



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

ENVI • NUMBER 052 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, March 8, 2011

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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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• (0850)

[English]

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), we're studying the supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year 2010-11, and votes 25c and 30c under Environment, referred to the committee on Tuesday, February 8.

We're pleased to be joined today by the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Peter Kent. Welcome, Minister.

Assisting him today, from the Department of the Environment we have Deputy Minister Paul Boothe; from the Parks Canada Agency we have Alan Latourelle, who is the chief executive officer; and from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency we have Elaine Feldman, who is the president.

I welcome all of you to the table.

Minister, I'll turn it over to you to bring us your opening comments.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your invitation to speak to the committee this morning.

I'm pleased to be here today to speak to the supplementary estimates (C), but I will as well address the main estimates.

This is the first time I have had the pleasure of appearing before the committee since being named minister for Environment Canada, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, and Parks Canada, and I'm looking forward to working with all of you in the committee in the days ahead.

As you know, the position of environment minister carries great opportunity, the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to preserving Canada's spectacular natural legacy.

This government is keenly interested in striking the right balance between economic renewal and environmental protection. We have put in place a plan that is already reducing greenhouse gas emissions, a plan that takes a strategic sector-by-sector approach, a plan that focuses on real, measurable progress. And this plan, members, is already working. In partnership with provinces, territories, and others, we have already taken actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 65 megatonnes, bringing us to about one-quarter of the way to meeting our target of reducing our emissions to 607 megatonnes by 2020.

Yes, there is much still to do, but over the past five years a solid foundation has been laid. Together with our provincial and territorial partners and others, we've made significant progress in a number of areas, including establishing new standards for emissions from passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks, and we are in the process of doing the same for heavy vehicles; announcing standards that will phase out the use of dirty coal to generate electricity, another major emitter; signing the Copenhagen accord, an international agreement overseen by the United Nations that inscribes the greenhouse gas reduction targets of all major GHG emitters and establishes a framework that enhances the transparency of all parties' mitigation actions; providing \$400 million in new and additional climate financing in 2010—the largest-ever contribution by Canada to support international efforts on climate change; and introducing aggressive new environmental enforcement rules, which have just passed into law.

With respect to climate change—one of the most serious environmental dangers facing the world today—we have made clear commitments and taken significant action. Along with the United States, we've pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. It is, I agree, an ambitious target. To achieve that, we've developed a comprehensive plan to achieve real emission reductions in the short, medium, and long terms, while at the same time maintaining Canada's economic competitiveness and capacity to create jobs.

In some key areas Canada has strategically aligned its policy with that of our closest neighbour and largest trading partner, the United States. Although this approach is by no means a boilerplate environmental solution, in some sectors the highly integrated nature of the North American economy makes it the most practical and efficient approach. This builds on a long and successful history of collaboration between our two countries. In particular, I would note that 20 years ago this month Canada and the United States signed the air quality agreement. At that time, acid rain was causing serious damage to our lakes and our ecosystems on both sides of the border, and smog was a serious threat to the air we breathe. Working together, Canada and the U.S. have cut in half the emissions that lead to acid rain, and cut by one-third our smog-causing emissions in the transboundary region established under the agreement.

On the transportation front, which is responsible for about 22% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, we've worked closely with the United States on 2011 vehicle emission standards. That makes sense because of the seamless cross-border characteristics of the automotive industry. We will continue to work together on even tougher standards for 2017 and beyond.

In the case of electricity, however, we're taking our own path. The United States relies on coal to generate about half its electric power. The United States has 650 coal-fired plants, compared to Canada's 51, which means we're in a better position to pursue an independent regulatory course to phase out coal plants and to become a world leader in clean electricity.

To repeat, this approach reflects our commitment to realistic and pragmatic policies, aligning with the U.S. where it makes sense, as in the case of transportation, and pursuing a unique path, such as electricity, where it does not. The government is also taking action to ensure that the economic benefits of developing the oil sands are balanced by a strong, clear environmental mandate. To that end, we have accepted the recommendations of an independent advisory panel of scientists who reviewed water monitoring practices in the area around the oil sands, specifically the Athabasca River and connected waterways.

We are currently developing a technical plan based on those recommendations. Working with Alberta and other stakeholders, including aboriginal communities, environmental groups, and industry, the scope of our plan will expand to include air quality monitoring, plant and animal habitats.

Especially at a time when oil prices are historically high and the incentive to ramp up production is strong, there is a need for clear, strong leadership on this file, and we are providing just that.

● (0855)

As for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Mr. Chair, our focus for the upcoming year will be on delivering high-quality environmental assessments on major projects and playing a lead role in shaping the future of federal environmental assessment.

We're also working to ensure that aboriginal people are consulted on environmental assessments affecting them. This is particularly important, of course, because the agency, on behalf of the Government of Canada, is responsible for encouraging and supporting aboriginal participation in the environmental assessment process.

In addition, I would also like to add to the actions that Parks Canada is taking to establish more and more protected wilderness areas. These areas are known to be natural buffers that protect our planet against the impacts of climate change, such as droughts and floods. They also provide safe havens for plants and animals that help nature respond to changing conditions. These past four years alone, we have taken steps that will add more than 133,000 square kilometres to the existing lands and waters administered by Parks Canada. That's a 48% increase, or an additional protected area equivalent to the size of a country such as Greece.

I would like to turn now to the estimates documents that are before Parliament for consideration. There are, as you know, two main documents: the supplementary (C) estimates for the 2010-11 fiscal year, and the main estimates for the 2011-12 fiscal year. We will be looking at these estimates for my portfolio, including Environment Canada, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, and Parks Canada.

Let's start with the supplementary (C) estimates. These estimates are the final requests for adjustments to our funding allocations for

this fiscal year. For Environment Canada, this fiscal year started with a request for \$1.1 billion in planned expenditures. This was a 10% increase over last year.

The first thing you will probably notice about these estimates is that they are not seeking additional funds. Rather, they are seeking to transfer \$4.7 million to other departments.

The majority of these funds will be directed to departments as part of Canada's climate change financing. This money comes from Environment Canada's \$5 million share of the \$400 million that was approved to support mitigation and adaptation in developing countries, as outlined in the Copenhagen accord.

For Parks Canada, the supplementary estimates (C) are requesting to redirect \$5 million from program expenditures to the new parks and historic sites account. This transfer would cover additional costs associated with new national parks and national marine conservation areas.

Mr. Chair, let's turn now to the main estimates—the first request for departmental funding for the next fiscal year.

Environment Canada is requesting \$872 million in these main estimates. This amount is a portion of the funding that the department will request over the course of the fiscal year. We expect further adjustments will be made to our funding through the supplementary estimates tabled later in the year.

As you all know, departmental expenditures can change from year to year. This is especially true for a regulatory department like mine, where a portion of the funding has been temporary in nature and is subject to further scrutiny before renewal. This fiscal year, a number of our programs based on temporary funding will expire. This does not mean that programs such as the chemicals management plan, the species at risk, the clean air agenda, and the federal contaminated sites action plan will end.

In this context, and as reflected in earlier reports on planning and priorities, these programs are following the renewal process. The extension or enhancement of their temporary funding is subject to government decisions. Once approved, funding amounts will be included in the supplementary estimates to be tabled later this year.

As for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, the 2011-12 main estimates propose \$30 million in funding for the agency. This request is \$1 million higher than was requested in the main estimates for the last fiscal year. The agency is seeking this additional funding to fulfill its additional responsibility for aboriginal consultation during environmental assessments by federal review panels.

The 2011-12 main estimates for Parks Canada, on the other hand, total \$690.5 million. The net decrease you may note with these estimates is largely attributable to the end of funding under Canada's economic action plan. These estimates also reflect some reductions that have been made to reduce the rate of growth in Parks Canada's operating expenditures.

• (0900)

Mr. Chairman, let me close once again by thanking the committee for this opportunity to join you, and for your ongoing work on behalf of Canadians. As a new minister I value your insights and welcome your suggestions. I look forward to working with all of you to lighten our footprint on this planet and preserve our incredible natural legacy for future generations.

I'd now be delighted to answer your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Kent. We appreciate your opening comments.

We'll open it up to our first round of questioning. I'm going to be judicious in making sure we stay to our seven minutes, to allow as many members as possible to ask the minister questions in the time we have him before the committee.

Mr. Kennedy, you have the floor.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Minister, for coming today.

I appreciate that you mentioned the main estimates. We want to talk with you about them, and probably at greater length. We'll have you back as well.

You said that supplementary estimates would bring back a large part of your budget. Your main estimates are 20% less than the main estimates last year. You couched some of that as temporary cancellations. Can you tell us that all the money that is missing will come back at budget time, as opposed to later on in the year? This is a disruption of programs, most of which are serving a purpose.

