



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

ENVI • NUMBER 004 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Chair

Mr. James Bezan

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Thursday, February 12, 2009

• (0900)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

I want to welcome Minister Jim Prentice and Deputy Minister Ian Shugart to the table. They have come today to help us do our study on supplementary estimates (B), pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and we'll be voting, of course, on the supplementary estimates (B) tonight in the House of Commons.

With that, Minister, I'll turn it over to you to make your opening comments, and I do ask that you stay within the timeframe, which is 15 minutes.

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee.

I am accompanied by my deputy minister, Mr. Ian Shugart. It's a pleasure to be here, and I very much look forward to working with the committee. It's a very impressive group of parliamentarians on the committee, and I look forward to our continued efforts together as parliamentarians.

This is my first appearance before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and as those who have come before me, I endeavour to be forthcoming about my priorities as the minister and helpful in informing the committee of the department's work.

Since this is my first opportunity to address you in this setting, I'd like to take a few moments to talk briefly about what I feel we need to concentrate on as a department, as a government, and as a country, and to make sure we make true progress in our efforts to protect the environment. These are in fact challenging times.

[Translation]

In the past few years, issues of environmental concern have dominated headlines like never before, and only recently, as the world slowly comes to grips with an increasingly alarming economic crisis, have these stories been bumped from the front pages.

But contrary to what some may think, environmental headlines that sporadically fall out of sight do not push environmental issues out of mind.

The environment remains a priority for our government, and we fully expect to be held to account—as we were last week—no matter what the headlines say in the daily papers.

The tabling of the federal Environment Commissioner's latest report generated what I think is some important discussion about government spending, but also about how we set standards for our programs.

I think Commissioner Vaughan does some valuable work that can be helpful, and I appreciated the opportunity I had to meet with him last week to discuss the contents of his report.

If anything, the focus that was put on the report should remind us that despite losing ground to what some might call more pressing issues, the environment still remains top-of-mind for many of us.

Mr. Chair, I want to assure the committee, and by extension, all Canadians, that even under the backdrop of tumultuous economic times... and even if environmental headlines aren't always above the fold, Canada's government is fully committed to the environment.

We saw as much just over two weeks ago with a budget that contained a large green stimulus package, in the form of over \$2 million worth of significant, environment-related investments.

Mr. Chair, this considerable financial commitment to the environment builds on our government's solid environmental record. Certainly, it was not unexpected given the tremendous gains we have made with respect to the environment since coming into office back in early 2006.

At the time, we inherited a flatlining patchwork of underwhelming environmental programs that were delivering well below expectations. Today, the government has a structured plan of action that is delivering real results.

At the time, greenhouse gas emissions were on a dramatic upturn, rising from 17% above Kyoto targets in 1998 to 35% above targets in 2006. Today, we are on our way to meeting our objectives of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020.

Progress, Mr. Chair, has come due to a well-thought-out and well-defined plan that we have adhered to carefully and adjusted when necessary.

Our accomplishments are many, and run the gamut in terms of how they relate to the environment. Among other things, we have invested in enforcement, so additional officers can be on the ground, ensuring that pollution and wildlife protection laws and regulations are respected.

We have also introduced a Vehicle Scrappage Program that will take older, more pollution-prone vehicles off the road.

We have made a significant financial commitment—upwards of \$200 million—to clean up contaminated sites across Canada.

We have also established new National Wildlife Areas and have purchased ecologically significant land across the nation, all in the name of protecting our landscapes and the species that inhabit them.

● (0905)

We have taken action to protect our lakes and rivers and oceans, with cleanups either underway or scheduled to take place on Lake Simcoe, Lake Winnipeg and the Great Lakes, among others.

And we have made ourselves active participants on the international scene by playing a significant role in global climate change discussions—for example during last December's Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Poznan, Poland—all in the lead-up to the Copenhagen Climate Summit later this year, where the world is expected to agree on a post-2012 course of action for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change.

From a Parks Canada's perspective, our government is providing new funding for projects geared to achieving the common goal of protecting Canada's natural legacy. And as we continue to manage 42 national parks, over 100 national historic sites and 3 national marine conservation areas, we expect to build on Parks Canada's reputation as one of the most competent and knowledgeable heritage conservation organizations in the world.

Mr. Chair, as you can see, we are doing a lot. But we are also primed to do more.

With three good years of solid environmental stewardship to our credit, we now need to expand our focus, and in light of changing global circumstances, adapt ourselves to the new landscapes of an ever-evolving world.

Mr. Chair, as this committee would know, the manifestations of several outside factors over the past several months have influenced how we must now proceed on the environment.

Two of these factors, in particular, will have a direct bearing on the way forward.

● (0910)

[English]

First, ladies and gentlemen, is the economic downturn.

To nobody's surprise, Mr. Chair, attention these days is focused almost exclusively on the economic downturn. As the economy falters and credit grows more difficult to obtain, Canadian firms are struggling to prosper and survive. As a government, we must assess whether this is the right time to add to industrial cost burdens with additional regulations.

The second factor to consider, Mr. Chairman, is the election of new leadership in the United States, in the form of a president who wishes to re-engage in a multilateral climate change negotiation and to turn some focus back to the environment. In itself, this bodes well for the creation of a North American regulatory approach and a level playing field that will alleviate concerns about Canadian competitiveness.

The United States is facing multiple and daunting challenges, both at home and abroad. Amongst them is the one that most preoccupies me, as Minister of the Environment, and that is the intertwined challenge of maintaining environmental integrity while enhancing our North American energy security.

Mr. Chair, our government has set ambitious goals for 2009. The first is to make our national environmental policies positive instruments of economic renewal and of national development during this period of economic uncertainty. Another is to develop an effective multilateral agreement for the years to come. And the third is to engage the United States in pursuing a coordinated approach to the energy and environmental challenges that both of our nations face and to make the case that our two countries should work together to bring new energy and economic renewal to North America by taking actions that not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also produce a larger and cleaner supply of both fuel and power.

For brevity's sake, let me focus on that third objective, Canada-U.S. collaboration, which I think you will find ties in directly to the other two objectives.

Canada, the U.S., and indeed the rest of the world now stand at a precarious crossroads in the fight against climate change, idling quite literally between a need for balanced environmental protection and a strong desire for economic stability.

So far, our respective countries have taken largely separate paths to address these needs and to tackle the main cause of our warming climate issues, namely, greenhouse gas emissions. But a shift in philosophy now needs to take place, one that calls on us to address, as partners, the environmental issues that straddle the borders of our two countries. Quite simply, Mr. Chair, Canadian and American governments need to work to ensure that our respective policy and regulatory frameworks are coherent and mutually supportive and that the road to reduced emissions travels straight through the heart of two nations towards common targets.

This, in my view, is good for two reasons: nature and human nature. I say “nature” in the sense that greenhouse gases accumulate in one common atmosphere, which is surely the ultimate form of transboundary pollution and interdependence in the world today. And I say “human nature”, since keeping score on the basis of artificial national boundaries and multiple territories is sure to lead to some gaming of the system for short-term and illusory purposes.

But what if we had in place a common North American approach, with common North American targets? What if we had a North American-wide greenhouse cap and trade system, as an illustration? Would that not yield greater success in bringing under control the shared emissions of our two countries? And would it not adequately level the playing field between state, provincial, and national jurisdictions? I think you will agree, committee members, that it would, and that the time is indeed right to explore the possibilities that might exist under an open-minded U.S. administration, with the hope of coming to some kind of an agreement on a North American approach to deal with greenhouse gases.

Based on where we stand today, we know that continuing on a unilateral pathway, while the U.S. pursues its own direction, could impede our economy, including in the energy sector, such as the oil sands and natural gas, and ultimately limit our ability to contribute meaningfully to global environmental protection efforts. We cannot let this happen, particularly when the alternative would help to secure our energy market, reduce our carbon footprint in a far more efficient manner, and, finally, help to move us beyond the empty rhetoric and unrealistic promises of previous international treaties and into a reality of attainable targets and real emissions reductions.

• (0915)

But we also need to go beyond targets, Mr. Chair, and talk about concrete actions, actions that will reduce not just North America's greenhouse gas emissions but its dependence on foreign oil as well.

While America once produced some 90% of the oil it consumed, the number has now dropped to 40% and is expected to dip to 20% by 2020, which would leave the United States as dependent on imported oil as are the nations of the European Union today.

I bring this up because Canada plays a major role in the American energy equation and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We are America's largest supplier of oil, natural gas, and electricity. I would even add hydroelectricity, uranium, and coal as well.

With expectations of a 2020 world in which 80% of America's oil would come from foreign sources, Canada needs to be playing an even bigger role in the North American energy solution and needs to be playing that role now.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, Canada not only can, but should, play a larger role in the North American energy security solution. Considering the implications of oil scarcity and situations in Russia, Venezuela or the troubled Middle East, Canada's status as the world's most reliable supplier of energy represents not just an economic opportunity for us, but also an obligation to others—perhaps even the single best way that we can contribute stability in an uncertain world. As the government, we know what we need—a secure energy future, and an understanding with our American counterparts that progress will come much faster if both our nations are travelling down the same road.

