House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

ENVI • NUMBER 018 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 10, 2005

Chair

Mr. Alan Tonks

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Thursday, February 10, 2005

● (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.)): Bonjour, and welcome. To the members of the committee and to our witnesses, thank you for being here. Well, especially to our witnesses, thank you for being here. Members of the committee are here as of right and as of duty—and as of privilege, I'm reminded. That's very, very true.

This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), study on Canada's implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, part I, "Setting the Stage", we're talking about where we are with respect to the current situation. You've all had an opportunity to get a copy of our research paper, which has attempted to set a platform in place within which we are going through this analysis of the Kyoto regime. We appreciate your being here as witnesses to assist us in terms of that process of the evaluation, re-evaluation, and so on. So thank you very much for being here.

We have as witnesses, from Greenpeace Canada, Steven Guilbeault, who is a campaigner with respect to climate and energy; from the David Suzuki Foundation, Morag Carter, the director of the climate change program; from Équiterre, Sidney Ribaux, who is the general coordinator and co-founder; and from the Friends of Science Society, Charles Simpson, president, and Tim Patterson, expert witness from Carleton University. Welcome to all of you.

I don't know whether you have arranged among yourselves to speak in a particular order. We don't flip coins or anything like that. Perhaps we could just start in the order on the procedure sheet, which would have Steven making the first presentation, from Greenpeace Canada. Is the committee in agreement with that? Then we'll proceed in that order.

Okay, Steven.

Mr. Sidney Ribaux (General Coordinator and Co-founder, Équiterre): Sorry, what would the order be?

The Chair: We'll go in this order: Greenpeace, then the David Suzuki Foundation, Équiterre, and Friends of Science.

Merci.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Guilbeault (Campaigner, Climate and Energy, Greenpeace Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, members of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development; my name is Steven Guilbeault and I am a campaigner for climate and energy with Greenpeace Canada. I have been with Greenpeace since 1997, but have been involved in climate change since 1994. In 1995, I attended the First Conference of the Parties in Berlin, I was in Kyoto in 1997, and I have organized more than a dozen international negotiation meetings on climate change over the past 10 years.

This morning I would like to discuss three aspects of the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol in Canada. First, there is the carrot and stick approach as represented in the measures that have been implemented to date. In our opinion, it is essential that we have measures on which to build the future. Of course, there is the Kyoto Protocol, but, internationally, there is already talk of what happens after Kyoto, in other words, future agreements that will follow the Kyoto Protocol. Finally, we feel that a long term plan is important. I will explain that further in a few minutes.

On the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to date, it is apparent that the Government of Canada has adopted the carrot approach. Incentives have been offered, and there are programs, often voluntary, for various sectors of the Canadian community, particularly industry. More recently, with the One-Tonne Challenge, the people of Canada have been asked to do their share. We now have a host of measures and incentive programs, but they are often unrelated when it comes to insuring any long term effectiveness. Many Canadian newspaper articles have recently stated that even the officials in Ottawa are now acknowledging that the voluntary approach will not help us to meet our targets, something that we, as environmentalists, have been saying for quite some time.

In the Rio Framework Convention on Climate Change, an international commitment was made to bring our greenhouse gas emissions back down to the 1990 levels by the year 2000. At the time, the only measures that were put forward to meet this target were voluntary, and we all know what happened. In 2000, our greenhouse gas emissions were about 20 % higher than in 1990.

Of course, there can be voluntary measures, and we agree that incentives are necessary, but the carrot cannot work without the stick. Regulatory measures must be implemented. There must be laws to force various sectors to meet the Canadian emission standards. That is unavoidable.

This applies to many of the sectors with heavy greenhouse gas emissions. Take, for example, the large final emitters that are responsible for 50% of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. There is also the transportation sector, which accounts for about 30% of emissions. So far, very few measures, if any, have applied to the transportation sector. This aberration must be corrected without delay.

There is also the construction industry. I believe that Mr. Ribaux, from Équiterre, will touch upon that briefly. The National Building Code is a number of years old. The provincial codes, none of which is very recent either—for example, Quebec's code was published in 1981—have not really been updated, despite the introduction of new construction techniques, new materials, new technologies such as geothermics, which is becoming more popular in Canada, even though it is not yet widely used, to reduce emissions. To date, these measures have, for all intents and purposes, been ignored or used very sparingly.

Speaking of geothermics, there is a very interesting project underway in Winnipeg, where 10,000 entirely geothermic housing units will be built.

This leads me to my second point, namely, the necessity to have measures on which we can build to not only meet the Kyoto objectives, but to go beyond them.

● (1110)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCG, as it is called in English,

[*English*]

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,

[*Translation*]

clearly states that for a country like ours, and for all industrialized countries, emissions will have to be reduced by 60 to 80% over the next decades, by about 2050, if we want to avoid a global climate catastrophe. Even last week, these conclusions were confirmed at a meeting sponsored by British Prime Minister Blair, held at Exeter University.

The introduction of tax measures in various sectors of Canada's economy will be one way to institute structural measures. This would require a complete overhaul of Canada's tax system which, even today, tends to encourage the type of activity that greatly encourages greenhouse gas emissions while acting as a disincentive to activities, technologies and investments that would reduce or create few greenhouse gas emissions. That goes against our Kyoto Protocol objectives.

In closing, I would say that part of our problem resides in the fact that Canada has yet to have a global view of the environment issue. Whether in Rio in 1992 or Kyoto in 1997—I was there—we held to our negotiating position, without really knowing what to expect. We should look to what is being done elsewhere to prepare these action plans for decades to come. We might think of Great Britain and its white paper on emission reduction. The British government has committed to a 50% reduction of their greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. I mention Great Britain, but I could also cite a nearby state, Maine, which has undertaken, in a similar exercise, to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 70% by the year 2050. An American state, under George Bush, which is moving forward with very proactive measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Who would have believed it?

We must not lose sight of the environmental limits, even if, so far, they have been completely ignored. How close are we coming to witnessing a global climate catastrophe? With that in mind, the European Union acknowledges that we must, by whatever means possible, avoid raising the climate's worldwide temperature by more than 2 degrees Celsius. Some countries, among them Great Britain, have already done that. Atmosphere concentration levels have been set in order to avoid going beyond that level. It is already part of Britain's climate change policy. And the European Union is about to do the same. I sincerely hope that Canada will undertake this type of exercise, and define this type of long-term objective. This will provide for a much more organized approach as we move forward in the coming decades. Everyone will know what to expect, which has unfortunately not always been the case. I will leave it at that, and would like to thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Guilbeault.

[*English*]

Thank you for that input.

I should have mentioned at the beginning that we allow about 10 minutes, give or take. We try to be as reasonable as we can with that time. You were under that time, Mr. Guilbeault. Thank you for setting that standard.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: Good.

The Chair: We'll now go to Ms. Morag Carter, director of the David Suzuki Foundation.

Ms. Morag Carter (Director, Climate Change Program, David Suzuki Foundation): Good morning, everybody, and thank you for inviting the David Suzuki Foundation to present before the committee. We're going to be saying very similar things to my colleague from Greenpeace Canada.

Canada now has the unenviable reputation of being one of the least energy efficientcountries in the OECD, and as your background paper said, Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions are approximately 20% above 1990 levels and more than 25% above our Kyoto Protocol commitments. Minister Dion has repeatedly referred to the Canadian target for meeting Kyoto as the most onerous in the world. That is true, but it's true because we have been so negligent in meeting our Kyoto commitments to date.

It's clear from our emission trends and the growing gap that Canada requires acredible, workable plan to meet our Kyoto targets and obligations. Canada’s plan must also set us on the path toward the steep emission reductions that Steven mentioned, which will be required to prevent dangerous climate change.

What is also apparent, as Steven said, is that we need this mixture of carrot and stick obligations. We need a mixture of regulatory, fiscal, and incentive measures if we are to be successful in meeting our Kyoto obligations. The right mix of measures will have theadded benefit of ensuring that Canada is on track to developing the architecture we think is required forthe long-term and steep reductions that science is showing us we need to achieve in orderto avoid catastrophic climate change.

The David Suzuki Foundation would like to share with the committee our analysis oftwo key programs that are central to the Government of Canada's strategy to addressclimate change and then to give a very brief overview of the findings of key scientific publications.In 2004, the David Suzuki Foundation received documents through access to information that dealt with the large final emitter program as well as the internal mid-program review of Environment Canada's Action Plan 2000 on Climate Change, usually referredto as the AP2000.

The LFE sector is of particular concern since the emissions from this sector are projected to produce half of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions by2010. In addition, this program is also a clear example of the need for a regulatory backstop to ensure that greenhouse gas reduction targets are met. As part of Canada's Kyoto commitment, the LFEs, made up of Canada's oil and gas, electricity, manufacturing, and mining sectors,initially had a target to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 55 megatons. This emission reduction for LFEs was a 15% decline from the 2010 business-as-usual projections, but an increase of 14% from 1990 emission levels.

The target was based on emissions intensity, or emissions per unit of production, not on absolute reductions. So if production went up, the LFEs would be allowed to emit more greenhouse gas than their original target. These access to information documents say that "It has become apparent that output in a number of high-intensity industries,most notably aluminum and oil sands, will be significantly higher than projected".