Do you want to identify for us which ones you don't expect to come back? In other words, which ones are you not currently advocating for renewal? Can you identify them for us, so at least the public will know what you are offering up by way of cuts? Are there some specific indications you can give us?

Hon. Peter Kent: Sure. Thank you very much.

I would clarify that these have not been terminated. The programs, temporary in nature, came to the end of their projected timeline, which is March 31. As I said, some of these were under the economic action plan. Others were programs that are in the renewal process now. I can give you the details of those—

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Minister, maybe I didn't give you the.... Can you tell us which programs are going to come back with the budget this year? Be very specific, if you would. Out of \$140 million cut on climate change and clean air, how much of that do you propose is coming back with the budget in a couple of weeks?

Hon. Peter Kent: Well, you'll have to wait for the budget for the detail, but that is one of the sunsetted programs that we expect to continue and have entered into the renewal process—

• (0905)

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Now, there's a big difference between continuing, not being terminated, and being cut. In the generality that you're able to give us right now, are you able to assure us that substantially all of the program is coming back? Is half of it being cut? Is there something you'd like to give us by way of guidance about what we should expect?

Hon. Peter Kent: You'll understand that I can't give detail of the budget that will be read to Parliament on March 22. What I can tell you is that the logic behind temporary programs is to ensure that rather than having continuing programs that may have shortcomings and flaws and corrections required, the sunsetting period allows for evaluation, reassessment, and renewal. In that regard, as I said, the clean air agenda, the chemical management plan, and the contaminated sites action plan will undergo the renewal process.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: The renewal process that you're talking about may involve, you suggest, some cuts to those programs. Is that correct?

Hon. Peter Kent: Well, no, I don't suggest that; what I say is that I can't discuss detail until the budget reveals the government's plan for the year ahead.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Minister, you do appreciate that this is our chance to understand where your emphasis is. You're the advocate for the environment in terms of spending.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: I think we're wanting to know what you—

Hon. Peter Kent: As you said, I will be invited back, and I'd be glad to come back and talk about those details.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Okay.

Let's talk about one program that bridges both...of what we're talking about, and that is parks. You want to transfer \$5 million into the parks fund, and you're doing that with only a few days left in the year.

Are you going to spend that money, or is it just going to go into a bit of a slush fund that will sit there?

Hon. Peter Kent: Well, for the answer on the detail of that.... But no, I think that's an unfair characterization. Money can be spent up until the end of the fiscal year.

As CEO Latourelle will tell you now, it's going to be well spent.

Mr. Alan Latourelle (Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): The transfer to the new parks and sites account is for expenditures that we're planning to have carried out by the end of March of this year. It's mostly for new parks that we've put in place—in Nahanni, for example, with the expansion in terms of the visitor centre in Fort Simpson.

We've cash-managed that so far. This will officially transfer it to the national new sites—

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: So the money is already spent and the transfer will pay for expenditures already made?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: That's.... Well, the—

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: If you look at the behaviour of this fund over the last few years, you proposed to spend as much as \$25 million just two years ago and you only spent \$3.5 million.

I'm asking—just expressly, because this fund has some special permission—is the money going to the fund or is it going to be spent and used by the end of the year? That's really the specific question, and then I have a follow-up question.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: With regard to the fund and the new parks and sites account, the whole concept behind it is to make sure that as we develop our new parks and put them in place, we have the funding secured in a central account. We—

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: So it's going to the account.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: The account will then rise to about \$25 million. I guess we'll have to wait to see what the plan is to spend that.

As well, a number of promises have been made. The fund is listed against several of those promises for national parks, national historic sites, as well as the national marine conservation areas. What is the real cost of developing those sites? Has that been tabled before? Can we see that?

You can appreciate that to an outsider it looks like there's no plan to develop those new parks that have been promised when the only money that goes towards it is the money found at the end of the year. It goes into the fund, and the fund then doesn't get spent sometimes.

How much does it take? Can you forecast for us...? Development of these parks has been promised. What is the cost? How much more money...? These are new areas that require development. All kinds of capital and operation expenditures will accrue from that. Can you put forward for us today, or shortly afterwards, how much these new commitments will take? We could then compare that with the money that's been set aside in the fund, which has been roughly the same amount for the last several years.

So is there an amount of money that you can tell us globally, or can you specifically give us an amount for those parks that are promised and still outstanding?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We have a set model for new parks in terms of the capital investment for putting the parks into operation and in terms of the ongoing operation of those parks. We have two models, one for southern Canada and one for northern Canada, because there are different realities. For example, in northern Canada we will invest \$12 million in capital investment and then approximately \$2.5 million a year in operations.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Is that globally for all of the new parks you're talking about?

What we want to know is how much it will cost to make these parks that have been promised, some of which haven't been started yet. Is there a timeframe, capital, and an operating plan you can table

for us today so that we can see the cost of these promised new parks very specifically? Is that available today?

● (0910)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I can provide that to the committee.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Kennedy, your time has expired. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Bigras, you have the floor.

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

First, good morning, Mr. Minister. Welcome to the committee and best of luck in your new responsibilities.

Based on what you said to Mr. Kennedy, I understand that you cannot go into detail. But it seems to me that it is your duty, as Minister of the Environment, to protect the budgets available to you.

When we look at the main estimates that were submitted, we see a reduction of 20% expected for your department. It seems to me that the Minister of the Environment is not very active. It seems to me that he is a ghost Minister of the Environment, obedient and at the service of the Minister of Finance, who is prepared to make cuts in his department. You can understand that people expect the Minister of the Environment to be proactive and to protect the budgets placed at his disposal.

When I looked at the main estimates, I was very much interested in the Meteorological Service of Canada, among others, and in everything having to do to the deterioration of the climatological networks.

I don't know if you know that an Environment Canada report, issued by your department in June 2008, stated that Environment Canada's abilities were compromised in recent years because of the collection, interpretation and dissemination of information on the state of our national climate system. Major errors slipped in.

Environment Canada's clients, both internal and external, cannot get the information they are looking for. So I went and looked at what was planned in the main estimates. In fact, there were some contributions. I had a nice surprise.

But after I saw what you did with these contributions and the funding that you had been given, I was disillusioned. I was disillusioned when school principals and guide and scout leaders called me up and told me that, with that money, you were sending weather radios to the various people involved so that schools and guide and scout leaders could "monitor the broadcast for weather information including warnings."

While you have cut back on Environment Canada's meteorological services in recent years, how can you now justify an expense in the order of \$888,000 to help school principals who have taken your device, put it on a shelf and never used it? How can you justify such an expense now?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

I will start with your original question. Let me assure you that as Minister of the Environment I will be a fierce champion of those programs that have proven effective over the course of recent years—for example, the program on air quality, the chemical management program, and the contaminated sites programs. But I can't divulge my cabinet conversations with the Minister of Finance on the worthiness of these programs. You'll simply have to wait until the budget on March 22. I will be glad to come back and discuss exactly what the budget contains and what the supplementary estimates will be for these important programs in my department.

With regard to the weather operations, the Government of Canada is committed to providing a world-class weather service, and we are recognized around the world for the quality of that service. That does not say there are not improvements that can be made.

With regard to your point on the report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, he revealed a number of risks, a number of challenges, a number of shortcomings with regard to a severe weather warning capacity. We accept those recommendations and we are moving to improve them.

We are also moving in Canada's north to improve the weather services provided there. We are working to provide the north with the same sort of high-quality forecasting and warning service, weather alert service, that Canadians in the south enjoy. With the diminishing ice in the Arctic, and the fact that more and more commercial vessels as well as coastal vessels are in need of accurate and safe forecasting, and in light of our commitment to fulfilling our international obligations on navigable waters, I made an announcement just a couple of weeks ago in Yellowknife that we will invest in improved technology there.

• (0915)

The Chair: Monsieur Bigras, before you continue with your supplemental, you have a prop on the table that's going to have to be removed. The rules of the House apply in the committee as well.

Hon. Peter Kent: With regard to the specific program that you highlighted, I'm not familiar with it. I will find out for you and discuss with you the parameters of that program.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I invite you to try it out. I would be curious to find out if any schools in east or west Montreal would be able to use this kind of device.

You told us that Canada is a leader in meteorology. But your own internal report indicates the opposite. The report establishes that the Meteorological Service of Canada is having trouble achieving the international standards of the World Meteorological Organization. We are not a leader; no, we are losing our role as a leader, which is worrisome.

You spoke about the observation that needs to be done in the north. I don't know if you are familiar with the PEARL observatory, which is currently looking for funding and is losing its funding simply because your government has cut back on funding to the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences.