Going forward, we can't predict how the talks with the U.S. will play out, but we can say with certainty that the time is right for these discussions to take place... and that the stakes are too high to let partisan politics get in the way of doing what is right for the planet.

[English]

We must work together within our own borders and with our continental partners to find common ground that is good for Canada, good for the United States, good for the planet, and good for a shared consensus on energy security and climate change. This will be for the best of our citizens, our industries, and our environments on both sides of the border.

This, Mr. Chair, and ladies and gentlemen of the committee, will stand among our priorities in my time as the Minister of the Environment. I thank you for your attention, and I am pleased to address your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

As everyone knows, the minister is here only until the top of the hour, so the first round will be for seven minutes. I'm going to hold you to that seven minutes so that everybody can ask a question of the minister.

Mr. McGuinty, please lead us off.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for joining us today.

Minister, I followed attentively your presentation, and I am stunned. I don't recognize any of the past three and half years of your government in this document. So let me begin by asking you, Minister, where your Turning the Corner plan is. While you jot some notes down, perhaps you can let us know whether you are still planning to use an intensity-based target approach in that plan. Can you tell us, as your plan tells Canadians, exactly what the effect will be on energy prices when you move to bring in whatever your regulations are in the Turning the Corner plan? Where is this? Has this all evaporated?

Apparently, according to your address, we've gone from "made in Canada" to "delayed in Canada and made in the U.S.A." Where is your plan from the three and a half years that you've been in government?

Hon. Jim Prentice: First, dealing with Turning the Corner, as I've said quite clearly, the Turning the Corner regulatory plan is one that we continue to work on. The Turning the Corner plan has set out the intent to reduce emissions, the target of minus 20% by 2020. That continues to be the approach of the Government of Canada.

In terms of Turning the Corner itself and the regulatory framework, we continue to develop that regulatory framework. Much of the work involved in regulating industry carries on, and we will ensure that we have in place a regulatory framework in this country that is leading in the world.

There are currently, I think it is fair to say, three realities that are superimposed upon all of this. The first is the need for continued stakeholder consultation, and that is ongoing. Second is the need to continue working with the provinces. Third is the need to ensure that the regulations brought into place fit together with where the new American administration is headed.

I think it is abundantly clear that in a context in which we are prepared to proceed on a North American basis in dealing with the environmental agenda, we need to ensure that any regulatory approach we bring into effect matches in terms of objectives, targets, mechanisms, and architecture what is being proposed in the United States.

On top of that, we need to deal with current economic realities, and we are dealing with all of that.

● (0920)

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, if I may, this is perfectly Orwellian.

On page 3 of your document, you say, “The government has a structured plan of action that's delivering real results”. It's one thing for your predecessor to have come in here and put up slide shows and say that for 13 years nothing happened, but you've been in power now for three and a half years. Where is your regulatory plan to deal with climate change?

To tell us that you're having stakeholder consultations at this stage of the game is ridiculous.

Hon. Jim Prentice: The regulatory plan is on target. The objective is to bring the regulatory plan—it has always been to bring it into law in the coming year, and that continues to be the objective and the focus.

Mr. David McGuinty: Now you tell us you're involved in negotiations because we're not sure where the United States is going. What does that mean? When the Prime Minister stood up beside President Bush and supported APEC in its efforts to delay the Kyoto process—I mean, you've been talking to the Republican Party and negotiating, and your positions have been aligned with that party for three years. Where is this coming from now? Why all of a sudden has this revelation, this falling off the horse, occurred for the government? Where's this coming from?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Well I'm not sure if you've fallen off a horse or not, but I can tell you that there is a new administration that has been elected in the United States. I think it's very clear to the entire world that President Obama has spoken about the environment with real clarity and determination, that he is determined to proceed to deal with greenhouse gas emissions—

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, we know all that.

Hon. Jim Prentice: —and that we intend to work together on a North American basis to do that.

Mr. David McGuinty: We know all that, Minister. But Minister —

Hon. Jim Prentice: Now if you have constructive suggestions on how you wish to do that—

Mr. David McGuinty: I do. Where have you been?

Hon. Jim Prentice: —I'd be delighted to hear them.

Mr. David McGuinty: Where have you been? I mean, your government has known that President Obama was likely to be elected three years ago. Where have you been? Where is your design of an emissions trading system for this country? What is the price of carbon going to be in Canada, or are you going to be a price-taker as well as a design-taker from the United States?

You've gone from “made in Canada” rhetoric to “delayed in Canada”. You're waiting for Godot. You're waiting for Obama to tell you what to do. Where has your government been on this?

Hon. Jim Prentice: No one is waiting for anyone at this point.

Mr. David McGuinty: Well where's your plan?

Hon. Jim Prentice: We are continuing to work on the regulatory framework that we have put forward. It hasn't been changed. We continue to ensure that the regulatory framework is one that will work together with the United States in terms of the future approach.

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, let's take a look at two things you got caught on.

You got caught on the transit pass, so let's just take a look. Help us understand. Help Canadians understand your style.

Everybody would admit at this table, I'm sure in their heart of hearts, that your transit pass was a failure: \$635 million. You can't tell us how many tonnes of GHGs were really reduced. You can't tell us whether ridership in the transit system is up or down. You were scolded by the commissioner. You were told by your own finance officials, your Minister of Finance was told, not to bring in this measure because—

Hon. Jim Prentice: I'm pleased to answer your question, if you have one that relates either to the transit pass or the ecoTrust.

Mr. David McGuinty: I'm coming. The cost, you were told, was over \$800 per tonne. It's somewhere between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Tell us that you're going to fix this problem right now.

Hon. Jim Prentice: The transit pass had two objectives. The first objective was to help hardworking Canadians who ride the bus, and I have no intention of apologizing for that initiative. If your party does not support helping senior citizens and students and other Canadians who ride the bus with tax relief, then that's your choice—

● (0925)

Mr. David McGuinty: You're not serious.

Hon. Jim Prentice: —but from my perspective, that was the primary policy objective and it was fulfilled.

In terms of the environmental objectives, if you have specific questions about how the calculations were done, they were based in fact on the Canadian Urban Transit Association report that had been completed, and I'm quite happy to explore that.

Mr. David McGuinty: Let me ask you then, Minister, how many more seniors are riding the bus because of your transit pass.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Well I can tell you that the calculations were done on the basis that—

Mr. David McGuinty: How many?

Hon. Jim Prentice: —the tax measures would have increased ridership on transit by 2.5% in each of the two years.

Mr. David McGuinty: Where is that? The commissioner—

Hon. Jim Prentice: That's the basis upon which the calculations were done. That's what you asked for.

The Chair: I do ask that you allow the minister to respond.

I'll give you a couple more seconds here, but we are urged to show appropriate courtesy and fairness when questioning witnesses.

Hon. Jim Prentice: To carry on responding to your question, you've also raised the transfers to the provinces, the dollars that were transferred, the \$1.5 billion that was transferred to the provinces. You've publicly said that this amounts to eco fraud on the part of the Province of Ontario and the other provinces who received the dollars.

I'd say to you today, in this public forum, if you have specific information to table about activities of fraud—

Mr. David McGuinty: I didn't say.... Where's the—

Hon. Jim Prentice: —I'd like to see that.

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, here's the question: where's the money?

Hon. Jim Prentice: The money was transferred to the provinces—

Mr. David McGuinty: Where's the money?

Hon. Jim Prentice: —and if you have specific illustrations or concerns about fraud on the part of the Province of Ontario—

Mr. David McGuinty: Just like the predecessor.

Hon. Jim Prentice: —or any other province, I'd be pleased to see that from you and we'll investigate.

The Chair: Time has expired and we're going to move on.

Monsieur Bigras, sept minutes, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

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

Welcome, Minister.

This morning, you distributed your speaking notes to the committee. However, my questions are not on the portions of the notes you read, but rather on the paragraphs you skipped and did not read, for example those near the top of page 10 of the English version, where you indicate that Canada has a variety of natural resources, including oil and natural gas. In your notes, you state that this could be, and I quote: "[...] an obvious way for many border states to reduce their reliance on coal-fired plants."

In an interview you granted the *Ottawa Citizen* on February 5, 2009, you said that the energy impact of tar sands would have to be assessed, as well as their repercussions on the environment, but that

the major share of greenhouse gas emissions in North America were currently generated by coal-fired power plants in the U.S.

If I remember, on February 14, 2002, in response to a U.S. proposal on climate change, your predecessor, David Anderson, said, and I quote:

We can help the U.S. achieve its targets by developing clean energy in Canada, but there must be continued recognition that Canada wants energy credits, credits for exporting clean energy.

Do you plan to suggest to the U.S. that Canada obtain energy credits for exporting oil from tar sands, by arguing that this would contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in comparison with emissions from coal-fired plants? Do you want to put that hypothesis on the table before the Americans?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you for your question, which I will answer in English.

[English]

I think in answering that question one has to have regard to the overall situation in North America. We are interested, as a country, in ensuring that we responsibly develop all of our energy resources. That includes hydrocarbons as well as renewables.

The United States faces significant challenges with respect to coal-burning thermal electricity plants. That's their challenge. The new President has really challenged the American nation to deal with that in the context of clean coal as well as renewables. Similarly, in Canada our challenge is to deal with clean oil and renewables. But I think you need to bear in mind the quantum of relative emissions that we are talking about.

