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Chair

Mr. Mark Warawa

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● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC)): Good afternoon, colleagues.

Welcome, each of you, and our witnesses, to meeting 29 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

We welcome today Mr. Hummel and Mr. Young to share with us some information as we develop our national conservation plan.

Before we hear from the witnesses, I just want to announce the good news that we do have approval on the funding, providing it's approved in the House. It has to now be voted in the House.

So that's good news.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

An hon. member: Way to go.

An hon. member: Bravo.

An hon. member: Good job.

The Chair: There was a condition, though. Of course we had the famous boxing match, and that was a good fundraiser; the next boxing match was an agreement by Ms. Leslie and Ms. Rempel to be the next boxers.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: That was the condition, so we look forward to that.

Welcome, Mr. Young and Mr. Hummel.

I think we'll start with Mr. Hummel.

You have up to 10 minutes. You can proceed.

Mr. Monte Hummel (Chair, Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for inviting the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement to appear before you today to contribute to your study on the development of a national conservation plan for Canada.

There are many aspects of this plan that deserve our comment, but in a 10-minute oral presentation I've decided to focus on just two. First is that the conservation initiatives included in the plan contribute economically as well as ecologically to our country. Second is that the leadership and implementation of this initiative be shared by the federal government with others, especially the private sector, non-government organizations, the provinces, and aboriginal leaders.

To help you understand why these two points are priorities for us, let me first say a few words about the CBFA.

This agreement was formally signed in May 2010—so our second anniversary is coming up next month. It covers about 75 million hectares, which constitute 80% of the licensed boreal forests of Canada, and as such is by far the largest forest conservation agreement in the world, absolutely unique to Canada. It includes 23 of Canada's largest forest companies through the Forest Products Association of Canada, FPAC, and nine leading NGOs. Both sides had previously been at war for decades.

Together these signatories agreed to do a number of things: to defer industrial activity on nearly 30 million hectares to allow time to develop plans to conserve woodland caribou; to cease hostilities in the international marketplace; to deploy the best forest management practices in the world on that part of the forest that would be harvested; and, most important, to actually accomplish more working together rather than apart.

Although much attention has been paid to the first three goals of our agreement dealing with conservation objectives, of equal importance is the economic content of goals 5 and 6, which are designed to achieve the following. I quote:

> 5) Improved prosperity of the Canadian forest sector and the communities that depend on it; and

> 6) Recognition by the marketplace (e.g. customers, investors, consumers) of the CBFA and its implementation in ways that demonstrably benefit FPAC Members and their products from the boreal.

I want to make the point that Canadian conservationists and a Canadian conservation plan must be capable of embracing both biodiversity and economic prosperity. In fact, it is much easier to make progress on one if proper attention is always paid to the other. Furthermore, practically speaking, it's always more difficult, if not impossible, to convince governments to take action on conservation measures if they think such measures represent an economic net loss.

Environmentalists are fond of demanding that economic development interests take into consideration the environmental consequences of their operations. Rightly so, and I believe most companies now do this either because they have to or because it's a genuine part of their corporate culture, or both. But the CBFA also represents the reverse proposition, namely a sincere effort to make sure that environmental initiatives provide economic benefits—because it's not a sin to want a job. Being a logger, miner, farmer, hunter, or commercial fisherman does not make you the environmental devil incarnate. Rather, these folks can and should be natural allies in conservation, because their very livelihoods depend on a sustainable or long-term conservation approach to the natural resources upon which they depend. The fact that they have an economic interest should be harnessed as a powerful motivator for conservation.

We at CBFA therefore recommend that both economic and ecological principles should underlie a national conservation plan. We believe our agreement is a living example that it can be done—through active collaboration rather than by lobbing media grenades at each other from a distance. It's not easy, but it is possible.

Further, most conservation proposals not only should but do bring with them measurable economic benefits, a fact that is now acknowledged by leading Canadian businesses and government policy-makers alike. The key, of course, is to value ecological services properly in any cost-benefit equation.

These principles obviously apply to the working land and waterscapes of Canada, which are an important focus for the CBFA and a national conservation plan. These managed areas can and must make an important contribution to biodiversity conservation.

That being said, please notice that protected areas are also important components of the CBFA, as they should be, for a national plan, especially for Canada, which is rapidly becoming one of the last global reservoirs of true wilderness, from which we all ultimately derive.

I predict that leaders who foresaw this fact during this decade, and took steps to protect large representative samples of our country in a natural state, will be seen by future generations as having saved something that became scarce in the world and unique to Canada.

As such, I further predict that wilderness will have not only a resonant cultural and spiritual value but a significant economic value far beyond what anyone now expects. Call it Canada's natural competitive advantage, if you will, every bit as important as our industrial resources.

If I may add a personal note, I've had the privilege of working with this government and our current Prime Minister on the protected areas part of our country's conservation agenda, through substantial increases right across Canada on land and water. Some of these were announced by Mr. Harper himself, such as the large extension to Nahanni National Park and the establishment of a one-million-hectare national marine conservation area in western Lake Superior—the largest freshwater reserve in the world.

This government also made the largest land withdrawal for conservation purposes ever in Canadian history, some 10 million hectares of primarily boreal forest found around Great Slave Lake. I hope the national conservation plan will build on this momentum.

Most of this work has been led by first nations, whose treaty and constitutional rights must be respected through a national plan. Conservation measures should be championed by the people most affected, not imposed, which only leads to a legacy of resentment and no real ownership. After all, it's their home, and they most of all should benefit both culturally and economically. Therefore, the CBFA tries to collaboratively engage aboriginal communities wherever our work hits the ground.

I'll now conclude briefly with my second major point in this submission—namely, sharing the leadership.

The most inspiring and productive conservation initiatives over the last 30 years in Canada were not dreamed up and led by governments but by non-government organizations. Some examples are as follows: the $1.5 billion North American waterfowl management plan led by Ducks Unlimited; the endangered spaces campaign, which resulted in over a thousand new conservation reserves, doubling the amount of protected area in Canada, led by WWF; the natural areas conservation plan on private land, led by the Nature Conservancy of Canada; and, I would argue, the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, led by FPAC and NGOs, who broke ranks with their peers in order to do things differently.

