Parks Canada.

As you are aware, my home riding of Victoria is one of the great destinations in this country, receiving more than one million visitors a year to explore the best of our region. That includes a number of national parks and national historic sites as well. I'm wondering if Parks Canada has data from last year about the effect of the Canada Strong pass in terms of attendance at those kinds of sites and parks, not necessarily specific to Victoria—though that would be welcome—but more broadly. What impact did that program have on attendance for Parks Canada?

Andrew Campbell: I'm trying to remember everything, but I do not know every place and how much it went up. I would say that across the country Parks Canada had slightly over 26 million visitors last year. As to our places, there was an increase of about 9% in national parks and over 20% in national historic sites.

One of the major national historic sites in the Victoria area was, in fact, one of those places that had well over the 20% increase. As well, we had increased visitation in the past year in the Gulf Islands National Park in your area. I don't know the number off the top of my head, but it's certainly substantive.

I will say it is substantive across the country. A number that we like to talk about is that this number of visitors ends up contributing \$16 million per day to the Canadian tourism economy.

Will Greaves: Absolutely. We see those effects in our region every day.

Relatedly, in the context of the government's 30 by 30 conservation targets, national parks and national urban parks play an important role in increasing access for Canadians to natural spaces and conservation areas.

I'm wondering if you could speak to the process of establishing those new national urban parks and, in particular, the way Parks Canada interacts with indigenous nations and communities, whose territories may be implicated in those projects.

Andrew Campbell: Absolutely. One of the projects that I'm most proud of in my own career is the Rouge National Urban Park. The very first thing we did when establishing that national park was to set up an indigenous round table. That's become the gold standard for how we do national urban parks across the country—we first set up an indigenous round table.

Within that process, of course, with the municipality, the province and indigenous people, we all work together in order to see how we can contribute. We have conservation authorities at the provincial level as well. We've had some universities come on board to look at their land. That all gets assembled under a process that certainly has all the groups I talked about as contributing members to co-operative management.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Will Greaves: Thank you.

The Chair: As we still have a few minutes remaining and all of these expert witnesses, I propose that we do three minutes per party for one last round, if there's no objection.

We will proceed.

I will begin with Mr. Leslie for three minutes.

Branden Leslie: Thank you.

Going back to the discussion paper, could a federal economic zone be used to advance a project over the objection of a provincial government?

Terence Hubbard: It all depends, but the answer is probably no. If there's provincial jurisdiction involved in these projects, we would work in co-operation and collaboration with provincial partners.

A good example of work I would point to in this space is the regional assessments that we have done offshore in Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are working through the joint management regimes to assess common issues, doing it on a regional basis and putting in place standardized mitigation measures and approaches that support faster downstream individual project decisions. This is the approach we're looking to replicate with willing partners across the country, moving forward.

Branden Leslie: "Willing partners" seems like an interesting point. There's some discussion among the provinces regarding a pipeline to the Pacific coast right now and very specific, purposeful language in the discussion document, which I assume is intentional, as part of spurring that discussion. It's something I think we should be aware of. I hope people will be giving comments on that, particularly those in B.C. I want to see a pipeline going through there, but the federal government creating this could be problematic. I'm curious about whether you could report back, over time, on what that turns into through the consultation.

Madam Chair, I would like to move the motion I tabled verbally on Tuesday, regarding a request to the Prime Minister's Office on the letter discussed in the media by CBC/Radio-Canada in which 14 Liberal MPs sent their concerns about the government's environmental policy direction to the Prime Minister.

This is a group of elected members of Parliament raising concerns with their Prime Minister about environmental policies. If those concerns are serious enough to put in writing to the Prime Minister—and I assume, to be leaked by one or more members of that group—then I believe they are serious enough for the members of this committee to see, because members of Parliament have a duty to be open and honest with the Canadians who sent us here.

I'm very open and honest about my criticisms and concerns with government environmental policies. Each and every day, I get the pleasure of sitting around this table and in the House of Commons. If Liberal MPs are privately warning the Prime Minister that his government is backsliding on the environment, then Canadians deserve to know exactly what those concerns are, especially given that they are coming from members of the Liberal caucus.