The emissions in North America, in the United States specifically, from coal burning plants are 60 times the size of the emissions that come from the Canadian oil sands. The total emissions from the Canadian oil sands amount to 0.05% of the emissions of greenhouse gases from the United States. That's the relative situation we're speaking of.

Does this need to be a common objective? Absolutely. We need to ensure that Canadian resources are developed in the most reasonable way and that we bring on as many renewables as possible.

The other factor that I think is important is the relative balance in Canada and the United States. Canadians have done an extraordinary job in developing non-emitting energies. Seventy-three per cent of Canada's electricity stock is non-emitting. In the United States it's actually the converse. Over 75% of the American electricity stock is emitting.

So they face quite a different challenge from ours.

• (0930)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I understand very well what you are saying. However, your emissary, Preston Manning, published an open letter in the *Globe and Mail* yesterday, if I'm correct, in which he wondered what was happening with "dirty oil."

Oil from tar sands is of course a potential fuel, but perhaps a fuel that would be less polluting than coal. In view of that, do you agree with what your predecessor, David Anderson, said on February 14, 2002—that Canada could obtain clean energy export credits if it exported oil from tar sands to the U.S.? Do you believe that Canada should be recognized because it contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States?

[English]

Hon. Jim Prentice: I'm not going to delve into previous commentary by anyone, but I would say that as we have discussions with the United States and with other members of the international community, everyone is working towards an architecture of a system that reduces greenhouse gases while simultaneously ensuring that we have the energy sources to fuel our society. There is no doubt about that.

In the context of North America, that needs to take into account the very extensive hydro resources that we will produce as a country. It needs to reflect smart use of renewables. It needs to reflect the reality of the hydrocarbons that we consume in North America, across the border.

You asked the question of whether there will be credits. None of this, at this point, has been agreed upon. Obviously, you start from common targets and common principles and then delve into what the architecture of a system might look like.

What has been proposed to this point in the United States is a system of cap and trade, whereby all carbon emissions in American society will be capped, there will be a 100% auction of those allowances, and they will then be traded in the American marketplace.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Second, with regard to the supplementary estimates, I should say that it takes some gall for the minister to appear before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to request \$13.965 million more to cover operating costs for regulatory measures applied in the industrial sector under the Clean Air Regulatory Agenda—while you, Minister, have since 2006 been promising greenhouse gas emission regulations but have tabled nothing. In all honesty, how can you appear before this committee and ask for more funding for regulatory measures in the industrial sector, when you have not even deigned to publish those regulations?

If I may point out, as recently as yesterday your website stated that you were to table the regulations by the end of last year, in 2008. The regulations were to have been published by the end of 2008. So how can you justify asking us for supplementary funding now? You have not even deigned to publish the regulations. Today, you appear before us and ask us for more funding. I must say that I cannot

understand this. We are not only lagging behind internationally, but also behind our neighbours to the south, the United States.

[English]

The Chair: Time has expired, so I expect just a very brief response.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The dollars in question, the \$13.9 million, are necessary to carry on with the work of developing the regulatory framework. I would say to you that the regulatory framework we are developing in Canada is one of the most comprehensive in the world. It is far reaching. No one else has regulated the industrial sector in the manner that's being proposed in Canada. It's complicated. It will fit well together with what is happening in the United States. We will continue to develop that in the way we've promised.

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you.

Time has expired. We'll move on.

Ms. Duncan, the floor is yours.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's nice to have you before us, Mr. Minister. I would simply say that I support the issues raised by my colleagues and I look forward to getting into more of the details on climate change when you come to defend the new budget.

What I would like to have you respond to today is the overall mandate of the department and the slippage in seriousness of the federal government taking on its environmental responsibilities. It's been a great concern over the last 20 years, and we're seeing extreme slippage. We're seeing extreme slippage in movement on the regulation of serious toxins. I don't intend to ask you specific questions. I look forward to quizzing your officials on particular regulations that don't seem to be seeing the light of day.

What I'm particularly concerned about are the comments in the fiscal update of last fall. You yourself stood up in the House and spoke to those. You said that when we look at the coming budget, when we look at the supplementary estimates, we need to look to the message of the fiscal update: that we were going to work toward clean electricity. While the Prime Minister has said we're not going to pick favourites, the Government of Canada has picked favourites by singling out nuclear power and coal-fired electricity as a purported source of clean electricity for the future of Canada.

Coal-fired power, as we well know, is probably the largest source, if not one of the largest sources of greenhouse gases in Canada. It is the single largest source of industrial mercury in Canada. In fact, it's the single largest source of industrial mercury in North America, if you're looking toward North American action.

It's very important, when you look at the regulation of mercury, that you not simply pick on the United States. When you're controlling a neurotoxin, it isn't the volume. In other words, it doesn't matter if we are emitting less than the United States; they should be serious about it. That substance bioaccumulates in the local environment. We have proven that in Alberta, and as a result we have introduced provincial regulations.

So I welcome your addressing how you are going to move forward. You're saying we shouldn't give up environment for energy security, and yet your whole plan of action is to continue to put more support into those dirty sources. Where is the money in this supplementary budget for incenting renewables? Where is the money for moving on a coal-fired mercury regulation?

Hon. Jim Prentice: I'm pleased to respond to that question. It's fairly far-reaching, so let me do the best I can.

First, in terms of the regulatory agenda, I disagree that there is any slippage. If you look, for example, at the chemical management plan, we are proceeding apace with our commitment to deal with chemicals that have been backlogged in our system for decades in terms of the review of the health and environmental impacts. That is well on track in the objective we outlined in 2007.

In terms of your comment about the government seeing nuclear and coal-fired electricity as the way to achieve our targets, I wouldn't agree. The targets that we have espoused are to ensure that, by 2020, 90% of Canada's electricity is derived from non-emitting sources. At the present time, we derive 73% of our electricity from non-emitting sources.

Frankly, we don't give ourselves enough credit for what we have achieved. Canada has one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world. I think we're sixth or seventh on that scale. Assuming we're able to do what we have aspired to as a target—90%—we would have in effect the cleanest electricity system in the world, with the arguable exception of France, which is nuclear, and Norway.

We will get there not with coal-fired plants but with nuclear, with hydro, and with renewables, and I'm very optimistic that on all those fronts that's achievable. Canada, in the North American context, has some of the most significant hydro possibilities that remain to be developed, and once a price is put on carbon, many of those hydro projects will become quite competitive.

I welcome your interest in mercury. This is something that you and I have spoken about extensively, and you've drawn my attention to the possibility of good work that can be done to carry on the work we've done as a country.

Over the last several decades, Canada has actually done a very significant job of reducing mercury emissions. You are quite right that it is a neurotoxin. It is of real concern to me. And there is evidence that airborne mercury that is not originating in Canada but basically comes to rest in Canada is one of the more significant

pollutant concerns in terms of the health of Canadians, particularly people who eat country food that is exposed to airborne mercury.

In the time since you and I spoke, we are of course proceeding to the UNEP conference in the next two weeks. At that conference there will be discussion about the work that the international community will be doing on mercury. Canada intends to be a strong, outspoken voice on this, again because although we have brought our house largely in order, major mercury emissions continue internationally.

As well, one of the issues you have raised with me is the concern that we need to look federally at a regulatory standard that is modelled on one of our Canadian provinces, specifically Alberta, which has the toughest standards for mercury being emitted by coal-burning thermal plants. This is something the department is examining. I have asked my deputy to schedule a meeting with all the CEOs of coal-burning thermal electricity companies in Canada. We have a number of issues to discuss, but one of them will certainly be that regulatory aspect and what's involved in terms of Canada moving to that standard. So this is something that we are pursuing very seriously.

● (0940)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Minister, I'm encouraged that you're looking into it, but frankly, time is of the essence. We're talking about a bioaccumulative neurotoxin. I find it very reprehensible that you'd be reaching out to Canada's industrial CEOs. What about the public? What about the people who live around these lakes where the mercury is bioaccumulating?

There is no cause for delay. Alberta has already shown that regulating mercury from coal-fired plants is cost-effective. They've already done it in the U.S., waiting for the demise of Bush, and we're finally getting a federal government of the United States that is willing, nationally, to move forward on this.

We need to have a regulation now. We need to have Canada going to the international table and reporting that we are about to put in place a federal regulation and that we're committed to a global treaty.

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Very briefly, please.

Hon. Jim Prentice: We certainly will be outspoken at Nairobi. In terms of the individuals we're speaking to, most of the thermal operators we're speaking of are public companies. These are publicly owned, provincially owned corporations in most cases. The challenge ultimately remains that we have differing provincial standards. One province has aspired to a higher standard—that's Alberta—and we're investigating whether that should be the national standard.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister, for being with us today. It's quite unusual for so many ministers to come to the supplementary estimates. Normally there are four or five. In this case, I believe most of the ministers of the government have come. I personally know how busy you are, so thank you for adjusting your schedule to be here today.

I have a question for you on regulations for industrial greenhouse gas emissions. Under the 13 dark years of the previous Liberal government, when they were going to get it done, or they were just about to take some action that was going to turn Canada around in the commitments it had made....