I'm not saying that governments haven't been, and are not, essential to the success of all these initiatives, because they absolutely are. Governments, after all, have the legal authority to decide about the disposition of public lands and waters in over 90% of this country. They can also greatly influence what happens on private land as well. But the initial vision, ambition, enthusiasm, and intellectual capital—in other words, the leadership—for these transformative initiatives came from outside government.

Quite frankly, the people involved decided not to spend the next decade just complaining about insufficient action from governments, but decided to assume leadership in partnership with governments. This leadership recipe can capture the public imagination in a way that is difficult for strictly government-led initiatives. It can also bring substantial financial resources, technical expertise, marketing capability, and a communication network to the table that is lighter on its feet and more third-party credible than what is normally available to governments.

We often say that conservation is too big a job for any one party to undertake, but we rarely act on that fact. To be sure, it's important that each party do its job and deliver on its responsibilities, including the federal government. But if you really want to make a difference, I urge you to share the leadership of developing and implementing a national conservation plan for Canada. This does more than just involve others as a courtesy; it makes those who should be expressly accountable for its success....

You are giving every indication of wanting to do that through these hearings and through the initial multi-party round table meeting with Minister Kent. We at CBFA are eager to constructively contribute whatever we can to an effective national conservation plan.

Thank you. I'd be pleased to respond to any questions the committee might have.

● (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hummel.

Next we will hear from the National Aboriginal Forestry Association.

Mr. Young, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Bradley Young (Senior Policy Analyst, National Aboriginal Forestry Association): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the standing committee for inviting us to contribute to the study regarding the development of a national conservation plan, hereafter referred to as NCP. Harry Bombay, executive director of the National Aboriginal Forestry Association, NAFA, sends his regrets.

My name is Bradley Young and I am the senior policy adviser for NAFA. Also, I am a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the traditional territory of the Algonquin Nation, Kichi Sipi Aski, otherwise referred to as the Ottawa area.

First, here is a little background on NAFA. We are a non-governmental organization, first nation controlled, focused on research and advocacy activities in the forest sector. We advocate for the policy frameworks that will address aboriginal rights, values, and interests, which will lead to a more equitable creation and sharing of benefits from the vast forest resources of the land we call Canada.

Given economic realities, increasingly this means a reconceptualization of the broad forest sector. And conservation has been a noticeable component of this for some time, especially when contextualized with first nations engagement.

From what we have seen to date, first nations in the forest approach this under the umbrella of forest stewardship, implying both economic activity and conservation.

Prospectively, as climate change, economic development, sustainability, and multiple visions of prosperity increasingly converge on the same forested land base, a well thought out, discussed, and resourced NCP could potentially play a constructive coordination role here, if the right peoples have a meeting of minds.

Considering that the federal government has constitutional responsibility for “Indians and lands reserved for Indians”, and that most of first nations communities are located in our forests, creating the conditions for aboriginal forest-based development should be a priority. The new federal framework for aboriginal economic development does not reflect this. As the NCP takes shape and potentially impacts the forested aboriginal home and treaty land, oversight in this same manner should be avoided, especially given Canada's pending and current status to various binding international conventions regarding the environment, development, biological diversity, human rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples.

For example, article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity states that each nation will establish protected areas with the involvement and consent of indigenous peoples, including equitable sharing of any benefits arising from all related activities.

What have first peoples in Canada done with forest stewardship that speaks to proactive engagement with conservation?

In 2007 NAFA calculated first nations land management totals of 5.5 million hectares, including federal reserves and provincial lands under forest management tenures held by first nations. When considered with gains under innovative conservation approaches, large additional land bases flowing from first nations traditional territories are apparent. Take two of the most emblematic stewardship conservation initiatives of the past decade: the Great Bear rainforest in B.C., at 6.4 million hectares; and the Pimachiowin Aki in Manitoba and Ontario, at 4.3 million hectares. Through these efforts, 10.7 million hectares of first-nations-led or co-managed forest territory has been gained since our 2007 study.

Thus, the total for lands under first nations management in 2012 would be 16.2 million hectares, a significant gain of 294%. This is equivalent to 162,000 square kilometres, roughly the size of Ireland and Scotland combined.

It is clear that conservation initiatives led by first nations have advanced sustainable forest management practices by codifying modifications to existing forestry and natural resource development. Traditional forestry activity is being tailored to meet aboriginal interests, and sensitive biological, spiritual, and traditional uses are being prioritized. The planning and management of these areas, while including non-aboriginal voices, is mediated by first nations representation and secured by sustainable funding generated by trusts controlled by first nations.

Conservation under this approach minimizes the spectre of conservation refugees, whereby lands are conserved and indigenous and local people are restricted or expelled from their homelands for new fortress parks.

● (1545)

From our perspective, the "wilderness protection at any cost" ideology is not sound policy. Many elders the world over call the fortress conservation approach "protecting the land to death". Why? Take indigenous people out of the equation and the land base either atrophies to an ecologically less dynamic state or it gets overrun by various unsustainable practices.

In fact, since the first exclusionary parks were created 120 years ago under the fortress conservation ideology, biodiversity and/or ecological performance have actually declined in these areas when compared to ancestral indigenous ecological outcomes before demarcation. It is an empirical, scientific, and historical fact that indigenous land management practices have, on balance, resulted in the protection, with indigenous cohabitation and usage, of over 95% of the world's last biodiversity hotspots.

Circling back to economics, which in Canada to a large degree is really about humans interacting with natural resources in the forest, first nations again are updating this ancient sensibility. For example, the Whitefeather Forest initiative in Ontario includes an innovative bioeconomic forestry enterprise and also establishes first nations management responsibility for the forest, including numerous sensitive sites identified by traditional knowledge holders.

On a broader national basis, many other communities are accounting for and planning to harness the value of ecological services maintained on their traditional forested lands. This includes carbon trading, water storage and supply, and various ventures counting on rich, intact biodiversity capital. Also, markets for non-timber forest products such as maple syrup, wild rice, and a growing number of confections and herbal remedies continue to develop, albeit slowly. And last but not least, hunting, fishing, and trapping in the forest continue to play emblematic roles in most communities and enjoy constitutional protections.

With continuing downward pressure on traditional forest enterprises and such significant gains coming from regional conservation initiatives, it is clear that first nations investing limited time and resources into forest sector development have discrete paths before them when analyzing potential initiatives in the bush. Strategic economic development, complementary conservation management, traditional activities, and implementation partnerships appear to be the broad trajectory of this promising path. Some are doing it all, yet others mix and match, and still others focus on just one activity.