You have cut back on funding to scientists, you have cut back on funding in your department. You cannot provide reliable information on weather and climate. So how can you say today that you are able to meet the objectives with regard to adapting to climate change when you are cutting back on funding to researchers and to climate change programs? You are doing everything to ensure that Canada not only does not achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets, but also cannot adapt to climate change.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bigras' time is finished, so you can give a final answer.

Hon. Peter Kent: Our meteorological service is recognized, despite the tasks and challenges that the commissioner recommended, as a world-class meteorological service. There are challenges. The department continues to prioritize its resources to address new challenges and shortcomings as identified. We'll discuss in further questioning our commitment to climate change and climate change science.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Duncan, you have the floor.

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

I welcome you and your officials, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I want to go first to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. I noted that in the main estimates they are slated to have only a 3% increase, despite the fact that \$400,000 is being dedicated to litigation.

Now, that litigation, as we're all aware, is because the agency and the Government of Canada are being taken to court because of failure to deliver on the responsibilities under the CEAA legislation. I'm wondering, given the opening up of the Arctic, all of the issues surrounding the oil sands, of course, which as the minister you've inherited, and the concerns raised by the Auditor General about the Northwest Territories and the failure to do proper cumulative impact assessments, why there isn't a more substantial increase.

Do you anticipate, going forward, that there will be a greater infusion of dollars for that agency?

Hon. Peter Kent: Well, again, I request your patience for another couple of weeks for budget 2011-12, and I'm sure that you will find items within that budget that will address part of your questions.

But with regard to the balance of the budgeting, the way it's intended to be spent, and the impact of litigation on those expenditures, I'd perhaps invite Ms. Feldman to offer some insight.

Mrs. Elaine Feldman (President, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency): Thank you very much.

As you've noticed, we are going to have an increase in our budget for next year. It's increasing by a million dollars, to \$30 million, which I realize doesn't compare with the budgets of Parks Canada or Environment Canada, but for us, all of the money is important.

In terms of litigation, we have really no control over the amount of funding that's required for litigation. It depends on the cases that are brought against the agency.

• (0920)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you.

Hon. Peter Kent: If I may add to that, with regard to the environmental assessments, as you are aware, there is a cost recovery for environmental assessments that pertain to proposals in the extraction industry, for example, or pipeline construction. So the Environmental Assessment Agency I think is a very prudent manager of the resources available.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

With all due respect, I won't belabour this one, but I think the agency and the government do have control over whether or not they have to incur costs in going to court by not complying with CEAA.

Climate change has been mentioned by some of my other colleagues, and a great concern of the public—and I'm hearing from them—is your mentioning not to be concerned about the 60% cuts to climate and air pollution because money might come in the budget. People are deeply concerned about that.

I noted in your speech, Mr. Minister, that you reference liberally in all of your speeches the Copenhagen agreement, but you don't seem to want to mention the Cancun agreement. So my question to you would be, where in the budget can we see the resources for delivering on the promised low-carbon national strategy in the Cancun agreement that Canada signed on to? Who will deliver that and who is to be consulted? Is that being budgeted for?

Hon. Peter Kent: Certainly we are signatories to the Cancun agreement, and that is the framework we will proceed on as the years come, and which was revitalized, and a recommitment was made by all the signatories in Cancun. I think Canadians can be proud of the role played by the then minister of the department and the Government of Canada in the key role of engaging some of the large emitters to commit to the objectives and the targets of the original Cancun agreement.

The Copenhagen accord and our inscribed commitment to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by 17% from the base year of 2005 by 2020 is a commitment that we will fulfill in a variety of ways. We are doing it, as I explained—and as I know you know—by regulation as we go forward. I will be announcing very shortly, for example, new regulations for the coal-fired electricity generating sector, and then we will move on to other large emitters sector by sector as we go around the wheel.

We address transportation first because that is the largest single sector in terms of emitting greenhouse gases, but our commitment is there, and we have the funds to achieve those commitments. As I said in my opening remarks, we have already taken actions that will move us about a quarter of the way to achieving the 2020 targets.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Minister, I have to reiterate concerns being raised by a major industry in Alberta, the coal-fired industry, and by the Alberta Minister of Energy, who are both remonstrating that they can't move forward on actions on reducing carbon until the Government of Canada puts a price on carbon. I guess my question again is, where will the action come from? Is it going to come from

your department? Is it coming from the Department of Natural Resources? There is a commitment by this country that we will deliver a national low-carbon energy strategy. I don't see anything in the estimates working on that, in either the Department of Natural Resources or Environment Canada. Maybe we'll see something in the budget. People are concerned that they're not being consulted.

You have given a number of speeches recently that you're going to be taking a lot more action on water. I notice in the main estimates that water is cut by 9%. Of course you're giving us hope that maybe some money might come back. You've made mention of the Athabasca River, and you've made mention, I think, of the Great Lakes, but I don't see mention of the Peace-Athabasca agreement, which is of course 20 years old now. The deputy minister of the Northwest Territories raised great concern; they're waiting for federal leadership. We're also waiting for leadership on Lake Wabamun. We suffered a massive spill on the lake and major impacts from the coal-fired industry. So I wonder if you could elaborate a bit more on what your plans are, given the cuts in water.

• (0925)

The Chair: Ms. Duncan, your time has expired. I'll let the minister respond.

Hon. Peter Kent: You've left me quite a list of questions to respond to.

I will say again that while Canada until recently was willing to examine the cap-and-trade principles, it is now clear that in the short term at least the United States is not going to that. It's a very thin market. We admire what the western initiative has done—some Canadian provinces, the state of California. But for the time being, we're moving forward quite enthusiastically—and I'll share more information if you wish—with the regulatory tools at hand, which allow us to work through those sectors. I've spoken with the power-generating companies in Alberta, and very shortly we'll be revealing the regulatory challenges they will need to deal with. We're doing it very sympathetically. We don't want to strand capital. We want to ensure that across the country, where there are coal-fired electricity-generating plants that will need to either convert to other power sources—natural gas—or use carbon capture and storage to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, that they will.... Everyone has to play their role.

With regard to the water monitoring, in the next couple of weeks you can expect that I will report to Parliament and to Canadians regarding the implementation plan for the water-monitoring system, which was committed to by my predecessor in December. We accepted all of the recommendations of the expert panel. The plan has been developed and will undergo peer review, and we will implement it in partnership with the Province of Alberta and with stakeholders and the industry itself.

With regard to the wider....

The Chair: Minister Kent, I'm going to have to interrupt.

Hon. Peter Kent: I'll just add, addressing the wider concerns, I've met with ministers in the Northwest Territories. They do have downstream concerns, not only from the Athabasca River basin but with regard to the Mackenzie Valley, downstream from the Bennett Dam. We are working with the Government of the Northwest Territories, as with the other provinces and territory, to address these very legitimate and real concerns.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Armstrong, we have you batting cleanup in the first round.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you very much, Minister, for being here. I enjoyed your presentation.

As you can tell from questions from the opposition, both here and in the House in recent days, there seems to be a lot of undue concern over estimates. We know that estimates are really the first step in the budgetary planning process. So we look forward to coming back after the budget is brought down for some more specific questions, and we're excited about the fact that you're going to be able to return to us.

I'm wondering if you could enlighten this committee as to some of the good work that's been done by Environment Canada and some of the new initiatives in place to help protect Canada's environment.

Hon. Peter Kent: Where do I start? I have an entire book here that is full of good-news stories regarding Environment Canada, across the parks system, the meteorological service, as we discussed. There are some significant and very real challenges to be resolved. But there is a great deal of good news in terms of addressing the responsible and sustainable development of our resource industry, and the protections, regulations, oversight, and assessments that play into that.

I was at the Hamilton harbour yesterday to announce what has gone on, what is going on, and what will go on in terms of our commitment to the Great Lakes action plan in addressing areas of concern in terms of required remedial action. This is part of our agreement with the United States, the Great Lakes water quality agreement. There are still significant challenges to be resolved with regard to municipal waste water treatment and invasive species of fish, for example, into the waters of our Great Lakes and the boundary waters.

In Hamilton, the number one area of concern, of course, is a phenomenon known as Randle Reef. That is offshore from a large steel plant originally owned by Stelco, which is now owned by U.S. Steel. I'm encouraging our partners, the province, the municipalities of the area, and other stakeholders—Halton Region—to start the remedial action that will clean up the worst hot spot in terms of an environmental area of concern in Canada. It's very similar to the action that will be required on the Sydney tar ponds, for example.

In terms of other good news, certainly the expansion of our national parks and protected areas is significant, and it's something Canadians should be proud of. We've also worked with those who live and work and operate businesses adjacent to protected areas.