The net result is that greenhouse gas emissions from LFEs, even if they comply with their targets, will be somewhere between 27% and 55% above their 1990 levels. With Canada needing toreduce its overall emissions by 6% from 1990 levels, who is going to be responsible for the emissions reduction shortfall caused by increased industrial pollution? The documents are very clear, and this is actually a quote: "the taxpayer, not industry, bears the risk if output turns out to behigher than forecast".

As well, recent developments reported in the press have suggested to us that the government maybe considering revising the LFE target down to 37 megatons. This is of very significant concern to us.

The other program that the Suzuki Foundation was interested in evaluating was the pilot emission removals, reductions and learnings program, the PERRL program. Our interestin this program has been heightened by suggestions in the press and from a variety of sources that a PERRL-type program may be a central feature of a new climate change plan for Canada.

In the package we received, a memo to the Prime Minister from the Clerk of the Privy Council explained: "While the review found that the majority of AP2000 measures are meeting their milestones as planned, it also found that some measures may have difficulty in fully achieving their 2010 GHG emission reduction targets". Of particular concern in this process is the pilot emission removals, reductions and learnings program, which is among the initiatives expected to yield emission reductions before the Kyoto commitment period of 2008 to 2012. ATIP information indicates that PERRL is among the measures from the mid-term review that require course correction.

● (1115)

The PERRL program was expected by the government to yield results sooner than other measures in AP2000, and its expected emission reductions were significant, a total of about 17.7 megatons. It represents several measures and approaches expected to affect and influence a variety of sectors.

The documents contain a detailed description of the challenges currently being faced by PERRL. The program was originally expected to reduce emissions by 17.7 megatons, but that figure has now been revised to a total reduction of about three megatons.

The reasons for this drastic revision include the fact that expected provincial-territorial participation in PERRL did not materialize. Also, AP2000's fixed end date and reduced budget limit the amount of reduction that can be attained over the remaining life of the project.

PERRL shows at least two important outcomes: one, "the program demonstrates that reducing emissions is not only good for the environment; it can also be good for business"; and two, achieving strong federal-provincial-territorial collaboration is essential to achieve greenhouse gas reductions.

The fact that the emissions gap faced by Canada keeps growing is an unequivocal signal that all levels of government and industry need to collaborate with creativity and resolution to implement a variety of strong additional initiatives to achieve our global responsibilities on time. A different policy approach is also required, one that includes strong regulatory and fiscal measures. This last point has been reinforced by the OECD, Canada's Commissioner for the Environment, and officials at Environment Canada.

Important lessons can be drawn from these documents.

One, using an intensity-based system for the LFE program is the wrong approach because it allows absolute emissions from industry to rise and places responsibility on Canadian taxpayers to make up the difference.

Two, the petroleum industry in particular is being allowed by the federal government to shirk its responsibilities with respect to greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Three, though access to information documents state that most of the measures in the government's Action Plan 2000 are meeting their greenhouse gas emission reduction milestones, Canada's emissions have nevertheless grown by more than 20% since 1990. There seems to be a bit of a gap here.

Four, if the PERRL program is to play a significant role in future greenhouse gas emission reductions, it needs to be significantly revamped by eliminating constraints on its effectiveness, i.e., fixed end dates and lack of funds.

Five, the provinces and territories need to work together to have much better collaboration, and the Canadian government needs to take on its fair share of Kyoto-related responsibilities.

Six, all Kyoto-related programs, including AP2000, require strong reinforcement and more open and frequent evaluations to ensure that they remain on target. They're clearly not.

And seven, not only can Canada's target still be met, but reaching them can also be good for Canadian business.

I just want to turn very quickly to one of the other things that Steven touched on, which is the state of the current science. Very few scientists around the world now debate that climate change is a reality. Furthermore, a growing body of evidence points to more potentially catastrophic changes than had previously been thought. As each major scientific assessment is published, the evidence of increasing temperatures, melting ice, changing weather patterns, species loss, and adverse human health impacts gets stronger.

Each publication comes with a warning that scenarios previously thought unlikely or even far-fetched may in fact be more likely unless we act as a global community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The IPCC third assessment report found that “[t]here is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities”, and that “global average temperature and sea level are projected to rise under all IPCC SRES scenarios”.

IPCC modelling further predicts that the “globally averaged surface temperature is projected to increase by 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius over the period 1990 to 2100”. At the conference earlier this month at Exeter University that Steven talked about, researchers reported that the potential for the collapse of the western Antarctic ice sheet was not as unlikely as previously thought. This is something that the IPCC third assessment report had concluded was very unlikely before 2100.

However, one of the most compelling scientific assessments to be published recently is the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report. In November 2004, the ACIA was released in Reykjavik. The report was authored by more than 300 scientists from 15 countries and reviewed by a further 160. The ACIA took on a multidisciplinary approach to evaluating the impacts of climate change in the Arctic and included indigenous knowledge as a component of the scientific findings.

● (1120)

The 10 key scientific findings from the ACIA are these: the Arctic climate is warming rapidly, and much larger changes are predicted; Arctic warming and its consequences will have worldwide implications; Arctic vegetation zones are likely to shift, causing wide-ranging impacts; animal species' diversity ranges and distribution will change; many coastal communities and facilities face increasing exposure to storms; reduced sea ice is very likely to increase marine transport and access to resources; thawing ground will disrupt transportation, buildings, and other infrastructure; indigenous communities are facing major economic and cultural impacts; elevated ultraviolet radiation levels will affect people, plants, and animals; and finally, multiple influences, including chemical contamination in the Arctic, will interact to cause impacts to people and ecosystems.

These findings and others point to an urgent need for Canada not only to comply with our obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, but to start creating an architecture that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50%—and as Steven said, more likely 60% to 80%—within the next 25 years. Clearly, the current science tells us action to reduce the emissions that cause climate change is warranted and urgent. Kyoto is an important first step on the path. While Canada has committed to meet reductions under the Kyoto Protocol, our actions and policies so far have had very little effect.

Therefore, we are making the following recommendations. The first and the most important is to establish a central bureau in the Privy Council Office with the authority and knowledge to engage departments on Kyoto implementation in an integrated manner and foster the development of an innovative, low-carbon economy.

The second is that we really need to design a transparent, fair, and effective large final emitters system with the dual objectives of protecting environmental integrity and promoting a low-carbon future. The cornerstone of this plan could fail if Natural Resources Canada fails to include key design elements, including reporting transparency for industry, provisions beyond emission intensity to ensure targets are achieved, safeguards against double counting, and a commitment to halt the shifting of responsibility from industry to taxpayers.

We need to phase out subsidies to the oil and gas industry, which is a tough one, and to redirect these subsidies to Kyoto solutions programs, including significant investment in the renewables industry.

We need to design measures to support deep emission reductions and also achieve the Kyoto target.

We need to take advantage of smart regulations that encourage technical innovation. Voluntary measures and spending on their own, as we know, have proven economically and environmentally ineffective.

We need to renew the principle of equitable burden sharing, which threatens to be fundamentally violated by the rapid growth of emissions in key sectors, particularly the oil and gas, electricity, and transportation sectors, shifting the burden unfairly onto other regions or sectors or from industry to taxpayers. Provincial, territorial, and federal governments agreed to this principle in the wake of the signing of the Kyoto Protocol.

We need to contain Canada's major drivers of climate change, particularly electricity, oil and gas production and extraction, and transportation.

Last, but certainly not least, we all need to take leadership. This is the single most important consideration in developing and implementing the climate protection and sustainable energy agenda in Canada.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Very well. Thank you, Ms. Carter.

[*English*]

We'll now go to Mr. Ribaux. We look forward to your presentation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sidney Ribaux: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, members of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development; I will be making my presentation in French. However, I will be ready to take your questions in English after my presentation.

Thank you for inviting me to express Équiterre's position on Canada's action plan for the Kyoto Protocol. I must say, as I begin, that my presentation will be much more down to earth than those made by Greenpeace Canada and the David Suzuki Foundation. I would consider it a companion piece. In fact, we support the main recommendations that were made by these groups. Équiterre is more of a hands-on organization, which was created in 1993. I would like to tell you about it.

Our head office is in Montreal, and we are involved with the general public in all regions of Quebec, and sometimes outside the province. Our mission is to spur people to act, by changing behaviours. Rather than simply raise the awareness of people and communities, we try to encourage them to act. We are in touch with more than 300,000 people every year, through conversations and direct contact. These people attend our conferences, read our documentation and visit our Web site. We feel that the public is becoming ever more receptive of the type of message that Équiterre conveys.

We have four education programs: sustainable transportation, energy efficiency, ecological agriculture, and fair trade, our international component. Since our inception in 1993, we have had a campaign for responsible consumerism and have been concerned with climate change. We are very active in finding solutions, most of which, in one way or another, involve climate change.

We are very active in Quebec and in all of its regions. I sit on the board of directors of an organization called Green Communities Canada, which brings together Canadian organizations involved in similar projects throughout the country. What I am about to explain applies, in some way, to almost all of the regions and federal ridings in the country.

I will give you a few examples of what we do so that you will understand our involvement at the local level. A few years ago, we began a series of organic vegetable basket projects, which allowed consumers to buy their vegetables directly from a farmer. Early in the growing season, the consumer or citizen commits to buying a certain number of baskets of vegetables from a farmer. Part of the crop is spoken for and, over the course of the season, the customer receives organically certified fruits and vegetables. And there are other products as well.