Additionally, there are other coordination and applicability crossovers. With over $500 billion of other natural resource development projected for the coming decades, significant convergent pressures are apparent. Most of this development will be in the forest, but will not necessarily be forestry. Respectively, first nations are actively engaged on multiple fronts, assessing, negotiating, confronting, confounding, advancing, modifying, and/or participating in the numerous projects planned or under way, on top of considering aboriginal conservation initiatives.

Thus an overlapping field of vision is in place, again, all largely taking place in the forests of Canada—our defining national feature and internationally recognized treasure.

In response to this we are developing a national first nations natural resource development map to provide context and scope to this dynamic story. It will be built upon the same utilitarian excellence of our reports on forest tenures in Canada, updated to current digital realities.

Within this space, while not as high profile as some other sectors, the aboriginal forest sector is an important segment of the economy where aboriginal people are gaining prominence. Through land claim settlements and increased access to provincial forest tenures, aboriginal people now have access to forest resources over a significant land base of over 16.2 million hectares through over 300 *sui generis* agreements with an aggregate volume of over 14 million cubic metres in annual allowable cut.

We are harvesting approximately only a third of this. It is our contention that new markets must be opened up, sectorally supported, and invested in to realize shared prosperity here. Importantly, these themes do not have to collide with conservation. Progressively, in the eyes of many, they can mutually support each other under a first nations stewardship ethic.

● (1550)

In closing, to advance the national conservation program, we feel that policy and programming development and investment are needed in the following areas: the aboriginal forest sector, including the investigation of innovative conservation arrangements; and national-level first nations dialogues, with the participation of national, provincial-territorial, and community organizations, leadership, and sectoral experts.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Young.

We now have our round of seven minutes of questioning. We will have four questioners for you.

We will begin with Mr. Woodworth for seven minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for attending with us here today. It is a very important subject. I was very interested in all that you had to say about accommodating both the economic and the conservation goals we all share.

I'd like to direct most of my questions to Mr. Hummel. I'll have two general categories. One is just to get a little more information about the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement. The second would be to get some information about specific strategies, if I can.

Since I only have seven minutes, I'm going to try to give short questions to which short answers are possible, beginning with, what provinces does the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement operate within?

● (1555)

Mr. Monte Hummel: We're in all of the provinces in which the boreal forest is found, which is all of them except Nova Scotia and P.E.I. We have focused projects in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, two large pilot projects in Ontario, and one large pilot project in Quebec. Those are priorities for us, but we have work going on in all of them.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you.

Your evidence was about the Forest Products Association of Canada and environmental organizations. Can you tell me if there is any oversight of mining, tourism, or things that are not related to what I would consider to be traditional forest products that is accomplished through the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement?

Mr. Monte Hummel: I'm sorry. Are you asking if we include tourist interests and mining interests in our perspective?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: That's correct.

Mr. Monte Hummel: I guess the short answer is that those aren't priorities for us. We're looking at forests and forest management, but before we can deliver any sort of packaged agreements to government or come to them with proposals that they are likely to act upon, we need to be able to show that we've taken into consideration all of the interests in the forest. That obviously includes aboriginal interests. It often includes tourist interests. It less often includes mining interests.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: So if a proponent wanted to initiate a mining project within the confines of the forest that you are managing, would your organization be involved or would that be outside the scope of what you do?

Mr. Monte Hummel: We wouldn't have anything to say about whether or not that goes ahead, but in talking to government about conservation plans and management plans for the area, we would certainly have to take into consideration mining interests. That includes oil and gas. For example, in some of the areas in Alberta that we're working on, energy interests are the dominant interests in the forest.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Okay.

You mentioned aboriginal involvement. Are any of those nine NGOs aboriginal groups? Or how do you engage the aboriginal community in your work?

Mr. Monte Hummel: None of them are aboriginal groups, but some of them employ aboriginal people, and all of them work closely with aboriginal people.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Okay.

How is the land selected that will be incorporated under the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement?

Mr. Monte Hummel: It's the sum total of the forest management units under the management of the member companies in the Forest Products Association of Canada.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Got it.

Mr. Monte Hummel: It's the licensed boreal forest that we're talking about.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: All right. Thank you.

Can you give me an example of, let's say, the most specific management program that would describe the actual implementation of the agreement?

Mr. Monte Hummel: Sure. We're working on one in northeastern Ontario right now, for example, where there are first nations interests and communities, and traditional use and territory. There are woodland caribou present. There are two companies that have very large forest management plans for forests that they're harvesting for commercial purposes. We're talking about two million to three million hectares. It's a large area.

In working with the companies and with the communities, our challenge has been to come up with a plan that accommodates the needs of the woodland caribou, accommodates the aspirations of the communities that are there, and also meets the wood volume needs of the companies that are involved.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: What did that look like?

Mr. Monte Hummel: We're proposing a zoned approach to it, which is new. The province has one approach, which is sort of a mosaic-cutting pattern. We've proposed a sort of zoned approach whereby the intact forest is left intact and there's more intensive management on the part of the forest that's already been disturbed. I want to emphasize that this kind of thinking and negotiation and discussion with companies and communities needs to deliver not just conservation-wise, but it needs to deliver those cubic metres that the mills need, as well as meeting the traditional uses of the communities. It's a different approach, which we take to government and say, look, we think we can meet the needs of the long-term management direction of the government for this area. We're meeting your overall objectives, but through discussions with the companies, communities, and other interests we think we have a different way of getting there. Often the situation will be polarized and people will be at each other's throats. What we try to deliver is a solution to government. It's up to government as to whether it wants to accept it and act on it.

● (1600)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Regarding the specific strategic you mentioned for the woodland caribou, was there success in achieving a consensus?

Mr. Monte Hummel: We think we have consensus between some of the parties. We're still actually talking about something we have not put on the table yet—we're still putting it together—but we're very close. All indications are that this is going to happen.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Very good.

Mr. Monte Hummel: It involves a great deal of technical work, of modelling, of disturbance regimes, and of wood supply analysis. It's a very technical job. I'm a forester by training and that helps. Let me put it that way.

The Chair: The next seven minutes is Mr. Choquette's.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to thank the witnesses.

I will start with Mr. Young, since Mr. Hummel had the honour of answering the first questions. But Mr. Hummel, you can also answer my question afterwards.