In the last three years a lot has happened, and you've described that in your opening comments in a lot of detail, but there have been questions here from all three opposition members, critics, regarding the Turning the Corner plan.

Of course, our Turning the Corner plan began with the notice of intent to regulate in 2007, as you said. This is the updated document of March 2008, and I'll have a copy for each of them so they can get up to speed.

You've said that we are on track for the regulations to come into force, so again, congratulations on the good work in that respect. Previously the regulations that Canada had were voluntary. Again, under the Turning the Corner plan, we move from voluntary to mandatory.

You did touch on the change now in the world with the United States' change of presidency, with President Obama. Could you elaborate on the importance of having a coordinated way of fighting climate change?

Also, in light of the world economic crisis, are we staying committed to one of the toughest targets in the world—20% reduction by 2020? Are we staying committed to that?

● (0945)

Hon. Jim Prentice: Well I might just respond in a couple of ways, and I won't get into the 13 years of inaction. In terms of our approach in dealing with greenhouse gas emissions with our American neighbours, we need to focus on the source of emissions. That includes, first, the transportation sector. I think it's fair to say that President Obama has taken some steps there, and we should speak to what we are doing that's commensurate with those steps. Secondly, we need to deal with the emissions from industrial sources, and I will speak to that. Thirdly, there are other aspects of emissions that relate to all of us as consumers.

However, I think it's important to begin with the targets. You're quite right that the targets we have put forward as a Canadian government of minus 20% by 2020 are in fact more aggressive than the targets that have been put forward by President Obama. This is from a 2006 base. The objective, the level of ambition that the new President has spoken of, is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the United States to 1990 levels by 2020. If you do the math and convert it, it equates to something like minus 14, from a 2006 base. The Canadian and the American targets are similar. They're not identical. The Canadian targets are slightly more aggressive in the shorter term. In the longer term they're commensurate with one another, although at 2050 the American targets are expressed slightly more ambitiously.

Broadly speaking, we have similar targets. I think what is also important is that the principles that our government has espoused in dealing with this are virtually identical to the principles that President Obama has espoused.

First is the importance of balancing economic progress with our responsibility to be stewards of the environment.

Second is the importance of technological innovation. We are talking about essentially step changes in the technological basis of our society. Whether you're speaking of bringing on hydro projects or advancing carbon capture and storage or new generation nuclear, these are significant step changes in technology, so we need to make investments to have that happen.

Third is the long-term nature of this. This will not be accomplished overnight. There is real importance to proceeding very quickly, but to make the kinds of changes that we're talking about, we need a longer-term horizon. Everyone has agreed on that, increasingly.

Fourth is the importance of engaging all major emitters. There's an old saying that if you're going duck hunting, you go where the ducks are. If you're trying to deal with emissions, you're going to have to deal with all of the major economies that emit greenhouse gases. That includes the United States, China, India, Russia, and the so-called BRIC economies. The new President has spoken with clarity and determination about that and so have we.

Finally, the new President has indicated a change of American policy in that he will engage in a very constructive way in the international climate change process. We have similarly said that that's what we are committed to. In terms of our targets and principles, we are on a common footing. In terms of dealing with the transportation sector, one of the first executive orders that President Obama signed.... There were two orders, in fact. One was to direct the American EPA to proceed with the "35 mile per gallon by 2020" vehicle fuel consumption standard. The other was to allow California, essentially, to pursue the California standard.

In Canada we have been in front of this for some time. In January of last year we actually indicated that we would move to the stringent, dominant North American standard for vehicle fuel efficiency. We have been working with and frankly waiting for the U.S. administration to make choices in terms of when they would bring that into place. Now that we know where the new President is going, harmonization of our vehicle fuel consumption standards is not only doable but well under way.

In terms of our industrial emissions, we continue with the Turning the Corner plan. However, I think it is important, as I said earlier, to emphasize the complexity of this and the effects it has on competitiveness. When you talk about regulating the industrial sector, you're speaking of 350 Canadian facilities that emit significant volumes of carbon dioxide. As I recall, that is more than 100,000 tonnes. These are distributed across the country. They involve everything from steel manufacturing facilities to coal-burning electricity plants and certainly oil and gas facilities. It's everything we essentially do as part of our industrial structure.

● (0950)

The way in which these regulations are brought into law and the competitive effect they have, as between Canada and the United States, all require careful consideration. That's why we are seeking additional dollars in the supplementary estimates, to carry on with that work.

I would emphasize that what we are doing, as Canadians, is second to none. No one else has brought in a regulatory industrial framework of this nature.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. Your time is up.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, please kick us off on a five-minute round.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, Minister. I must humbly apologize. I didn't realize all this time that your government had been framed for an Obama victory.

But going back to the transit pass, I recall it being sold through heavy radio advertising before the last election. I don't recall it being sold as a gift to seniors and students; I recall it being sold as an environmental policy.

In terms of the \$13 billion you're requesting for work on regulations on climate change, I think that's an admission that you missed your fall deadline to come out with climate change regulations—though I understand we needed to take time out for an election. But I digress.

In the fall of 2006, I introduced a motion to the House calling on the government to introduce a national water strategy. In its 2007 budget, the government paid lip service to the idea of creating a national water strategy, but then did nothing. In the 2007 throne speech that followed, the government again paid lip service to creating a national water strategy—still nothing. Then last spring I introduced a bill based on the work of the Munk Centre at the University of Toronto, calling for safety net legislation to prevent water exports, among other things. This idea was picked up in the fall 2008 throne speech.

Given that you still haven't come up with a national water strategy, why should we believe you will proceed with such a bill, and if you do proceed with it, that it will have any teeth?

Hon. Jim Prentice: First, I would compliment you on your involvement in the subject of water. I think it's extremely important. It's something we need to be world leaders on.

One of my first acts as Minister of the Environment was to ensure that we maintained the GEMS program in Canada, which is an international initiative we've been part of for many years and that has Canada in the forefront of water testing in other countries. There will be more said about that in the days ahead.

I don't agree that we are not proceeding as we need to on our national approach to water. I would advise that in the coming week there's a meeting of the Canadian ministers of the environment, and one of the agenda items will be a major initiative on waste water. For the first time we'll try to achieve a consensus amongst the provincial ministers on regulatory standards for waste water. This is something our country has not addressed for decades. It is an area where we need to work together, federally and provincially, to ensure that we have waste water standards. There's been some truly fine work done by officials on this subject, and I'm very hopeful about where it will go.

In terms of the record of our government, I think it stands on its own. The extensive investments that have been made in the Great Lakes, Lake Simcoe, Lake Winnipeg, the work that's being done under the Building Canada Fund to invest in water facilities—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Excuse me, Minister, I only have five minutes. May I continue?

● (0955)

Hon. Jim Prentice: Please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I don't think that Canada's foremost water experts, whether we speak of Ralph Pentland or Frank Quinn, believe that the government has a national water strategy. As a matter of fact, a year ago, at a presentation here on Parliament Hill, Frank Quinn, who was a former Environment Canada public servant, said, "Nobody in Ottawa knows where water is any more". That statement, to me, expresses the government's disarray on the issue.

On another point, I'd like to get to the idea of water infrastructure, because I think the more we reflect on this recession the more we realize that, as in every recession, certain industries are going to lead us out of it. I think, quite frankly, it's going to be the green industries. I think one of the industries that can do a lot of work is the water infrastructure industry, if you will, the filtration industry, the engineering firms.

There was a report that came out back in December that suggested that \$1 billion invested in addressing the water infrastructure deficit in Canada would create 11,500 to 47,000 jobs. How much are we going to spend on water infrastructure in the next two years? How much is the federal government going to spend on water infrastructure in the next two years? I would posit that it's not nearly enough.

We all love hockey. It's good to build arenas, but arenas are not a global growth industry, whereas it's estimated that the global market size of the water industry is U.S. \$360 billion and it's forecasted to rise to U.S. \$1.6 trillion in 10 years. If you look at the market, the water portfolios are the ones that are outperforming the market. So why aren't we doing more to encourage this industry in Canada?

The Chair: I'd appreciate it if you could keep your response brief because time has almost expired.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you. I would just counsel you to withhold judgment on whether we're spending enough until you find out how much we're spending.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's what I'm asking, how much?

Hon. Jim Prentice: The point is that we need to invest money particularly in waste water treatment in this country. That is what the Canadian environmental ministers will be speaking about next week. We have set \$1 billion of green infrastructure dollars aside in this budget.

Quite apart from that, the Building Canada approach is the largest infrastructure build that our country has seen since the Second World War, and significant—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: With all due respect, I don't think you want to go to the Building Canada fund.

The Chair: We're going to move on to Mr. Braid for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for your presence here this morning and for your leadership on this very important and complex file.

I'd like to spend my time speaking specifically to environmental initiatives and support for your department and for the environment that we see in the economic action plan, Budget 2009.

It's clear since the inception of our government in 2006 that the environment has been a clear, stated priority—the protection of the environment. Despite these challenging global economic times, as I read the economic action plan, that commitment to the environment remains strong. Although I have some specific questions about specific initiatives in the economic action plan, I wanted to ask if you could just start generally by speaking about support for the issue of the environment in the economic action plan.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Are we not here discussing the supplementary estimates and were you not told to stick to that?