Équiterre acts as the go-between in this project. We make it easier for the farmers by helping them to prepare these projects and by linking them up with consumers. This helps to ensure the survival of small family farms that have an environmental vocation. They have a guaranteed market share, since people commit to buying ahead of time, and this also ensures a greater biodiversity-diversity for their farms. These farms produce 20 to 30 varieties of fruits and vegetables, while most others only have one type. There is an advantage for consumers as well, because they have access to local, organic, fresh produce at very close to supermarket prices for conventional items and about half the price of the organic produce.

These projects work quite well. The first one was in 1995, with one farm and 50 partners. This year, 100 Quebec farms will supply more than 20,000 people. This is an interesting demonstration of Canadian public opinion. Some might say that 20,000 people is a small number, but the growth curve for this type of project is phenomenal. There is no lack of consumers willing to take part, but the number of participating farms has levelled off, something that can be attributed to a number of reasons, including the lack of government support.

What does this have to do with climate change? About 50% of the food that is consumed in Quebec comes from outside the province or the country. The food that you eat travels an average of 2,400 kilometres before it finds its way to your plate. Those are the figures for Quebec, but they must be about the same for the rest of Canada. These projects obviously affect food safety, the development of organic farming, but also, most assuredly, the transportation of goods, and therefore, greenhouse gas emissions.

● (1130)

Équiterre also provides energy efficiency services. We have a program which is specifically intended for those on a low income. We go to their homes and offer to carry out a free visit of approximately two hours during which time we carry out work and provide a range of advisory services. We visit 1,000 homes each year. This program is supported by the government of Quebec, but not, unfortunately by the federal government. It allows people to save between 5 and 20% on their power bill. For low-income individuals who struggle to keep a roof over their heads, our program makes a significant difference.

We have a second home energy efficiency analysis service called ÉnerGuide. ÉnerGuide receives the support of both the Quebec and the Canadian governments. The service consists of performing an energy efficiency analysis of a house in order that the owners can then carry out an energy efficient upgrade which will allow them to save up to 20% on their bill. These are extremely popular programs which allow us to truly educate consumers and, as a result, implement real changes.

As regards transport, we organize public awareness campaigns in collaboration with several partners, including the health sector and municipalities. Over the past ten years, the majority of Équiterre work on this front has been focused on convincing municipal and provincial policy-makers to take measures to improve public transport and other means of urban transport.

We have been very involved in trying to increase investment in, among other sectors, public transport and active transport. Later on in my presentation, I will speak to you about this issue in more detail. I believe that, in the long term, public transport will be one of the most important issues in terms of climate change.

Allow me to tell you about an interesting example which is making the news. In Montreal, discussion is underway on the construction of a new bridge, the Highway 25 bridge linking Montreal and Laval, on the north shore. The project is becoming something of a hot topic. For the moment, no federal participation is required, but it is, nonetheless, an interesting example given that the situation is applicable to any highway, and that the federal government has previously invested, and continues to invest, in highway infrastructure, particularly in urban settings. The bridge would carry an additional 150,000 cars into Montreal on a daily basis. That is a further 20,000 cars at morning rush hour alone. Construction costs for the bridge are evaluated at $350 million. Yet there are already reserved lanes for public transport in Montreal, in particular on the Champlain Bridge, which allow for around 25,000 passengers to be transported at rush hour.

The question that has to be asked is the following: from a public finance perspective alone—let us forget about environmental issues for a few moments—are we to invest $350 million in building a new bridge, or should we put orange traffic cones along an existing lane to reserve it for buses? That is essentially what the debate boils down to.

It is extremely important to monitor federal government investment in infrastructure. If the federal government lets it be understood that investment in road infrastructure is desirable, we run the risk of aggravating the problem, not only in environmental terms, but also in terms of road congestion and population health in urban environments.

In terms of the Kyoto Protocol, the Canadian government sent an extremely positive message to all jurisdictions and the many citizens when it signed the Kyoto agreement in 1997 and then ratified it in 2002.

● (1135)

Allow me to give you some examples. In Quebec, our hard work led the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, which includes the entire Montreal CMA, to support the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Cities such as Quebec and Montreal have unreservedly adopted action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. More recently, Quebeckers spoke out strongly against the construction of a natural gas plant which presented virtually no environmental risk other than greenhouse gases. On this front, the signature and ratification of the protocol have sent out some important messages.

When you work at the grassroots level with cities and other bodies, it becomes clear that there is a gap between what the federal government says and what it does. Allow me to provide you with an example. We are on the steering committee of the Montreal Strategic Sustainable Development Plan, which seeks to take measures for the environment. However, there is no concrete mechanism for supporting the measures that the city of Montreal wishes to introduce: programs are rare or non-existent, and the means available to cities and provinces are inconsistent with the message sent to them on greenhouse gas reduction.

I am raising these issues because, in my view, they are important. The government has launched an education campaign on climate change which is called the One-Tonne Challenge. Recently, in conjunction with other bodies, Équiterre funded the Centre québécois d'actions sur les changements climatiques. Furthermore, we are partners in the government's campaign. We are trying to adapt it to a Quebec context, as the provinces and territories are trying to do with programs such as Climate Change Hub.

This campaign is necessary. It is important that Canadians understand what governments are trying to achieve in terms of climate change. However, it could prove difficult, both for the government and for us, as a group which works at grassroots level and which speaks with people on a daily basis, to tell people not to use their cars if car manufacturers are being subsidized irrespective or the type of car that they are manufacturing. It will also be very difficult to convince people to use public transport in Montreal when buses, which at worse ran every 15 minutes 10 years ago, now come along every half hour. Waiting for a bus in January when it is -30 is not a pleasant experience. The authorities, including the Canadian government, have shown no clear intention of investing in public transport rather than highways.

I will just give you a brief overview of the transport situation since time is running out. I simply want to highlight that there has been a steady increase in the number of cars and kilometres covered in Quebec over the past few years. Aside from the United States, we are one of the G-7 countries which makes the least use of urban transit. This has nothing to do with the size of Canada, we are talking about urban transit. This is a trend which is as equally true of Montreal as it is of Toronto or other cities. We have to remedy this situation, in particular by sending out clear signals.

I will end with Équiterre's recommendations. Although our recommendations are fairly broad, they are based on recommendations already made by bodies such as the National Round Table on the Environment. In the short term, cities need new tax measures to raise funds; however, the federal government is not in a position to give municipalities the legal means to do so. It is, therefore, important that these funds be made available. Three billion dollars should be earmarked each year exclusively for public transport and active transport, such as bikes. These monies could also be invested in infrastructure to reduce our use of cars, for example, setting up toll booths in major cities. As well as meeting this recommendation, it is important not to invest in highway infrastructure, as it would cancel out the benefits gained from investing in public transit.

The federal government should adopt policies on transporting public servants and on the location of its buildings. This is a measure which would be very easy to implement but which would have a significant impact given that the federal public service comprises 367,000 public servants.

● (1140)

The government should consider tax breaks for employers providing public transport passes to their employees.

As regards awareness-raising, methods of decentralizing public education strategies must be examined, because the solutions for an individual living in Alberta are not the same as those for a Quebecker.

The government should also move towards an increase in gas taxes. Such a move is one of the levers that are available to the government.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm going to ask you to conclude now, please.

Mr. Sidney Ribaux: I'm concluding.

[*Translation*]

Funding for energy efficiency has to be increased and, more specifically, the federal government should examine the possibility of funding an energy efficiency program for low-income individuals. I will finish on that note.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

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

I'll just remind the members and witnesses that if you have additional points to bring up, you can bring them up in the question and answer period also.

We were just a little bit over time on that one, but we do appreciate that input.

Mr. Simpson and Mr. Patterson from the Friends of Science, please.

● (1145)

Mr. Charles Simpson (President, Friends of Science Society): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members. Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today and impart our thoughts on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

I'm with the Friends of Science Society, which comprises engineers, geologists, geophysicists, and atmospheric and environmental scientists. The society was formed just three years ago to examine the science underlying Kyoto, as our members felt this science was at best uncertain and certainly leaned towards being obsolete. We have consulted many client experts and now have a scientific advisory board consisting of a number of leading international experts in the field. One of them, Dr. Tim Patterson of Carleton University, is with me today to speak to the science.

Today is unique in that it is the first time, to my knowledge, that an independent climate scientist has addressed a committee such as this as a dissenting voice. We and others who contest the science of Kyoto have previously been prevented from attending the stakeholders meetings. For allowing us to present today, I give my sincere thank you.

The summary notes from your October 21 meeting make no mention of the science of climate change. From this omission, I presume the committee has concluded that the science has been resolved. To the contrary, it has been swept under the rug and has been ignored. As a consequence of this serious oversight, Canada is about to commit to spending billions of dollars towards the implementation of a climate change plan that is not justified scientifically.

We are here today to give you just a snippet of the science and, further, to encourage you to recommend to your government that an open national debate on the science of Kyoto be held, something that has never happened in Canada.

While this committee session is focused on implementation, please, before going forward, seriously consider what Professor Patterson has to say about the science. Future actions should clearly be focused on dealing with real pollutants, not carbon dioxide, which is most assuredly not a pollutant. Kyoto is flawed in its science and failed as a policy, and it could be financially disastrous. I am hesitant to say this, but I personally feel that Kyoto is only politically motivated.

The Canadian government has refused to listen to our country's leading experts in the field, so we have brought one with us today to impart some science to you. It now gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce my friend and associate, Professor Tim Patterson.