As you know, the conference of the signatory parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity has established a conservation target of 17% of terrestrial areas and 10% of marine areas. Right now, we are only at 10% for terrestrial areas and 1% for marine areas in Canada.

In your view, what should Canada's targets be? Should the target be 20% by 2020? What should the targets be for terrestrial areas and marine areas?

[*English*]

Mr. Bradley Young: Thank you for the question.

In terms of the specific technical answer, I have no number out of the air that I can refer to. What should happen is that the local first nations, regional nations, and the larger first nations technical groups who would be speaking for the territories where these percentages are going to be deployed should be involved in a really robust process that is, I would say, partly co-led by them. Instead of being worked with, the first nations and the various governments of the land should be talking at a government-to-government level.

The other supporting actors such as ENGOs or policy groups could then fill in with expert technical advice. Because we're dealing with setting aside, conserving, and basically determining the management regime and the operational flow of these land bases at a very high level, an internationally binding level, there should be a very hard look at the rigour of involvement, participation, and investment there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: I am going to stop you there, Mr. Young, and I apologize for that.

Let me ask you another question. The Canadian boreal initiative proposes to protect 50% of the protected areas of the boreal forest.

What do you think about that? What is your opinion?

[*English*]

Mr. Bradley Young: We've heard the various numbers, and again, I have nothing, and nothing has been provided to NAFA, to substantiate any of that talk. In terms of an overall goal of 50%, boy, there are a lot of ways you can skin that cat, so to speak.

Again, I would caution that when you're talking about basically determining the type of development and the types of activities that can be undertaken on traditional lands flowing from first nations territories...people are not going to be moving from their territories any time soon. A leadership position for those communities and for the affected peoples, the rights holders, should be put into place immediately to peel back whatever number, whether it's 5%, 10%, 17%, or 50%. Those communities and the representative voices need to be in actual leadership, government-to-government positions to really adjudicate on those matters.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: I will come back to you later.

I would just like to ask Mr. Hummel whether he agrees with the 20% for protected lands, for example, or at least whether he is in favour of pursuing the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Do you think that it should be specified somewhere that the Government of Canada has to make firm and absolute commitments in terms of the percentage?

[*English*]

Mr. Monte Hummel: I'm very familiar with this percentage argument, and I think it's somewhat artificial. I actually agree with a lot of what Bradley said. I think the percentage of what's conserved or protected should be an output of something else. I think the key is not just the quantity, but the quality of what we protect or conserve.

I headed up the Endangered Spaces campaign. Its goal was to establish a representative system of protected areas in Canada representing all the natural regions of the country. During the 1990s, there were 486 natural regions in Canada. The idea there was just to have baseline representative samples of our natural mosiac. That's an ecological goal; it's not a per cent goal. So I would argue to have an ecological goal and a cultural goal working with first nations, and let the percentage fall where it may.

I was also one of the founders of the boreal framework, which put that 50% number out there. I would observe that when communities are left to their own devices, and they aren't whispered into the ear by big conservation groups, big governments, or big companies, they've tended to protect about 50% of their territory by their own choice. So the 50% does have a historical precedent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you very much. I apologize for somewhat rushing you, but my time is limited.

I just have a quick question for both of you. I will start with Mr. Young.

Should the national conservation plan pay attention to climate change or action on climate change? Should this be included in our national conservation plan?

[*English*]

Mr. Bradley Young: I would argue not just climate change, as per the content that I've shared in my opening statements. I think there's a convergence of issues that need to be considered over the land base. These issues are climate change, economic development, and the different sectors that are going to be engaging in this economic development. There are also the different peoples and the migration patterns in terms of urban/rural. There's so much there. There's so much complexity there that I think we need really workable, functional goals in terms of an ecological model, in terms of first nations, in terms of a respectful rights base model, and in terms of the other aspects and players in government and in society who look for prosperity and economic development. Then I guess it's roll up the sleeves and get to work.

I've only seen the national conservation plan referred to in the throne speech, and then in some of the preliminary feeders out there.

The Chair: Time has expired. Thank you.

Mr. Toet, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses.

I wanted to touch a little bit on the whole aspect that you both touched on; that is, economic growth and conservation working together side by side, and that there's differentiation. Mr. Young, you touched on it a little bit also. We always have this implication of conservation areas as just drawing a bunch of lines on a map around a certain spot and saying, you can do this and you can't do that. How do you see the integration of those two things working together in a real way? Just give us an example of how you would see that coming together.

Mr. Bradley Young: Okay. Thank you for the question.

I think from a first nations perspective, from a community that's on the ground, that's been there from time immemorial, what they tend to do is lay out, in terms of a traditional ecological study, some form of map that kind of shows where they have been, their special sites, and where there are activities they're engaging in. Then they start to build in other considerations.

I can share from my personal background from northern Manitoba what we did in terms of not actually developing a discrete map but having a relationship with the local forest management and the company to where they had a foreman from our community, we had subcontracting loggers, and they just kind of managed to move around operations outside of sensitive areas and go into areas that were okay, kind of building it on the ground on a management level.

Now it's progressed, in the year 2012, to where there are actual agreements. There are performance targets, with a legal technical expression of that now. And I think that's what should happen. You should build up from the community's connections to their traditional land base and then have them involved in a dialogue so that they know here are these opportunities, and here are these other opportunities.

In my neck of the woods, we have a gasping Tolko FMA, FMU. The guys are just barely holding on to their jobs as loggers, as silviculturists, as tree planters. There's talk of mines coming in. People are interested in that, but people are also still hunting, fishing, and trapping. They enjoy the spiritual sites out there, and the connectivity of the traditional land base.

So there you have it: a personal kind of perspective and an intellectual little journey, I guess, on how I think it should be played out. To do that work is, I will say, tremendously taxing on the community. It takes a lot of resources and a lot of good faith between the government units that are putting it together, right?

● (1610)

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you.

Mr. Hummel, just to build on that a little bit, in your presentation you did touch on how the people in forestry and the fishers are natural conservationists and, going back to what Mr. Young was saying there, how they can work together.

Can you just expand a little bit on that natural integration of those two groups, and how they can work together efficiently in a conservation plan?

Mr. Monte Hummel: I think that often what people want for an area, their aspirations or their desired future, gets articulated in something like a land use plan, which is I think what Bradley was talking about as well.