The Chair: The estimates are deemed to have been ordered reported. As I announced, we are on Standing Order 108(2), which is fairly broad based, and also the minister's opening comments were quite broad.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Can I speak to that point of order?

The Chair: Mr. Warawa, stay on the point.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I will speak on the point of order raised by Ms. Duncan. Actually, her questions were quite broad and we're not on the supplementary estimates, so I find it ironic now that she's trying to stop somebody else from asking questions similar to hers.

The Chair: Mr. Braid, you still have the floor.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm sorry, Mr. Minister, I didn't mean to interrupt.

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

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you could just start briefly by describing the commitment to the environment and to your department out of the economic action plan.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you.

Having resolved that point of order, Mr. Chairman, I will carry on.

The budget contains very extensive dollars dealing with environmental priorities. Several of these have been mentioned over the course of the morning. There is a \$1 billion fund set aside for green infrastructure projects. Those can include projects relating to public transit, waste water management, as we've spoken about, or the generation of sustainable energy, as well as other projects.

Parenthetically, before I leave that, in response to the previous question on waste water, this is an extremely important question, and the essence of what we are saying as a government is that we will regulate. So we'll work with the provinces, but we are speaking of a regulatory framework for the first time in Canada.

In terms of the budget or the action plan, as I said earlier in my comments, a lot of this turns on technology, so a \$1 billion fund has been set aside for clean energy research and demonstration projects. This could include carbon capture and storage, but it is not limited to carbon capture and storage. This involves the significant greening of our energy systems. Extensive money—\$300 million—has been set aside for the ecoENERGY home retrofit program. This will allow for up to 200,000 Canadian homes to be energy retrofitted.

I think it's important to point out that a lot of this will be driven by green citizens making green consumer choices. All of us, as parliamentarians, have been quite taken, I think, by the response we've seen from individual Canadians who wish to pursue this, to retrofit their homes or to engage in energy-efficient upgrades.

We're advancing the dollars that are being invested in federally contaminated sites. An additional \$80 million is being invested, but certain other dollars are being accelerated. We have a far too lengthy list of contaminated sites in our country that have accumulated over the last 100 years, and we'll be accelerating the remediation of those.

Something that's received very little notice, which is included in the action plan, is support for continued work by the department to monitor and obtain information on environmental indicators. That is part of it.

In addition, \$1.3 billion has been set aside for retrofits, including energy efficiency retrofits of Canada's social housing stock.

In addition, dollars have been invested in VIA Rail to increase the carriage capacity on the Windsor-Quebec corridor. I think we would all agree that more train transport by Canadians, taking cars off the road, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, a significant amount—\$300 million or thereabouts—is being invested in nuclear with AECL.

There is a lengthy list of efforts that the government is taking on to ensure that our environmental objectives are achieved.

• (1000)

The Chair: Time has expired.

Minister Prentice, it is after 10 o'clock, and I understand you need to be getting to some other commitments you have today.

Thank you for appearing.

We're going to continue on this round with the department officials. Deputy Minister Ian Shugart is going to stay with us, and I believe Andrew Treusch, an associate deputy minister for Environment Canada, will be joining us.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, committee members. I've enjoyed the exchange.

The Chair: While the minister is leaving, so everybody's clear what we're doing today—because the supplemental estimates were reported back yesterday—we're deemed to have dealt with them and reported them.

So even though the topic matter is the estimates, we are meeting under Standing Order 108(2), which reads as follows:

The standing committees...be empowered to study and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management and operation of the department or departments of government which are assigned to them from time to time by the House. In general, the committees shall be severally empowered to review and report on:

- (a) the statute law relating to the department assigned to them;
- (b) the program and policy objectives of the department and its effectiveness in the implementation of same;
- (c) the immediate, medium and long-term expenditure plans and the effectiveness of implementation of same by the department;
- (d) an analysis of the relative success of the department, as measured by the results obtained as compared with its stated objectives; and
- (e) other matters, relating to the mandate, management, organization or operation of the department, as the committee deems fit.

So we do have a fairly broad base that we can work from today.

Now, we have a number of departmental officials with us. Maybe before we go to the next round, once everybody sits down, I'll ask you to introduce them for us, Deputy Minister.

Mr. Ian Shugart (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Chair.

We have a number of officials from Environment Canada here, but I'd like to introduce my colleagues, Alan Latourelle, Chief Executive Officer of the Canada Parks Agency; and Mr. Peter Sylvester, President of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. With your permission, as members raise different questions I'll invite other officials to join me as necessary.

• (1005)

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Ouellet, you have five minutes.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Shugart, last week Mr. Vaughan, the environment commissioner, told us that no department had been much concerned with sustainable development over the past few years. This goes for both Liberals and Conservatives.

It is important to note that new sustainable development legislation was passed in spring, but is still not being applied. Is it not surprising that the environment department does not apply the principle of sustainable development?

Mr. Ian Shugart: The commissioner did indeed point out deficiencies in the plans of a variety of government departments. However, Parliament has passed new legislation on sustainable development. Under the new legislation, all departments concerned are required to implement strategies, including timetables, targets, and mechanisms to monitor results.

As leaders in this area, we accept that responsibility. At present, we are focusing on planning this approach across all government departments, including the environment department. We are now engaged in internal consultations, as well as consultations with outside organizations.

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Why have you not yet done that? There is already legislation on sustainable development, so how is it you have done nothing more than this? You have been in your position for three years now, yet you have done nothing when it comes to sustainable development.

Mr. Ian Shugart: I will answer that question in English.

[English]

In our view, it would be overstating the judgment that nothing has been done in departments. Faults were found with the specificity and rigour with which commitments were set out. In our view, everything the Department of the Environment does is oriented to sustainable development. When we are managing our protected areas, pursuing the chemical management plan, and so on, our approach to that philosophically is within the concept of environmental integrity and sustainable development. It is true that the commissioner has pointed out—and indeed this was the nature of the debate in the House, in this committee, and in Parliament—that the legislative framework that was in place needed to be made stronger and much more rigorous to require specific commitments with timelines. We welcome that obligation and will work within that framework.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: You say that you do have a philosophy of sustainable development. A while ago, when he appeared, the minister gave an example of the renovations that will be done to buildings, in particular housing units, in complete compliance with the principles of energy efficiency. Yet, energy efficiency is only one small aspect of sustainable development.

You have a policy whereby you give people money to encourage them to do renovations, but you do not include the principles of sustainable development. So, don't come here and tell me that you have a philosophy of sustainable development if you do not follow it in your programs.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chairman, I completely agree that the notion of sustainable development is far broader than a number of specific measures to solve an environmental problem. All the departments will have to agree to adopt this concept of sustainable development so that a social and economic approach can be implemented that is in keeping with the objectives of sustainable development. It is an ongoing requirement.

•(1010)

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a short question.

[English]

The Chair: Time has expired.

Monsieur Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and I want to thank the folks from the department for being here today. We appreciate that.

I also want to thank my colleague, Ms. Duncan, for bringing forward the great work the Province of Alberta has done in looking at mercury. They've also done some wonderful things, I'm sure you're aware, with the Water for Life strategies, and also the land-use

framework they're using to make sure the environment there is well looked after. Not to mention that Alberta was the first province to move forward with greenhouse gas emission standards. So it's wonderful that our province is doing such great work and that we have so many Albertans here today represented in this committee, including our minister.

One of the things I want to ask about is an area of particular interest to me. I spent much of my previous time before Parliament working for Alberta Environment and also for Parks Canada, and one of the things that's near and dear to my heart, of course, and near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians, is our national parks system and our historic sites and our marine conservation areas. So I would like to get more clarification from the department on the initiatives that have been going forward and the plan for our national parks. The plan that was brought forward previously was quite ambitious in the creation of new parks and so on, but what specifically can you tell this committee about where that work has progressed? I know we've seen expansions of the Nahanni; we've talked about the freshwater area at Lake Superior.

Could you expand on this a bit and let this committee know what's being done to preserve eco-sensitive areas of the Canadian environment?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chair, I'll invite Alan Latourelle to take that question.

Mr. Alan Latourelle (Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you very much for the question.

I think a lot of work has been done over the last several years in terms of achieving conservation gains through Parks Canada—work on the expansion of the Nahanni, the east arm of Great Slave Lake, the marine conservation area in Lake Superior.

We're still working on about eight other files across the country, Mealy Mountains, for example, in Newfoundland and Labrador, Lowlands in Manitoba. So we still have a fairly aggressive expansion program to complete the national park system. The objective is to represent each of the 39 natural regions in Canada, and we are still proceeding on that track.

Over the next few years we are looking forward to bringing home several of these initiatives, but that also includes the marine conservation area programs. For example, in British Columbia, we're working on the Gulf Islands area in the Strait, in terms of moving ahead with a national marine conservation area there, and also in Gwaii Haanas.

So we are committed as an agency to deliver on those commitments, and a lot of progress has been made, but still a lot needs to be done.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: A couple of parks I don't think have full park status yet, so I guess my question is going to be quite specific. When it comes to Grasslands, it's not fully established as a national park, nor is the park out on the west side of Vancouver Island where the West Coast Trail...Pacific Rim, that's correct.