I met with the Cattlemen's Association a couple of weeks ago, and we reviewed the significant environmental benefits that have come from Parks Canada allowing cattle herds to graze in Grasslands

National Park. That has helped to restore the natural habitats and the balanced environmental cycles that used to come when the buffalo roamed, and others.

Again, we are aware of dire projections with regard to climate change in the Canadian Arctic, and we are working with both Canadian stakeholders and our neighbours on the Arctic Council to ensure that species at risk, species that face adaptation to changing realities, are protected, and where necessary recovery programs are put into place.

● (0930)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I'm glad to hear you talk about the Sydney tar ponds. As you know, I'm from Nova Scotia, and that's been a huge issue for years. It's one that our government has taken on, and I think it's going to be a huge success story for that area of the country.

Also in Atlantic Canada, we have a huge opportunity to produce clean, green, perpetual energy, with the Lower Churchill Falls development. That's going to be a big benefit, not only to Newfoundland and Labrador, but also Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces. Do you have any opinion on that project? Do you have any hopes that it can help to get us off coal, particularly in Nova Scotia?

Hon. Peter Kent: Certainly the federal government has been following those proposals with interest. As you know, the proposal for the Lower Churchill project is now being assessed by a joint review panel. There are a variety of proposals, which we've heard discussed in the House, regarding how financing may or may not be arranged. But because the approval is before the courts at the moment, I would discreetly suggest that I stop there.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Do you want to share your time? You still have one minute and 15 seconds left.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I'll share it with Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I'm very interested in a project that I think your department is undertaking on watersheds in the Lake Simcoe area. That project is working with multiple stakeholders, agricultural producers, conservation groups, community groups, and towns and municipalities. Can you elaborate on that model and how successful it's been?

Hon. Peter Kent: I'd be delighted, and thank you for the question.

In Lake Simcoe, as in other lakes across the country—Lake Winnipeg, for example, in your home province—Environment Canada has been engaged in addressing waste water challenges, with the challenges of phosphorous and other chemicals in the lake, both with the restoration of aquatic plant life and the restoration of native species of fish. It is a continuing program. It is a program that has shown great success and great achievement. In a similar way, the wetlands at the end of Hamilton Harbour, which had been overtaken by an invasive species of carp and where environmental degradation had reduced this marsh to almost a lost status, has been recovered, and is recovering. For example, as the aquatic vegetation is restored and as fish stock are returning, there is now a plan to eventually bring sturgeon back to that area.

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

We're going to start on our second round, with five minutes per member.

Ms. Murray, you have the floor.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you.

Mr. Minister, thank you for being here, and your officials. We appreciate the opportunity.

I have to say that I was disappointed that you used most of your time talking about main estimates and generalities when this request to come to the committee was to focus on the supplementary (C) estimates. Then, when members asked you questions regarding the main estimates, invariably, the answer was, "Sorry, I can't give you any details". It does beg the question, what is the purpose of this committee session?

Hon. Peter Kent: I come at your request. The timing is unfortunate with regard to the detail of the main estimates and the future supplementary requests. As I said, I'd be glad to come back.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I do have a specific question about the supplementary (C) estimates. I am compelled to comment on your remarks that Canadians can be proud of this government's action on climate change, when in fact my experience on the ground and internationally is that Canadians are embarrassed and appalled by this government's lack of progress on climate change.

I note that Environment Canada's own website says that measures by federal and provincial governments will reduce greenhouse gases by 65 megatonnes, which is one-quarter of the reductions needed by the year 2020 to achieve the government's own targets.

Hon. Peter Kent: Action has already been taken; regulations are already in effect.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Yes. Any actions committed to—

Hon. Peter Kent: There are nine years to go, with more regulations coming.

Ms. Joyce Murray: We're talking just over eight years away, Mr. Minister.

I'll also remark that international organizations have given Canada the fossil of the year award. The last two were in Cancun and in Copenhagen. It was not just because Canada wasn't doing its share

under this government, but because it was undermining other countries trying to do their share.

Lastly, on the subject of climate change, having personally been at the Copenhagen meetings, Canadian negotiators were banned, were disinvited from being part of the discussions to generate the Copenhagen accord simply because of the lack of cooperation and Canada's bad reputation under the Conservative government. It's a sorry story.

My question is actually on the supplementary (C) estimates.

Hon. Peter Kent: Okay, but I'll address those issues as well.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Why is the minister cutting the vehicle scrappage program, a program that takes old polluting cars off the road—

Hon. Peter Kent: The "retire your ride" program.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Presumably, it increases demand for clean cars and lower greenhouse-gas-emitting cars, stimulates industry, creates important jobs for Canada, and is a program that, if it were improved, could be as effective as some of the similar programs in the U.S. and Germany.

Hon. Peter Kent: Let me start at the beginning of your intervention, and you won't be surprised if I disagree wholeheartedly with your characterization. After 13 years of Liberal lip service to climate change and international remediation efforts, our government stands in stark contrast in the actions we have taken and the commitment we have made and continue to make.

With regard to your characterization that the 65-megatonne reduction is all that will happen between now and 2020, I would return to the fact that we have started with the transportation sector. Last year it was with automobiles and light trucks, and with renewable fuels to gasoline and to diesel. I'm about to bring in new regulations for heavy trucks on the road. Eventually—in the not-too-distant future, not too many months down the road—there will be regulations for off-road new heavy vehicles.

With regard to vehicle greenhouse gas reduction and emission controls, the first round will end in 2014 for automobiles and light trucks. There will be even more stringent requirements in those last five years. But if you take a look at that 65 megatonnes, that is what is now forecast to be achieved by 2020. That does not take into account the significant reductions that we will achieve in the coal-fired electricity generating sector, in other heavy emitting sectors, or the reduction, for example, of private and commercial and governmental residences across the country, which are in themselves large contributors to greenhouse gases and where remedial action is taking place and will take place.

The “retire your ride” program was a largely successful program, which was not intended, as some have suggested, as a stimulus to the automotive industry but as an environmental targeted program to reduce the number of pre-1995 polluting vehicles on the road. In that sense, the retire your ride program provided a modest incentive, \$300, which was enough of an incentive to remove more than 126,000 vehicles from the road, and prevent the emission of some 4,000 tonnes of noxious fumes into the atmosphere. Newer vehicles of course meet higher standards now, and will meet even higher standards under our new regulations, and there are incentives from a number of quarters to move to electrical vehicles. I've talked to some of the scientists in my department, as well as to those in Hydro-Québec, which, for example, has a world-leading initiative in lithium battery storage, for more efficient storage of electricity, which will enable and encourage the auto sector to move into that area.

A couple of weeks ago I met with ambassadors from the United States and Canada, who met with the automotive sector, with the major manufacturers here in Canada, who are themselves committed to cleaner and leaner vehicles, including all hybrids and electrical vehicles. We are already considering the sorts of common standards that will be required for the charging and the electrical standards to be met by those vehicles.

• (0940)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Woodworth, you have the floor.

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

Welcome, Minister. It's great to see you at this table. We're all very excited and interested, and we're anticipating your work in this role.

There is a particular area of interest for me. It's in a way related to the climate change issue, but of course climate change is a complex matter, and our government is well aware of that. In particular I note that the presentation you gave mentioned Canada's part in assisting with climate change adaptation. We know of course that Canada is responsible for only 2% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, but that around the world the need for adaptation and mitigation of climate change is very pressing in some areas.

I would like to ask you about our government's commitment to fast-start financing of these adaptation initiatives and the degree of importance that our government attaches to investing heavily in adaptation plans.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

Again, in our continuing dialogue, colleagues, and certainly in continuing discussions and debates, on some occasions, with environmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, Canadians at large, and our international friends and partners, we need to conduct these discussions on the basis of facts and science. Sometimes we get somewhat derailed when there are exaggerations, misrepresentations, or deliberate untruths made to score points on one side or another of these arguments.

As we go forward, it is always relevant to remember that Canada does in fact contribute barely 2% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. If I may remind the committee again, transportation and

the coal-fired electricity generation sectors are the largest contributors of those gases. Some other sectors receive more domestic and international coverage, but they are minor contributors to total greenhouse gas emissions.

I can't say this enough: Canada is a leader in the global science effort to address the phenomenon known as climate change. We are an active participant and contributor to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As my colleagues will know, recent scientific results published in a variety of highly respected scientific journals have illustrated the significant contribution the scientists at Environment Canada are contributing on the world stage. They have also shown Canada's commitment to addressing the challenges of climate change and to encouraging the largest emitters to reform and remediate and adapt, because adaptation is a large part, certainly, of Environment Canada concerns and programs.

For example, in the Canadian Arctic, some damage that has been done and some challenges that need to be addressed cannot be fully corrected. With regard to plants, animals, and the human beings who live in those parts of Canada and in affected regions around the world, there needs to be funding and support in terms of adaptation.