Dr. Tim Patterson (Expert Witness, Carleton University, Friends of Science Society): Mr. Chairman and committee members, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify to you today, and I hope that my presentation here will result in many more non-governmental scientists being invited to give testimony.

Any government policy concerning climate change must be based on the most up to date and best in today's climate science. Otherwise, we risk wasting taxpayer dollars on plans that may have no foundation in reality.

Besides advising Friends of Science and working at Carleton University as a professor of geology, I'm what is known as a paleoclimatologist. That's to say I examine evidence that's contained in ocean and lake sediments, such as fossils and isotopes, to attempt to decipher how climate has varied naturally over the past 2 million years. My research is funded by the National Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada as well as the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences. I am also the Canadian leader of the UNESCO International Geological Correlation program designed to examine sea level change.

During the past half million years there have been more than 33 major glacial advances and retreats. The next ice age is expected to start some time within the next two millennia. Even in recent times we have seen disastrous cold periods, such as the Little Ice Age, when the Thames River in London froze over and famine and pestilence killed millions of people throughout the world. There have also been periods warmer than today, such as the medieval warm period, when Vikings farmed in Greenland and sailed waters now covered with sea ice.

Generally speaking, warmer is better and colder is worse for human societies. Based on the paleoclimatic data I and others have collected, it's obvious that climate is and always has been variable. In fact, the only constant about climate is change; it changes continually. We certainly have no chance of stopping this natural phenomenon.

The field of climate science is vast and, I should emphasize, rapidly evolving. Many things we thought we knew about the climate system just a few years ago are now proving to be highly uncertain or quite mistaken. It's no exaggeration to say that in the eight years since the Kyoto Protocol was introduced, there has been a revolution in climate science. This is not surprising, given that the industrialized world has spent around $30 billion on climate research over that period. If back in the mid-1990s we had known what we know about climate change today, there would be no Kyoto Protocol, because it would have been considered unnecessary.

Today I'll highlight some of the recent Canadian developments that illustrate this point. Analyst Stephen McIntyre and University of Guelph professor Ross McKitrick have found devastating mathematical mistakes in an important 1998 study that claimed to prove that the most recent warming of the earth is unusual. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, used this study as a major prop. Now that prop is gone, yet Environment Canada and others continue to use this graph as if it were still valid. It is not.

Figure 1 in your handout illustrates this point very well. The blue line is one of the primary pieces of evidence used by the IPCC to promote the idea that the 20th century warming was unprecedented in the past millennium. This line has become known as the hockey stick. The shaft of the stick is the supposedly relatively lower temperatures for the first 900 years of the period, and the blade of the stick is the reputed sudden temperature rise of the past century. The red line in figure 1 is the result you get when the data and the methodology used to produce the hockey stick are applied correctly. As you can see, there's an enormous difference between the two curves prior to about 1500 AD.

While neither McKitrick nor McIntyre nor anyone else who properly understands climate history would assert that the 1400s really did have such high temperatures, their exposure of the serious flaws in the hockey stick was a crucially important development, one our government has simply ignored.

Similarly, the research findings of extreme weather experts such as Dr. Mandhav Khandekar have been disregarded, and this is in the published literature. Dr. Khandekar has shown that extreme events are not on the rise in Canada and that the likelihood such occurrences will rise or increase in the next 25 years is very low. Events such as droughts, floods, and hurricanes are important threats and we can do a lot to prepare for them, but humans do not cause such occurrences and Kyoto will do nothing to prevent them.

● (1150)

Canada is fortunate to have one of the world's leading paleoclimate researchers at the University of Ottawa, and that's geology professor Dr. Jan Veizer. Over the past several years he has conducted truly groundbreaking research, looking into the long-term climate trends. Professor Veizer has shown the changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide—the gas most restricted by Kyoto in Canada—have had little effect on earth's long-term temperature variation in comparison with natural causes.

I direct you to figure 2 in your handout. The thick blue line at the top shows the changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide, CO_2, and the thin black line at the bottom of the graph is a plot of temperatures found by Professor Veizer, looking back through geologic time. As you can see, through deep time there is no meaningful correlation between carbon dioxide levels and earth's temperature. In fact, when CO_2 levels were over 10 times higher than they are at the present time, about 450 million years ago, our planet was in the depths of the absolute coldest period in the last half billion years.

On the basis of this evidence, how could anyone still believe that the recent relatively small increases in CO_2 levels you see in figure 3 of your handout would be the major cause of the past century's modest warming?

What causes climate change? My own research, and that of many others in the field, shows that in all times scales there is a very good correlation between earth's temperature and natural celestial phenomena such as changes in the brightness of the sun. This should surprise no one; after all, the sun and the stars are the source of virtually all the energy that's received by our planet. The fact that the sun is now brighter than it has been at any time in the past 8,000 years should have a major impact upon climate.

In our research, we are showing the excellent correlation between the regular fluctuations in the brightness of the sun and earthly temperatures. Hundreds of other studies have shown similar trends. In the legal system, there's a mechanism to reopen cases when new evidence comes to light. In science, this is the norm as well—questioning, re-examining, changing ideas, and rejecting old ones when reputable new information surfaces.

If Canada's government is to base climate policy on real science, then it must accept that its policy decisions should be changeable as climate science advances. Otherwise, policy becomes disconnected from science, and we may waste billions of dollars going in entirely the wrong direction.

Until we have a far better understanding of the underlying science, the government should cancel funding allocated to stopping climate change, which is ridiculous. The only constant about climate is change. Instead, we should be preparing for whatever nature throws at us next, as well as continuing to fund research that will help us to eventually understand our planet's complex climate system.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

● (1155)

The Chair: Merci beaucoup, Monsieur Patterson et Monsieur Simpson.

Let me say that you certainly have given us something to cross...I shouldn't say “cross-examine”, but certainly to examine further, and we appreciate that point of view. It will be interesting with respect to the balance of the committee's deliberations to inquire further into the perspectives all of the witnesses have put forward.

Without any further ado, I will go to the first questioner, Mr. Mills.

We have a prescribed format. We have 10 minutes of questioning from each of the parties, and then we go to a back-and-forth for 5 minutes. I will try to keep this part within the 10 minutes each for the parties.

Mr. Mills, please.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for attending.

I understand your frustration, Mr. Simpson and Dr. Patterson. I went through exactly the same thing. I tried to attend 14 of the public consultation meetings and, of course, was excluded because I was an opponent of Kyoto. The public consultation process has been one-sided up to this point. It's amazing what a minority government does for a country and its democracy.

Having said that, I would ask you to keep your answers fairly short, if you can, because I have an awful lot of questions.

First of all, from the very beginning, the Kyoto target being 6% below 1990 levels seems to not consider the fact that we have a very large country, a huge amount of space, no transportation infrastructure, and not a lot of people. All of those are considerations if you are going to try to achieve a target, which makes that target totally impossible to achieve as a resource-based economy, and so on.

I really question the fact that a poor country can't take care of its environment. I'm always amazed when environmental groups seem to think that most Canadians would like to live in a cave instead of having the modern economy that we have, with an ability to take care of our environment.

I wonder about the reality of these targets or even attempting to achieve them, because to me, Kyoto is basically a Eurocentric, bureaucratic nightmare. Having attended those meetings, I believe I can say that with some fact basis.

My next question is this. Is CO_2 really a poisonous, hazardous waste? We seem to talk about CO_2 being hazardous. From my biology background, I have basically always thought of CO_2 as being the basis of photosynthesis, necessary for all life on earth, and very valuable. Do you consider CO_2 a hazardous material in our environment? I guess I'm addressing this more to the unscientific people in terms of that basis.

My third question would be this. Would it not be better to develop technologies in Canada? Let our companies here develop the technologies that would allow us to really make a difference to the environment, where we would transfer this to developing countries, to the Indias, the Chinas, and really make a big difference. Again, Canada is a pretty small player when it comes to global change.

My question for our scientists would be this. It's very difficult to get Canadians to focus on science. It's much easier to look at the sky falling and the Chicken Little phenomenon, where you run across the country and say that people are drowning and polar bears are dying. How can we get that science on a level that Canadians can understand? How can we do that?

As well, what do Canadians think Kyoto is? If you ask them in Toronto, they'll say it's about the smog days. We can reduce smog days by signing Kyoto. We can have no boiled-water warnings across the country, we can have a clean environment if we in fact go along with Kyoto.

There are a lot of questions there. I wonder if you might answer, whoever wants to tackle that general gist. I think you see where I'm coming from.

Again, the purpose of this committee is to establish some solid evidence about Kyoto in a balanced approach. Like you, I am very afraid we're going to spend billions of dollars on programs that really will make little or no difference to Canada or to the world.

● (1200)

The Chair: Well, you have a full spectrum of questions. Who would like to lead off with answers to some of Mr. Mills' questions?

Professor Patterson.

Dr. Tim Patterson: I am not prepared to speak about Kyoto per se. That's not my expertise. I'm a paleoclimatologist, but what I can speak to you about are two science portions, one talking about carbon dioxide as a poisonous gas. That's ridiculous. It's a plant food and a natural part of the atmosphere.

Probably the major contribution that humanity makes every year is a net increase of about 3 gigatons to an overall flux of about 740 gigatons. There is a sort of increase. That's our anthropogenic or human-induced influence. But if you look over geologic time, we find that when CO_2 concentrations go up, it's generally trailing on after a temperature increase, because just as you mentioned, this is a plant food and you're reflecting biological activity.