To me, a land use plan should reflect the desired future of the people who live there. It inevitably will include both conservation elements as well as economic development interests. It may be zoning. It may be setting out conformity requirements, or ground rules for activity in the area. But it needs to reflect the views and the wishes of the people who live there.

I really believe that conservation will not be embraced unless it serves a useful economic and cultural purpose for the people who live there. I agree with this fortress mentality thing; you can't shove it down people's throats.

So there's really no other way to do it than to bring two interests, the economic interest and the conservation interest, together.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: I guess the other tendency we have, when we talk about these plans—this is what happens when we start talking about percentages of areas, etc.—is that we right away equate size with actually having accomplished something. The bigger it is, the better we've done, so to speak.

Both of you have kind of indicated—and I'll leave this to both of you to maybe answer—that size isn't the biggest issue. I would even argue, from some of the discussions we've had with some of the other witnesses who've been here, that it's bringing the knowledge to the urban community, so to speak, or being able to bring the urban community to that conservation area.

Do you have any ideas and thoughts on how we could integrate those two things together? I think the need for young people in urban centres to have a better understanding of conservation is very critical to this actually succeeding.

Maybe both of you could touch on it, just quickly.

Mr. Bradley Young: You've actually touched upon a really critical area, not only in terms of the non-indigenous population, the general population, but also in terms of the aboriginal population, that I would say in many respects are seething in the cauldron of the inner city, that have no connection back to their traditional territories —the culture, the teachings, the elders, the language, the grounding influence of watching a stream go by, having fresh air around you; that head space, that good frame of mind.

I think that will be a critical component for an NCP, that connecting back from the urban centres so that we have an awareness, not only in the indigenous community but also in the non-indigenous community, of where the actual prosperity comes from, where our air comes from—air comes from trees—and where all these ecological services are generated that we benefit from.

But I don't want to.... I'm watching the time here.

Monte, go ahead.

● (1615)

Mr. Monte Hummel: I was raised in the bush in northwestern Ontario. I spend a lot of my time reminding my environmental colleagues how that's going to go over in the north if they say it the way they are saying it.

I have a foot in both camps, and I am aware of this cultural divide you're talking about. Just how you overcome it, I am not sure. What it does require, rather than blaming each side and saying inflammatory things, is to try to calmly explain to people that this is the life experience these folks have. Try to explain to people in the north why the people in the city think the way they do, and explain to the people in the city why the folks in the north or the rural or coastal parts of our country think the way they do. It is a great diverse country that we've got, but that can also be divisive.

Things like the Rouge Park that is about to move ahead in the greater Toronto area does represent a terrific opportunity to get students out, at least for a day hike, and get a little sense of what we are talking about.

The Chair: The time has expired.

Ms. Duncan, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to ask a question, if I may. I thought we had four witnesses coming today.

Can someone give me an update on that? I'm hoping they are coming back.

The Chair: We did have four witnesses. We were notified this morning by one of the groups that they wouldn't be able to come, and then just before the committee meeting started we were notified by another that they were not available. It was last minute—

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Will we be inviting them back?

The Chair: We'll try to get them back at another time.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I would like to hear from them. Thank you.

Thank you both.

Mr. Young, when Mr. Woodworth was asking Mr. Hummel questions, I saw you writing something down. Are there some things you'd like to share with us?

Mr. Bradley Young: I was just taking notes on my colleague's answers here. It's just a cordial thing to do.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay. That's all I wanted to know.

You mentioned something, and I didn't quite get the words down. It was something like “the aboriginal economic forum does not reflect this”. Can you elaborate on that? What is the current state, and how could it be better?

Mr. Bradley Young: Well, 80% of first nations communities are in the forest, and we would hope, because of our organization being the National Aboriginal Forestry Association, that there would be a discrete envelope of support for that sector. Given all the connections between prosperity, anti-poverty, the tax base, and the health of the rural economy, we would have hoped there would have been more investment in the aboriginal forest sector under that framework. Unfortunately, we somehow got missed in the shuffle.

That was a point the executive director was sure to tell me; he's recovering from back surgery. He said to make sure that I have some strong language on that and to say that now is the time.

You can always fix things, right? You can approach the aboriginal forest sector from the discrete economic side or you can approach it from the conservation side, and that is what's really unique about the aboriginal forest sector. It's really broad. There are multiple avenues for engaging and getting things done in the forest.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Mr. Young.

If you could make a recommendation to the committee, what would the recommendation be on this? Be as clear as you can, so we can get it in the report.

Mr. Bradley Young: Let's talk about an envelope for the aboriginal forest sector. Let's discuss that and let's move that forward. It is important for first nations aboriginal communities to be prosperous in the rural hinterland of Canada and be contributing to the lifeblood of the country, as opposed to being perceived as a drag.

Let's get on with joint prosperity. That's what I would say.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Then you talked about article 8 on biological diversity, and you talked about needing involvement and consent of aboriginal peoples. Can you talk about the current state and what you would like to see going forward?

Again, the more specific you can be in making recommendations to this committee, the more helpful that is.

● (1620)

Mr. Bradley Young: I checked up as far as I could because our shop is a small technical shop here in Ottawa, but we were monitoring the fact that Canada was going to ratify and sign the convention on biological diversity. There are articles underneath the convention that are internationally binding and have a very direct implication for a national conservation plan, given that consent, given that involvement, given that equitable sharing of benefits is explicitly in the text of the treaty.

I think you need a really good technical platform and a due diligence design in terms of making sure that platform is built into the national conservation plan and doesn't get missed. You can't get around it because it is a binding international covenant. I don't think folks have to be alarmed by that. By and large, in terms of what Monte has shared there, that when you start dealing with indigenous folks and first nations people you'll often get beyond the positioning very quickly, if it's a respectful relationship and there is some parity in terms of resources.... You'll get down to mutual interest and mutual development, and you'll just get moving forward.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Sorry, Mr. Young. I don't want to interrupt.

What would be the very specific recommendation to the committee?

Mr. Bradley Young: Again—

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Be very specific.

Mr. Bradley Young: Please design a resource and a technical package that can look into paragraphs (a) and (j) of article 8 as they apply to the national conservation program.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You talked about conservation refugees. Can you talk about what has happened in the past and what you want to ensure in the future?

Again, I'm asking for a very specific recommendation.

