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# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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Chair: Shannon Miedema





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Tuesday, June 9, 2026

• (1555)

[English]

**The Chair (Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everybody. This is meeting number 43 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. This is a meeting that is public for the first hour and in camera for the second hour.

For those attending in person, please follow the health and safety guidelines as per the cards on the table to prevent audio or feedback incidents for our interpreters.

Before we begin, regarding Bill C-244, the committee is still scheduled to meet with the sponsor of this private member's bill and government officials on June 16, which is next week. We deferred this decision, and we need to decide if the committee would like to meet as planned next week and then proceed with the clause-by-clause review of the bill in September. If we do that, we would need to set a deadline to receive written amendments to the bill, and a suggestion for that deadline is 4 p.m. on Monday, September 14, 2026. The committee could also choose to postpone the entire study until September, including the meeting that we have scheduled for next week, but then we would have a gap next week.

Is it the will of the committee that we proceed as planned with listening to the sponsor, having amendments due in September and then continuing from there?

Go ahead, Mr. Leslie.

**Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** I'll quickly reiterate that I think it's a little disjointed. I think we should come back and start with witness testimony. I'm sure we could find something to fill our time. There's still a number of outstanding motions. If we are going to move ahead, I'm not sure September 14 or whatever date you said is.... It's quite early. I think we might need a little extra time to get amendments in.

**The Chair:** Is there anyone else who would like to speak to this?

We'll vote on this. All those in favour of proceeding as planned next week and hearing from the sponsor, please raise your hands.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** I see agreement with proceeding as planned. Thank you for that.

This afternoon, we have former members of the net-zero advisory body here to speak with us as per a past motion of this committee.

We have Dr. Simon Donner, professor at the University of British Columbia, with us by video conference. We also have Catherine Abreu, executive director of the International Climate Politics Hub.

Thank you so much for being with us today.

I think you have opening statements, so you each have five minutes to make a statement.

We will start with you, Ms. Abreu. The floor is yours for up to five minutes.

Thank you.

**Catherine Abreu (Executive Director, International Climate Politics Hub):** Thank you, Shannon.

Thank you to the members of the committee for inviting us to be here with you today.

I'll share my story about why I resigned from the net-zero advisory body.

I resigned when it was clear to me that this government would let divisive politics and the interests of a wealthy few, who represent a fraction of the economy, wash away any progress we had made on climate in the last decade in Canada and, with it, any hope that we might end the decades of broken promises on climate in this country.

I started working on climate in 2010, fresh out of university. I've dedicated my entire career to the study of climate change, to proposing and advocating for policies that live at the intersection of climate and address people's lived realities, and to building political and social consensus to take action on this crisis.

I learned very early on that Canada had never delivered on a climate commitment it had made, despite the fact that by the time I started working, Canada had been making climate promises for decades. Canada now remains the only G7 country where greenhouse gas emissions have gone up since 1990.

Six years into my career, when I took the helm at Climate Action Network Canada, I started the movement to stop the legacy of missed targets and to get Canada to pass a comprehensive climate law. It took us five years to help build what then became the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, and in 2020, I was really honoured to accept the invitation from the then minister of environment and climate change to join the advisory body that act created.

I'm sharing this story to impress upon you my personal and professional conviction that the act and the climate governance regime it builds are essential pillars of any effort in Canada to protect current and future generations and to be a responsible global citizen. It was very difficult for me to realize that the act is not being respected and that I therefore had to step down from the advisory body that is mandated to advise the government on its legal obligations.

There are 61 other countries that have similar climate framework laws in place, and there are 28 countries that belong to the International Climate Councils Network. It's clear from the examples of these countries that climate governance regimes informed by science and independent expert advice are a growing global norm in a world that's rocked by floods, fires and fatal extreme weather events.

The shredding of environmental policy that this government has undertaken means that Canada is now on track to violate its own law and fail to attain net-zero emissions by 2050.

The shredding of those environmental policies, of course, began with capitulation to what I believe is irresponsible and inaccurate rhetorical politics around the consumer carbon price, which was scrapped as soon as this government took office.

Then the climate competitiveness strategy repealed or weakened virtually every climate policy and regulation Canada had developed in the last decade. Our clean electricity regulations for 2035 have been set aside in favour of a national electricity strategy that's delayed to 2050 and opens the door to new gas-powered electricity plants, which makes a mockery of the abundant clean energy resources that should be a very celebrated economic advantage in this country.

The oil and gas emissions cap has disappeared, making room for the government to use Canadian taxpayer dollars to build new major oil and gas projects and grow what's already the largest and least-controlled source of pollution in the country. As well, of course, zero-emissions vehicle mandates have been significantly delayed and weakened, contributing to a dramatic drop-off in EV sales in Canada right at the moment when soaring gas prices are hurting Canadians who are struggling to fuel their gas guzzlers.

Speaking of those soaring fossil fuel prices, rather than discussing a tax to harvest some of the \$100 billion in windfall profits that Canadian oil producers are set to make from the Iran war, this government is proposing to grow its subsidies to the industry, extending taxpayer dollars to cover enhanced oil and gas recovery and capitalize a fake sovereign wealth fund.

With these decisions, we knew there was no hope of Canada meeting its 2030 or 2035 climate goals. Now, the Ottawa-Alberta MOU weakens and delays methane regulations for Alberta, even though methane is arguably the cheapest and easiest greenhouse gas emission to control, especially in the oil patch. Most devastatingly, it takes what has been described as a sledgehammer to Canada's industrial carbon price, and that puts net zero by 2050 firmly out of reach.