The environment committee exists to examine these very issues. We can't do our jobs properly if relevant concerns from members of the governing caucus—those who should know the most about what policies are being undertaken behind the scenes—are kept secret simply because they are politically inconvenient for the government of the day.

This is about accountability. Liberal MPs can't say one thing privately to the Prime Minister and another thing publicly to their constituents. In my view, Canadians deserve to know where their elected representatives stand, especially on questions as consequential as pipelines, major projects, economic development and the future of Canada's entire regulatory system.

Madam Chair, sunlight matters, and if these concerns are legitimate, as I assume they are, they should be aired publicly. If the government disagrees with them, it can explain exactly why. Keeping them secret, though, serves only one purpose—to protect the government from political embarrassment. I assume that is why this letter was leaked by one of the signatories, and it is not good enough simply to protect yourselves politically. Canadians have a right to know what concerns are being raised inside the government about its own environmental agenda. Given that we are in the environment committee, perhaps there are signatories within this room.

I hope that we take this opportunity to pass this motion, bring this issue to light and see what specific concerns the 14 signatories have regarding this letter sent to the Prime Minister.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Leslie.

Mr. Grant, you have the floor.

Wade Grant: Madam Chair, we have important witnesses here today, and we have a number of members who would like to continue asking their questions, as we did extend this meeting for three minutes each. This motion is not the subject of this meeting today, and I think we should continue our scheduled business. Therefore, I move to adjourn this debate.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Madam Chair, with all due respect, my hand was up.

[English]

The Chair: We can't debate a dilatory motion, Mr. Bonin, but you may now speak.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: I wanted to speak before we moved to a vote on this matter, which is important and also concerns our party directly. What my Conservative colleague summarized is that this important letter sent to the Prime Minister by 14 Liberal members is of public interest in the sense that we have issued a number of media statements on this matter and there has been no—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Bonin, but we can't debate dilatory motions. We're going to continue.

[English]

We have a few minutes remaining, so we will now turn to the Liberal side, to Mr. Grant, to continue with the witnesses for three minutes.

[Translation]

Patrick Bonin: Madam Chair, my hand was up before the vote.

[English]

Chris Malette: Mr. Grant did too.

[Translation]

The Chair: Yes, I gave the floor to Mr. Grant, who raised his hand first. That's the procedure.

Patrick Bonin: Madam Chair, I think you didn't see that my hand was up. This motion was moved by my Conservative colleague and I raised my hand right after he started speaking to the motion. I understand it can be hard to see that from a distance, but if you watch the video recording, I'm sure you'll see that I raised my hand right after my Conservative colleague moved this motion, which we all knew about. This motion, which touches on an important letter that concerns our committee directly is not new. It was tabled last Tuesday.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bonin.

[English]

That's not my understanding. We can definitely follow up on procedure with the clerk after this, but we're going to continue now. Thank you.

Mr. Grant, you have the floor.

Wade Grant: Mr. Fisher, on World Water Day earlier this year, the minister announced that we're going to launch Canada's national water security strategy. This is a significant milestone.

Could you speak to what the strategy will mean for Canadians and how the Canada Water Agency intends to work with provinces, territories and indigenous partners to develop it in relation to the full diversity of water challenges across the country?

Mark Fisher: Through you, Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the member for the question. I also want to thank this committee for deliberating and issuing the freshwater study this morning. Obviously, we haven't had a chance to look at that yet, but we understand that it's comprehensive. There are many recommendations that will certainly serve as an important input as we start our con-

versations with Canadians about how we collectively think about water security today and into the future.

I have travelled the country over the last year, and I have spoken to farmers and irrigators, who are concerned about access to water for growing more healthy food; to industry, in terms of power production and water for industrial processes; and to mayors and municipalities. There's certainly increasing interest across the country in terms of how we connect with water every day, both for our environment and for our economic competitiveness. Those will be important aspects as we start this conversation, as will recognizing that provinces and territories have a primary responsibility for managing water resources in Canada, alongside the federal government.

We have initiated early dialogues with our partners, and there's certainly increased interest in having that discussion with us in terms of how we build a more water-secure and water-resilient future.

To get to the member's question, we certainly look forward to undertaking those discussions over the next year, with his support as the parliamentary secretary.