Mr. Bradley Young: Boy oh boy, that's a huge topic. It's not a really well-known portion of history that a lot of Canadians are in regular contact with. I happen to be lucky in the sense that I have done some advanced graduate work and have lived, worked, played, and prayed—done everything—in the mountains of Alberta.

The creation of the national parks in the latter part of the 19th century was a tremendously contentious event with the confederacies of the northern plains—I'm talking Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 territory, as well as the present-day B.C. first nations. When you have a situation where a land base was once used for medicinal gathering, for hunting, for traditional uses, for spiritual uses, and the next day the walls are up and you're actively excluded, and you could be legally, and were legally, prosecuted for going into those areas, there is an emotional pain at the minimum.

What has happened over the years is that there have been various legal challenges to that, various activism. I think of Jasper, in particular, of the national parks because I had some professional engagements there. They are working busily at repairing that relationship.

It takes an awareness of that history first. It takes good discussions, and then eventually, as things move forward, it takes investment of resources and a willingness to do things differently there.

The Chair: Thank you.

Your time has expired. We're now going to begin our first second round of questioning, and it's five minutes each. We'll begin with Ms. Leslie.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both the witnesses. This has been very interesting. It has been really interesting to listen to your testimony.

My first question goes to Mr. Hummel. When you talked about sharing the leadership, that struck me. You said that NGOs have great and innovative ideas. I'm just wondering if you could just share with us a bit more about how we tap into that, this sort of innovation that's happening on the ground.

How would we support that? Is it a matter of supporting programs with groups that maybe are trying out different things? Some will work and some won't. Is it sort of like the cream rises to the top? What's the best way to support that innovation?

● (1625)

Mr. Monte Hummel: You can do that. I guess I would suggest that the actual drafting and development of the plan itself be a joint effort, that you bring a diversity of people to the table here. It doesn't have to be a throng of thousands.

The people who cobble this together should be representative of the dozen interests that come to the table, and not just be orchestrated by government. I think you need a committee—I hate to say it—a group of people to put this together. It needs to be the product of a mind greater than just the government, in my view.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Both of you talked about consultation in different ways. I hear people dismiss consultation and say that they have to do it to make sure they've dotted their i's and crossed their t's. But there's a big difference between that kind of consultation and meaningful consultation, which actually draws out the best of what's happening on the ground.

Mr. Monte Hummel: I'm sure Bradley will speak to this. Consultation, involvement, seeking support—these are all passive ideas.

I've been very busy in the Mackenzie Valley. You'd never hear me say that the conservationists want to protect the ramparts. You'd hear that the conservationists support the chief of Fort Good Hope, who wants to protect the ramparts. The leadership for these initiatives needs to come from the people who are going to be experiencing the consequences of them. It's a matter of sharing the fashioning of it, the creation of it. It's not a matter of just cobbling something together and then working with...by then, it's often too late. You sort of say, “If we'd been involved in putting this together, we would have put it together differently.”

There are people outside government who are capable of bringing real, positive energy. They can fashion this thing with you and work with you to pull it together and write it and help you with all the folks who need to be involved to make it successful. That's really what I have in mind. It's not consultation. It's not involving.... It's not going to people after the fact. It's getting people in on the ground floor to actually put it together.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Young, is that what you were touching on? You used the word "consultation", but maybe we need to find a new word for that.

Mr. Bradley Young: Yes and no. I think the general intent and the general working dynamic Monte shared with us is generally correct. The legality that comes into international conventions and treaties, the establishment of free prior informed consent, and consent within the Convention on Biological Diversity are going to kick things up another gear in terms of some of the formality and some of the early initial design and engagement that should go into this.

I know that first nations across the land, whether it's at the community level or all the way up to the PTOs and into the national first nations governmental organizations, take the international conventions quite seriously. Things like the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—well, it's not draft anymore, because it's been ratified by the General Assembly—and different conventions are watched. There's an expression and there's a waiting and a willingness from all the parties to finally say to the Government of Canada, "Let's treat with each other." That's the hope.

The other way of doing it is to look at each community. Chiefs in these communities are the signatories for these rights. They're going to have their unique spin on it as well. That will all have to be taken into consideration, and there will have to be a high level of rigour.

● (1630)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Rempel, you have five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Just to pick up on the theme of consultation, Mr. Hummel, I'm interested in hearing briefly about some of the guiding principles you used to bring together what you referred to as two warring factions in the development of the agreement. Could you speak briefly to some of those principles and how they could potentially be leveraged to develop a national conservation plan?

Mr. Monte Hummel: I'll try.

One of the things that brought us together was that the status quo was no longer sustainable. I mean, it was exhausting. It was resulting in the worst of both worlds for both of us. You kind of say that you can't continue like this.

On the more positive side, I think we stood back and realized that there was a fit. You could actually cut portions of the boreal forest and provide for economic development and provide for conservation. You could bring them together. You had statesmen-like people on both sides who said it was time to put away the weapons of war and see if we could work something out together. I can't really be much more specific than that.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: So an acknowledgement of that need for balance is there, between the strong environmental stewardship component and the economic growth.

Mr. Monte Hummel: It's an accommodation of each other's interests.

The good negotiator is the one who listens to the other person's position and manages to accommodate as much of it as he or she possibly can, rather than the one who folds their arms and says all he knows is that this is his position. So if people put themselves in the other's shoes....

I went through exercises where all the conservationists had to make the economic development proposals and all the economic development interests had to make all the conservation proposals.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: That's very cool.

My question for Mr. Young is this. We've talked a little to some of the other witnesses, and you spoke briefly about that urban connectivity component. This is something I think we're all very interested in. You spoke a bit about the need for first nations living in urban areas, and that there is a gap there for that connectivity back to nature and that needs to be part of the NCP.

I want to give you a little more time to expand some thoughts you might have around that, and maybe give us some examples of some programs that are working within that community. Perhaps some principles in those programs could be broadened to a larger scale for a diverse set of urban audiences.

Mr. Bradley Young: The one main program that comes to mind would be the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres initiative, UMAYC. I sat on one of the adjudication committees in Alberta for this. It was managed out of the Department of Canadian Heritage. As a youth board we would give advice on the delegation of funds for urban cultural programming.

One of the major challenges we had was that connectivity piece, because the programming is meant to be deployed in the urban area, but what you wanted to connect these young people to in various ways was back to nature, back to their traditional roots, and back to their traditional culture.