That's the basic answer about CO_2. You cannot equate this with some kind of a poisonous gas. We are breathing it out over time as we sit here. That's the first answer.

The second part that I would discuss is science education. As an educator myself, I find that really difficult. I teach a climate change course every year at Carleton University. I have one going now, with about 350 students in it. These are university students, and I'm amazed at the lack of understanding of even some of the most basic concepts of climate.

I feel good by the end of the semester when I think I've brought them up to a certain level at which they can basically understand some of the questions. They don't understand Kyoto, they don't understand what's behind it, and particularly, they don't understand the science of climate change. That's why I make an effort, when I can, to go out into the community to give general climate lectures, and so on, to try to bring people up to speed so they can form an educated opinion and not be overtly influenced by certain organizations that have a stated agenda.

That's about all I can say on the science at this point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: On the issue of science, to say that organizations such as NASA and the Pentagon, for example, which last April issued....

A study was leaked from the Pentagon saying that climate change was, in its eyes, a threat far worse than terrorism for U.S. global security. To say that the Hadley Centre, Environment Canada, and the 122 countries that have ratified Kyoto are simply suffering from some form of mass illusion is a bit of a stretch.

In terms of living in a cave, I'm not particularly fond of it myself. You may be familiar with Scandinavian countries, which have a standard of living very similar to our own. They live in a cold climate. They have heavy industries like we do—Norway, and countries as such—and they basically consume a third of the energy we do. So it's not about living in caves; it's about being efficient. Frankly, being efficient would not only be good for the economy, but it would be good for the environment at the same time.

You will probably be reassured to know that I am a social scientist. I have published a number of articles in peer-reviewed magazines on the issue of climate change, and as Morag pointed out earlier, the international scientific consensus around climate change is there. Yes, some people still dispute it, but the overall majority of scientists who are working on the issue are saying that it's happening.

The way IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, basically does its work is by doing an international scientific review of the literature that looks at climate change. I don't have the numbers for the 2001 assessment report, but for the 1995 assessment report, they reviewed 20,000 scientific papers dealing with climate change, and that's how they were able to come to the conclusions that they did in 1995, and the conclusions in 2001.

I don't think any of us have argued that CO_2 is a poisonous gas, although a number of legislatures around the world, including Quebec, are saying that CO_2 should be considered a pollutant. If you look at even the classical definition of what a pollutant does to the environment, then from that perspective it can be described as a pollutant. No one is saying it's a poisonous gas, obviously.

I would agree with you that the Kyoto implementation plan should focus on developing technologies and implementing them in Canada rather than buying credits abroad. That said, I think it has to be recognized that because of the time we've wasted over the past few years, we will have to buy some credits internationally, and we need to make sure these are for valid projects—and there are valid projects out there in which we can invest. Canadian companies are investing abroad every day of the year, and we should make sure that the investments are for very valid projects.

● (1205)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Ribaux, we have one minute left in this interchange.

Mr. Sidney Ribaux: Okay. Very quickly, we can talk about the objective of Kyoto for a long time, but reducing CO_2in most of the measures we're proposing would have huge co-benefits that in and of themselves would be worth it in terms of air pollution in cities and congestion, which are costing cities like Montreal and Toronto hundreds of millions of dollars a year, and so on.

On the technology, I sort of agree with you. We should use Kyoto to develop technologies that are promising for the future, like wind power and geothermal. We should be investing in these new forms of energy rather than existing technologies that have proven to be very pollutant for all sorts of reasons, including climate change—like the oil industry and nuclear power, for example.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ribaux.

We'll now go to the next questioner. I might remind you once again that if there is something outside the time limit that you wish to add, you can possibly include that in the answers you give to other members.

We'll go to Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to discuss the issue of the carrot and stick approach. I have less to say about the carrot approach, because it seems to me to be self-evident, but I would like us to discuss the stick approach. In my opinion, we have no choice but to discuss it, because the voluntary approach which we have favoured thus far has been an unmitigated failure. I feel that the focus of the debate ought to be shifted to regulations, although, of course, we have to determine what type of regulations we wish to adopt in Canada, specifically as regards large industrial polluters and the 55 megatons.

Thus far, the federal government has focused on the intensity of greenhouse gases emitted by major industrial polluters, in other words, the relationship between emissions and production, rather than the absolute quantity of emissions per industrial sector.

Secondly, 2010 is being used as a reference year. The government has stated its intention of carrying out an evaluation, per industrial sector, of greenhouse gas emissions forecast until 2010. It has stated that these emissions will be reduced by 15 % per industrial sector. Supposing that regulation is agreed upon as being the best way forward, what do you think of the two issues that I raised; the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions as a basis for the sectoral calculation, and the choice of the year 2010? Does this approach not simply encourage pollution? Does it not mean that some businesses, such as those in the Quebec manufacturing sector, which have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 7 % since 1990, will be penalized?

● (1210)

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Bigras.

On the issue of reducing the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions as opposed to absolute reductions, we are in full agreement with you. The emissions intensity approach which was introduced in the large emitters' program is a very poor one, given that it in no way guarantees that we will achieve overall reductions in emissions, which is, of course, the objective of the Kyoto Protocol.

It has to be understood that scaremongers, particularly in the oil and gas sector, are invoking the spectre of economic collapse, as they did at the time of the debate on the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and its implementation in Canada. However, if memory serves me well, it was Mr. George Anderson, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources Canada, who said before this very committee that the impact of the planned measures on the oil sector would constitute a 23 to 25 ¢ increase per barrel. A 23 to 25 ¢ increase per barrel, not per litre, and we know that prices on the international markets fluctuate by several dollars per week, sometimes more. That does not seem to bother the industry, yet they say that a 23 to 25 ¢ increase per barrel would result in an economic meltdown. I find that somewhat difficult to believe.

The issue of the reference year is also very important. It has to be understood that in choosing 2010 rather than 1990, for example, we are encouraging people to pollute massively until 2010 in order to create a maximum ceiling of emissions. As a result, it will be far easier to show reductions than it would have been had 1990, the year used in the Kyoto Protocol, been used as the base year. Using 1990 would also allow us to recognize the efforts already undertaken in several Canadian industry sectors, for example, in Ontario. You spoke of the Quebec manufacturing sector, but what is true of Quebec is also true of several manufacturing sectors in Canada. For example, the pulp and paper industry across Canada has greatly reduced its production energy consumption. There is also the aluminum sector. If we opt for 2010 rather than 1990, all the efforts that these sectors have made will disappear from the radar screen and will not be recognized by the federal government's plan.

The Chair: Monsieur Simard.

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): I think that it bears repeating that we have not met our objectives. We committed $3.7 billion, I believe, yet we are still 28% short of our objectives. This is serious, because it means that radical measures will have to be taken. We will have to do in one fell swoop what we could have done in stages.

The Minister of Finance came here to tell us that Canadians wanted fast economic development and environmental protection, and that the government was going to provide them with both.

Now, the budget is fast approaching, and difficult choices have to be made. Could you tell us what tax measures ought to be included in this budget? Could you also tell us why, in your view, these tax measures, which are not costly for a government, are not being urgently implemented as provided for in the Kyoto Protocol? How would you interpret Canada's failure to follow up on this?

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Currently, the Canadian taxation system tends to encourage activities which produce a lot of greenhouse gas, and discourage those which produce little or none. It is true that the federal government has introduced a credit for wind energy production which is, by the way, around a third of the wind energy credit offered in the United States by the Bush administration. George W. Bush offers a wind energy production credit which is three times more generous than the Canadian one. Yet Mr. Bush is considered to be a reactionary on environmental issues. He is a reactionary, but I think that shows that Canada is lagging behind on this round.

As I said earlier, our emissions increased significantly in the 1990s. Had they been stabilized during the 90s, we would only be 6 per cent, as opposed to 28 per cent or perhaps even more, short of the Kyoto Protocol objective. Clearly, there is room for us to pick up the pace, and we have to do so. We have to stop using state money to fund business activities which generate pollution, and we have to encourage businesses which do not produce greenhouse gases. As Sidney said, and it is worth underscoring, when we reduce greenhouse gases, we are also reducing other pollutants, in particular nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides.

I agree with my colleagues that federal government subsidies for fossil fuels must be reduced progressively or even eliminated—given the current price of a barrel, they clearly do not need them—and that the introduction of renewable energies, as well as public transit, must be backed by significant incentives. Canada is the OECD country which invests the least in public transit. There is also room for improvement on this front. In our view, it is very obvious that we must stop funding pollution-producing business activities and start funding those that are environmentally friendly.

● (1215)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bigras, you have one minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I have one more question. We have heard that the target for large industrial emitters is to reduce emissions from 55 to around 35 megatons. If we wish to meet the Kyoto Protocol objective, we will, inevitably, need to look elsewhere for credits for these megatons. It seems that the federal government wishes to look abroad.

In the original November 2002 plan, it was said that the Canadian government wished to seek credits for 12 megatons of emissions from abroad. Are there not limits to seeking megatons from abroad, when, clearly, we could reduce greenhouse gases at source here in Canada? Are there limits to the number of emissions credits which can be obtained from other countries?