Wade Grant: Thank you very much,

Ms. Johnson, with another COP approaching later this year, Canada has an important role to play in advancing multilateral climate ambition.

Can you speak to how ECCC is positioning Canada to be a climate leader on the world stage?

Mollie Johnson: There are a lot of things that we do and will do better if we're working with other jurisdictions. Right now, about 30% of the world is covered by industrial carbon pricing. As we think about our trade agenda and our build agenda, market access is increasingly going to be determined by how we consider carbon pricing in our market, as well as by how we work with others—India and China are both considering that. That's one thing we need to be doing. We're working with the European Union. We have an upcoming MoCA meeting. There are number of steps that we're taking to try to do that.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, as we've been talking about as well, is a totally different COP, but given the size of Canada, our ability to meet our 30 by 30 goals and our laser focus on achieving that.... Where Canada goes, so goes the rest of the world, just by our sheer size.

The work that we do, the partnerships that we build and the momentum we build to line up with others really matter. We have to be thoughtful about how we do our work, and we continue to do that, but we will be spending a lot of time....

The other one I would mention—I see my time is up—is methane. Again, it is both about the emissions reduction and the huge economic opportunities for companies that are building the abatement technology.

I'll pause there. Thank you.

• (1305)

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

We'll now turn to Monsieur Bonin.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor for three minutes.

Patrick Bonin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Johnson, it is my understanding that the budgetary reductions under the purpose “taking action on clean growth and climate change” will amount to approximately \$1.2 billion, a 96% decrease from last year.

Can you break down these reductions?

[*English*]

Mollie Johnson: Pardon me. Is it 96% for climate change and—

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: It's in French, so—

Mollie Johnson: That's okay. I just want to make sure it's the right figure.

Patrick Bonin: It's \$1.2 billion.

Mollie Johnson: Yes, thank you.

It's a sunseting initiative. As the minister said,

[*English*]

in the main estimates, it does show that we have about a 45% reduction, year over year, in our budget. There are a number of programs that I expect the committee will have an opportunity to review as part of supplementary estimates (A) and future estimates, owing to the timelines of decisions. We expect that some of those pieces will be coming forward.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: You stated that Canada was a global leader on climate. I don't share that assessment. We need comparative examples. Can you name any country that has performed worse than Canada over the past year, with all the backsliding that has taken place, including the exit of the former minister of environment, who walked out and said that your plan has been dismantled?

I do understand that you're in government as a deputy minister, but do you have anything to show that Canada has performed better than any other G7 country over the past year to support your statement?

[*English*]

Mollie Johnson: Perhaps we're framing the issue a bit differently, but I think Canada is demonstrating leadership in that we are an energy-producing nation. We are committed to net zero by 2050, and we are dealing with a—

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: You're not responding to my question.

[*English*]

Mollie Johnson: —complexity that other jurisdictions in the G7 are not dealing with.

I understand the lens through which you are looking, but participating in international conversations—as we try to talk about applying carbon pricing, as we try to talk about methane reduction and how we do it in a way that is durable through this moment—is something that we, as Canada, are doing.

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: You're not responding to my question.

The Chair: Mr. Bonin, your time is up.

Patrick Bonin: That is truly sad.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'd very much like to thank the witnesses for their time today.

I will now ask if it's the pleasure of the committee to proceed to voting on the main estimates, as we need to do.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Witnesses, you may be excused at your leisure. Thank you.

Shall vote 1 under the Canada Water Agency, less the amounts voted in interim supply, carry? The amount is \$26,020,103.25.

Mr. Leslie, do you have a question?

• (1310)

Branden Leslie: In an effort to save time, whether for dermatological testing or Ribfest, could we pass these on division by chance?

The Chair: If there's unanimous consent, we can do it all at once.

CANADA WATER AGENCY

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$34,693,471

Vote 5—Contributions.....\$42,244,658

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$969,963,675

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$70,255,723

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....\$342,921,705

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

IMPACT ASSESSMENT AGENCY OF CANADA

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$78,490,986

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$20,738,903

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

PARKS CANADA AGENCY

Vote 1—Operating expenditures, grants and contributions.....\$626,338,961

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$356,664,676

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Vote 10—Payments to the New Parks and Historic Sites Account.....\$24,947,397

This meeting is adjourned.

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