That's where the gap is, in terms of program design and delivery. It's getting that connectivity in terms of the energy of youth directed back in a positive fashion out onto what I would see as a working landscape. That also has tremendous spiritual and cultural and historical resonance for those youth in the urban centres of Canada.

Is that a new program? I don't know. We've tried, to a limited degree over the years in NAFA, to work on the professional end of things with foresters and different natural resource texts to connect them back in terms of the operational side, the professional side.

But there is the whole cultural side as well that has to fit in there too. To build it into programming for national parks, again, there is no programming for a national park that I'm aware of that says we're going to pluck kids from the urban centre and bring them out to, say, Jasper.

● (1635)

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Briefly, you spoke of that gap. What are some of the bullet-point issues that you think are some of the challenges that we need to address to overcome that gap?

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Mr. Bradley Young: Resources, people who do it, and a longer-term timeframe because the youth have been subjected to an intergenerational traumatic experience. So turning that around and connecting it back to the land base is going to take some time. It can't just be a one-year or a two-year thing. It should be built right into the long-term goals.

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pilon, you have five minutes.

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Young, could you tell us about the efforts and progress made by first nations so far in terms of the national conservation plan? The national association mentioned by phone a map explaining their progress. Could you tell us more about that?

[*English*]

Mr. Bradley Young: Specific technical work on the national conservation plan has not really happened yet. We've heard about it before, leading up to the throne speech. It was in the throne speech, and here we are now at the environment and sustainability committee to talk about it. The land base is kind of the one grounding influence for all of the policy design that happens here in Ottawa for Canada. If you have something happening, it's going to happen on the land.

Our thinking in terms of how we want to engage with this has been that we did some really solid technical work in the mid-2000s around mapping out and providing metrics for first nations lands under management—mainly provincial or territorial forestry concessions—and we said, look, here is where first nations are actually working on the land base, and they're doing all kinds of neat things here. Yes, they're logging, they're doing silviculture, but they're also doing other things there too.

At this point we're saying, well, now look at all the conservation that has happened here. So here's the Great Bear rainforest. Here is Pimachiowin Aki. Here is a regional park that has a conservation initiative with these first nations, but here are also some of the potential mining developments that are happening. Here are some of the oil and gas developments that are happening. Here are some of the other developments that are happening across the land base and creating a national story, because the national conservation plan will potentially affect all of that across the sectors.

From a first nations perspective, we want to show the first nations footprint in conjunction with all the other footprints that are on the land base, and then let the various parties work with that technical knowledge in the best manner.

That's two and a half minutes. You have time for one more.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Pilon: How would you like the government to integrate first nations in its national plan?

[*English*]

Mr. Bradley Young: I think there is going to have to be a meeting of the minds on the legal parameters around free, prior, and informed consent, and I trust there will be.

I think there is some goodwill on all sides of the table. People want to see things done a little more proactively on the land base out there on all sides of the table, and I think that's the goodwill that will go into this.

From there, I can't get any more specific other than to say design it with first nations. There are going to be some high levels of rigour there. Keep the will going. It's important work. It's work, again, that we can do to magnify Canada's national and international image out there, and provide a really good and sound base of prosperity, not only economic but ecological, cultural, and spiritual—all of the great things that Monte and everybody I know around the table here share.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Pilon: Mr. Hummel, the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement has been around for two years now. Do you have some concrete examples of the benefits of this agreement?

● (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Monte Hummel: Yes.

Both industry and the conservation community with broader community support have made recommendations to the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Canada regarding the conservation of woodland caribou. I want to emphasize that that's joint advice. In other words, this is a very divisive critter. It tends to divide people. So when you can actually say here is our advice on the conservation of this species, and it enjoys the support of these two former warring parties, that makes quite a difference.

We will be coming forward at our second anniversary with more cohesive plans around candidate protected areas, protected area plans, as well as caribou action plans for these very large pilot projects that we have been undertaking over the last two years in Canada, which would enjoy support, again, of the broader community. So I think having that joint advice is quite unique and important, and it's a contribution we're proud of.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next we have Ms. Ambler.

You have five minutes.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests today for most informative presentations.

I'd like to ask what I think will be a fairly quick question first to Mr. Young, with regard to the initiative you mentioned, the White Feather forest initiative in Ontario. Could you tell us briefly a bit about this, and also tell us where the funding came from for this initiative?

Mr. Bradley Young: The White Feather forest initiative comes out of northwestern Ontario, centred roughly around the Pikangikum First Nation's traditional territory, and then it flows further west into the eastern side of the lakes in Manitoba.

There's a consortium of either six or seven first nations—I don't have my technical notes in front of me—that have managed to make it work in partnership with provincial ministries from both Manitoba and Ontario, and also with a federal level of jurisdiction through Parks Canada, and then an international jurisdiction involving the UNESCO world heritage site designation party. Someone raised in the critical academic tradition would look at the surface of that and ask how the heck they are going to keep that boat going in the same direction—and they have done so.

I don't know the exact funding formula for how all these parties have contributed and what the funding formulas are; I don't have the agreements. I know that there have been investments by the provinces, both Manitoba and Ontario, and I imagine that to have Parks Canada people and UNESCO adjudicating people there, there would have to be some sort of in-kind contribution at minimum, in terms of time for staff.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I believe there has been some federal funding. I should probably find out about that and let this committee know.

Thank you for that. I appreciate that answer.

I'd like to ask Mr. Hummel about the role of urban areas and their protection as part of the national conservation plan. The Rouge Park in Toronto is expected to be the largest urban park in the world at 6,000 hectares. It will be 15 times larger than Central Park in New York City and within an hour's drive of seven million people.

In addition to that, the not-so-happy part is that since 2006-07, attendance at Canada's wildlife parks and marine and historic attractions has fallen 7%, but in Ontario and Quebec by 12%. My question is a general one and possibly a bit of a lob question. Should connecting urban Canadians with nature be a goal of the national conservation plan?

Mr. Monte Hummel: Yes.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That was easy, wasn't it?

● (1645)

Mr. Monte Hummel: These urban parks—Stanley Park, Central Park in New York, Pleasant Point in Halifax—are seen as hugely far-sighted. Whoever came up with this idea...it was a great idea. It's also equally clear that if they hadn't come up with the idea and if it hadn't been protected, they wouldn't be parks today. That's just testimony to what I was saying about how in hindsight the value of doing this becomes more obvious than it was in the day.