The Chair: A short answer please, Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: No limit is set in the Kyoto Protocol. Obviously, the problem is that that can be perceived as capital flight. I agree with your colleague from the Conservative Party who pointed out that emission reduction and technological development would be funded elsewhere, while we would hang on to this technology which is obsolete and generates pollution. I do not see that as a sensible economic development strategy .

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go over to Mr. McGuinty for questions.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks very much for joining us, witnesses.

The panel is reminiscent of a forum I raised here once before with the members of the committee, where the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy of the Prime Minister's advisory council conducted a national climate change forum. Through that process, it invited 29 experts from the economic perspective, the scientific perspective, the public policy, the international legal perspective—on and on it went. We asked each and every one of the witnesses who appeared before that forum to speak to the limitations of their discipline and, at the same time, share what they did not know as well as what they knew.

Either this is a natural condition of disciplinary differences, a question of scientific method, or some epistemological problem, I'm not sure, but once again we have a series of presentations that do not speak to the limitations of their disciplines, and it's very frustrating to members of the committee.

I'd like to pick up on something that was mentioned by Mr. Simpson on the uniqueness of hearing dissenting views. I would beg to differ. The government has been hearing different and dissenting views and voices on this subject for over a decade. This is not the first time. It may be the first time that such views are heard in this committee, I don't know, Mr. Chairman; you're a longer-serving member. But I don't think this committee or this government is into censorship. I don't think it ever has been. That doesn't mean to say the climate change debate isn't rife with censorship on all sides. I think it is continuing, and that's a very unfortunate fallout effect of the difficulty we're having in wrestling this climate change elephant to the ground.

I want to also pick up on some of the remarks in the Friends of Science Society document. I thought it was carefully crafted and the choice of words was good.

What struck me most was the sixth paragraph on the first page. You say that “no political decisions should be taken on the basis of the present incomplete scientific knowledge”. I really appreciate the fact that the word is “incomplete” and not “uncertain”, because the Kyoto Protocol speaks specifically to the fact that the science is not complete. For that matter, I would put to the panel, when is science ever complete? It is not complete.

We put this question of completeness or incompleteness to the 30 Order of Canada members who sat around our national forum at the national round table. They knew precisely nothing about climate change, and in fact they were chosen on the basis of their ignorance of climate change. They weren't environmentalists or anti-environmentalists, and all former politicians were excluded. They were given the privilege of sitting down and hearing from all these experts.

At the end of the day, when they could not reach a consensus on the science, they said to Canadians in their declaration that we need to take out a measure of insurance. We need to follow the science and invest in the science heavily. We need to take mid-course corrections when we find out new things, so it's important for us to hear about new discoveries. But at the same time, this proxy sampling of Canadian society said they would like the government to move forward under Kyoto; they would like to see a measure of insurance taken out, while benefiting from ancillary benefits like better air quality and higher eco-efficiency—the kinds of things people would naturally tend toward anyway.

So I want to table that first with the panellists for some comments.

The other thing that struck me was in the presentation from the David Suzuki Foundation, when it referred to and based one of its recommendations on the work done by the Pembina Institute.

I haven't seen the Pembina study yet, unfortunately. Perhaps we could get a copy, Mr. Chairman.

But there is an ongoing debate as to whose science or analysis is more robust than that of the others. This is a very frustrating thing for Canadians, MPs, and members of the committee who are trying to get to the truth of the matter. I'm not so sure what this study says. I'd like to hear more about it, and I'd like to find out what other actors in Canadian society have to say about the study, and whether, as a government, we are subsidizing the fossil fuel industry. I don't know that to be the case.

I'd like to turn that over to the committee to get some responses.

Thank you.

● (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McGuinty.

We will have the Pembina Institute in next week, I believe.

You have those questions. Perhaps, Mr. Simpson, you would like to lead off.

Mr. Charles Simpson: I would, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, thank you very much for your complimentary remarks on our scientific presentation.

We contend that environmental issues need to be addressed, pollution needs to be addressed, but we can show conclusively that CO_2 is not a pollutant, and by addressing the reduction of CO_2 emissions we are forgoing the chance of addressing the real pollutants: NOx and SOx, as they're referred to, and the particulates.

Insofar as this being the first chance to present the science is concerned, we can show, first of all, that we have been precluded from attending groups that are supposedly speaking to the stakeholders, and second, when we do obtain entrance to the forums, we are precluded from speaking.

If I could ask a question, I would like to know how buying credits from Russia will help pollution in Canada.

● (1225)

The Chair: Well, Mr. Simpson, you introduce a different perspective and procedure. Could we just let that sit out there for the moment?

Mr. Charles Simpson: Sure.

The Chair: Mr. McGuinty had asked questions equally to the rest of the panel, and I wonder if we could expand that and allow the witnesses to respond to Mr. McGuinty.

Ms. Carter.

Ms. Morag Carter: Thank you.

Speaking to the limits of discipline, I, like Steven, am a social scientist, and I work in an environment with a robust and very interesting scientific diversity on the staff and beyond.

I think one of the things that's really interesting about climate change is actually one of the things that Mr. Patterson and Mr. Simpson spoke to this morning, which is that there is room for a very wide range of perspectives, differences, and disciplines in evaluating the climate science. If we left it all to perhaps just atmospheric scientists, I think it would be incomprehensible. It's very important to have a really interesting range of perspectives.

When is science enough? When is enough science enough?

I think when you have a body of evidence that is beginning to show you that without action we are facing very serious consequences—economic, financial, environmental, and social consequences—we have an absolute duty and obligation to act. But that does not mean we should treat every new paper as absolute proof one way or the other. I think we all—you and us—have a duty to weigh the body of evidence, the burden of evidence, and act with prudence and caution.

The Chair: Mr. McGuinty, we're out of time on that block.

I'll come to Mr. Cullen when we come into the next round—in the order, Mr. Cullen, because I do have you down on the list.

We're now back to Mr. Cullen. Questions, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Chair. Also, thanks to the witnesses for being here today.

First of all, I have a comment.

Underlying the comments from Friends of Science today there was some sort of notion, almost conspiratorial in nature, in terms of what's happening with the way this federal government has gone through things in the last decade, also internationally.

I'm extraordinarily hesitant to rely too much on the conspiracy theories as to why there hasn't been a balanced look at climate change. Reading through even such populist publications as the *National Geographic*, which devoted a recent edition entirely to this, took a number of years to do it, for a broad range of fields, and came to the conclusive evidence that we're in a whole lot of trouble....

I'm not going to spend time seeking any questions or answers to your presentation, although I do have curiosities as to how this has managed to manifest itself in such a way that the exclusion of such important science has happened, both here nationally and internationally, to such a great extent that so many scientists who by their nature tend to disagree on things have found agreement—many published and well-researched scientists.

My questions are going to be around this concept of the stick that Mr. Guilbeault...that this Liberal government seems to be so reluctant on with respect to industry. Depending on the sector, the government seems very cautious about bringing in regulations. Many things are left to the realm of voluntary adjustments by business. We saw this before, years ago, with asbestos or leaded gas, the resistance and the foretelling of great doom and despair.

I'm wondering if you could comment on the importance of moving toward forced regulations and enforced regulatory environments. Let's take the specific example of auto emissions. How important is this to whatever plan this government plans to move forward?

The Chair: Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Cullen.

I think it is fundamental, not just as part of our Kyoto implementation strategy but as an overall national clean air strategy, that we force car manufacturers in Canada to produce more efficient, less-polluting vehicles.

The argument by the Canadian automaker is that we'll be the only ones on the planet to do it, and they can't manufacture vehicles for us. Well, great, they won't have to. Oregon has adopted the California standards. California has obviously adopted the California standards. A number of other U.S. states are moving in that direction, New York being one of them.

Because people travel more and more, because every year there's a greater number of vehicles on the road...basically the average fuel efficiency of the fleet hasn't moved since the end of the seventies. Considering the tremendous technological development we've seen in the auto sector, it's quite staggering to look at that statistic. We could very efficiently have....

Yes, it would be more expensive to buy those efficient vehicles. There's a bit of a debate in California. The range is between $1,000 to $3,000 to get those efficient vehicles. For an average Canadian who travels roughly 16,000 kilometres a year, the payback is so quick that it becomes a non-issue.

Frankly, our approach to this, like other sectors, has been to try to negotiate a voluntary approach with the auto manufacturers. Guess what? It's not working. We're not going anywhere. I don't think we will ever get anywhere unless the government says to the Canadian auto manufacturers that we can sit down and negotiate, but they should be certain that if we do not come to an agreement, the federal government will legislate.

If we don't do that, we'll never get out of it.

● (1230)

The Chair: Is there anybody else?

Ms. Carter.

Ms. Morag Carter: Thank you.

One other really important thing to remember is that there was legislation that was approved by the House in 1982. It's never been proclaimed. The reason it was never proclaimed is that there was a significant push back from the auto industry, which wanted to negotiate voluntary agreements to comply with the intent of the legislation.

Well, more than 20 years later we're in exactly the same predicament. The tragedy is that perhaps if something had been done in 1982, when there was an auto pact in place, when there was a really robust national infrastructure that supported the auto industry, then we wouldn't be being held hostage to the kind of push back from the auto industry we are now facing.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Kyoto is being described more and more as an energy question, the way energy is produced and used and how things and people are moved around this country. I am wondering if any of you have taken a look at the impacts of this level playing field that has been called for. I have heard the term “subsidies” used, and I have heard doomsday predictions within the oil and gas and coal sectors in particular about what the effects would be if subsidies were removed on what is a significant portion of the western economy, which is the extraction of those fuels. Has anyone looked at bringing forward a level playing field and saying we're going to treat wind the same as we treat oil and gas, and how that would manifest itself in the Canadian economy? This is a huge concern for many of our western MPs.