One of the things that is of concern to me is how long some of these things have taken, because I don't believe they've achieved full park status yet. Can you enlighten this committee as to the progress on those two particular areas?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: In terms of understanding the processes, we do respect aboriginal rights, for example. As part of our park establishment process, there are two key steps. One, when there are still outstanding land claims for any given park, we bring a proposal forward for cabinet and then for parliamentary consideration for national park reserve status. So, for example, the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve has national park reserve status; the Canada National Parks Act applies fully. Once all the outstanding land claims are resolved, it moves to national park status. So that's the case in the Pacific Rim.

In other parks where we have a longer-term objective, and Grasslands is a good example where we're still proceeding with major acquisitions, once we have a sufficient amount of land that we want to bring forward for national park status purposes, then we would bring that legislative proposal to the government and then to the House.

• (1015)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Okay.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I can assure you that in Grasslands, we're still very aggressive in our land acquisition.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: That's encouraging, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Wilfert, you have the floor.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to say that I'm glad to see Mr. Latourelle here. I had a wonderful working relationship with him when I was the parliamentary secretary.

I have a comment and then I'm going to ask a question. If the 13 dark years were so dark, I'm very proud of those 13 dark years, because according to the government, we had the most aggressive plan of the G-8 in 2005 and the greenest budget in history, which was \$10 billion. I haven't seen that replicated by this government.

In 2007 the UN estimated that all humanitarian aid, except for one, was climate related. We have famines; we see rising sea levels and the displacement of millions of people because of a shortage of fresh water. In fact, we may see environmental migrants by 2020.

My question to you is, with regard to the north—and certainly the Northwest Passage, which could be open all year round—what work is your department doing on the issue of climate change, national security, and energy dependency with regard to other departments? Under the leadership of the former Minister of the Environment, Mr. Dion, we were able to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Finance in order to get the greenest budget in history.

Obviously, given the situation, the Ministry of the Environment has to play a critical role in dealing with issues in the north, particularly on the issue of national security, which is becoming extremely important. The Americans and the British already have strategies in place, and I'd be interested in your comments as to what collaborative work, if any, is currently going on in your department with those colleagues.

Mr. Ian Shugart: I would first say that this issue is going to be with us for some time to come, and I would not be surprised if we see considerably more activity and work in the department and

across government as we learn more and as the consequences of global warming become more identified and quantified.

Second, I would say that in a couple of areas in our science programming, our atmospheric science has largely adjusted to being sensitive to changes in the climate and supporting the understanding of that impact on water resources. That's not unique to Environment Canada, but it's in collaboration with Natural Resources Canada, which has the geological survey and is responsible for a lot of geospatial mapping and so on.

On ice, we have the Canadian Ice Service, which is largely focused on the north. They study the annual ice patterns as well as the multi-year ice situation. The government, as you know, has committed to the establishment of a high Arctic research station. The department is very much involved with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, NRCAN, and National Defence in developing the potential structure, management, and programs of the national ice service. Those are some issues that we are directly involved in as a department.

I know, without speaking for them, that the Department of Health is also involved in this work in terms of monitoring and understanding the impact of global warming in the north, on the peoples of the north and so on.

Of course, in the Canadian Wildlife Service, the particular impacts on species such as the polar bear are a main focus of attention within the department, and also within provincial and local organizations, with the Inuit, and internationally.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): I thought it was Mr. Woodworth who was next.

The Chair: Oh, Mr. Woodworth; I'm sorry about that.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have just one or two comments on the side. First, if the Liberal government in fact did propose a \$10 billion commitment in 2005, I think that after 12 years of having done nothing it could only be described as a kind of deathbed repentance.

I also want to comment on what I could hardly believe my ears on, if I correctly heard one of my friends opposite say that the Government of Canada should have been able to predict three years ago that Obama was going to win this election. I don't know whether I heard that correctly.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: No, what I said, if I may interject, is that you were praying for an Obama victory.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I am sure that I heard a comment that we should or could have predicted it three years ago. That, I think, if I heard it correctly, would have surprised many people, up to and including Hillary Clinton.

I want to thank the departmental representatives for being here today. I have a concern, as has our government, for things that matter most to ordinary Canadians. I think of all the things that I have heard your department is doing, the issue of meteorological services—severe weather warnings—matters most to ordinary Canadians. We have to be able to plan our lives around the weather, so the accuracy of those weather warnings is very important.

I want to compliment the department on what I saw in the environmental commissioner's report in this area. I saw many reports of good things.

I want to also say that I strongly disagree with at least one conclusion of the environment commissioner, at paragraph 2.82 in his report, which indicated that "Environment Canada's systems...do not adequately support the delivery of timely and accurate severe weather warnings to Canadians". In fact, everything I saw in the commissioner's report leads me to exactly the opposite conclusion: that Environment Canada's systems are providing and supporting timely and accurate severe weather warnings. Out of 15,000 severe weather warnings, the environmental commissioner didn't feel there was a single instance of an inaccurate or untimely weather warning to put in his report. I think that speaks very well of the department and that Canadians can have a great deal of confidence in the systems you are proposing.

I notice there's about \$3 million of capital expenditure in supplementary estimates (B) directed toward the meteorological service. I notice as well in the environment commissioner's report that over the last three years there have been any number of great developments: the ISO 9001 certification, the Treasury Board 2007 approach to capital planning, the adoption of the NinJo Workstation, the establishment of four national service offices, the creation of the national inquiry response team, new technologies with wireless and RSS, the implementation of the quality management system—all these very great things done in the department.

What I'd like to ask is, which of these great initiatives you've been working on over the last three years do you consider to be the most important that you expect to finalize in the upcoming year? Thank you.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you, Chair.

I could say a lot more if I had more time on the question, but I will answer with two examples. The first is the completion of the NinJo Workstation capacity, which will allow us to raise the level of technical analysis, and in collaboration with other jurisdictions.

The second thing I would say is that, of that list, perhaps the most important is the establishment of the national centres, which allow us to do a number of things, including: interacting through the media and with organizations about the implications of rapidly changing weather patterns; using the storm prediction capacity and the ability to relate in a fairly specialized way to communities through the media; and, whether for business or the farm community or whatever, knowing what the meaning is of the data we're getting

as it is continually changing; and giving advice on things such as timing and severity and rapidity of approach and all of that kind of thing, as well as advice on how to prepare for it.

There's no question that this is a constantly evolving field, a mandate of the department. We are not exempt from error, but we are very committed to responding to the recommendations of the commissioner—with whom we work very closely, I might say—to improve the life cycle management of our assets in order to focus our resources in those areas that are going to provide the service most quickly and most effectively to the Canadian communities that need it.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our witnesses for appearing.

I want to take a moment of my time to address a comment made by one of our members opposite who is concerned that the government is not taking on enough environmental responsibility.

I disagree strongly with that. For example, the chemicals management plan is a very robust undertaking. Some significant progress is being made on that front, and \$300 million has been set aside for that over three years.

I think back to 2006 to a project that was very important to me, where \$225 million was set aside for land habitat preservation. I believe the first funding announcement went to protect 5% of Pelee Island down my way.

There was \$200 million for sediment cleanup, which the Commissioner of the Environment indicated in his updated report in 2007 was a significant Great Lakes issue.

Even though the \$1.5 billion ecoTrust may not satisfy auditors because the provinces spend and account for the dollars, I can assure Mr. McGuinty opposite that it pleases his brother, the Premier of Ontario. There is \$586 million to help address coal-fired emissions in the province of Ontario.

There are many other things that I think are very significant. There's the first binational funding between Canada and the United States to establish a spawning reef in the Great Lakes for native fish species including whitefish, sturgeon, and walleye, for example. So I think the government is taking on a significant amount of environmental responsibility.

Speaking of the Commissioner of the Environment, I want to turn to his chapter on managing air emissions and the example of acrylonitrile. I think that has brought an interesting point to hand, particularly as we're looking down the road toward the chemicals management plan and further steps, with more substances or chemicals to be addressed with risk management studies.

The recommendation from the commissioner was to ensure that measures are in place to deal with significant sources of acrylonitrile air emissions, but we have learned that there has been a significant downward trend since 2006. The two largest sources of emissions are being addressed; one is federally regulated and the other is provincially regulated. How much more should be done with acrylonitrile risk management on that remaining 1%? I'm not sure if that's the most significant use of our resources, particularly since more risk management strategies need to come on board for the chemicals management plan.

I'd like your response to the environment commissioner's recommendation in his report on acrylonitrile.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you, Chair.

The honourable member has put his finger on a challenge that we face in the department with respect to the development of a compliance and enforcement strategy for the wide range of things that are regulated.

This is done on a risk management basis. But things do change. We are sensitive to changes in public commentary, coverage of problems that we were perhaps not aware of, or advice from the commissioner and others in terms of the appropriate allocation of resources.

One of the areas of controversy in regard to acrylonitrile was the use of the pollution prevention plan, which is one type of mechanism used to address relatively unusual or specific situations. So you establish a pollution prevention plan, which we're authorized to do under CEPA, as one kind of instrument.

Another aspect of the acrylonitrile story is the reliance on provincial action to take measures within the domain of a province. There, too, the fact is that the federal government could take action, but we are frequently, if not continuously, working in collaboration with our colleagues at the provincial level. In that particular case, we believed that the action proposed by the Government of Quebec would be sufficient to deal with the issue.