• (1600)

At no point has the expert advice of Canada's legislated advisory body been sought or considered in these decisions. Let me be clear: There's room to change and update climate policies and regulations, and, in fact, doing so is often necessary. Part of the function of the net-zero accountability act and the net-zero advisory body is to identify where course correction is needed and provide advice on how to get there, but that's not what we're talking about. We are talking about the elimination of policies with no alternative policies or pathways being put in place.

It's not just the net-zero accountability act. There are other pieces of legislation that have been put into the crosshairs. It really seems that all of the environmental laws and some of the human rights protections are up for grabs for the sake of building fossil fuel projects that rely on public subsidies because no private investors are interested. These projects will likely wind up as stranded assets when the vague Asian markets that are often referred to inevitably fail to materialize.

Politics south of the border and desire for economic growth are the reasons given for these devastating decisions, but taking a moment to look up from a narrow view of the U.S., we see the rest of the world is moving ahead on climate. It's a big risk for Canada's economy that our government has decided we won't try to keep up. Canada needs to make climate policy a priority again if we want to stay competitive. The OECD's Canada 2025 economic survey pointed out that "Canada's productivity growth has been lagging [behind] best performing OECD countries for many years." That's not because we haven't been building enough pipelines; it's because we haven't been investing enough in green and digital transitions.

Thanks.

• (1605)

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

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

[Translation]

**Dr. Simon Donner (Professor, University of British Columbia, As an Individual):** Good afternoon, everyone.

[English]

Thanks for the opportunity to appear on your screen here today.

I am a professor at the University of British Columbia, as you've heard, and I'm speaking to you today from Vancouver, which is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh nations. I believe a member of one of those nations is here today. I think so. It's hard for me to tell on the screen.

I resigned from my role as co-chair of the net-zero advisory body last December, and I did so with a heavy heart. It was a real honour and privilege to work with the other members, including Ms. Abreu, to provide independent advice on pathways to net-zero emissions for Canada. I enjoyed the work, I enjoyed the people and I remain grateful to the federal government for the opportunity to do that work.

As a legislated body, as we've just heard, the net-zero advisory body can provide a unique service to the government. Unlike all the other voices that seek to influence climate and energy policy, the NZAB and its members have no vested interests: You fire the members and they all go back to their day jobs.

Countries around the world, as was alluded to in the last statement—and this includes the U.K., across the EU, Korea and Australia, all these countries that Canada is trying to build stronger economic relationships with—benefit from similar legislated climate councils, similar bodies that also have no need to curry favour to gain access to power. They're going to be honest with you.

The NZAB structure, to be honest, however, was never ideal, and after last year's election, a series of structural yet manageable challenges, which had plagued the NZAB from its creation, expanded into full-blown crises. I'll highlight three of them here.

First, the NZAB's work—and this should be obvious—is pertinent across government, yet the body serves only the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, who often, particularly in the current government, is not leading the relevant policy file. For example, last summer, we completed research on industrial pricing and on equivalence agreements with the provinces that was highly relevant, well beyond ECCC. We volunteered to brief people across government and received no response from the Prime Minister's Office and nothing but an acknowledgement from the office of the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

The second point is that in successful climate councils, the work is aligned with government policy timelines. This was the exception, not the rule, for the NZAB, with the one key exception of the 2024 annual report, I'll say, in which we gave advice on the 2035 emissions target and what can be done to reach the 2030 target. However, the gap with government policy timelines worsened under the current government. We were not informed of policy decisions under way nor asked to provide advice on those decisions.

If you add in the ongoing structural challenges we had, like procurement rules slowing our research process and just the awkwardness of the staff for the secretariat being ECCC employees who were being asked to work with us at times to critique the government, it became very difficult for us to produce any work of value.

The third point I'll highlight is that the member appointment process is extremely arduous, and the government simply did not plan adequately in advance. Last summer, the NZAB was down to six

members. Despite repeated requests from me personally, I received no answers from the minister's office about a timeline for future appointments. By late fall, it had become evident that due to government inaction, I would have to continue chairing an understaffed body without a francophone counterpart for at least another six months, and I have to say that this is a workload that was completely unsustainable for me last year.

When the Canada-Alberta memorandum of understanding was released and the private briefing on our annual report scheduled for the next day was cancelled by the minister's office, I concluded that the NZAB's work had become performative.

To be clear about this, I was comfortable chairing an advisory body whose advice was considered but ultimately rejected by the government because, after all, we're not elected representatives like the rest of you. I was not, however, comfortable with the process becoming performative, in which we had little or no opportunity for our work to actually inform policy.

In addition, as the chair of the NZAB, and the sole chair at that time—and by rule, then, its spokesperson and its liaison with the minister's office—the MOU represented a direct challenge to my professional integrity, because I wasn't just the chair of the NZAB; I'm a scientist. I was inundated with requests for my professional judgment on the content of the MOU and the government's intentions with the MOU. I felt pressured to soften that assessment because of this uncertainty and the lack of conversation with the minister's office. That softening of my assessment is incompatible with my responsibilities as a scientist and a professor at a public institution. I simply can't do that. That's not my job.

● (1610)

Scientists like me only earn a seat at the table because of the integrity of our discipline, and I felt I could no longer serve people whom I felt were not being honest and forthright themselves. Therefore, I submitted a private resignation letter to the minister and then immediately afterwards informed the NZAB members. I announced that decision publicly a couple of days later.

I'll just conclude—thank you for the time—by saying that I'm a scientist and that this experience taught me that the goal of net-zero emissions is about so much more than fighting climate change and so much more than climate science. It's about building a prosperous future for Canada. Much of the world is rapidly transitioning to clean energy, as we just heard, and if we don't change our strategy, we really risk being left behind.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Donner.