With regard to that, the \$400 million commitment made to the fast-start program, to which money is already flowing, is being applied to developing countries and to places such as small island states, which are already seeing rising sea levels. In some extreme cases they will require the eventual relocation of populations to other islands or higher ground.

You have seen in the supplementary estimates (C) the redirection of funding to CIDA for application in Haiti, where a large part of the environmental remediation is going to require reforestation on a scale that is probably unprecedented anywhere in the world.

The commitment is there. I offer to all of my colleagues, both on the government side and on the opposition side, any supplementary information, briefings, or updates you require. I will ensure that the information is made available and that we work together. This is one of those areas where we can and should put partisan dynamics aside, because, and I can't say it enough, there is so much good that is being done by the various departments within Environment Canada.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Kent and Mr. Woodworth.

Your time with us has expired. We're already over the time you had available. Time goes by quickly when you're having fun.

I will suspend briefly, and we will continue with round two with officials. The minister is always welcome to stay, but he has also extended his willingness to return to committee at a later date to talk about the budget and to continue our discussion on the main estimates.

Thank you, Mr. Kent.

We will suspend for five minutes.

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0955)

The Chair: We'll call the meeting back to order.

We're going to continue on with our second round of questioning. We have been joined by Michael Keenan and Basia Ruta, who will help with answering questions.

With that, we're going to continue with Mr. Ouellet.

[Translation]

You have five minutes.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for staying on with us. It gives us an opportunity to continue asking some questions. Also, thank you very much for appearing today with the minister.

Mr. Boothe, in the speech Minister Kent just gave, and I'm sure you're very familiar with the content, he said "We have put in place a plan that is already—I emphasize the word 'already'—reducing greenhouse gas emissions, GHGs." Then he said that he didn't want to give incorrect information.

But if we look at your department's website, we see that emissions, in megatonnes, went down between 2008 and 2009—obviously because there was a crisis—but that they increased from 701 megatonnes in 2009 to 718 megatonnes in 2010, and that emissions are expected to be 720 megatonnes in 2011 and 728 megatonnes in 2012. But the minister is saying that there are reductions.

On your site, it is also stated that, with the federal measures, the emissions in megatonnes are continuing to go up. So there's no point in having federal measures in place, knowing that the figures relating to emissions in megatonnes are going up, if we go by the numbers I just gave you.

So, could you explain to me the difference between what the minister just said and what appears on the website of your department?

Mr. Paul Boothe (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): First, thank you for your question, Mr. Chair.

[English]

This is an important question. I'm happy to have a chance to respond to it. Basically, when you look at the website, what you see is the historical path of emissions and then three additional pieces of information for 2020, which is the target year.

The first piece is where we think the Canadian economy would be if there had been no government action. When I say "no government action", I mean not just federal government action, but also provincial government action. Environment Canada, under Michael Keenan, runs a sophisticated model to do these kinds of estimates, but they are estimates. Our measure of the 2020 amount would be about 850 megatonnes, with no government action.

With the actions that have been taken so far—that have been announced so far—both federal and provincial, we believe that we will be in 2020 at about 785. That brings us down about 65 megatonnes, which is about a quarter of the distance that we have to go to reach our target in 2020—607 megatonnes. That's why the minister says the actions that have been taken to date move us about

a quarter of the distance that we have to go to reach our target in 2020. We readily acknowledge that there's still lots more work to do. We have to go from 785 down to 607.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Mr. Boothe, I'm going to stop you there. The question is not about whether we need to have more measures or better measures. The question is finding out how it is that the minister just spoke to us about reductions, when, really, your website says it's a matter of increases. That's the contradiction I want to understand.

[English]

Mr. Paul Boothe: Okay, absolutely.

The easiest way to explain this is to say that in the case of a growing economy, in a country with a growing population, it's not possible to go in a straight line from our current level down to our target. We have to take measures that take effect over time, and this approach will bend the line down to our target.

We look at the 2020 number without government action, and then we take actions that over time will start to bend the line down. We believe we're about a quarter of the way there, but there are still many more actions that need to be taken to get us to the 607 target.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: You are saying the same thing over again, about what will happen in 2020. But that's not what I want you to talk about. I'm saying that the minister said that there were reductions, but your site shows increases.

I would like to come back to another topic. The environmental commissioner said that you had no plan to offset climate change. I'm not talking about GHGs, but climate change. So, what is the basis, in your department, for engaging in significant spending on climate change if you have no plan?

Let me give you an example. The minister just talked about actions that will be taken to reduce automobile emissions. Not a word about a general plan for using public transit, such as trains. Nothing, as if trains didn't exist! You do often make reference to the United States, but just for cars. But we know quite well that the Obama administration is heavily promoting trains. In Canada, don't we know that the train has worked before?

[English]

The Chair: Give just a brief response, please.

Mr. Paul Boothe: First of all, I guess I would have to respectfully disagree with the commissioner when he says we have no plan. In fact, as the minister said, we are pursuing a regulatory approach.

Let me just focus on the area you spoke of, rail. When you look at the transportation sector, which is the largest sector, we divide that sector into light-duty vehicles, heavy-duty vehicles, air, rail, and marine. For light-duty vehicles, the first round is done. We are working on the heavy-duty vehicles. Our colleagues at Transport Canada are currently working on rail, marine, and air. Of course marine and air are going to require some international discussions, but they are working on regulations for the rail sector to reduce emissions in that sector. So we do have a plan.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here. Thank you for sharing the good news and dispelling some of the myths we hear all too often from the opposition members. There is very good work happening, as we've heard. We do have a plan, and we are well on our way to meeting our very aggressive goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 17%. We are a world leader and we're very proud of what Canada is accomplishing.

I'd like to focus on page 116 of the main estimates in my questions, and one of the two issues I want to ask about is aboriginal consultations. We're increasing that by \$1.5 million, so I'd like to know what the total amount will be. Also, we're increasing by \$1 million to deal with litigation costs. Ms. Duncan's response to the \$30 million was, well, do as the activists demand and that way you will save that \$30 million—just buckle down and buckle under and do what the activists say. I don't think it's quite that simple. Of course the NDP Bill C-469 brought by Ms. Duncan calls for even more expenses and dramatic increases of litigation if that were to go ahead. Hopefully it never will see the light of day.

Also, under the study of Bill C-469 there was no consultation with first nations, unfortunately. I think it's very important that we do have consultation with first nations. So the aboriginal consultations are going up. What is the total amount now that's being proposed?

• (1005)

Mrs. Elaine Feldman: Thank you very much.

The agency provides funding both for aboriginal groups and for the public to participate in environmental assessment. Our total envelope for the two programs is in the order of \$4 million annually.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So that's going up from \$2.5 million to \$4 million?

Mrs. Elaine Feldman: Right now we're spending about \$4 million. The amount we spend each year varies a bit. It depends on how many major projects are going through environmental assessment and whether the groups to which we allocate the funding are able to spend the money in the year in which it's allocated. Sometimes we have to move money from one year to the next. But we look at our total envelope as approximately \$4 million.

Mr. Mark Warawa: And that has been the same for the last couple of years?

Mrs. Elaine Feldman: That's correct. It has been in that order.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So in the explanation where it says there's an increase of 1.5%, in fact it's just moving it from one year to the next. Is that what you're saying?

Mrs. Elaine Feldman: That's correct.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Could you comment on the increase in litigation costs of a million dollars?

Mrs. Elaine Feldman: As I think I said earlier, some of this money also represents some funding that we had put aside for litigation costs that wasn't spent last year, so we're moving it into this fiscal year, and that's litigation in which the agency is appearing as a defendant. The agency is not acting as a complainant in these cases but is defending cases brought against it.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Correct. Are we seeing the cost of litigation going up, or is it static over the last five to ten years?

Mrs. Elaine Feldman: My sense would be that our litigation costs are always going up.

Mr. Mark Warawa: They're going up.

Do I have any time left, Chair?

The Chair: You've got about 20 seconds.

Mr. Mark Warawa: That's fine. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Valeriote, it's your turn.

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for appearing. I particularly appreciate being able to appear in Mr. Scarpaleggia's absence as his replacement.

The minister in his presentation, which some of you heard, said that he valued our insight and welcomed our suggestions, and I'm hoping you would continue that theme with this discussion.

He indicated on page 4 of his presentation that the government had developed a comprehensive plan to achieve real emission reductions and at the same time maintain Canada's economic competitiveness and capacity to create jobs. I want to speak specifically about ecoAction and the ecoENERGY initiatives, which were a continuation of what the former Liberal government had presented under the enerGuide program. We're frankly appreciative of the continuation of that program, notwithstanding its rebranding.