With respect to the last incremental gain, I would say that in any substance or environmental problem where we have the responsibility and the authority to act, a number of factors are taken into account, including the nature of the threat posed to wildlife or the ecosystem, or Canadians' health. That remaining 1% may be very substantial if the exposures are significant and the toxicity of an agent is high. In another case, it may not be as significant, and we probably would orient our resources—without vacating the field—to other priorities representing greater threats.

We do accept the recommendations of the commissioner with respect to these regulatory issues. I think he has rightly pointed out gaps in the data consistency and thoroughness that have to underlie a robust risk management strategy, and we will be, and indeed already are, updating the data or information about the regulated community and the levels of emissions and so on in those areas he looked at, so that our risk management strategy can then govern the actions we plan to take over the course of the year through the compliance and enforcement work we do in the department.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you.

The time has expired.

We do have time to go into a third round. We do have a motion that we may have to deal with at the end of the meeting, plus we have to set our agenda for when we come back from break week. So I'm going to suggest that we do three minutes each.

Mr. McGuinty, you have the floor.

Mr. David McGuinty: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Shugart, thanks for joining us.

I asked the minister earlier, and maybe you can help me get a technical answer to this question, has the department done any work on the consequences of the forthcoming regulatory regime on the prices of energy?

In the first version of this regulatory framework plan, the Turning the Corner plan, there was explicit reference to increasing energy costs. I don't know whether that's still in this document or whether it has been whitewashed out, but can you tell us whether the department has done any analysis, and what will the consequences be, of this regulatory framework for energy prices in Canada?

Mr. Ian Shugart: One of the things we have done, Chair, in respect of the current economic situation is to assess the impact on the regulatory framework of the substantial changes in the world oil price, for example, and what that could do to the carbon price over the life of the regulatory framework.

I don't know if we have re-analyzed the impact of the regulations on what I think you might be referring to, the price of electricity for consumers and industry—so as an input price. I would have to confirm that. But we are monitoring and doing a different set of models that take into account the changing economic environment.

• (1035)

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, through you to Mr. Shugart, you have some knowledge, I think, of the design of an emissions trading system. The minister spoke at length about what is now a North American trading system; he is asserting there will be a North American system. Is it possible to have the design of an emissions trading system, say, continent-wide, when Canada has an intensity target and the United States has an absolute target?

Mr. Ian Shugart: It is in principle, Mr. Chair, conceivable to do that, because the point of trading, as Mr. McGuinty will know, is to calculate the emission reductions to which a credit or an allowance is applied. To the extent that an intensity-based system requires a different approach to calculating that, one would have to do a crosswalk between a system that is based on hard caps and one that's based on intensity. But assuming that both systems actually do result in reduced emissions that can be converted, then it would be, in principle, possible to have the two coexist. I'm not saying they will; I'm saying it is possible.

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

Monsieur Bigras.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to return to the issue of deadlines for regulations having to do with greenhouse gas emissions. Earlier I asked the minister some questions, but his answer was not clear. Yesterday, I went on your Internet site. In an announcement that was updated on October 22, 2008, we clearly read the following:

Proposed greenhouse gas regulations are expected to be published in the *Canada Gazette* later this year, and the regulations finalized in 2009 to come into force as planned on January 1, 2010.

"Later this year" was back in 2008. Am I mistaken, or is the information on your Internet site inaccurate? We are told that the regulations will be published this year at the latest and finalized in 2009, and will come into force on January 1, 2010, as planned. Given that this public information is wrong, do you have another timetable for us?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chairman, I understand the problem that the member has raised. I have no announcement to make today concerning a new timeframe.

[English]

I would simply mention that in the intervening time there was an election, a prorogation of Parliament, and a very, very significant change in the economic environment facing the country and the world.

As the minister indicated, that has led to scrutiny of the regulations as they have been developed, to some further consultation for validation of the direction we are taking, and for examination of the implications of the new administration in the United States for the regulatory framework.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I understand what you are saying, but there was an election in the United States as well, and nonetheless, they can tell us something. I'll quote Ms. Barbara Boxer, who is the person in charge of the environment file in the American Senate. Concerning legislation on nation-wide climate change legislation, she says that it is a matter of a few weeks, not a few months.

Why is it that the new American administration, which came to power after the new Canadian government came to power, is able to tell us that within a few weeks, and not a few months, they will be bringing in legislation on climate change, whereas you are not able, first of all, to keep your Internet site up to date, and then, give us a timeframe for regulations on climate change? I don't understand. Does that mean that there is no political will?

• (1040)

[English]

The Chair: Let me just interject here, because committee has to respect our public servants. This is right out of Marleau and Montpetit, at page 863:

The obligation of a witness to answer all questions put by the committee must be balanced against the role that public servants play in providing confidential advice to their Ministers. The role of the public servant has traditionally been viewed in relation to the implementation and administration of government policy, rather than the determination of what that policy should be.

A point of order?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

I think that this is not a matter of confidentiality. When the department releases incorrect information, as it did once again no later than yesterday, I believe that as parliamentarians, we are entitled to get the straight goods. The information that is being given to the public is incorrect. As parliamentarians, we are entitled to ask officials for explanations about an official website. In my opinion, none of this is confidential.

[English]

The Chair: At the same time, if you feel, Mr. Shugart, that there's anything here that... Usually you're excused from commenting on policy decisions that are made by the government. If there is any information that you feel is appropriate to share, I'll let you do it, but if you want to temper that, you are excused, according to Marleau and Montpetit.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you, Chair. My guess is that my answer won't be entirely satisfactory.

[Translation]

I accept Mr. Bigras's observation that the 2008 information that is found on the site is no longer valid. The considerations...

[English]

I didn't say that, on the translation, but I think everyone understands.

The factors that go into this due diligence that we're doing on the regulations are the ones that I've mentioned. I would just add the observation that Senator Boxer, earlier this week, was speaking about a much longer timeline for legislation in her committee. But I do take the point that things will be moving in Congress, and we will be engaged in following that.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

We'll check the blues and make sure the translation is correct.

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you very much.

Finally I get another question under these wonderful rules.

Mr. Shugart, it's very nice to have you here. I have a thousand questions, of course. One thing I would like to focus on, and I would appreciate your answer on, goes directly to the supplementary estimates and to what is budgeted for next year.

Both I and the people who phone me and contact me are seriously concerned about the delays in moving on implementing CEPA. When CEPA was first enacted, the then Conservative minister, Tom McMillan, said that a law is of no effect if you don't have effective enforcement and compliance, and if you don't have the regulations there to prescribe the binding standards.

We hear the minister and his officials today saying, no problem, we're moving along on greenhouse gas regulations, and we're going to start moving along on mercury regulations. And yet we have the chromium electroplating, chromium anodizing, reverse etching regulations, which were gazetted in 2004. And where are the regulations? Is it money? Has it been bounced?

We have the vinyl chloride regulations, which the Senate and House of Commons regulatory committee said we needed to move on right away. They're still not at *Gazette* II.

We have the vehicle emission regulations. We missed the deadline in December to move forward and update regulations. We're not enforcing the ones we have on the books right now.

The air emission action plan was promised for the end of last year. Where is it? And now there are the regulations to set the binding targets under Turning the Corner.

How can we believe that we're actually going to move forward expeditiously, in a timely manner, to deal with a neurotoxin, which is mercury, and deal with the most pressing issue of our time, climate change, when we haven't even moved on the regulations that are languishing out there on the books?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you, Chair.

I will need, on some of those specific regulations, to check the status. I don't know, at the moment, the status of some of the ones the honourable member has raised.

I would say that many regulations and enforcement plans that have been developed in association with those regulations indeed have moved forward. Prime among the actions under CEPA has been the chemicals management plan. That is a major undertaking, as is known. It has been funded by the government. In fact the administrative schedule for moving the risk assessments, the consultation periods, and the responses to those risk assessments has been rolling out, and it will continue to do so.

I cannot add more on the greenhouse gas regulations other than what the minister has said and what I have said about the factors that have to be taken into account in finalizing those regulations, and doing the due diligence, at a time that is very rapidly evolving when there has been a significant economic shift in the context. I can only underline the comment made by the minister, that the process is proceeding and the government is committed to moving ahead with that regulatory framework.

But I will follow up with respect to the specific items that the member has raised in order to ascertain where they are in the process.

• (1045)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

We're just in a short three-minute round.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair. I just want to ask for a couple of quick comments from the officials about carbon capture and storage.

I think back to about two years ago, when Christian Ouellet, John Godfrey, Nathan Cullen, and I were at Globe G8 plus 5 in Berlin. We heard from that delegation how important carbon capture and storage is. We heard that to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, one of the technologies the world was counting on was carbon capture and storage, and they were hoping that 25% of the reductions would come from that. We also heard that Canada is the world leader in that technology.

Since 2006, the government has provided \$275 million to support the development of carbon capture and storage technologies, including \$250 million in Budget 2008, to further support Canadian leadership in clean technology. This budget provides \$1 billion over five years to support clean technology, which includes \$150 million over five years for research, and \$850 million over five years for the development and demonstration of promising technologies, including large-scale carbon capture and storage. This support is expected to generate a total investment in clean technology of at least \$2.5 billion over that period.