We will now turn to questions by committee members. I believe we are beginning with Ms. May of the Green Party for six minutes.

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** I want to start by making sure that anyone watching this publicly knows that I'm only able to ask these questions because the Conservative party decided to give me six minutes, for which I thank them.

First of all—because I know you both—I want to extend to you my thanks for your hard work on the climate issue for so many years. I want to thank Dr. Donner for standing for scientific integrity, and I want to thank both of you for a really tough decision. I know it cost you personally and emotionally more than you're able to share before a committee.

I want to put my question to Dr. Donner.

I'm also informed that the Prime Minister has never once met with his prime ministerial science adviser, Dr. Mona Nemer.

Do you sense that this government understands the importance of science writ large? You spoke of scientific integrity. Do you have any comments on that matter? How much does this new government understand the importance of science?

**Dr. Simon Donner:** To be honest, I feel like I can't answer that question because I never had the opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister or hear anything from the Prime Minister's Office.

I want to be clear about this. I'm just one of many scientists in the country, but I was chairing the advisory body. The NZAB serves under the minister of ECCC, and I did have a liaison I met with in the minister's office. There is no obligation for the Prime Minister's Office to meet with the NZAB, but I find it highly strange that they wouldn't be interested. We were doing research with the Canadian Climate Institute that was directly relevant to the decisions that were just made on the MOU.

I'll be clear about it: Basically, the results of the work that the NZAB has done and our advice would have said that the way they've changed the industrial pricing system.... I don't mean just the changes in the headline price and the price floor, which are what have gotten all the attention. It's also the details: the changes in the tightening rate for the benchmarks and the grandfathering-in of old permits under Alberta's system. We would have been telling them that this is not going to work and that we could tell them this based on modelling that was done by the Canadian Climate Institute and based on our own analyses.

Would they have taken our advice? I don't know. Why they don't want to hear it, I also don't understand. If you don't want to hear from advocates on all sorts of issues, that's your choice, but this is

just research evidence. As I said, the NZAB has no vested interest. We're not lobbying for anything in particular. We're just passing along advice based on the best available research.

**Elizabeth May:** I have a further question for Dr. Donner.

I'm deeply troubled by the most recent research that's come out on what's now estimated to be a fifty-fifty risk of the collapse of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation system—which has to be the worst name for anything scary in the history of time. Could you just talk directly to Canadians about what's at stake if we don't move quickly?

We're talking about science here. How would you explain to the average person that fifty-fifty risk of collapse of the Gulf Stream and the circulatory systems by mid-century?

**Dr. Simon Donner:** I'm going to say a couple of things.

The first thing to know is that the projections for the future, what's going to happen over the next many decades, are uncertain. The choices that people make are the number one driver of that uncertainty. This is data that comes straight out of the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. I can pass along a figure, if people would like.

Which scenario we're going to be in and how high our emissions are going to be are really up to individual people. It's up to governments, but the choices we make about the emissions we put up into the atmosphere and how much the planet is going to warm are the number one thing controlling what our future is going to be.

Some of the biggest risks that come with future climate change are that the more the planet warms, the greater the risk of some sort of run-on or cascading feedback events. Examples would be some really disastrous things like a slowdown of the ocean circulation, as Elizabeth May mentioned, or other sorts of severe impacts and run-on feedback events.

I will say that the risk of overturning the circulation in the Atlantic in this century is still fairly low. That is something that's debated. Sometimes there is a case of a debate from within the scientific community popping up in the media, and then you only hear parts of it. I don't want to say that the risk of it is exaggerated, but maybe the statistics that people present on the likelihood sometimes get pushed a little bit. It sounds a little bit more likely in the media than it does in a scientific meeting.

That doesn't change the fundamental issue here that the choices we make are determining the climate for many generations to come. Some of the molecules of CO<sub>2</sub> that you put up in the atmosphere are still going to be there in 10,000 years. This is a really permanent decision we're making, and that's why it's so important to act early.

● (1615)

**Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

To Catherine Abreu, if you could give advice to this government right now, what advice would you give if they were open to listening?

I think I have less than a minute for your answer.

**Catherine Abreu:** I would start with two things.

Number one, keep the existing environmental protections that we have. Bill C-30 is currently being debated in the House, where we're talking about rolling back decisions made by Health Canada about potentially harmful toxic chemicals. Keeping those kinds of protections in place in this uncertain world that we're entering into, which Simon Donner spoke about, is absolutely critical.

The second piece of advice is to make a plan and tell Canadians about it. That's what the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act is all about. It's about making a plan and transparently communicating that plan to Canadians.

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

[*Translation*]

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

**Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to extend a special thank you to my Conservative colleagues for their generosity toward the Green Party. I've never seen that before. I find it very interesting.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleague Elizabeth May, as it's her birthday today. I therefore wish her a happy birthday. I know she's not listening to me at the moment, but that's all right.

I would like to say a few words about prosperity. Mr. Donner spoke about prosperity and how the country is going to become prosperous. We are fortunate today to have two experts with us who, I hope, will share their views on projects that are important to Quebec.

One of those projects is the high-speed rail project led by Alto. I was surprised today to hear the leader of the Bloc Québécois say that he was opposed to this project. I couldn't believe it, given that it's a project that is very good for the climate. I would like to hear Mr. Donner's views on electrified rail systems in Canada.

Mr. Donner, what do you think of this project?

[*English*]

**Dr. Simon Donner:** I'll say that, in general, I actually quite like the concept of the Major Projects Office. I like the idea that there are projects that are in the national interest that we need to put ahead. Those projects need to align with getting to net-zero emissions.