If I can personalize this for a moment, in Guelph a company developed around that ecoENERGY program called Guelph Solar Hot Water. It created jobs installing hot water systems on buildings. When that program was surreptitiously abruptly ended last year, the owner of that company, Steve Dyck, came to me. We spoke and he was literally in tears from the loss of opportunity, the loss of jobs for his employees, and the loss of income for himself. It was just a terrible experience.

I then received e-mails from I can't tell you how many people, including a lady from Mount Forest, Corey La Chanse. She owns Green-Seal Technologies, which installs insulation in people's homes, and her business has also been affected. This is a program that allowed people to participate in climate change mitigation. It helped local economies. It spurred innovation and created jobs.

The minister indicated, "I will be a fierce champion for those programs that have proven effective over the course of recent years". He said that, and yet he has already signalled in the House of Commons that this is a program that would not be coming back, which I regret.

So these are my questions to you. Was that program successful? How many jobs did it create? How many jobs have been lost because it has stopped? In your capacity working with the minister, will you be recommending to him that those programs be reconstituted?

• (1010)

The Chair: I'll just pause here for a minute. As all members know, in chapter 20 of O'Brien and Bosc, starting on page 1068... I'll just read this:

Particular attention is paid to the questioning of public servants. [...] ...committees ordinarily accept the reasons that a public servant gives for declining to answer a specific question or series of questions which involve the giving of legal opinion, which may be perceived as a conflict with the witness' responsibility to the Minister, which are outside of their own area of responsibility, or which might affect business transactions.

I just say that because I believe this program is under NRCan rather than Environment Canada.

If you feel comfortable in replying, you're welcome to. If you don't, we have reasons for excusing you from answering those questions.

Mr. Paul Boothe: Mr. Chairman, that was going to be my response. I apologize to the member. I don't have information about this program because it's not an Environment Canada program. It's an NRCan program. So I don't know if we can track down some information and provide it to you through the clerk of the committee.

Mr. Francis Valeriote: Would you be willing to track down that information?

Mr. Paul Boothe: I'll do my best, yes.

Mr. Francis Valeriote: I'd very much appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I am sharing my time with Mr. Kennedy.

The Chair: Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: We'd like to believe that you're giving advice that could be discussed in public to the minister. I see the references to confidential advice. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the overall plan on GHG reduction. That's one of your special roles. I see it referred to in a number of ministerial statements in your plans over the last few years. Is that correct?

Mr. Paul Boothe: I would say I'm responsible for giving advice. The government and Parliament, ultimately, are responsible for the plan.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Is Environment the lead ministry?

Mr. Paul Boothe: On climate change?

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Yes.

Mr. Paul Boothe: Absolutely.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: If there are programs that are contributing substantially, we'd like to know. We'd also like to know from the responsible officials as well as the minister, when he's available, that there is actually a plan.

My colleague was asking whether this was an important part of the plan. The minister is on record that he's not advocating for this to continue. We're not asking you to contradict him, but it must have figured in the plan. So you've said you have a plan. The plan, I assume, adds up to the right number of megatonnes being removed by 2020, because we assume the government is sincere in its goal.

You say you don't agree with the environment commissioner. The national round table on the economy and the environment has given an estimate to suggest that the government, with the lead of the ministry, is going to reach 3% above 2005 levels, not 17% below.

Can you table a plan now in which things like retrofits are no longer part of the plan? The reasonable question is, how significant was that? Does the environment ministry know whether the plan was effective and efficient? Did it deliver? Could we see the plan that articulates not just the 65 megatonnes, a slight majority of which comes from the provinces, but the rest of the reduction as well? Are there numbers to support that?

I think that's what most people understand a plan to be—a numerical achievement we're trying to get to. So there are two things here: one is in respect of the reminder on the climate retrofits; the other is on the overall plan.

The Chair: Mr. Kennedy's time has expired, so just give us brief response, and only where you feel comfortable.

Mr. Paul Boothe: I'd welcome the opportunity in questions to talk about our plan. If you look at the chart in the background to the minister's speech that showed the share of emissions in the various sectors for 2005, you can see that the approach is quite straightforward. We are going to use a regulatory approach for each of those sectors and work our way around the pie chart.

We began with the transportation sector. I already talked a bit about that with Mr. Ouimet, so I won't repeat myself. The minister mentioned coal-fired electricity. That is well under way and we're hoping to roll out a pre-publication draft of those regulations soon.

The next is oil and gas. We've begun informal consultations with oil and gas—

• (1015)

The Chair: Sorry, your time has expired.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Could I ask the minister, through you, to come back with the figures that support the plan he's referring to? I think all members would benefit from that. Or we could come back in a subsequent round. That's what I'm really looking for.

The Chair: We will have time for a third round and the minister has already said he's more than happy to come back. Maybe we can put a resolution together to ask him to come back on the budget and the main estimates. He could address the plan at that time.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: We're hearing that there is a plan, and I'm trying to get that information.

The Chair: We can ask them to forward it. We can do that as well. We're going to continue.

Mr. Calkins, you have the floor.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'm just going to fire my questions out there—I've got about four. For those of you who feel comfortable responding, please do so.

The first thing I'm going to talk about is the Species at Risk Act. This committee is undergoing a study of that right now. We've heard from other department officials that the expenditures to date under the Species at Risk Act have amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars, yet not one species at risk has been moved off the various schedules in that act. Can you tell me what's being done in the department, as far as budgetary allocations, on any evaluations to determine dollars versus results, to ensure the taxpayer dollars are being used wisely for species at risk?

Mr. Boothe, you brought up rail. In my constituency there is a rail siding used by CN in the hamlet of Mirror, where CN constantly leaves their motors idling in close proximity to residents. This can't be very good for the environment. Are there any programs or any expenditures through Environment Canada that would either change the regulatory approach in dealing with these large diesel engines idling for excessive hours at a time, or programs that might encourage rail companies to reduce their footprints and their fuel consumption?

Mr. Latourelle, I'm going to come at you with park fees. Right now, if citizens of Calgary or Edmonton who drive west into British Columbia, or vice versa, say at the park gates that they're not going to be staying in the park, they get free passage through. Yet the 7,500 residents of Rocky Mountain House and 1,500 residents of Bentley who head west on Highway 11 are hit with a \$20 fee for driving for 20 kilometres on the parkway. They end up driving south to Cochrane or north to Hinton to avoid that park fee. Wouldn't it make more sense for the environment to allow a shorter distance of travel from central Alberta to British Columbia by removing that fee? Frankly, I don't think it's fair, and it is quite punitive to people, depending on where they live.

When it comes to litigation, this committee just examined Bill C-469 a little while ago. Various environmental organizations, like Ecojustice, and so on, assured this committee that the cost of litigation for this bill, which actually.... The clauses in the bill actually create a litigious environment and make it easier for litigation to happen. Has anybody in the department prepared any expenditures to examine, should that bill come to pass, what the cost would be? They assured us that litigation would not happen if the bill were passed, yet we've seen increased budgets for litigation. I'm hearing conflicting stories from groups like Ecojustice that the taxpayers of Canada are going to be on the hook for these lawsuits against the Government of Canada.

Mr. Paul Boothe: On SARA, the department is working hard to catch up, because when the legislation came in it created a big backlog. We're making progress.

Am I aware of any evaluations of SARA yet? I'm not. It doesn't mean there aren't any, but I'm not aware of them. There are many groups that are very generous with their advice on how we're doing our job, and I expect I will hear about that soon. I get lots of informal advice all the time.

As far as rail goes, I don't know the answer to that. It may well be a Transport Canada issue that's being considered as part of their regulatory approach to reducing GHGs for rail. I'll try to find out if there is any information that I can forward to committee members about that.

I will turn to my colleague on park fees.

• (1020)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Thank you.

On the Species at Risk Act, we are taking concrete action. If you look at Grasslands National Park, we have reintroduced the black-footed ferret and the bison, so clear, concrete actions are being taken that will see significant improvements in those species in the near future.

On the park fees, the overall concept is that as people use our national parks, there's a public-good component that is paid through appropriations and the private-benefit component is paid through user fees.

In the case of roads through our national parks, we have two types. We have the Trans-Canada Trail, with free access on the Trans-Canada Highway through several parks. But where in-road parks include parkways, such as the Icefields Parkway, Parks Canada charges a fee.

The Chair: Mr. Sopuck, you have the last of the five-minute round in the second round.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I'll just make a quick comment about the Species at Risk Act. The reason why it has been such a failure goes back to the architecture of the act itself. It's an act that really inhibits citizens. I come from a farming and resource constituency and my constituents do a lot of voluntary conservation work, but the coercive nature of the Species at Risk Act is a grave weakness. I would urge the department to move from an enforcement approach to the conservation of species at risk to an incentive approach.