The urban park thing is beyond the reach of the CBFA. We're talking about boreal environments. I note that part of the objective of the national conservation plan is to connect Canadians to nature. Most of us live in cities: 50% of aboriginal people live in cities now, and 80% of Canadians do.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Let me change my line of questioning a little. At the top of your remarks you mentioned including economic considerations and benefits. Mr. Young also mentioned strategic economic development. I think you're rather talking about the same things.

Mr. Young, what kinds of economic activities would you include in, as you put it, the working landscape?

Mr. Hummel, could you tell us what kind of economic dimension you had in mind?

The Chair: I'm going to ask for a very short answer from each of you.

Mr. Bradley Young: The question was about strategic economic considerations. I would say this would affect all the natural resource development sectors. I think there is a tremendous opportunity there for first nations if they can get the right land use and priority plans in place. They will engage in all the sectors according to their priorities, and they will be the ones that will make those decisions.

That's just a general commentary on what has happened out there. They will consider everything, but they have to have their priorities outlined first. They have to be on an equal footing and they have to feel this parity in government-to-government relations.

Mr. Monte Hummel: I would go to the end point. I would paint a picture. If people have a park in their backyard, whether they live in the remotest parts of Canada or not, I'd like to hear them saying that they love it. They benefit from it. They use it. There are people who come there and they benefit economically. If it's a conservation approach to harvesting trees, I like it when people say that they love it, that they're proud of it. They don't take it lightly when people are critical of it, because they think this conservation approach to our natural resources is great and they benefit from it.

If they don't have some skin in the game, if there isn't something in it for them, then it's going to be very difficult for them to own it and champion it and lead it and be proud of it and make sure that it continues.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Liu.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): I want to thank our witnesses for coming in today. Your testimonies are very useful, and I'm sure they will help us produce our report at the end of the study.

I'd like to refer to a report published in 2003 by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. They consulted with hundreds of witnesses concerning conservation in Canada. This report contains about 20 recommendations, and I'd like to bring your attention to a particular recommendation, recommendation 2:

> The Round Table recommends that federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments require integrated land-use planning to ensure that conservation decisions are made at the same time as, or prior to, decisions about major industrial development.

Mr. Young, could you provide a brief response to that? Do you support this recommendation, and what are your comments about this?

Mr. Bradley Young: Yes, I would wholeheartedly support that. You can't conserve and develop without taking into consideration one or the other. First nations people should be at the heart of that discussion.

● (1650)

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Hummel, by the way, while I was doing research, I was impressed by your life-long advocacy for environmental issues. I know you spoke about the importance of marrying economic interests to environmental interests, so what would your comments be on this recommendation?

Mr. Monte Hummel: I participated in that study. Buried in there is what's called the "conservation first" principle. It says that often you have to sequence conservation accomplishments up front when you're making economic development decisions, because you aren't going to get a chance down the line. For example, give communities a chance to identify and protect areas that are important to them before you open it up for industrial development, whether it's diamond mining, oil and gas, or forestry.

I want to emphasize that "conservation first" doesn't mean it's the only thing you consider. But sometimes you have to sequence things, because you won't get a crack at it further down the road. That's part of what was being referred to in that section on land use planning.

Ms. Laurin Liu: I know my time's running out quickly, so I'd like to thank our witnesses for coming in today. We'll definitely use your testimony to work on our recommendations.

We know that the committee in the past has studied CEAA, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. My constituents have been somewhat concerned about the cuts that have been made to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. With the budget that came out last week...we were quite concerned about the cuts that have been made to the environment, including the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, so—

The Chair: Order.

I want to encourage Ms. Liu to stay on topic. We're not talking about the budget. We're talking about the national conservation plan.

Ms. Laurin Liu: I just wanted to give a preamble to a motion I would like to present at committee, but thanks for the reminder.

Last month, Environment Canada decided to loan....

Dan Wicklum was an official at Environment Canada and recently became the chief executive of Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance. This has been a concern for my constituents, the separation of powers.

On that note, I'd like to present a motion to committee. The motion reads as follows:

> That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee hear Dan Wicklum, Chief Executive of Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance, no later than on Thursday, April 5, 2012.

If the motion is receivable, I'd like to make an amendment.

The Chair: The motion is in order, but for anything to do with scheduling, the tradition is that we move in camera and that it be discussed in camera, as we have every other scheduling issue.

On a point of order, I have Mr. Woodworth.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I hate to do this when you just said the motion is in order, but don't we have a rule about giving notice of motions? Has there been notice given of this motion before—

The Chair: On that point of order, there was adequate notice.

Now, if I have no other points of order, I will be suspending this meeting and we will be moving.... The motion is in order, but to discuss it, it would have to be done in camera.

Ms. Megan Leslie: I have a point of clarification, Mr. Chair.

I know as of late it's been tradition that we go in camera, but I don't think we necessarily have to if there's unanimous consent to discuss the motion right now.

The Chair: One moment.

Just to answer Ms. Leslie's question, it does not require unanimous consent. It requires a motion. There is already a motion on the floor, but that would be a dilatory motion, which would not be debatable. We would have a motion. We would then vote to go in camera or to stay in the open meeting. The tradition is that scheduling is dealt with in an in camera meeting, so we would be breaking tradition to stay in the open meeting. But it's the committee's choice, if you want to do that.

At this point I would need a motion to deal with this at this meeting.

Do we have a point of order?

● (1655)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): On the same subject, would Ms. Liu be willing to move her motion towards the end of the meeting so we can still hear from our witnesses? Some of us still have questions that we'd like to ask.

The Chair: One moment, please.

[*Inaudible—Editor*]...postponed, because she already has introduced a motion, and the motion is in order, so to postpone dealing with hers would require unanimous consent. Do I have unanimous consent to—

Mr. François Choquette: No.

The Chair: Okay. We do not have unanimous consent.

Ms. Rempel.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: I would like to move that the meeting proceed in camera.

Mr. François Choquette: A point of order.

The Chair: No. I said it's a dilatory motion, non-debatable. We will now have a vote on whether or not to move in camera.

Ms. Megan Leslie: A recorded vote, please.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I want to thank the witnesses for being here. Your testimony was very much appreciated.

We're going to suspend and move in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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