Some of the things we need to do include electrifying transportation and electrifying how we heat and cool our homes. I'm from Toronto originally. It sounds like a wonderful idea to have an electrified rail line, ideally going from Windsor all the way to Quebec City. I would say that the plan that was put in place was probably too limited.

As to why people would or would not support this, that's a debate for all of you to have amongst yourselves. I don't want to be used as a sort of narrative device in that debate.

[*Translation*]

**Tim Watchorn:** I understand very well, Mr. Donner.

Ms. Abreu, I think you've already discussed electrified rail projects. What do you think of the concept of an electrified rail project between Quebec City and Toronto?

We're also hearing about a project that may be moving forward in Alberta. I think electrified public transit systems are one of the good things we can do for the environment.

What's your opinion on this?

● (1620)

[*English*]

**Catherine Abreu:** Maybe you've heard of the competition that's happening among countries right now between petrostates and electrostates. There's this idea that many of the emerging economies that are becoming most competitive globally these days are heading towards electrification. Indeed, with the annual UN climate talks coming up, Turkey has now put it on the agenda to talk about a global goal of increasing electrification by 35% by 2035.

This trend toward electrification, making use of Canada's clean energy resources to electrify our homes, our businesses and our transportation, is definitely a conversation that we need to be having. When it comes to specific projects, that conversation has to happen in context with the communities that are involved and might be impacted.

Perhaps part of what you're raising here, from my perspective, is the need for us to be having conversations about these kinds of projects in Canada versus having the oldest, most boring conversation I can possibly imagine about how we're going to build another pipeline. This subject sucks up so much of the energy, the attention and the political and financial resources in this country, preventing us from having these kinds of important conversations about projects that will actually take us forward.

[*Translation*]

**Tim Watchorn:** Thank you very much for giving us your opinion on that.

A second project that is very important to me is the new inter-connection project that forms part of the government's national electrification strategy. I'm thinking in particular of the expansion of the Churchill Falls generating station and the Gull Island project, which will provide clean energy to Quebec for the coming decades. It will also allow for a more equitable partnership between Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec.

How do you see major clean energy projects in the context of electrification?

Is this a positive direction for our energy strategy?

I'll start with you, Ms. Abreu.

[English]

**Catherine Abreu:** I'll make a distinction in terms of projects that are about better connecting the electricity grids across Canada, west to east, which is absolutely essential. We have far better connections north to south in Canada than we do across the country. We need to have those connections east to west in order to balance the clean energy resources that we have across the country and serve those parts of the country that might not have those resources.

I actually had the experience of cutting my teeth in Nova Scotia as the Muskrat Falls project was being developed. That's where I met Ms. Miedema.

I slipped into using your first name earlier—my apologies. It's because we have our history, Madam Chair.

I realized at that point that the interconnection and clean electricity that the Muskrat Falls project would provide was essential to helping get that part of the country into a clean electricity scenario, as long as the project was undertaken with certain considerations in place.

There are other questions to be asked about the further developments of that project. Hydroelectricity has significant environmental implications and significant implications for the communities that surround those projects. Again, this is another area where some very robust conversation is needed among governments, workers and communities, to think about what projects are required to take us into that clean energy future and to grow our clean electricity grids.

[Translation]

**Tim Watchorn:** Thank you for your answer.

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

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

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

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us.

Mr. Donner, give the current situation, could you tell us whether Canada is on track to meet its net-zero goals for 2030-2035?

Do you think Canada will achieve these targets?

[English]

**Dr. Simon Donner:** With respect to the 2030 and 2035 targets, no, Canada is not on pace to meet the targets. At this point, no analyses, even the analyses done by the federal government's own modellers, would find that.

I can't give you specific numbers because there is yet to be any really detailed modelling of the impact of the Canada-Alberta deal and the change in the industrial pricing system across the country as a result, but I can point to some previous numbers that might be helpful. Even modelling that the NZAB did, again, with the Canadian Climate Institute, found that we were looking at about a 19% reduction by the year 2030 with the existing policies in place. Some of those existing policies have since been weakened.

The methane target for 2030 has been lessened a little bit. We've seen changes in electric vehicle rules, etc. It would be unlikely that

we would even get to a 19% reduction below 2005 levels, which are less than halfway to the 40% reduction target. That modelling is very similar to the result in the government's own 2025 progress report that was released in December for the emissions reduction plan.

I want to point out something else. The other people who do modelling on this are from the Canadian Energy Regulator. If you look in the Canada futures report that they put out, their own modelling shows that we're nowhere close to the 2030 target, even with policies that were in their modelling, policies that have since been cancelled. They also model all the way out to 2050, and they find that, even with the implementation of things that have been cancelled, we'd only get to, at most, a 35% reduction by 2050.

That is why I've been quite outspoken and was quite clear, whenever I had the chance, with the government. You can't be saying that these deals are still compatible with net zero by 2050. They're not. The deal is not compatible with it, and I think it's paramount for the government to be honest with Canadians about this. If you're going to pass deals like this, be honest about the implications.

• (1625)

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin:** Ms. Abreu, the former minister of the Environment, Steven Guilbeault, said that the current government was going further than Stephen Harper in addressing climate change, but in the wrong direction, of course.

Do you share his view?

[English]

**Catherine Abreu:** I'm not going to compare this government to former governments. I will say, however, that we are seeing an evisceration of environmental protections across the board. It's not just what I observe as the contravention of the legal obligations under the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. It's also the discussion paper that was recently issued on getting major projects built. It proposes some really significant undermining of some of Canada's longest-standing environmental laws and protections.

This question of the extent to which we're willing to lose this infrastructure is not one that's being put to Canadians. I agree with Dr. Donner that it is critical to transparently communicate to Canadians that this is the decision we're making, this is why and these are the protections that you're going to lose as a result.