The Chair: Ms. Carter.

Ms. Morag Carter: I don't think anyone has looked at that question specifically. The Pembina report was released just last week, which is perhaps why the members of the committee haven't yet had a look at it, and it shows that around $8.3 billion has been spent on subsidizing the oil and gas industry. I understand the political difficulties of eliminating subsidies to the oil and gas industry on both the west and the east coasts.

One of the things that could be very important, as Steven mentioned earlier on, is a significant investment in renewable technologies. The wind power producer incentive is not as well supported in Canada as it is in the U.S. But a number of other technologies are beginning to come on stream that do not enjoy the kind of federal support wind does. For that we can look at, for example, geothermal, solar, and so on. It would be absolutely fantastic if we were looking at, for example, a renewable energy production incentive in the same way as we have one for wind.

● (1235)

The Chair: Mr. Guilbeault and then Mr. Ribaux.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: There are two things we should be looking at. We want a phased-in approach. No one is talking about the massive disruption of any economic sector in Canada. That's not what we're arguing for. I think we can look to concepts such as the one developed by CEP around fair transition. If people will be losing employment in certain sectors, let's train them so that they can be employed in other sectors.

I recall that in 2002, at the time we were debating whether or not Canada should ratify Kyoto, Industry Canada produced a study that showed, depending on the different Kyoto implementation scenarios, the renewable energy industry in Canada could generate annual revenues in the order of $7 billion to $8 billion if Kyoto was implemented properly. So obviously the potential to create jobs is there. The potential to generate wealth is there as well. We just have to do it right.

The Chair: Mr. Ribaux. There is one minute left.

Mr. Sidney Ribaux: We are proposing a gradual shift in the use of that government money. As an example, we produce trains in Canada and we produce buses. We actually produce 50% of the urban buses used in all of North America, so we have half the market. There are 40,000 jobs in urban transit. The idea is to shift these types of jobs in this type of economy rather than to keep going in the direction in which we've been going.

The Chair: We have time for one last question. It will have to be short, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oftentimes pollution is equated with an inefficiency within a system, whether it's a machine or an entire economy. Canada's productivity is always lamented. I now lament that George Bush didn't get to address our Parliament and therefore wasn't able to highlight how much better they're doing on wind than we are, which would have been quite striking for Canadians.

I have been approached by the Mining Association of Canada and other groups that have done a great deal toward reducing the emissions they are putting into the air and have realized good economics out of it. They have said it was actually very good for their business. Yet they're not going to be getting any credit, as it stands right now, for the work that has already been done. It's going to be more expensive for a number of these mining outfits to make further increases.

Have your groups looked at the concept of grandfathering, where the government would say, "You've made a number of improvements and we applaud you for that, and this will go toward the reductions we're now asking for the large final emitters"? That is generally the place we're talking about. I think parts of the mining sector are a good place to look.

The Chair: We'll have to have a short response, Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: I think they're trying to have their cake and eat it too. Is that the English expression? It refers back to what Mr. Bigras was saying earlier. If we were to use 1990 as a baseline, then these efforts that they've done would be recognized, but these same companies or sectors are arguing for a 2010 baseline to start the intensity of emission reduction, thereby basically nullifying all the efforts they've made.

If they were to choose the approach that we were talking about earlier, then these efforts would be recognized, but because they're arguing for a 2010 baseline, all of it is basically forgotten.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Guilbeault and Mr. Cullen.

We'll now go to five-minute questions and responses, and we go back up to the top of the batting order with Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for coming today.

As we get into these hearings, it's fascinating to look for patterns of similarities. Our interest—that is, mine, particularly as a layperson—is to better understand the basic premises that we work under. For example, I noted today that three of our four presenters reiterated the basic premise of Kyoto—that man-made emissions are contributing to global warming, and that it's occurring at a rapid and threatening rate. Mr. Cullen—I'm sorry he's not with us at the moment—even suggested that to think differently might be some kind of a conspiracy theory, or whatever.

It's important to follow up the line of questioning on what Mr. McGuinty was saying a minute ago about his panel of experts, because that's what we're looking for here. We'd like to get some expert opinion and solid data, not just a reiteration of other people's views, because as I think Ronald Bailey said, "Once a particular notion becomes conventional wisdom, evidence and stories confirming that conventional wisdom are easily accepted and published - and reported in the media". As well, "Those that contradict the prevailing views have a much harder time getting a hearing".

We want to hear not just prevailing views—it's important to us—but also the basis of those views: where they come from, what they're founded on. Without questioning the sincerity of people's views or their concerns, I think it's incumbent upon the committee as well to get an understanding of where those views are coming from and of the credentials of the people making those presentations.

We've heard today questioning of the basic science at the premise of this. I'm talking about the physical science, not the social science. The credentials seemed pretty clear. Could I ask our first presenters your credentials for presenting the information you did today?

● (1240)

The Chair: Mr. Simpson.

Mr. Lee Richardson: No, I'd like to ask the first presenters.

The Chair: Oh, I see. I'm sorry. All right, we'll go to Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: As I said earlier, I am a social scientist, but I referred to NASA—you may have heard of them—Environment Canada, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Pentagon, the British meteorological centre, the Chinese meteorological centre, the Japanese meteorological centre, the European meteorological centre, the German meteorological centre.... A tremendous number of organizations around this planet—the World Meteorological Organization—agree that climate change is real, it's happening, and it's largely due to human activity, so you might as well question their credibility, their credentials, if you want to question mine.

Mr. Lee Richardson: I didn't mean to suggest that I was questioning them; I just wanted to know what they were.

But as you've raised this point, I think all those views came out early. We had this premise established that CO_2 emissions were the cause of climate change. It's only been recently, and particularly very recently, that those views are questioned.

I'm aware that it's difficult for people, once bought into a line of thinking, to defend their position, to save face or whatever, but I think it's only reasonable that we question these. That's all I'm asking—are you then convinced that we don't need to go back over that ground? From your background, is there no doubt in your mind that there's any reason to question that basic premise of the original basis of Kyoto?

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: That is not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that there is an ongoing scientific debate around climate change. Right now the overwhelming consensus is that it is real, it is happening, and it is because of us, and therefore, on that basis we should develop policies to address that question, which as others have pointed out will help us address other environmental issues.

I am not saying we should stop or should prevent people who have different views on the issue from being heard. What I'm saying is that the overwhelming international consensus on this issue is what I've said already. I am not saying we should stop.... Those who have different views shouldn't be prevented from saying them. In fact, I've read many articles from Professor Patterson in various Canadian publications, but mainly in newspapers. His voice is obviously being heard, just as my voice is being heard, and that is where the debate is presently.

The Chair: Professor, do you want to make a comment?

Dr. Tim Patterson: I think I would like to speak a little bit to this idea of consensus.

If you look at the scientific literature, it is not like reading a newspaper. There is not the consensus there that you refer to. You should look at the different sorts of researchers. Mr. Guilbeault is referring to himself as a social scientist. He is probably looking at basically observing what is going on with climate today. He is not looking at what natural variability is in deep time. You have to think about the different sorts of research that go on, at whether you're looking at people who can look at the long-term trends in climate or people who are just observing climate. These are the sorts of things. But if you do look at the scientific literature, there's much more of a debate than would appear from sitting around a committee such as this.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

We'll now go to Mr. Cullen, and then I'll go to Mr. McGrath.

● (1245)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am Roy Cullen from Etobicoke North. We have two Cullens now in Parliament.

I am sorry I missed your presentations. I would like to start with.... Mr. Simpson, I missed your presentation but I went through your brief. I think you make an interesting point with respect to which gases we're chasing. I for one think greenhouse gases are a problem and I think we should be doing something about it.

However, you raise an interesting point. I know the Ontario government some time ago introduced some measures that caused the trucking companies, for example, to increase the energy efficiencies of their engines. I am told by the truckers that what that means is they're actually going to be polluting more in terms of some of the noxious emissions.

When I look at Toronto, where I live, one of the issues for me is the air quality. It seems to me we have to work on all fronts, but sometimes we may have competing policy objectives, or at least we need to understand that when we go after one gas, there might be some unintended consequences we need to think about.

The one gas I am very interested in is methane. I don't think we talk enough about methane. I don't think we do as much as we should about methane. As I understand it, methane, among greenhouse gases, is about 20 times more dangerous than CO_2. I can think of a perfect way that we create so much methane, and that is through landfills. With all the garbage that is sitting in landfills, unless you have a collection system underneath, which some do, that methane is rising into the atmosphere. It is a 20-times-more-difficult problem than CO_2.

I wonder if you could comment on why we haven't been able to deal with municipal solid waste more effectively and what we should be doing about it.

Second, there's the idea of tax shifting from the non-renewable sector to the renewable sector. We do not know what we're going to see in our budget, but I'm hoping to see something on that.

The energy companies in Canada, the oil and gas companies, are all changing their theme. They're now energy companies. The reason they're energy companies instead of oil and gas companies is that they're trying to develop renewable energy sources. I think that is what you were asking for, a shifting of some of the tax incentives from the non-renewable to the renewable sector. It seems to me the energy companies, although they might....