My question relates to how you develop policy within the department. I'm specifically referring to the policies related to greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency, energy conservation, and all of that.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy a couple of years ago put out a report called "Achieving 2050". I was on the round table at the time when that report came out. The report, as I recall, looked at the economic impact of a cap and trade system, which seems to be off the table in North America. Nevertheless, it was an analysis of what a cap and trade program would do to the economy of the country.

One thing in particular stuck out for me, and even more so now that I am a member of Parliament for a remote rural constituency. The economic impact of a lot of these programs is disproportionately felt by people who live in rural areas or have low income.

I don't think there has been nearly enough discussion about the effect of a lot of the stuff on low-income Canadians and rural Canadians, because low-income people in this country, as well as rural people, spend a disproportionate amount of their income on energy. Even though the majority of Canadians live in cities, what I really worry about is that too much policy is designed for urban Canada, which is fine, but often the needs of rural Canadians and low-income Canadians—and the two are often synonymous—are not considered.

In your department, when you're looking at these kinds of programs and policies, do you do an economic impact analysis and do you specifically look at the effect of what you're proposing on rural Canada and low-income Canadians?

Mr. Paul Boothe: Thank you for the question.

Actually, Mike Keenan leads the group that does that work, so I'll ask him to respond.

Mr. Michael Keenan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you for the question.

The issues you raise are indeed key issues in the course of the policy analysis on various options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We use various sets of analytical tools that pull together different types of information.

One of the things we do is we match up what a regulatory instrument, whether it's a price instrument or a performance tender, would do in terms of industrial activity, what that does to prices, and then we work that through in terms of the impact on households. You can see the different impacts by location in the country, you can see it by income class of households. So it is a factor we regularly look at in the context of our economic analysis.

The second point I would make is that the impacts of these measures depend greatly on the details of the measures. For example, generally there's an assumption that any action to address greenhouse gas emissions increases the price of energy, and households thereby have to pay more. That's not always the case.

I think one key exception would be the performance standards the Government of Canada has put in place for light-duty vehicles, in collaboration with the U.S. government. Those are now working their way through the first period up until the model year 2017. It will generate a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

It will also reduce the total cost of operating motor vehicles. What happens is the vehicles cost a bit more because we require

manufacturers to put technology in, but the fuel savings when people operate their vehicles means, for example, that for somebody driving a car a lot because they live in a rural community and they have a big commute distance, their overall cost of operating that car will be less as a result of these regulations. Yet greenhouse emissions will be reduced significantly in the country.

● (1025)

The Chair: Before we kick off the third round, I just have a couple of comments I want to make before we turn it back to the membership.

I'm just going through vote 1 on the main estimates, and I'm just looking at all the different program activity we have here. It seems that this is very technical and science-based, all the programs we run: wildlife and habitat biodiversity, water resources, sustainable ecosystems, wildlife compliance promotion and enforcement, climate change and clean air, substance and waste management, weather and environmental services.

Since this is highly technical, how many scientists do we actually have working in the department?

Mr. Paul Boothe: One of the first things scientists will argue about is how you get defined as a scientist. The way I think of this is if you think of the Environment Canada budget as a box, about half of the box is devoted to science. It's not just people with graduate degrees but also the people who support them as well. So about half of the department's budget is science.

I guess I would say that, just in terms of telling members a little bit about results, we are the seventh-largest producer of peer-reviewed environmental science in the world. We are the largest outside of the U.S.

One of the things Environment Canada can do, and I'm very proud of the department because of this, is that with a lot of scientific credibility it can provide very good advice, not just to ministers and deputy ministers but in environmental assessments, international science work like climate change work, etc.

About half of what we do is basically science.

The Chair: So in person-years, what would be allocated to that half?

Mr. Paul Boothe: We think about, just in very round numbers, 7,000 persons in the environment, give or take, and about half of those. So in the neighbourhood of about 3,500 would be supporting or directly involved in the science.

The Chair: That's good to know. Thank you very much. That's a great service being provided, not only to the government but to Canadians in general.

We're going to go with our final round. We'll probably have to go to about four minutes so we can fit into the time that's allocated.

Mr. Kennedy, you could kick us off.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: I assume somewhere in that fairly large number of scientists there are mathematicians.

Canada, notwithstanding some of the numbers we heard before, may be 2% of the GHGs, but we're about 0.5% of the world's population, about 1% of the world's economy. Does that sound about right to you? In other words, our GHG contribution per capita is still significant.

Mr. Paul Boothe: I think that is fair to say.

I should also say, first of all, that I did teach mathematics to economists at the University of Alberta, so I should know these numbers better.

Those don't sound far off. Of course with the growth of China and India, our share of the world economy is shrinking even as our economy is growing. But there's no question that everybody has to do their part about greenhouse gases.

• (1030)

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: But we're a top-ten emitter of GHGs in the world—top ten.

Mr. Paul Boothe: In absolute terms?

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Right.

Mr. Paul Boothe: No, I don't think that's right.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: That's correct.

Mr. Paul Boothe: I'll have to check that.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: I'm happy to have that from the ministry.

There is another thing I would like to have from the ministry. When we were in Mexico there was an evaluation released in Germany that suggested that out of 57 nations that have made pledges in terms of GHG reductions, Canada was ranked 54th.

I wonder if the ministry has had time to evaluate that document. Do they want to share with us where they would locate us, if that's inaccurate? What would they say about our relative performance compared to some of those international evaluations?

Mr. Paul Boothe: I'm not familiar with that document. I'll certainly look into it.

Are you saying compared to our Kyoto commitments?

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: They were measuring us on relative progress in terms of commitments we've made. I guess our Kyoto commitments count. You report every year on those Kyoto commitments—

Mr. Paul Boothe: We do.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: —and so forth. Would you like to qualify that?

Mr. Paul Boothe: I'll certainly look into it. I would not be surprised if a document is showing that we have not made significant progress against the commitments of Kyoto—

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: In your measurement of progress, your last report shows a lot of impact from the recession—in other words, reduction in GHGs due to the downturns in the manufacturing and other parts of the economy. Has that been accounted for? When you remarked earlier on progress made, has that been taken out of the equation? Can you let us know roughly how you weighted for that

temporary effect—hopefully temporary effect—of a downturn in the economy in terms of whether that's at all part of what you see as accomplishment?

Mr. Paul Boothe: Yes, absolutely. If you look at the chart that the minister released with his speech, you'll see a downturn. In fact, our current estimates are that GHG emissions are actually below the 2005 level. As you said, the recession had a significant role to play there.

When we're talking about being a quarter of the way, we're talking about 2020, so presumably the economy, hopefully, will have come back and started growing again in a sustainable way. So those temporary reductions do not have a big effect on our being a quarter of the way to meeting the target in 2020.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: That is good to know.

I have a last quick request. Could you table for us...? The estimates we're talking about today contain things like vehicle scrappage, which I understand is being cancelled. It's expiring; it's ending, and so on. I know there was an earlier question, but just to be clear, is there an evaluation that the ministry has done? Some people have been very critical about how this program was conducted by the ministry. Mr. DesRosiers is one of them. Some people have called it a free-rider effect because it was so small.

Can the ministry, having spent \$92 million, table for this committee what the impact of that \$92 million has been as an additional amount? Also, can it table the reasons why the program is being cancelled when it's had such a much smaller impact than the comparable programs in Germany and in the United States in terms of taking pollutants off the road? A pre-1995 car is 19 times the pollutant of a post-1995 car. Going back to 1987, you're looking at 60 times the level of pollutants. Yet there's not going to be a national program after this year, we understand. So is there something you can table with us or send to us about how the department has evaluated the program and its impact on—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. Your time has expired.

Do you want to respond quickly?

Mr. Paul Boothe: I'll just say this. Because the program is just coming to the end this period—and of course we'll have to wait for the budget to find out what the government is going to plan for the future—we may not have an evaluation of it yet. If we don't, then either the Auditor General or the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development will have one. If they don't have one, we'll do it ourselves. So one way or another, we will have this.

If I could just add, though, the thing is that—

The Chair: Time is up, Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Boothe, if you....

Mr. Paul Boothe: Sorry, should I...?

•(1035)

The Chair: You can just respond very briefly, because we do want to respect time and give another member a chance.

Mr. Paul Boothe: The German and U.S. programs—and I'm very familiar with those, because my previous job was with Industry Canada—were really about economic stimulus. Our program was not about economic stimulus; it was about pollution reduction. The programs in the U.S. and Germany have come to an end, and I think everyone needs to be aware of that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Bigras, *c'est votre tour*.