We're not having that kind of open conversation. Instead, things are being obfuscated with misleading language, including claims that we will continue to meet our net-zero goal, when that has clearly been put out of reach with recent decisions and with misleading language like “decarbonized oil and gas”, which is something that I hear this government say regularly and is actually just a complete contradiction in terms.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin:** I'd like to come back to the former minister of the environment. He also said that, by the end of the year, Canada's record on climate action could be worse than that of the United States under Donald Trump.

Do you see the situation in a similar way?

[English]

**Catherine Abreu:** I mentioned earlier that Canada is the only G7 country where emissions have actually gone up since 1990. The United States is also a G7 country. We have seen emissions in the United States drop by over 20% between 2005 and 2026, and emissions are actually, believe it or not, projected to continue declining in the United States, even under Trump and the rollbacks to environmental and climate policy. That's because they have locked into their economy a certain amount of transition. With the Inflation Reduction Act and the investments that were made in renewable and clean energy through it, the transition to clean energy continues apace in the United States. The increased investment in renewables versus fossil fuels also continues apace in the United States.

Yes, it is true that despite all the rhetoric we are hearing and despite the very damaging decisions that have been made by the U.S. government around environment and climate, they will continue to perform better than Canada over the next number of years.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin:** In your view, does what we've seen over the past year represent the worst setbacks in Canada's history when it comes to addressing climate change?

• (1630)

[English]

**Catherine Abreu:** There are, of course, other countries that have different kinds of resources acting on the crisis, and they have different track records. Certainly, among Canada's peers in the G7, yes, our performance is the worst.

[Translation]

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

[English]

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

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Thank you.

Thank you so much for your testimonies, Ms. Abreu and Dr. Donner, and for your courage in standing up for climate action.

Canada won the Fossil of the Day Award in 2025 at COP30. Do you think Canada will win again this year?

**Catherine Abreu:** My first COP was in 2015, when the Paris Agreement was struck. I never witnessed Canada getting the Fossil of the Day Award because they didn't get one in that entire decade between 2015 and 2025. It was not because Canada was perfect, but because they were showing up in the international space openly, honestly and with a constructive attitude. Because this was not the case in Brazil, Canada won the Fossil of the Day Award.

Again, we will see how Canada's performance is spelled out at COP31 in Turkey, but I expect, given its rollbacks in climate policy

and ongoing commitment to continue building fossil fuel projects, that it will indeed be on the slate for the Fossil of the Day Award at COP31.

**Gord Johns:** You talked about our international partners leading with a low-carbon agenda. We see that the European Union has its carbon border adjustment mechanism. We were told that if we removed carbon pricing, we would pay the price there. We've heard the Liberals talk about this prosperity agenda, and the Prime Minister comes in and calls this a prosperity agenda.

Given the wildfires we've seen in the last five years—kids being told they can't go outside—and the damage to the environment, can you speak to what that prosperity agenda looks like and its impact on our economy due to our walking back on climate action?

**Catherine Abreu:** We are seeing billions and billions of dollars in damages from climate impacts across Canada every year, and those numbers and impacts are always mounting. My Canadian family is from Nova Scotia. I recall 2024 when that province entered a state of emergency three separate times—first for fire, then for floods and then for extreme weather. This is the case across the country. Canadians are feeling the impacts of climate change.

We are being forced into this false dichotomy between the environment and the economy, as if we can trade one off against the other when in fact the two go hand in hand. What economy do we have in an environment that is not able to function and provide the ecosystem services we rely on? I think it's an absolutely rhetorical position that Canadians are being put in. These are the kinds of divisive politics I was referring to in my opening statement.

Let me talk about prosperity for a second.

In 2022, for the very first time, Canada decoupled greenhouse gas emissions from our GDP. This has been a hallmark of success for the United Kingdom and the EU. Separating GHGs from GDP has been a huge part of their growth, prosperity and green economy in the last number of years. In 2024, we could already see that this was stagnating—that the separation between GHGs and GDP in Canada was stopping. I expect, with the decisions we've recently seen, that this trend will only continue.

We're seeing that our most prosperous counterparts in other parts of the world have figured out how to make money while reducing emissions. If Canada can't do that, we're going to keep being stuck and left behind.

**Gord Johns:** Thanks.

Ms. Abreu, you stated that the net-zero advisory body wasn't informed of policy decisions under way, and that you weren't asked to provide advice on those decisions.

Can you identify the most significant decisions that the advisory body was excluded from?

**Catherine Abreu:** Under the net-zero accountability act, it is mandated that the net-zero advisory body be consulted when a climate plan is being developed. The so-called climate competitiveness strategy—noticeably missing the word “plan”—was developed, again, without consulting Canada's net-zero advisory body. Because it's not called a “plan”, they weren't legally mandated to consult on those decisions.

Obviously, all the decisions taken have unwound many of the policies we advised on in previous years. They contravene the advice we prepared, pre-emptively, as a new government was coming into place. We said, “Hey, we get it. You might want to make some changes. Here are some suggested new pathways you might consider.” Again, we were not consulted on the climate competitiveness strategy, despite its looking much like a plan but isn't. Our advice on how to make changes without doing away with so much of the progress made was not taken into account.

• (1635)

**Gord Johns:** How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You're all done your five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Johns.

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

**Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.):** Thank you, witnesses.

I'd like to talk about building retrofits. I know there are a lot of things that go into addressing the climate challenge. This is one.

Can you talk to me about what policies have been most successful, which you've seen in other jurisdictions or even the previous program here in Canada, in encouraging building retrofits?

I'll start with you, Ms. Abreu.