Could you make some comments on carbon capture and storage? I'm very excited about it. The world is counting on it, as Mr. Ouellet and I heard clearly. Does Canada remain the world leader on that technology?

Mr. Ian Shugart: I would say a couple of things in regard to carbon capture and storage. First, it is not a substitute for the responsible use of energy. It is not a substitute for the development of alternative sources of energy. It is a technological advance that looks to be promising with respect to the carbon management of fossil fuels.

To that extent, given the energy economy of Canada, the United States, and indeed the world, particularly in the major emerging economies, it is an avenue of technology that is very important to explore.

Canada has some particular assets with respect to CCS technology. I might say, without being in any way an expert in the technology, that as is typical with these things, the technology itself is changing. There are hopes that the direction of the technology in the future may indeed be more oriented to the complete use of the energy in the industrial process and the capture of the carbon stream rather than sequestration in underground caverns, and so on, or, for that matter, ocean sequestration, which is an area that I believe is being explored by the Norwegians.

With respect to Canada's leadership, I think it would be accurate to say that we remain a leader but we are not the only leader in the world. Increasingly, I think the nature of the leadership will be collaborative rather than a foot race for any particular finish line.

• (1050)

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank the deputy minister and his officials for appearing at the committee today. We are going to wrap it up at that and you're dismissed.

We as a committee are going to look at next week, the week when we come back after break week. Also, Mr. Warawa has a motion.

What I am going to suggest as chair is that on Tuesday we meet to do our planning and set our agenda for the spring. We have one Governor in Council appointment that was tabled on January 30. So pursuant to Standing Order 32(6) we can, if we want, call the new Associate Deputy Minister of the Environment, Bob Hamilton.

As well, because Mr. Shugart was appointed deputy minister in June and because of the election, we never had a chance to bring him before the committee. We can't bring him under Standing Order 32 (6), but maybe we can send a friendly invitation and ask him to appear under Standing Order 108(2).

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Chair, you mentioned that you'll be away, and you've asked me to take the chair that week, which I'm pleased to do.

It raises a question and a concern. If we're going to be discussing future business, in which I have a big stake, it makes it very hard for me to vote on future business or suggest witnesses.

I'm wondering whether we should have a steering committee meeting after all or have some arrangement whereby my hands are not effectively tied with respect to my motion, by the fact that I'm chairing in your absence, which I'm pleased to do but I don't want to box myself in either.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, I can hopefully put Mr. Scarpaleggia's mind at ease. I think we need to start preparing an agenda of what we need to do as a committee. I will support his desire to deal with water, as we supported it at our last meeting. It's his passion and I admire that. I look forward to working with him on the water issue. He can put his mind at ease.

As far as the list of witnesses goes, I look forward to working with him. Each of us will provide a list of witnesses. That was the contentious part. I look forward to working with him on that.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I appreciate that, Mr. Warawa. Is it possible there might be some differences of opinion on which witnesses should be invited, and therefore we might have to vote on it in committee? If that happens then I'll basically be outvoted.

The Chair: What I'm going to suggest on witnesses is that we deal with business on Tuesday and ask everyone to forward their witness lists in by the end of that week for whatever studies we're going to start undertaking as we set out the agenda.

The steering committee would meet to go through that witness list when I'm back.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: When you're back, okay.

Ms. Linda Duncan: At what juncture would the steering committee look at the list?

The Chair: We'd probably be doing that the first week of March.

Ms. Linda Duncan: The first week of March. As soon as possible.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, as soon as possible.

The Chair: That's when I'm back.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, in the past at the steering committee we went over the list and then got agreement, got consensus at that steering committee, brought it back, and it was then endorsed by this group. That seemed to work well in the past. There's some give and take. We also left you and the clerk with discretion.

As long as everybody's list is respected, and each party has one person represented at that, it becomes very fair.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: May I make an additional point?

Is it possible, then, given that you and Mr. Warawa sit on the steering committee, for the steering committee to meet the week you're away?

•(1055)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Who would chair?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's really a consensus thing. We could all sit down and have a coffee and discuss this. I don't know if we need a formal chair as opposed to just a discussion.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'd be agreeable.

The Chair: If you guys are okay with that....

Mr. Bigras.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I wouldn't want us to start creating precedents on the committee. I saw, particularly during the last week, that we had informal discussions behind the curtains in the House to try to organize our committee business for the week. I must tell you that I'm not very keen on this idea. This week, it would be all right because we had limits on our time. But I would prefer us to have official meetings, with interpreters so that we can deal with our business more easily, and so that it is done in a fair manner. I wouldn't want us to get into the habit of discussing future business at a table somewhere having a cup of coffee. That's all that I'd like to say.

I understand Mr. Scarpaleggia insofar as it's his proposal. It's clear that he has witnesses he would absolutely like to hear from. I think that we should have a chairman, and it should be you, Mr. Chairman, and I think that you should chair the meeting when we are discussing future business within the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure.

[English]

The Chair: I kind of agree with you, Mr. Bigras. I don't like having these fluid agendas. We need to get things set and solid, notice properly given so that we have the witnesses we desire to have at those meetings. We need to respect timeframes and we need to respect our clerk, our analysts, and the technical staff in setting meetings. Once we get things booked, I like to stick to them.

Ms. Duncan, and then Mr. Watson.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Monsieur Bigras makes a valid point. Regrettably, I'm the only one of that group that cannot follow a conversation in French. I don't think it's fair that he should have to speak English, and if you speak French, I'm not going to be able to contribute. But I'm hoping this doesn't end up being a terrible delay.

I'm sorry that I don't have those language skills, but I really hope we can expedite that subcommittee review, because I don't want to have this whole group having to do that. I think it's too large a group. So if we can move it up to the last week of February, if that's at all possible.... But if the earliest is the first week of March, let's not drag that out. We need to agree on the witnesses. We need to get going and do the work on Mr. Scarpaleggia's motion.

The Chair: Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would remind the committee that we all accepted a routine motion as to the composition of steering committee and also that we would have it as a mechanism. That includes the chair. It also has a formal responsibility, which is to report to the larger body.

I'm not sure that mechanism would exist in an informal meeting, Mr. Chair, and I think it's important for the broader committee and those of us who aren't on the steering committee to be able to receive something in terms of a report to digest and then vote on.

I'm in favour of ensuring that we have a steering committee meeting as opposed to something less formal.

The Chair: My interpretation of the routine motion we made is that it doesn't stop the larger committee from meeting in camera to discuss future business. That's what I'm suggesting we do on Tuesday. We would have a meeting on the Tuesday we come back in order to deal with the agenda and set that agenda, and then all committee members get to have input on that.

On the issue of witnesses, if you want to deal with witnesses that day, that's the committee's will, but the suggestion has been made that we'll deal with witnesses when I'm back the first week of March.

Mr. Jeff Watson: My comments were directed in that direction with respect to the establishment of witnesses, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's fine, but can we agree? First of all, are steering committee meetings interpreted?

A voice: They are.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: They are? Okay, well let's do it on March 2, then, as soon as we get back, rather than the fourth and so on.

[Translation]

If we can have a meeting of the steering committee on Monday, March 2, so that we could report back to the committee on the third, that would be fine by me.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. We can do it just before QP or just after. We'll probably need about an hour, I would think.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Excuse me. I'm actually on House duty that day, but I'll see if I can switch.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I think they'll allow you to. Our whip allows us to go to committee meetings, so I—

• (1100)

Ms. Linda Duncan: I just have to make sure I'm replaced. I'm all for expediting this.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: If it's before QP, it would be possible. After QP, we have meetings.

The Chair: So before QP would be preferable?

Mr. Mark Warawa: On the second—

The Chair: On the second?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Yes, for the subcommittee, and we'll have our witness list.

Will it be distributed through the clerk, or do we just bring our lists at that time?

The Chair: No. I would suggest that members still forward to the clerk their suggested witnesses and to do that in the next two weeks so that steering committee can sit down on March 2 and go through it.

Ms. Linda Duncan: What time, sir?

The Chair: I'm going to call it for one o'clock.

Ms. Linda Duncan: It can't be in the morning?

The Chair: I usually travel on Monday mornings.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Is it for an hour?

The Chair: Yes, from one o'clock to two o'clock. That's what I'm suggesting. That should be enough time.

Okay. We'll do that. Do I need a motion to adopt this for Thursday?

A voice: Yes, you do.

The Chair: If everybody is in agreement, I've asked for a motion that we ask Mr. Bob Hamilton to appear before committee pursuant to Standing Order 32(6).

Mr. Jeff Watson: So moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The last piece of business we have, Mr. Warawa, is that you have a notice of motion.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm going to defer dealing with that until we get direction from the House.

The Chair: Okay. I think it was circulated, though. Everybody has that motion on species at risk, but we're going to sit on it until—

Mr. Mark Warawa: We may deal with it on Tuesday, at our next meeting.

The Chair: Okay, but we need an order of reference from the House.

It's 11 o'clock. Can I have a motion to adjourn?

Mr. Jeff Watson: So moved.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Watson.

We're out of here.

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 Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.