[Translation]

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

First, continuing with the matter of greenhouse gases, I have a lot of difficulty understanding your analysis. In the chart on your website—Mr. Ouellet referred to it—the calculations were 701 megatonnes for 2009, 718 megatonnes for 2010, 720 megatonnes for 2011, and 728 megatonnes for 2012. These numbers clearly include federal measures. So, I am seeing an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

On your website, your chart is showing numbers that include federal measures and numbers that don't. With the federal measures, with what you are proposing, the trend is not toward a reduction in greenhouse gas emission for 2009-2012, but rather an increase. That's the comment I wanted to make.

Next, it seems to me that research is fairly important. So far, the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences has financed a number of centres, including centres in the Arctic. I'm thinking of the atmospheric research centre in Nunavut. That centre was funded by the foundation.

Here's my question. In what you are proposing today, is there something that is going to make up for the cuts in funding to the foundation? You are saying that, in a few years, only infrastructure will be left, so a building, and that there won't be any researchers funded by the foundation. Has Environment Canada planned to offset the cuts in funding that the foundation is providing to these research centres? It's nice to have infrastructure, but it doesn't work very well if there are no researchers.

Mr. Paul Boothe: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

I certainly agree very strongly with Mr. Bigras on the importance of research. We talked about how much research there is going on in the department, and in fact Environment Canada scientists are world leaders in climate change research.

I have to confess that I have to wait until the budget to give you details of any steps regarding funding of external research by Environment Canada, and I apologize for that, but that's the reality of the timing that we face.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I have another question about a completely different issue, the St. Lawrence plan. Over the past year, we saw the end of the St. Lawrence plan, an agreement between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada that is usually a five-year plan. In the next few months, the agreement is supposed to be renewed. Can you confirm for us that funding will be available for the renewal of this agreement, which should take place in the spring?

It is important to know that people are waiting for it. I'm thinking about the priority intervention zones. There are ZIP committees, committees of citizens who live along the St. Lawrence who are conducting awareness campaigns.

Can you confirm for us that funding for the priority intervention zones will be confirmed in the next few weeks? And is there any money set aside for the introduction of the St. Lawrence plan?

Mr. Paul Boothe: Mr. Chair, my answer will be almost exactly the same as the one I just gave.

[English]

I'm going to have to wait for the budget before I can talk about financial aspects. I can say that my colleagues in Environment Canada have been working very hard with their Government of Quebec colleagues, and we hope to be able to make an announcement on this issue very soon.

This has been a series of very successful programs over a long period of time. It's one of our key Canadian ecosystems, and we're hopeful that we can continue to make progress on *Plan Saint-Laurent*.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much. The time is up.

[English]

Ms. Duncan, you have the floor.

•(1040)

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm pleased that my colleague, Monsieur Bigras, raised the concern about the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences. It's not very reassuring to see, in the estimates, a 100% cut. Of course that happened a year ago, and it is being evaluated. So I can just assure you that many, including me, will be watching and hoping that the minister will live up to his words that he lauds the role of scientists in addressing climate change and respects their work. We hope the funding will be restored.

Minister Prentice, two ministers back, reacted to seeing malformed fish and called for a monitoring report. That report is now among five or six reports calling on the federal government to step up to the plate and take action. We're anticipating that on the 22nd of this month, budget day, that report will also be released and will hopefully get the attention it deserves.

This is my question for the department. A number of reports, including mine based on our parliamentary committee review of the matter and the testimony of numerous witnesses, identify not only concerns with monitoring but the failure to do cumulative impact assessment of that sector on the region and downstream and upwind in the Northwest Territories, the failure to regulate significant toxins, the failure to provide leadership on implementing the Peace-Athabasca water management plan, and the failure to adequately assess and address potential impacts on the health of first nations. We've now learned that the Alberta government has increased its monitoring budget by only 4% for the entire province. So my question to you would be what can we expect in the way of major initiatives led by Environment Canada and its partner agencies to act on these deficiencies?

Mr. Paul Boothe: Thank you for the question.

I guess what I would say is that based on the briefings I received yesterday, we are on track to deliver the design of the new water quality monitoring system at the end of this month. We'll have to work out the exact timing, given that budget day seems to be arriving at exactly the same time, but there won't be a long delay, I'm sure.

The plan will be to have an externally validated, independently validated water quality monitoring system and to be very transparent about the design of the system, the quality assurance and quality control of the system, and the data that the system produces. The minister was clear that he wants these data to be freely available to the public. My hope is that we will get to a point soon on water quality monitoring where we can have discussions about the policy, but where we all have confidence in the data.

The other thing that the minister said about this was that water quality monitoring is not the end of the story. We and the department are actively planning to implement his direction to move on to monitoring in the other dimensions of environmental performance. Those include air quality, and I'm sure you're very well aware of the work that—

Ms. Linda Duncan: My question is actually not about what you're doing on monitoring. My question is what are you doing in all the other deficiencies that were identified in the review?

The Chair: Your time has just expired, so just a very quick response.

Mr. Paul Boothe: As I was about to say, we are moving on to the other dimensions of environmental performance, such as biodiversity and air quality. Those things will be not just monitoring, but implementing the science to improve cumulative effects and to have a better understanding of thresholds that need to motivate both monitoring and enforcement.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Calkins, you have the last of the four-minute round.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you.

I have a comment first for Mr. Latourelle.

In your answer to the previous question, you said that major transportation routes like Highway 1, the Trans-Canada Highway, aren't charged for people who pass through the park and you said that roads that are just inroads in national parks are. That would

mean that folks going through Riding Mountain National Park using Highway 10 don't pay a park fee either. Also, Highway 16 is not part of Highway 1, which goes through Jasper National Park, and folks don't pay any money there.

I would suggest to you—and this is just a comment, Mr. Latourelle—that the section of Highway 93 between Highway 11 and Highway 1 would be no different, from the perspective of the people who vote for me. I'd like you to at least consider that in future, because it does pose some problems for the folks who pay their fair share of taxes in my constituency and who are hit with a fee that people in Edmonton and Calgary aren't hit with, or people coming from B.C. using those other roads are hit with.

There is one question I didn't ask in my last round. Ms. Feldman, you did talk about this a little bit earlier: an increase in your budget to deal with litigation. Can any of you tell us who is the most litigious organization or group or individuals in Canada that are suing the Government of Canada when it comes to environmental action?

•(1045)

Mrs. Elaine Feldman: I'm afraid I can't tell you who the most litigious are. I could look at who is suing the agency and provide you with that information, if that would be helpful.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: You don't have that information here today? Nobody here knows who is doing the most suing against the Government of Canada? I find that a little hard to believe.

Mr. Paul Boothe: It's very dispersed. I'll do some investigation to find this out, but I don't believe there's any single organization you can point to and say that they are the bulk of legal action. I'll confirm that, but I'm almost certain that is the case.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: That would be nice to know.

I'll just turn the rest of my time over to Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I have just a quick follow-up question, Mr. Keenan, on the impact of energy pricing on rural and low-income Canadians.

I agree with you that if energy efficiency improves, then energy costs should go down; however, there are always policy proposals on the table, some of which would have the impact of increasing the cost of energy, the price of energy. Can we say unequivocally if energy prices go up that low-income Canadians and rural Canadians would be the hardest hit?

Mr. Michael Keenan: I think the refuge of economists is that they're almost never unequivocal, because it depends, again, on the details. I think if energy prices go up, it has a significant impact on industry. It depends a little on whether it's natural gas or oil, etc., because we've seen some divergence in those prices, so I think there's a direct and an indirect impact.

For example, for people who use energy more for transportation—rural communities—and for people for whom energy is a larger share of their total household budget—lower-income communities—there is a bigger effect there. If you're in a rural community, I think it depends on whether you're in agriculture or some other activity. If you're in agriculture, some farms are very heavy fuel users, so that...

So I think you can see a pattern that.... I would say it's generally true, but it depends on the details of it. If it's the result of a policy, it depends upon the other attributes of the policy. For example, something that made energy more efficient but also generated energy efficiency could have an offset.

So as a general.... I think the answer is yes. The details depend on the nature of the price increase and exactly who it's hitting.

The Chair: Mr. Boothe, you have committed to doing some homework for committee and providing some information to the clerk on various issues. We're looking forward to receiving that information.

We've dealt with supplementaries (C), so I'm going to call the votes.

ENVIRONMENT

Parks Canada Agency

Vote 25c—Program expenditures.....\$1

(Vote 25c agreed to)

Parks Canada Agency

Vote 30c—Payments to.....\$1

(Vote 30c agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the chair report votes 25c and 30c under Environment to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I will do that. Thank you.

With that, I want to thank our witnesses for joining us today: Elaine Feldman, Alan Latourelle, Paul Boothe, Michael Keenan, and Basia Ruta.

Do I have a motion to adjourn?

Thank you, Mr. Sopuck.

We're out of here.

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