**Catherine Abreu:** Over the course of my career, I have witnessed several examples of a program rolling out and then being cancelled abruptly with celebrations of its success. Some of the programs that were being offered at the federal level to support building retrofits faced, unfortunately, a similar story. They were cancelled very abruptly, with press releases that mentioned the great success they had when they were in place. It's always a sad tale when those are rolled back.

I will say that the previous federal supports we had for building retrofits were making a difference. In particular, they were making a difference for renters and for lower-income communities where it can be a lot more difficult for folks to access these kinds of programs.

I'll offer an example from my experience working in Nova Scotia. We actually developed a stand-alone energy efficiency utility. This is one approach I've seen that works very well for incentivizing these kinds of home- and business-based retrofits. It can create a huge workforce and can train up that workforce. A lot of the con-

versation we need to have is not just about making money in Canada but also about creating jobs.

**Bruce Fanjoy:** Thank you.

Dr. Donner, can you weigh in on building retrofits?

**Dr. Simon Donner:** I'm happy to.

What I can comment on is some of the work that the net-zero advisory body had done. Among the key things we tried to advise the government on last year.... Again, this is a report that I sent to the Prime Minister's Office and the energy minister's office, and I got no feedback on it. They didn't request it, but I offered a briefing on behalf of the net-zero advisory body.

Among the modelling we did—we did this work with the Canadian Climate Institute—we looked at the industrial pricing system and how you could tighten it to make it work better, which this deal that's been arranged has failed to do. We also tested other policies that would make a lot of sense, like building programs.

For example, here in British Columbia, the zero-carbon step code is probably the state of the art for building codes. In the modelling, we tested what would happen if you adopted that across the country, and we gave some advice around that. We also tested the idea of having consumer incentives for heat pumps, particularly for low-income households. Those are in the models, and they basically came at little economic cost to the government but, by 2035, with a pretty good bang for your buck in terms of emissions reductions.

Again, this is advice that was there. There was no conversation about it, and there was no response from the government.

**Bruce Fanjoy:** In your opinion, would a program such as this help to engage the broader Canadian public in the importance of taking the measures that are available to us to address climate change?

**Dr. Simon Donner:** The way I think about it is that if you look in the polls, there are a lot of people in Canada who want to take action, who themselves want to do something to reduce emissions and to respond to climate change, but it's costly for them unless governments set the incentives right. Better building codes, the zero-carbon step code and certainly a program, particularly for low-income households, to help get heat pumps installed.... They are net financial winners in the long term and give you cooling in places like British Columbia, in Vancouver, where very few people have air conditioning, myself included. These are really sensible policies that the government could be working on right now.

• (1640)

**Bruce Fanjoy:** Thank you.

Madam Chair, I'd like to move the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development holds no less than six meetings to conduct a study on the opportunity for home energy and adaptation retrofits to improve energy efficiency, affordability, and resilience of Canadian homes, and the role of public policy in creating the conditions to realize these benefits, including:

- the opportunity of home energy retrofits and adaptation measures in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing energy affordability for Canadians, and fostering local economic and job growth;
- accessibility of home energy and adaptation retrofits for low-income Canadians who are disproportionately impacted by high energy costs and climate change;
- accessibility of home energy and adaptation retrofits for renters and landlords;
- accessibility of home energy and adaptation retrofits in all types of communities and regions in Canada, including rural, urban, northern, and Indigenous communities; and,
- the barriers that impede Canadians from undertaking home energy and adaptation retrofits, including financing, program accessibility, supply-chain limitations, workforce availability, and regional variations in housing stock.

That the committee present a report to the House on its findings and recommendations; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

Thank you.

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

I believe this motion was on notice. Hopefully, we can proceed quickly so that we can continue with our witnesses.

Mr. Leslie.

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

Parliament is ending for the session. I can't believe how gutless this is. Clearly, you don't like the testimony that is happening in this place. You asked a question about the program and it turned out that one of the witnesses went to the minister and was rejected, was rebuffed; they wouldn't even talk about it. It turns out that this entire program has always been delivered by Natural Resources Canada. It's not even under ECCC.

This is something that, sure, maybe we want to talk about this in the fall, but for you to sit here and read out the entirety of the motion just to kill time is so shameful.

**Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Leslie, go through the chair, please.

**Branden Leslie:** I move to adjourn debate on this issue, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

**Patrick Bonin:** Madam Chair—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will vote on Mr. Leslie's—

[*Translation*]

**Patrick Bonin:** Madam Chair—

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Bonin.

**Patrick Bonin:** I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but I think it's still important to build on what my Conservative colleague just said.

I consider it completely shameful that we're using the speaking time of two expert witnesses on climate change, who came to speak to us about these issues, to tell us how problematic the situation in Canada is and how it could be improved. Instead, we're laughing and using that time precisely to prevent them from telling us the truth. Frankly, I find this very low. I'm very disappointed by this attitude. We've really hit rock bottom here. Seriously, this is completely unacceptable—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Bonin, but we can't debate Mr. Leslie's motion.

[*English*]

We need to vote on Mr. Leslie's motion to adjourn debate.

(Motion negated)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Leslie.

**Branden Leslie:** I'm flabbergasted. What is there to debate on this issue? If you want to pass this, sure, go ahead. I understand that you don't appreciate the witnesses' testimony here, or is there some other explanation as to why this would suddenly be moved just before the end of June, despite our having a private member's bill that we're studying on the 16th and then coming back immediately to finish clause-by-clause?

It is so transparent. It is shameless that you're trying to muzzle our witnesses. I would just ask for an immediate vote. Pass this or whatever you think you need to do. You have your majority. You're going to do it anyway. Just because you don't like this testimony....