One of the constraints, I think, is the development of the oil sands. You would probably argue that we shouldn't be doing that, but in the short to medium run we probably do; therefore, to get the economics right we might have to have some tax policies that support it, or at least make it more economical in the short to medium run. I would like to see some tax shifting to the renewable sector as well.

I will just throw those comments out for whoever wants to answer.

The Chair: Mr. Simpson, would you like to lead off? We'll have to stay within two minutes now.

Mr. Charles Simpson: I would, thank you. I won't take two minutes.

The oil and gas industry—the energy industry—in Alberta is probably the cleanest jurisdiction in the world insofar as emission controls and so on are concerned. I think the Alberta government should be given a lot of credit for its initiative in addressing the real pollutants.

Our consensus is that, as I said, we need to address the real pollutants, and not CO_2. In case I don't get another opportunity to say anything, I would like to extend an offer for us to appear before the committee again and present a more detailed scientific exposition on our reasoning.

The Chair: Thank you. We have time for one response. We've had the municipal waste and methane and the tax shifting.

Mr. Guilbeault. It'll have to be one minute now.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: I think Albert Einstein would be of very great use right now. He said that the significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them. Climate change is exactly that.

Why aren't we capturing all the methane that's being emitted in our landfills? I don't know. It's economical, or very close to being cost-effective, in most cases. Toronto will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by some 20% because it's doing that.

I think Kyoto should force us to look at everything we're doing and find creative ways of improving our wealth, our standard of living, while not creating havoc on the plant. I think that's what it's about.

The federal government can play a very important role in providing leadership, in showing the direction we should be going in. Unfortunately that hasn't been the case so far. We say we ratify Kyoto, but at the same time we don't want to put any measures in place that would force any sector of the economy to reduce its emissions. So we're sending out a very mixed signal, and that's a problem.

● (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Guilbeault.

We'll go now to Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Simard: Mr. Guilbeault, Mr. Ribaux, Ms. Carter; it would appear that those who are in favour of the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol are not united in their approach. It seems that, in terms of strategy, they are asking for many different things and opting for several different approaches. Faced with such a situation, it would seem to me that it is easy for a politician to wriggle his way out. Minister Goodale told us that his department was in no way responsible—although he did finally admit that it may have had a modicum of responsibility—for Canada, thus far, having failed to meet its Kyoto objectives. It really is fairly worrying when a Minister of Finance says that.

What should we do to force the Minister of Finance to act? What strategy should we adopt to introduce changes to the taxation system in Quebec and, in particular, in Canada? The Green Budget Coalition told us that it could have recommended the introduction of a tax on carbon, but that it did not. That is a little strange, but it seems that there is a sense of defeatism; people are discouraged and feel that things will never happen. I get the impression that with this government, people are becoming used to immoral behaviour and a lack of results. We are becoming far too indulgent.

What strategy do you plan to adopt to ensure that the Minister of Finance assumes his responsibilities and those of his government, and that he uses the budget to facilitate compliance with the Kyoto objectives?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Guilbeault.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

I think that even within the federal government, it is recognized that the approach adopted in 1992 is not working. Federal public servants now admit that our carrot and stick approach is effective, but there is also the whole question of taxation. The federal government now realizes that it will have to implement such measures.

For our part, we are going to continue to put pressure on the federal government. Canadians are concerned about climate change and are committed to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. A Léger Marketing poll published on Monday by the Canadian Press revealed that, if I am not mistaken, more than 80 % of Canadians support the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. On this front, Canadians are going beyond simply paying lip service to the idea. In the Léger Marketing poll, Canadians were told that they had to understand that they would have to do their bit. In spite of this, 80 % of Canadians said yes. They said that tighter measures had to be implemented and that we had to go ahead with Kyoto. In some provinces, such as Quebec, support for this type of proposal stands at around 92 %. It is not quite 100 %, but it is not far off.

I think that this is the only choice that the federal government has.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Members of the committee, we are almost out of time, and we come down to the point where the member who has been sitting here has not had an opportunity to ask a question and has been on the list.

I'm going to seek your indulgence—and I'm seeking it most humbly—to have Mr. Watson ask the last series of questions. Is anybody opposed to that? Okay.

● (1255)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I need 30 seconds.

The Chair: Well, if you could do that, then we'll end with Mr. Watson.

Thank you very much, committee members.

Mr. Cullen, and then Mr. Watson.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I have a really quick question, just to establish the credibility of all the groups here. I know it was being questioned earlier.

I don't have enough background about your organization to know, in terms of credibility, where money comes from or where your members come from. Everyone has a bias. I want to know what yours is. Could you submit that to the committee, as to where you get your funding and also who tends to be on your membership list?

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Thank you to the committee for the indulgence of giving me some time.

The auto industry is taking a real kicking here in testimony today. As an auto worker by trade before I was elected as a member of Parliament, I would like to put a little meat on the bones of what the auto industry is actually like, and how taking the concept of a specific regulatory measure applied in other jurisdictions and trying to apply it to Ontario, for example, as a jurisdiction doesn't really work. I'm talking about the CAFE standard.

We've talked about fuel efficiency standards in California, in Oregon, and perhaps places in the northeastern United States, but the reality is that they don't have a manufacturing concentration for the auto industry like we have here in Ontario. So the cost to them is negligible to put this kind of standard into place.

This standard proposes to increase fuel efficiency 25% across the fleet. The reality in Canada is that we manufacture for export to the United States, not for local consumption, by and large. There are a few model exceptions with Honda, Toyota, and others, but the reality is that we build large SUVs, we build these trucks, and in order to continue building them with the CAFE standard imported here, we'd have to build hundreds of thousands more units on the small end.

Well, that's nice, but where do we sell them? We can't sell them to Canadian consumers, because they already drive small cars. That's the reality of the situation here.

So it's nice to talk regulatory without having a proper appreciation of what it means in real time here. These are $30-an-hour manufacturing jobs and the tens of thousands of jobs in the supply chain that depend on those, that pay $17 or $18, up to $28 an hour. There's a cost here.

With these jobs also, the United Ways in our region raise millions of dollars to support battered women's shelters, they raise millions of dollars to support persons with intellectual disabilities.... I can go down the list here.

What I'm trying to establish in this committee is an understanding of how an idea that sounds nice in the abstract, applied improperly to a jurisdiction like ours with respect to meeting a timeline of seven years when product is already locked in for, in many cases, six to eight years in the auto industry and so it can't be adapted to current situations here, can prove really disastrous. There's a huge cost.

Have you guys assessed that type of cost, and do regulatory measures like this make sense to you, to continue going ahead?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Watson.

Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Watson.

The Canadian Auto Workers Union would disagree with you, since it has endorsed the NDP's green car platform, which does specify a very stringent standard for fuel efficiency for vehicles in Canada. This was launched, if I'm correct, about a year and a half ago, or two years ago, but we would be happy to provide the committee with a copy of that platform, which has been supported by the Canadian Auto Workers Union.

Mr. Jeff Watson: I'd appreciate seeing that. I kind of understand it. I worked at the truck road assembly plant, and through three collective bargaining agreements spanning eight years, we couldn't get product for that plant. The reality was that products were already developed but gone to other plants. They couldn't get product developed in time, into the chute, in an eight-year window to save a particular plant in my community so that I could keep my job there or families around me could keep their jobs. In fact, we still have 650 people on a city-wide layoff who, two and a half years later, still don't have a job.

I'm curious about the timelines here. If we're going to keep to 2010, we're going to lose a lot of manufacturing jobs in the auto sector because of a regulatory thing like this, like the CAFE standard. It's going to cost enormous numbers of jobs.

My follow-up question is, should the government be compensating auto industries for billions of dollars that they've already put into existing vehicle products that are either emerging now or soon to emerge, because we're going to ask them now to adapt different technology and they'll have to go back to the R and D drawing board? Should we have some sort of compensation as well, or should we abrogate timelines with respect to preserving jobs in the transition?

The Chair: Mr. Ribaux.

Mr. Sidney Ribaux: We often spontaneously turn to industry for innovation. In terms of fuel efficiency, the car industry has failed miserably. The fuel efficiency of cars is now lower than it was with the Model T Ford. Kyoto was signed in 1997. I think the auto industry needs to have a level playing field. I think the federal government needs to intervene to create an incentive for all companies, including those not based in North America, to provide consumers with efficient vehicles.

● (1300)

Mr. Jeff Watson: What about consumers in the United States? We already buy small vehicles here that are much more fuel efficient. How would you do that?

Mr. Sidney Ribaux: Transition measures need to be put in place in terms of jobs. But I think eventually we need to look at this as a country. We need to think about where the jobs are going to and whether we are going to move toward producing more efficient cars and wind energy. Whether people are working at producing cars, buses, or trains, they still have very high-paying jobs. There need to be transition measures for those communities, but the long-term objective still needs to be there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For the members of the committee, we have reached the end of the agenda in terms of the time, and I'm going to have to bring closure.

Mr. Jean has a point of order.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): This is a committee matter. So perhaps we could let our guests go first.

The Chair: Thank you very much for being here. I think you can see from the questions that have been asked that there's huge interest and capacity on this committee. We appreciate your input in order for us to understand better how we can meet our Kyoto commitments and get on with the agenda.

We'll discuss Mr. Jean's point at the steering committee meeting.

We have a motion to adjourn.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

This meeting is adjourned.

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

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

Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :
http://www.parl.gc.ca