This is something I never thought I would see. I thought you might do something like this in camera, but to be televised and doing it is just embarrassing.

**The Chair:** Is there any further debate on the motion?

Mr. Fanjoy.

**Bruce Fanjoy:** I need to respond to this.

• (1645)

**Branden Leslie:** How much time will you take? You'll take a long time, I'll bet.

**Bruce Fanjoy:** No, you've taken the time. I was using my time. I don't think either of our witnesses needs you to speak for them. I think they would welcome this study if it ultimately turned into a program that helped us get to our numbers. This motion has been on notice.

Mr. Leslie, this entire past year you have fought every single measure to address this issue, so you can get off your high horse.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fanjoy, go through the chair, please.

**Tim Watchorn:** You've asked no questions of the witnesses—none.

**Bruce Fanjoy:** If there's no further debate, we'll go to a vote.

**The Chair:** You have your hand up, Mr. Ross.

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Madam Chair, it's a motion on retrofitting for energy efficiency. When we're talking about it, we hear it from the government all the time that this is an existential crisis—climate change, the Paris accord—yet we have members who resigned from the net-zero committee coming to explain why they lost faith in the climate action plan in Canada.

We hear it all the time that this is one of the single biggest issues facing Canadians, if not our global partners, when talking about clean energy, fossil fuels, you name it. What do we do? We waste time and muzzle our witnesses with a motion to look at heating efficiencies for houses.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Ellis Ross:** Is this really a big issue, as the government has been saying for the last how many years, or is this just an attempt to muzzle our witnesses, who are giving what we—as well as our colleagues down the way here—see as extremely important witness testimony?

**The Chair:** Shall we continue and do the vote that so we can get back to our witnesses?

(Motion agreed to)

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

We will now turn to Monsieur Bonin.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Mr. Donner, you spoke about the risks to the Canadian economy, among other things. We're seeing a global shift toward electrification. We're also seeing that new technologies are making it possible to reduce costs related to energy, oil and gas.

In this context, could you tell us more about why it's more advantageous for people to make that transition and move toward electrification?

If Canada doesn't get on board with this shift, this global wave, don't we risk falling significantly behind from a competitive standpoint, given a higher cost of living for households and, of course, greater environmental impacts?

[*English*]

**Dr. Simon Donner:** Thank you for the question.

Obviously, I'm a scientist—a natural scientist, not an economist—but because of working with the NZAB for so long, I've followed the research on the economics and what's happening globally for the past five or six years. One of the things that I think is just so important for Canadians—for everyone here in the committee but also for Canadians writ large—to understand is that the conversation we have in Canada, in the media, etc., about energy is divorced from the international conversation. Anyone who has attended an international climate conference and sat through a lot of sessions would see this.

For the International Energy Agency, which is a very conservative group, for years their fossil fuel projections typically have overestimated fossil fuel demand. In their scenario that's on stated policies, they have oil demand peaking by 2030, and they have gas demand peaking by 2035. Now, that is just based on existing policies that governments have going on around the world. That was from last year. It does not include the impacts of the war. As I've mentioned, they tend to overestimate fossil fuel use.

That is the reason that bodies like the NZAB were warning that an overreliance on oil and gas for the future of Canada is going to be a risk. Trying to make the major projects heavily reliant on a pipeline or new LNG facilities.... They all risk being stranded assets. It's not just an economic issue. It's a jobs issue, because we make people's lives dependent on something that maybe isn't going to survive going forward.

When I was a student back in the 1990s when I was first in graduate school—which I started in the mid-1990s—and I was studying climate change, we were told that solar and wind.... I'll pause there. I'll just say that there's a revolution on clean energy going on and Canada is not a part of it, and it's a problem.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

We'll now turn to Ms. May and Mr. Johns for five minutes.

**Elizabeth May:** Just to be clear, do I split five minutes with Mr. Johns?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

I thank you again, Ms. Abreu, for your very clear statements.

I want to go back to some of the key points: that Canada is not doing as good a job as the Trump administration and that the climate accountability act is being ignored.

Given what you've experienced, do you think there's any point in keeping the climate accountability act, or should we just let it be repealed so Canadians know the truth?

**Catherine Abreu:** It's absolutely important to have national legislation that enshrines our long-term climate goals as well as a climate governance regime. That being said, while it's not being respected, communication around why that legislation is not being respected is absolutely paramount. We are not getting that kind of honest and transparent communication with Canadians.

I certainly would not recommend repealing this legislation. I, in fact, am here to stand up for this legislation. It is absolutely critical. As I mentioned, we are not a front-runner country when it comes to having this legislation. We were 59th to pass a climate law, so already we were out of step with many of our global peers. Eliminating a climate law, particularly when we announced a climate emergency in 2019, would just make us embarrassing on the global stage.

When it comes to the damages that Canada is experiencing from climate change, according to the studies of the Canadian Climate Institute, by 2025, the Canadian economy was being slowed by \$25 billion annually because of climate impacts. It is a huge impact to the Canadian economy and it's not something we can ignore, nor can we ignore the shrinking market share that Canada has in the global clean energy economy, which is only growing.

**Elizabeth May:** Ms. Abreu, as you said, there is a global energy revolution happening. Dr. Donner said the same thing. Canada is not part of it.

Are we in a very small group of countries that are still defending and willing to subsidize fossil fuels? Are we putting ourselves outside of what is now an increasingly global norm, in your view?

**Catherine Abreu:** Fossil fuel subsidies, unfortunately, continue around the world. We see, in particular, fossil fuel subsidies for consumption in many parts of the world. This is to offset the increasing costs of fossil fuels that people on the ground in many countries are experiencing because fossil fuel markets are becoming increasingly volatile.

We are one of a number—I wouldn't say a tiny number, but still a relatively small number—of countries that are offering the amount of subsidies that we do on production. I'm not sure that Canada would necessarily count itself amongst those other countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and, of course, the United States. We are certainly falling out of step with many of our global peers when it comes to really taking advantage of the transition.

I will point out that Canada has a unique advantage. We have an incredible abundance of clean energy in this country that we are not taking advantage of. Instead, we obsess over this one industry that, yes, is important and we need to plan for a managed phase-out of

that industry over many years with respect to workers and communities, but let's invest in the resources that we have in this country. Those are clean energy resources.

**Gord Johns:** Thank you.

Ms. Abreu, the Prime Minister was elected just over a year ago. He was elected as a climate champion. He served as the UN special envoy on climate action, leading global net-zero initiatives. This was his pedigree.

Do you believe that he is betraying what he got elected on, his pedigree and the work that he had been doing prior to becoming Prime Minister?

**Catherine Abreu:** My solidarity is with the many who had much higher expectations for this Prime Minister when he came into office, seeing his commitment to climate in other arenas and having read his book. Many of us are experiencing that disappointment. It's not only around climate policy. As someone growing up in Canada, even if I set my concerns around climate change aside, I'm concerned that we are not having the conversation about where we want to prioritize future opportunities in this country. We've been having the same conversation the entire time that I've been in my professional career. It's sad. I just have to be really honest with you all about that. It feels like we're stuck in the same conversation over and over again.

Even if I put my concerns for climate aside, the fact that we're not actually transitioning our economy into the future really worries me. That, in particular, is what many of us are disappointed about, because we felt that this Prime Minister would be the right one to think through the options at the intersection of economic potential and clean economy potential in this country. That's not what we're seeing.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. May and Mr. Johns.

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

**Chris Malette:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for appearing today.

I want to thank our Conservative friends, as well, for giving their time to Mr. Johns and Ms. May. I guess they're embracing their true commitment to climate change mitigation and environmental champions by allowing other voices at the table.

Welcome, and I welcome your questions.

My first question is for Ms. Abreu.

In your estimation, what institutional changes would make the advisory board more effective in providing independent advice to the government?

**Catherine Abreu:** The first step is to appoint members to the body. I believe that there are still only four members who are currently on the body out of a maximum of 14. Definitely, having some human resources there would be essential.

As Dr. Donner already mentioned, investing and making sure that the right co-chairpersonship is there is really important. I know that Dr. Donner will have further observations to share as the former co-chair.

In other iterations of this kind of dynamic that we see in other countries, the level of autonomy that the climate council has is really critical. That's autonomy both in terms of resourcing—the ability to oversee its own research and activities budget—as well as the level of autonomy of its staff. As Dr. Donner mentioned in his opening statement, we experienced the difficulty of having staff who were sometimes being put in challenging positions in terms of their roles within government. Those would also be areas that a new structure would have to look at for the advisory body to be more effective.

**Chris Malette:** Thank you.

My next question would be for Dr. Donner, then.

During your time on the net-zero advisory board, what recommendations, Dr. Donner, do you believe had the greatest impact on federal climate policy?

**Dr. Simon Donner:** Honestly, it's a bit hard to answer precisely because of the timing of our advice. A lot of what we were advising on was aimed at very long-term decisions. There weren't necessarily things being done in immediate policy.

The one time when we lined up quite closely with the government, because of planning from the government's standpoint, was on advice towards the 2035 target and advice towards what could be done to close the gap towards 2030. That was our second annual report.

Most of the advice that we gave was not taken, but it was discussed in great detail with the government. It was discussed in great detail with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. It was discussed in great detail with the Privy Council Office. That's because of the coordination, and that's why I pointed to the importance of coordination in my statement.

Another thing I will point out is that we worked a lot on industrial policy and industrial strategy. I know that in the previous government, there was a lot of interest from outside of ECCC in the advice we were giving, and the previous co-chairs met with many people outside of ECCC about that advice. Again, it wasn't directly adopted, but I think it did influence some of the direction that the government took.

You all don't have to like me personally, but we're just doing research and giving advice. Why not listen to the experts? They're there working for the government, serving at the pleasure of the government. It's worth listening to them.

**Chris Malette:** Dr. Donner, I don't dislike you personally. I want to make that clear.

My last question is for Ms. Abreu.

We just heard Dr. Donner talk about the long game, if you will, of the recommendations that the advisory body made. Would you agree with me, though, that you painted a bit of a bleak picture by painting us versus the U.S.A. in terms of the progress that they're making? Is that not a bit of a false narrative?

We can go back to the Bush era, when they started laying the groundwork for this. With the commitment, the ability and the sheer heft, if you will, of the U.S. to enact some of these—and the California climate regulations, which are not insignificant—that is all catching on now, and to compare it... Would you not agree that it's a bit of a false narrative to compare all of those years of planning and that stewardship by progressive presidencies, which is now coming to fruition...?

We're being compared to Donald Trump, of all people. Do you agree that it's a little bit unfair to do that?

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Give a short answer please, Ms. Abreu.

**Catherine Abreu:** I don't agree that it's unfair to do it, because if we were not making that comparison, then we would be saying that it was okay for previous successive governments in Canada not to take any action on climate change, which is not the case. It was not okay. In fact, we now have a decade of revolution in Canadian climate policy behind us.

What I'm talking about is how this government will plan to continue that legacy. Currently, there is no plan to continue any of that activity. Instead, there's just an elimination of policies without any new pathways being put forward.

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

On behalf of the committee, I would like to very warmly thank our witnesses for their time and testimony today. They are now excused.

We'll suspend for a few minutes while we switch to in camera.

Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]







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